

UK climatologists seek bubble blowers, cloud watchers

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A man walks across Parliament Square in central London in 2009. Meteorologists launched a new campaign Wednesday to get people in England involved in measuring climate change by using a mirror, soap bubbles or simply looking up at the sky.

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The Met Office [national weather service](#) is asking people to complete a series of simple activities to check the results of climatic computer models.

They include measuring wind speed by blowing bubbles into the air to

monitoring the direction of clouds with the aid of a mirror.

Participants are being asked to spot plane vapour trails to measure [air temperature](#) and humidity, and to record how cold or hot they feel.

"They're all aspects that are actually quite difficult for us to analyse or measure with our standard monitoring network and so it's all about capturing new data that can complement our existing observation and tell us a little more," Met Office climate scientist Mark McCarthy told AFP.

"Contrails (vapour trails), for example -- we want to look at how well weather and [climate models](#) are able to predict where contrails do or don't form and whether they do or don't spread out and form clouds."

When planes fly, the burning of the fuel creates water vapour which mixes with the very cold air at high altitudes and condenses. The air is so cold that ice crystals are formed, leaving behind condensation trails -- contrails.

The trails stop heat from leaving Earth and contribute to global warming. But while computers can predict where they should form due to temperature and humidity, the only real way to check is to look at the sky.

Another activity under the OPAL Climate Survey includes asking people to write down if they are hot or cold to help scientists understand how sensitive individuals are to [climate change](#).

The Met Office expects a strong response from the survey, one of several launched in recent years involving the public on environmental issues, and has already distributed 40,000 activity packs to schools and other organisations.

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