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**ClientEarth Communications**

12 January 2022

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## We're suing the UK government over its net zero strategy



We're taking the UK Government to court over its inadequate net zero strategy, arguing that the Government has failed to set out sufficient policies to tackle climate change and reach net zero emissions by 2050.

### Why are the Government's net zero plans unlawful?

The Government is not taking action at the pace needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Its current policies will not reduce emissions enough to meet its legally binding carbon budgets – targets which limit the total amount of greenhouse gases that the UK can emit over five year periods on the road to net zero.

We believe these failings mean the UK Government has breached its legal duties under the 2008 Climate Change Act. What's more, its approach risks the UK having to introduce more drastic measures in future and pushes the burden onto future generations, with disproportionate impacts on young people's rights to life and to family and private life under the European Convention of Human Rights.

So we're stepping in.

### What do we need from net zero policies?

It's not enough for the UK Government simply to have a net zero strategy, it needs to include real-world policies that ensure it succeeds. Anything less is a breach of its legal duties and amounts to greenwashing and climate delay.

*Sam Hunter Jones, Senior ClientEarth Lawyer*

On releasing the net zero strategy in October 2021, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the Government had centred

its plans on the principle of “leaving the environment in a better state for the next generation” and releasing them of the financial burden of adapting to a warming planet.

However, its own baseline forecasts show that the UK’s projected emissions in 2037 will be more than double the levels the Government is legally required to adhere to.

The Government is also relying heavily on unproven technologies whilst overlooking viable current solutions that would have immediate impact, including solutions recommended by the its own advisors, the Climate Change Committee.

In addition to this, the Government’s failure to deliver real climate action is resulting in higher bills for people. Soaring energy bills for many UK households is, in part, because of the over-reliance on fossil fuels for heating and poor levels of insulation across the country. Yet new plans to roll-out low carbon heating and home insulation are well below the levels advised by the CCC. This needs to be addressed.

### **When will the court case happen?**

Following our filing of the claim in January 2022, the Government will submit its defence, and the Court will then decide whether to grant ClientEarth permission for a full hearing.

### **What does ‘net zero by 2050’ mean?**

The Government has pledged to reach net zero emissions by the year 2050. This means that by mid-century, the volume of emissions released into the atmosphere by the UK as a whole should be equal to the volume of emissions removed from the atmosphere.

The Climate Change Act 2008 legally binds the Government to carbon budgets, which includes a target to be over three quarters of the way to net zero in the next 13 years. The UK has also committed internationally to reduce its emissions by at least 68% by 2030 from 1990 levels, as part of its ‘Nationally Determined Contribution’ (NDC) under the Paris Agreement.

Missing these targets has severe consequences for the public’s future health and prosperity. To avoid this risk, the Government has to address the huge policy gaps in its net zero strategy. Our legal action intends to make that happen.

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