

# 10 Years of the UK Climate Change Act

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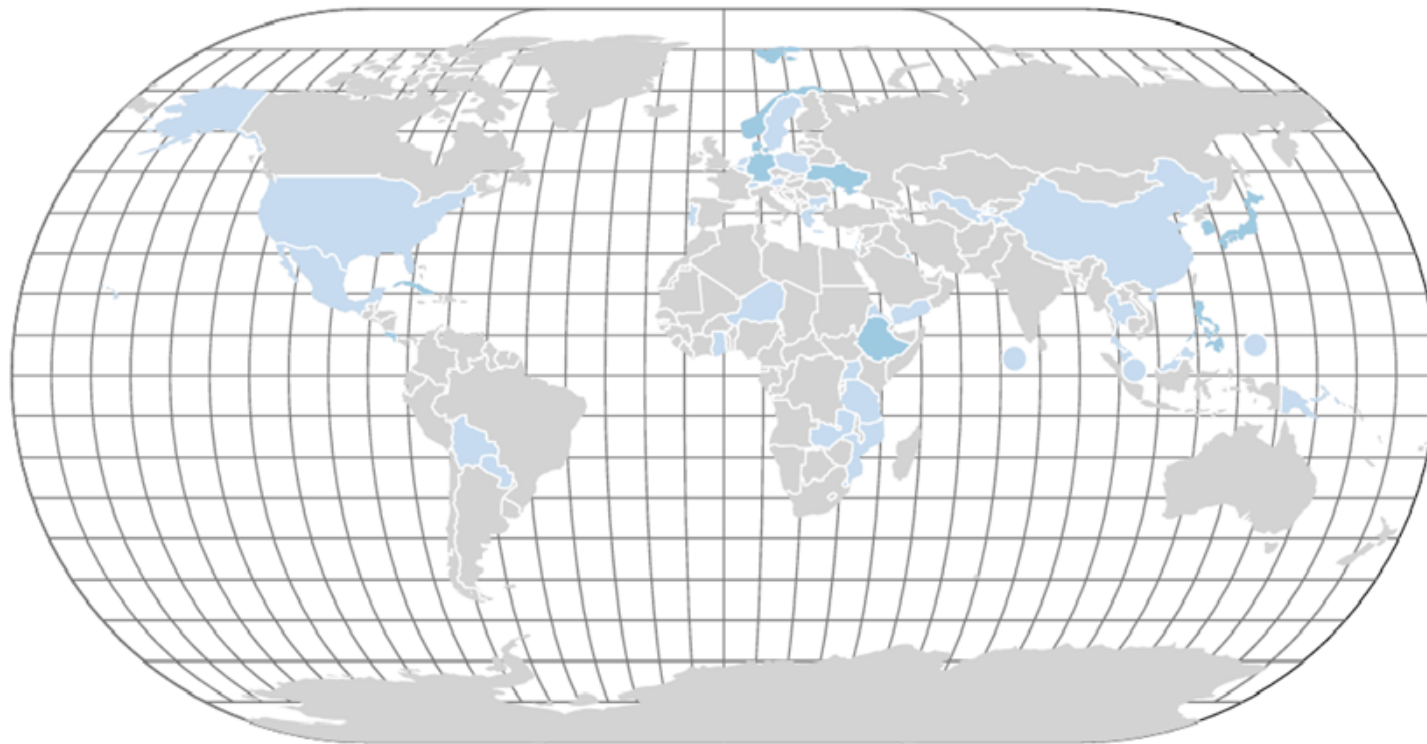
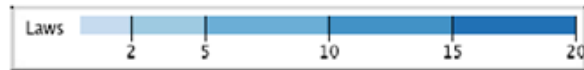
# Overview

- The context
- The main components of the Act
- Areas of success
- Areas for improvements
- Looking ahead



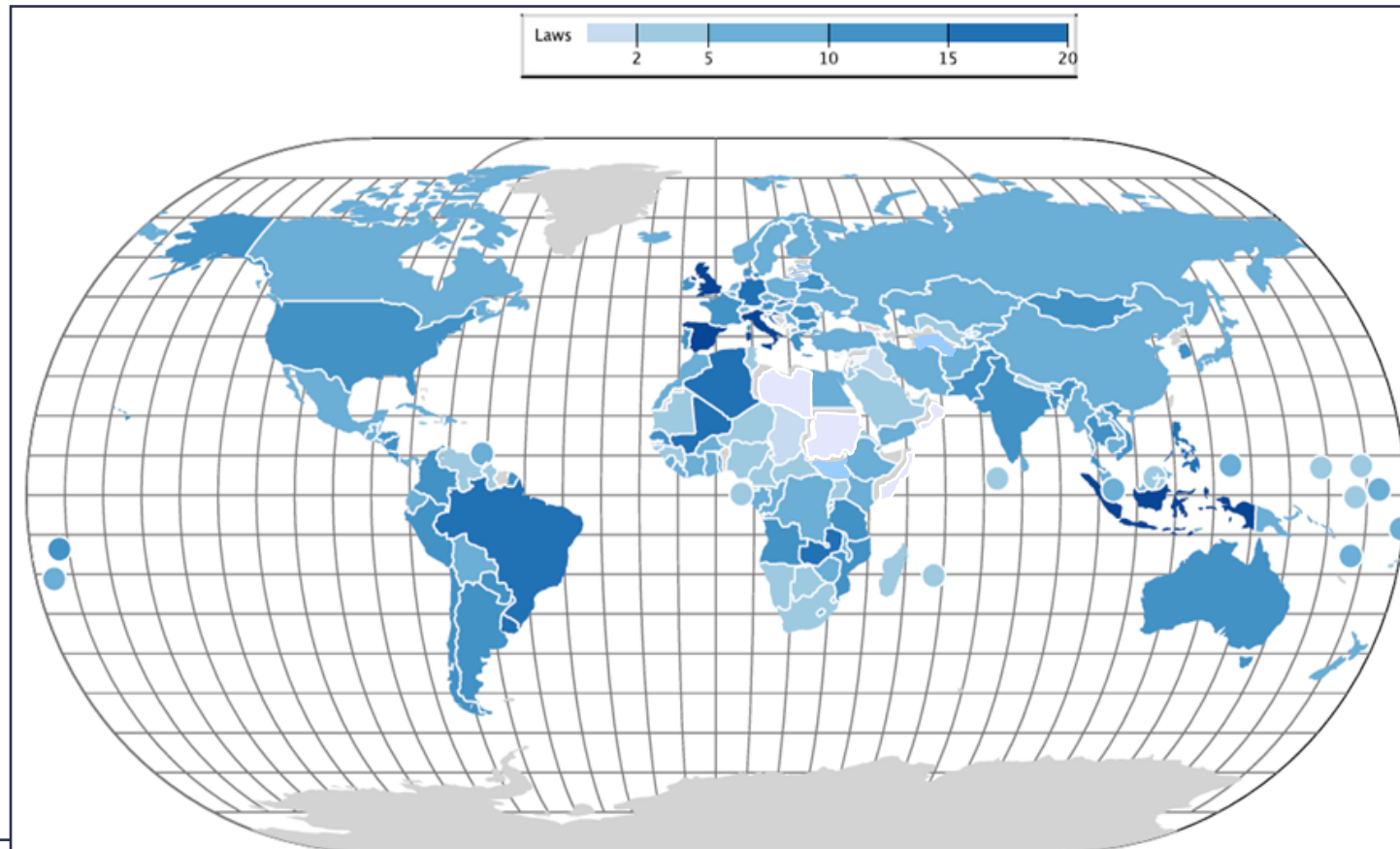
# Climate legislation in 1997

## 72 legislative and executive acts

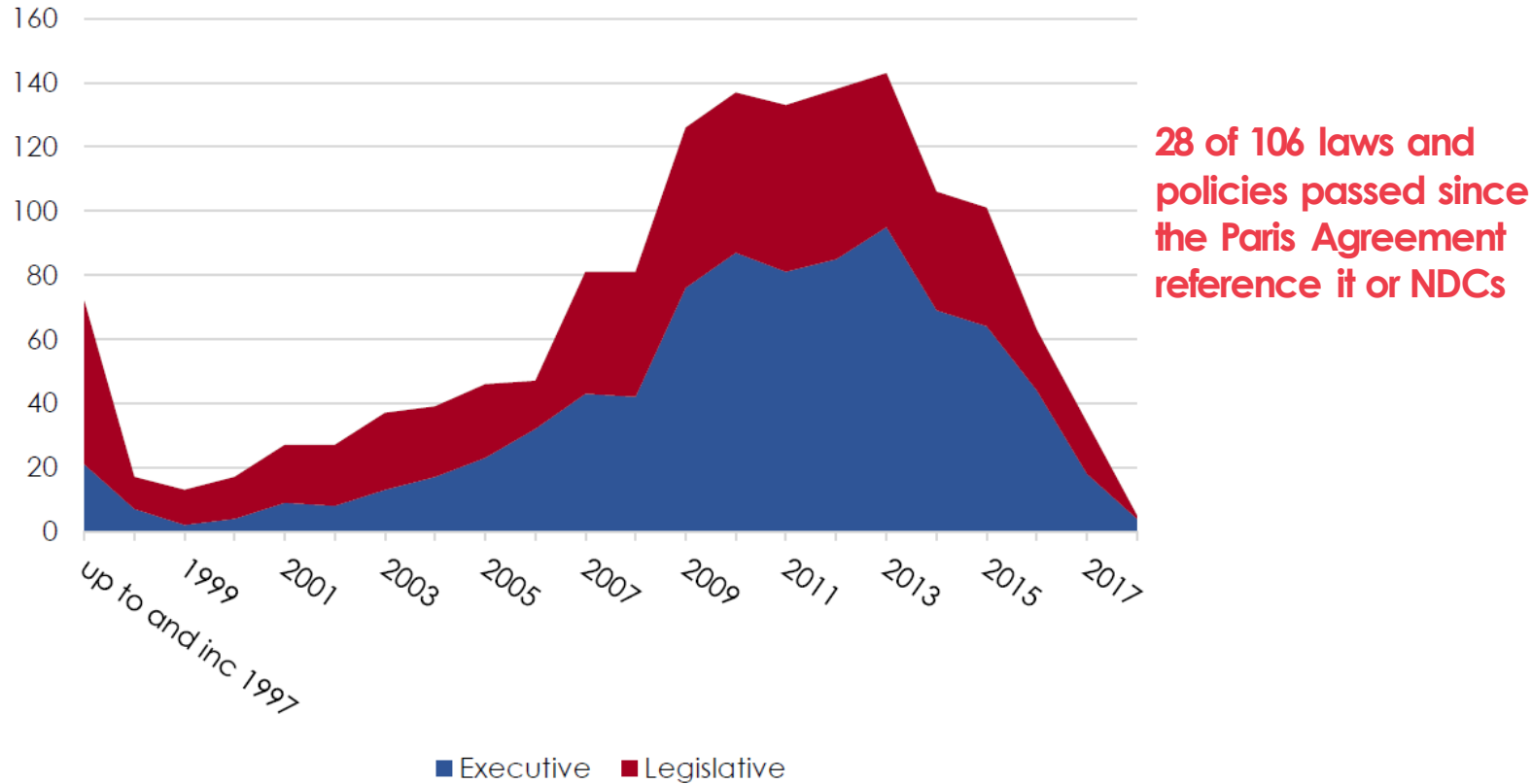


# Climate legislation in March 2018:

*1500 legislative and executive acts: A twenty fold increase in 20 years*



# Number of climate-related laws and policies passed annually



# Examples of framework laws

- **UK Climate Change Act, 2008**
- Mexico "General Law on Climate Change" 2012 (and Decree of 2018)
- Honduras "Decree no. 297-2013 (Law on Climate Change)" 2014
- Malta "Climate Action Act", 2015
- Mexico "Energy Transition Law" 2015
- France "Energy Transition Law", 2015
- Ireland, Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015
- Finland Climate Change Act, 2016
- Kenya Climate Change Act, 2016
- Ecuador "Organic Code on the Environment" 2017
- Paraguay "National Law on Climate Change no. 5875" 2017
- Sweden "Climate Change Act", 2017
- Peru "Framework Law no 30754 on Climate Change" 2018

## Drafts:

- South Africa (published June 2018)
- Chile (to be published July 2018)
- New Zealand

## Our research method

- Multiple analytical techniques
  - Interviews, consultations, lit review
- Range of angles & expertise
  - 33 interviews >50 perspectives
  - Different views about speed of emission cuts
  - 2 overt climate sceptics
  - Only 18% female respondents

Perspective	Number of respondents
<b>Politicians</b> , by party :	<b>12</b>
Conservative	4
Labour	4
Liberal Democrat	2
Cross-bench peers	2
by function:	
Parliamentarians	6
Minister/secretary of state	1
Special advisers to ministers	5
<b>Government officials</b> , including:	<b>10</b>
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	4
Department of Energy and Climate Change/Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	3
Other	3
<b>Committee on Climate Change</b> , including:	<b>5</b>
Members	3
Secretariat	2
<b>Private sector</b> , including:	<b>13</b>
High-carbon/energy-intensive	5
Low-carbon (e.g. renewables)	3
Other (e.g. services, agriculture)	5
<b>Other stakeholders</b> , including:	<b>11</b>
NGOs/think tanks	6
Academics	4
Journalists	1

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## Long-term target to 2050

### What and how?

Reduce emissions by at least 80% on 1990 levels

Covers the whole economy and all greenhouse gases

### Outcomes

Long-term direction of travel

Defines the UK's contribution to solving climate change



**Scientifically informed, long-term approach to policymaking**

# Carbon budgets

## What and how?

Sequence of 5-year targets

Recommended by Committee on Climate Change (CCC)

Debated and legislated by Parliament

Set 12 years ahead

## Outcomes

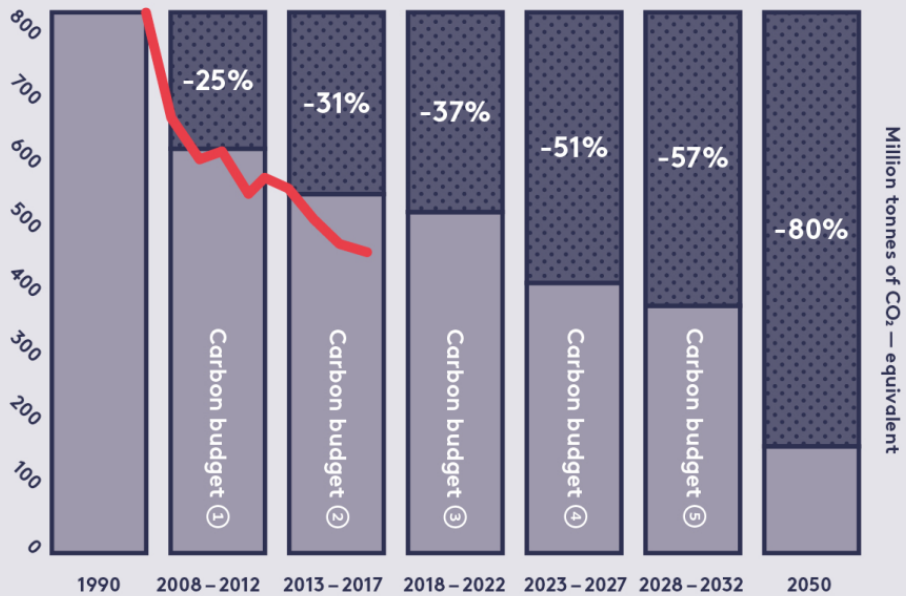
Basis for concrete policy

Long-term target translated into near-term actions

Flexibility built in

Progressive, ratcheted emissions cuts

Actual emissions



# Rolling set of medium-term targets

# Continual adaptation planning

## What and how?

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5-year cycles of adaptation programmes and risk assessments

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Scrutinised by CCC

## Outcomes

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Introduced climate change risk into public and private sector decision-making

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Prepares for the now unavoidable impacts



Year 1



Year 5



Year 10



Year 15



Year 20

# Independent advisory body

## What and how?

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Committee on Climate Change: experts and secretariat

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Recommends carbon budgets

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Monitors progress on emissions reduction and climate resilience

## Outcomes

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Independent, objective analysis

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Long-term consistency in approach across government

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Transparency and legitimacy

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More informed decision-making



# Duties and powers to deliver

## What and how?

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Government is accountable to Parliament to deliver

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Government obliged to produce plans to meet budgets

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CCC provides annual progress reports to

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Parliament  
Judicial review if non-compliant

## Outcomes

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Assigns clear responsibilities

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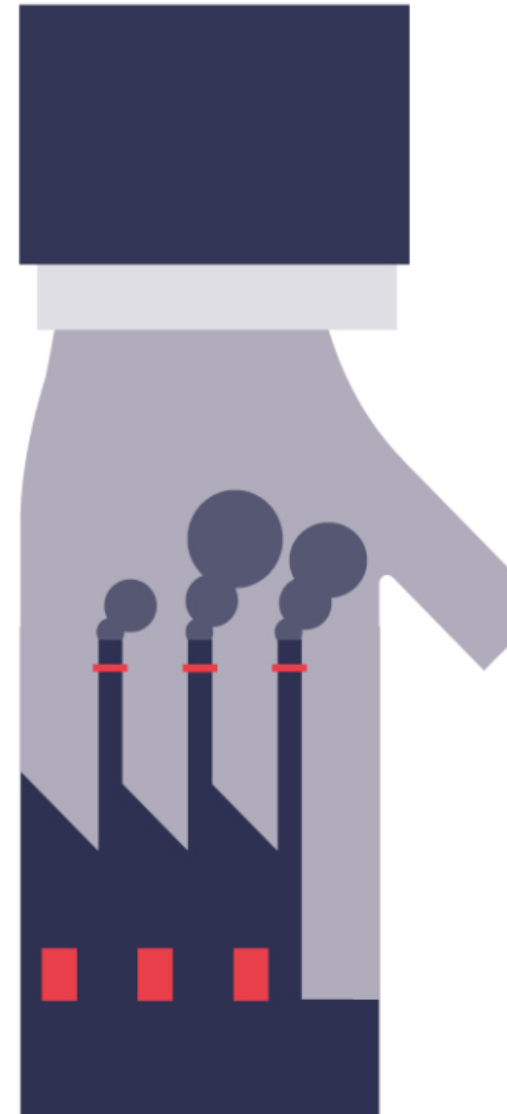
Holds government accountable

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Enables public scrutiny

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Provides basis for policy implementation



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## Different stages in the life of the Act

- Agreeing the Act (2006-08)
- Building the institutions (2008-10)
- Safeguarding climate ambition (2011-17)



David Cameron  
September 2005

*“Vote blue go green”*



David Cameron  
November 2013

*“We’ve got to get rid of all  
the green crap”*

# The political debate on climate change has improved

- The Act provides a clear structure for debate
- The Committee on Climate Change as a custodian of analytical rigor
- But much less impact on the public debate, e.g. in the media





## The political consensus on climate change has held

- Political commitment to particular climate policies has waxed and waned, but there is no real opposition to the Act
- The Act is both a beneficiary and a cause of the political consensus on climate change



2 The climate consensus has held

## The UK's international standing has grown

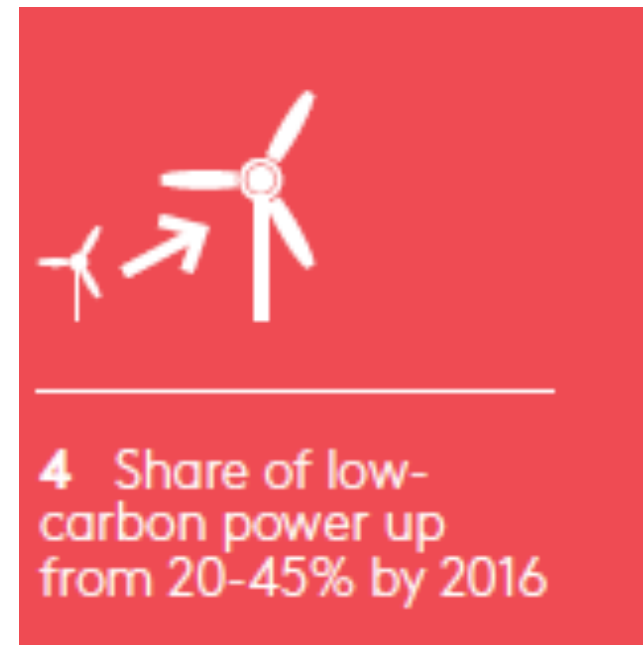
- The Act became the basis of a sustained international campaign on climate change by the Foreign Office
- It helped the UK to play a leadership role in negotiating the Paris Agreement and inspiring other countries to take action



3 International leadership, inspiring others to act

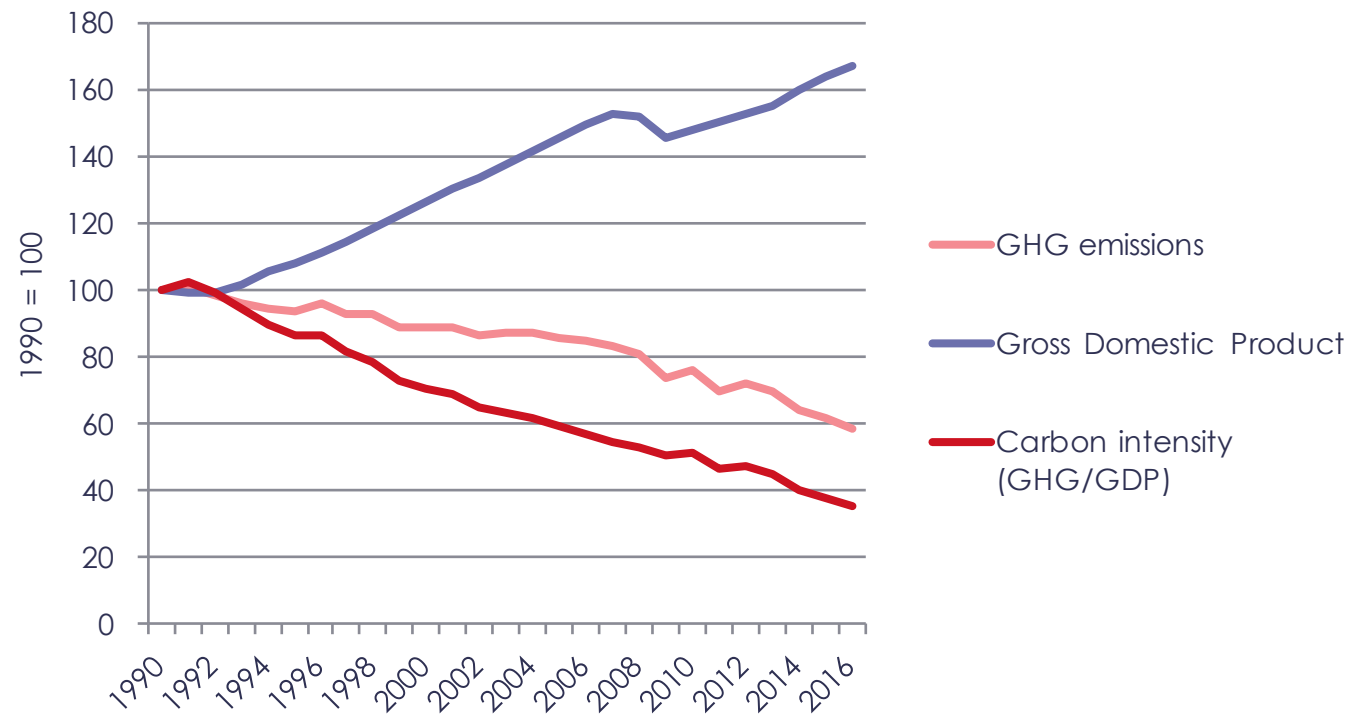
## The power sector has been transformed

- Greenhouse gas emissions have fallen since 2008, but this trend started well before the Act came into force
- But the impact of the Act on the UK power sector has been transformative



# UK emissions started to fall in the early 1990s

The trend continued under the Climate Change Act



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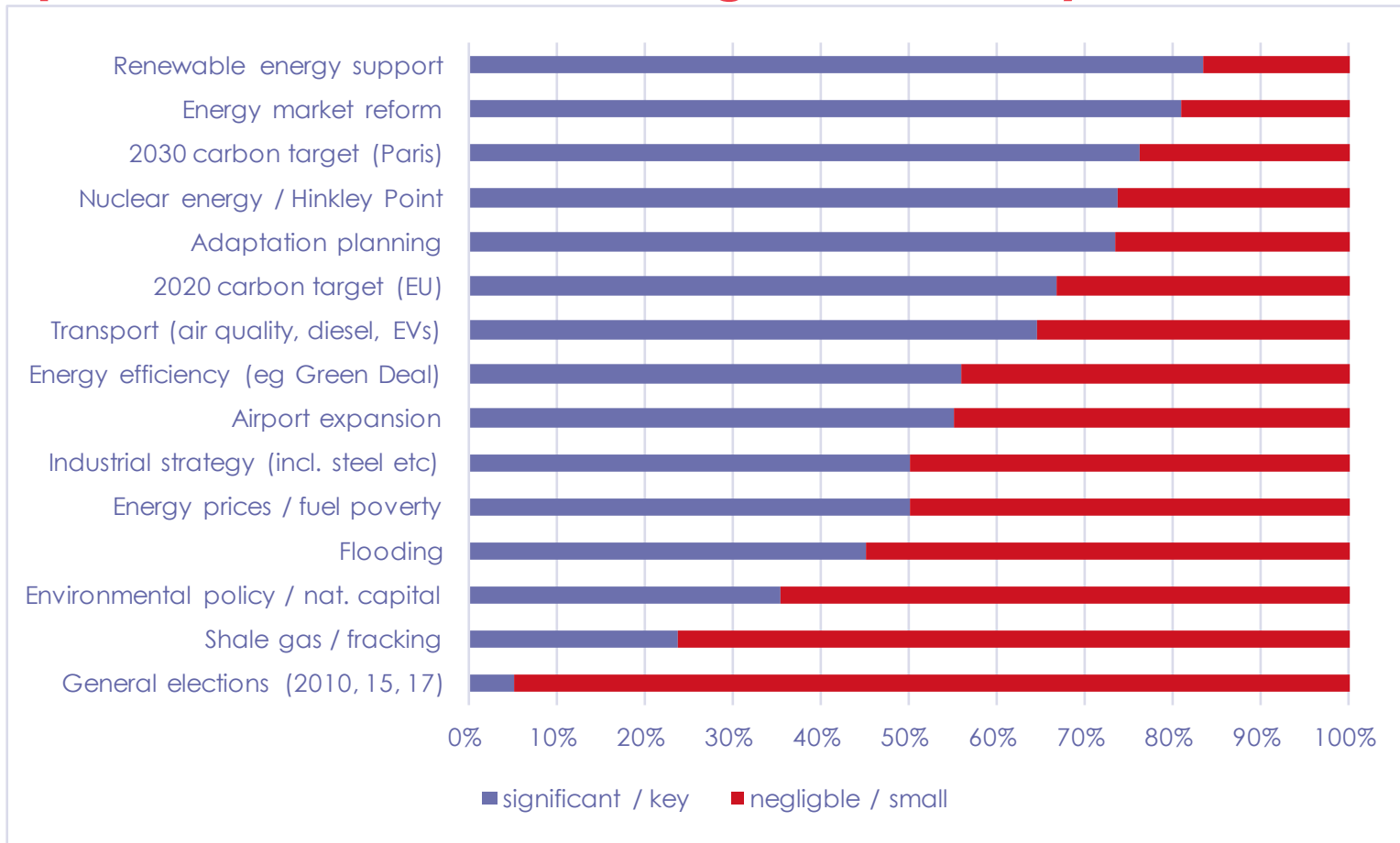
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## Four areas where expectations have not been met

- The Climate Change Act on its own is not sufficiently investible
  - Certainty about carbon targets is different from certainty about carbon policies
- Insufficient protection against backsliding
  - A gap between emissions targets and the policies to deliver them
- More adaptation planning than adaptation action
  - A slower start and some problems with the 1<sup>st</sup> Climate Change Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Programme
- Government buy-in is uneven across departments

# The impact of the Climate Change Act on key debates



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# The Act remains an effective framework for climate action

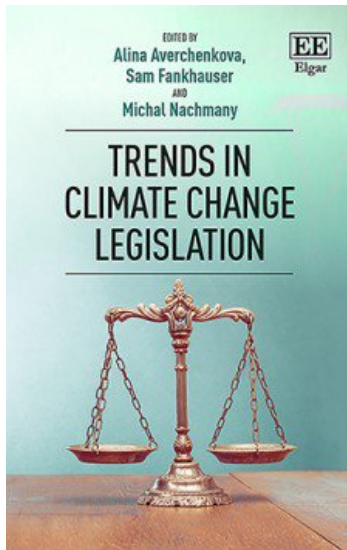
## But some adjustments to climate governance should be considered

- Compatibility with the Paris Agreement (net-zero target for UK by 2020)
- Stronger safeguards against backsliding
  - a statutory timetable for carbon plans; financial independence of the CCC; clearer criteria for assessing compliance
- Implications of Brexit
  - Carbon accounting based on gross emissions, not of carbon trades under the EU ETS

## Key Learnings

- A framework law is an effective way to coordinate and advance climate action
- A good framework law is not a substitute for political leadership on climate change
- The UK needs to reinvigorate this consensus as it moves into the next phase of decarbonisation

For more information see:



10 years of the  
UK Climate Cha

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and Jared Finnegan



**The Governance and  
Legislation research  
programme:**

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/research-theme/governance-and-legislation/>

Thank you!

# 10 Years of the UK Climate Change Act

London, 20 June 2018

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