

Our Position Paper on:

 **friends of
the earth**
see things differently



**CLIMATE CHANGE
ADAPTATION**

IN A NUTSHELL

Climate change is causing more flooding, typhoons and heat waves. This damages lives and food production, and hits the poorest people in the UK and overseas the hardest. To limit the impact we must adapt. By funding climate change adaptation, the Government can protect vulnerable communities and nature. As historically our country is one of the biggest polluters, we must take responsibility and help poorer countries too.

THE FACTS

- 1 The Committee on Climate Change says the UK Government needs to spend at least £500 million a year more on flood defences.** Some 5 million homes are already at risk of flooding.
- 2 For every degree rise in the global temperature, rainfall intensity increases by 5-10%, causing more flash floods.**
- 3 Developing countries don't have the resources they need to adapt.** Far too little is being done, so at least 1,000 times more money must be invested.
- 4 Without adaptation to climate change food yields could fall by 2% every year, yet demand will increase as the global population increases.**

THE PROBLEM

Emissions of greenhouse gases have caused changes to our global climate. These emissions are predominately a result of developed countries like ours burning fossil fuels over the past 150 years. And global emissions are continuing to increase.

We're seeing more and more extreme weather around the world, such as flooding, heat waves and droughts, as a result of climate change.

The World Meteorological Organisation has reported a 20% increase in lives lost due to extreme weather compared to just a decade ago. This is only likely to increase, as global temperatures continue to rise. A 2 degree rise will affect food production and increase the spread of diseases, but we're currently on track for a temperature rise of more than twice that.

It's the poorest who suffer. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that "People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalised in society are often highly vulnerable to climate change" whereas "privileged members of society can benefit".

Adaptation is possible, but we're not spending anywhere near enough to make it happen. In the UK, flood defence spending is far lower than needed, and spending in developing countries needs to increase 1,000-fold.

WHAT WE THINK

Friends of the Earth is campaigning for significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to help keep global warming to less than 1.5 degrees, compared to pre-industrial times.

Alongside this, we call for the UK to take the following adaptive actions:

- Increase spending on flood defences in the UK to £1 billion per year by 2025. The UK Government's official advisors on climate change have warned that current spending is £500 million a year too low. Floods in 2014 cost insurance companies £450 million – we do not save by scrimping on defence.
- Stop building new homes on flood plains. Despite planning laws, 20,000 new homes are still built on flood plains every year. The UK needs at least 2 million new homes, but building on flood plains simply stores up future problems.
- Give tens of billions of pounds more to help climate adaptation overseas. The UK, with other wealthy countries, has been most responsible for causing climate change, while developing countries themselves have contributed very little to the problem. We must take responsibility.
- Add a legally binding loss-and-damage mechanism to the new international climate change agreement. This would help developing countries assess the risks of climate change to their countries, people and environment, and provide compensation for losses as insurance is too costly for many vulnerable people.
- Involve more women in adaptation plans. Women have particular experience and understanding of adaptation needs,

yet research shows their voices are often unheard.

- Adopt resilient farming systems. Large-scale, intensive farming practices are very vulnerable to climate change. We need to adopt more diverse agriculture systems that are more resilient and also provide important services such as carbon dioxide capture and flood protection.
- Give nature a helping hand. Global warming is happening too fast for most wildlife to adapt. At 2 degrees of warming, 20-30% of plant and animal species could be at risk of extinction. Isolated nature reserves alone cannot protect wildlife, we need abundant nature everywhere – in cities, the countryside, our rivers, and at sea.



KEY REFERENCES

Friends of the Earth (2014), Climate Change – ten key findings from the climate scientists:
www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/ten-findings-by-IPCC-climate%20scientists.pdf

USEFUL LINKS

www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/flooding_41880

www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/demand_climate_change_23337

FOLLOW

[@chilledasad100](#) Senior Campaigner, International Climate, Friends of the Earth

[@guyshrubsole](#) Campaigner, Climate and Energy, Friends of the Earth

To give us feedback please visit: www.foe.co.uk/feedbackcomment.html