

Climate change means bigger medical, council and property bills

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Climate change concerns like melting icecaps, increased desertification, loss of coral reefs and the extinction of species like polar bears can seem a distant concern in our everyday lives. Little attention, however, has been paid to the likelihood of increased bills, through tax and insurance charges, that will be incurred as the UK climate changes.

Alistair Hunt, a researcher at the [University of Bath](#), will be addressing scientists this week at the international [Climate Change](#) Congress being held in Copenhagen to present research which shows that the cost of climate change is going to be felt much closer to home than many expect. Alistair's talk is one of many described in the complete online abstract book of the congress, published in the IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science.

Working with the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP), Alistair has calculated the projected cost increases that would be incurred with an increased burden on National Health Service resources during hotter summers; the effect that hotter and drier summers will have on the rate of property subsidence; the maintenance costs of public lawns and the cost of maintaining climate damage-induced highways.

As Alistair says, "Through isolating particular consequences of extreme weather fluctuations, projected to become more frequent such as the hotter summers of both 1995 and 2003, and assessing the effect that these weather fluctuations had on local resources, we are helping businesses, councils and individuals to prepare for the future."

The hot summers of 1995 and 2003 are used to inform a number of the case studies of likely trends associated with climate change, as experts predict that the once-a-century temperatures, reached in 2003's summer, become regular English [summer temperatures](#). Changes in temperature and [rainfall averages](#) also result in climate change costs.

The case studies look ahead 90 years and predict that the cost of treating people with heat-related illnesses will increase anything between five and nine-fold for primary care trusts; the increased insurance costs associated with property subsidence during arid summers will increase anything between four and 13-fold; and that both public lawn and road maintenance will see expensive hikes too.

Dr Johanna Schwarz, Editor of IOP Publishing's Earth and Environmental Science Conference Series, said, "Climate change is going to affect all of us and Alistair's presentation in Copenhagen is a timely reminder that it is not just tropical islanders or others in less moderate climate zones that need to adapt."

The case studies explore different adaptive measures, such as public health campaigns to provide advice about how to stay cool during hot summers, which could over the long-term reduce the health costs, and also looks at weather patterns that could lead to savings, such as the need for less road-grit during warmer winters, but the studies still forecast financial hikes that will bring the expense of climate change much closer to home.

Alistair said, "While the case studies might appear parochial and only reflect the concern of particular stakeholders such as the National Trust or the Association of British Insurers, the hike in costs will be shared, climate change will affect all of our wallets."

Roger Street, Technical Director at the UK Climate Impacts

Programme, said, "Understanding the costs of impacts and adaptation is an important aspect of defining and implementing a viable adaptation strategy and its evolving adaptation measures. It is essential that we continue to provide up-to-date and supportive guidance that meets the needs of users towards identifying the costs and benefits."

Source: Institute of Physics ([news](#) : [web](#))

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