

# Government leadership needed to support Net Zero lifestyle changes, says UK review

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The pace and scale of behavior change required to meet the UK's Net Zero targets will require the UK Government to do much more to support people to make greener choices, say the authors of [a newly](#)

[published review](#).

Environmental psychologists based at the Center for Climate Change & Social Transformations (CAST) at the University of Bath conducted a review for the Climate Change Committee (CCC)—the independent non-departmental body that advises the UK Government on adapting to and mitigating the effects of [climate](#) change.

Across two reports, they highlight that to reach Net Zero by 2050, substantial emissions reductions will need to come from people making greener choices. The review focuses on eight key areas where behavior change is required.

Areas where individuals will need to shift behaviors include diet (i.e., reducing high-carbon foods like meat and dairy); reducing consumption by reusing, repairing, and recycling; flying less; and supporting farmers to increase tree-planting.

The review also considers areas where other forms of behavior change are required, such as upskilling workers with new Net Zero skills and careers; supporting businesses to be more sustainable; and creating well-accepted fair policies for all.

The review finds that most behavior change interventions are focused on changes at an individual level—for example by giving people information. However, they conclude that these measures are generally less effective at shifting behavior than interventions which make greener choices more attractive, affordable, convenient, or the default; or regulations and incentives led by the Government or businesses to support behavior change.

In order to bring about these changes and involve the public in the process, the researchers are calling for the urgent development of a UK

public engagement strategy for Net Zero. In 2021, following advice from CAST, the Scottish Government became the first legislature to develop a detailed [public engagement strategy](#) aimed at involving the public in reducing emissions.

Commenting, author, environmental psychologist and Director of CAST, Professor Lorraine Whitmarsh MBE, said, "It has been clear for a number of years that in order for the UK to reach Net Zero, individual behavior changes are required.

"Against this backdrop, our review for the Climate Change Committee looks at how we can enable people to make green choices on a large scale. For too long we've been relying on giving individuals information about the problem of climate change and hoping their behaviors will change, ignoring that we have not yet created the right environment to enable this.

"As we set out, there are a combination of policy levers that can help shift behavior—ones which incentivize, regulate or enable. But this all needs to start with the UK Government creating an environment that allows people to make large-scale behavior changes, and sets the stage for ambitious Net Zero policies.

"This will mean creating a clear communication strategy, involving the public in policy decision-making, and creating policies that make low-carbon behaviors easier, cheaper, and more attractive—alongside regulations and incentives. This should be set out in a thorough public engagement strategy for Net Zero."

Specific policies reviewed by the researchers include the introduction of a Frequent Flyer Levy to curb aviation for the most frequent fliers; subsidizing meat-free options and increasing the availability of plant-based food; as well as changing regulations to enable repairs of consumer

products to be carried out more easily. Similar initiatives have recently been adopted in France.

To boost Net Zero skills, the review calls for more access to green skills training for [young people](#), as well as a greater focus on life-long learning to enable [older people](#) to transition to greener careers in later life. It also considers the changes required to enable sustainable business and farming practices.

The [review "The implications of behavioural science for effective climate policy"](#) was published by the Climate Change Committee.

Provided by University of Bath

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