

10 Years of the UK's Climate Change Act

Webinar on Korea's Carbon Neutrality Committee
26 April 2021

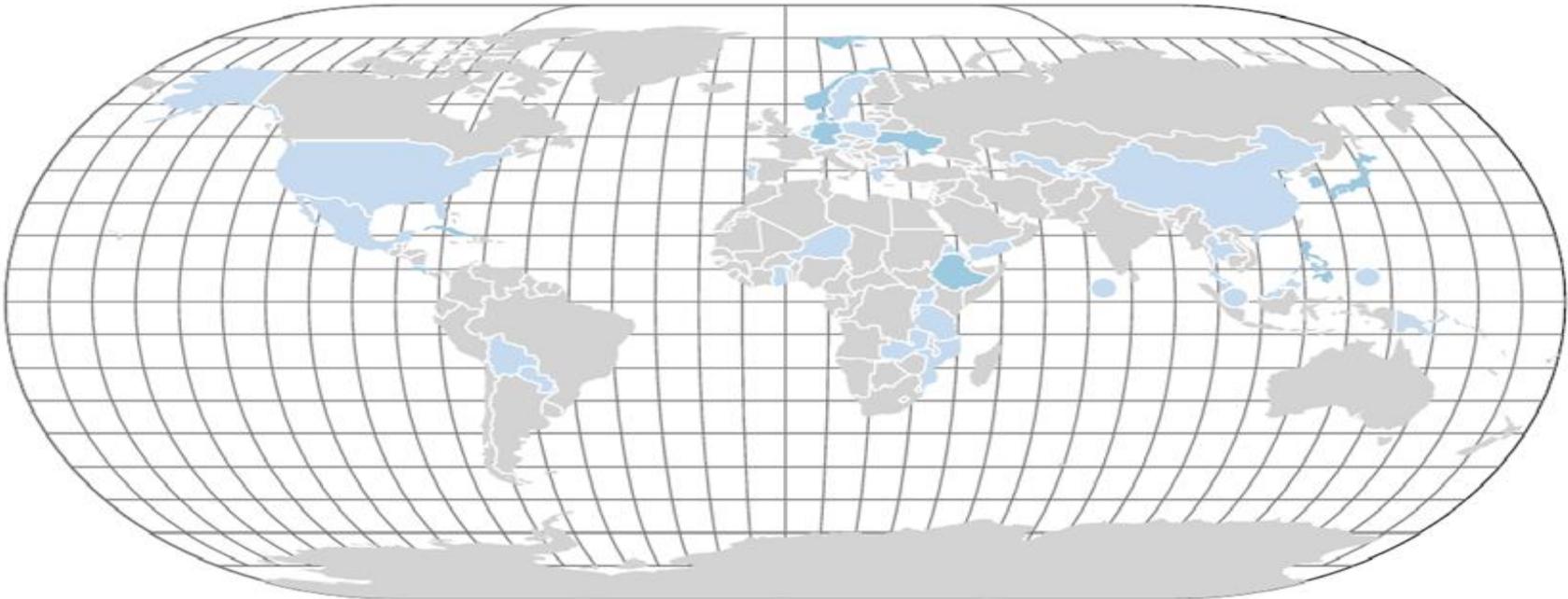
Dr. Alina Averchenkova

Grantham Research Institute for Climate Change and the Environment

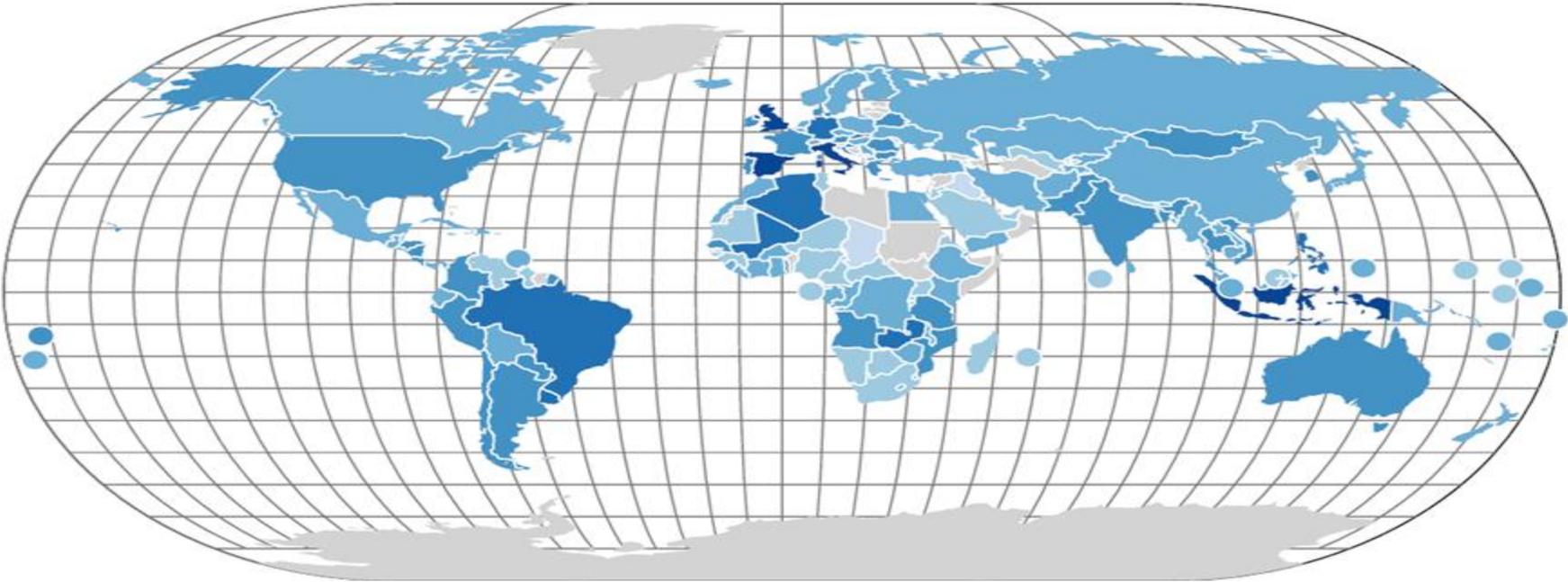
London School of Economics

a.averchenkova@lse.ac.uk

Climate change laws and executive policies in 1997



Climate change laws and executive policies in 2020



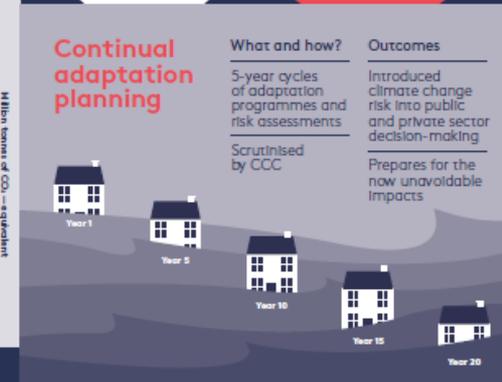
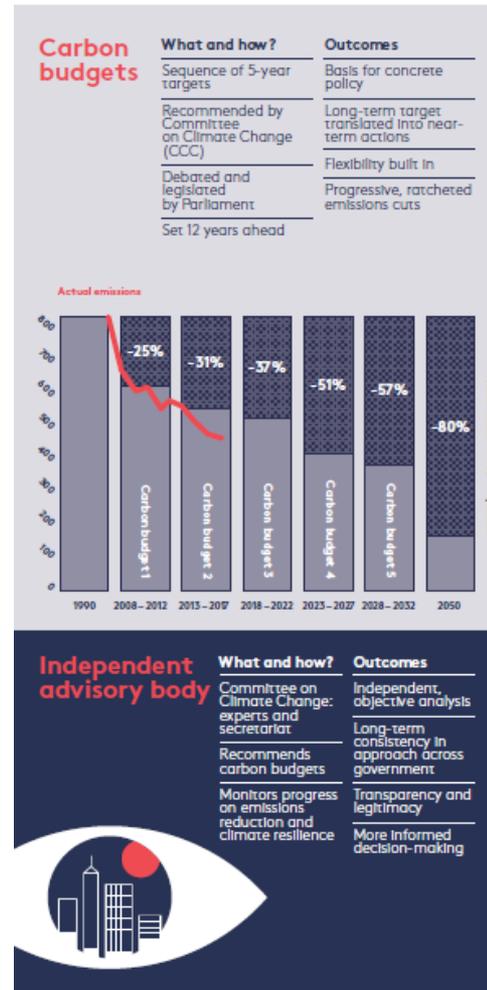
Over 1,900 climate laws and policies worldwide, including 140 strategic frameworks with around 40 of them embedded in laws

UK Climate Change Act	2008
Mexico "General Law on Climate Change"	2012 and Decree of 2018
France "Energy Transition Law"	2015
Malta "Climate Action Act"	2015
Mexico "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
Norway "Climate Change Act"	2017
Peru "Framework Law no 30754 on Climate Change"	2018
France "Law on Energy and the Climate (Law N 2019-1147)"	2019

Elements of good practice in the UK Climate Change Act

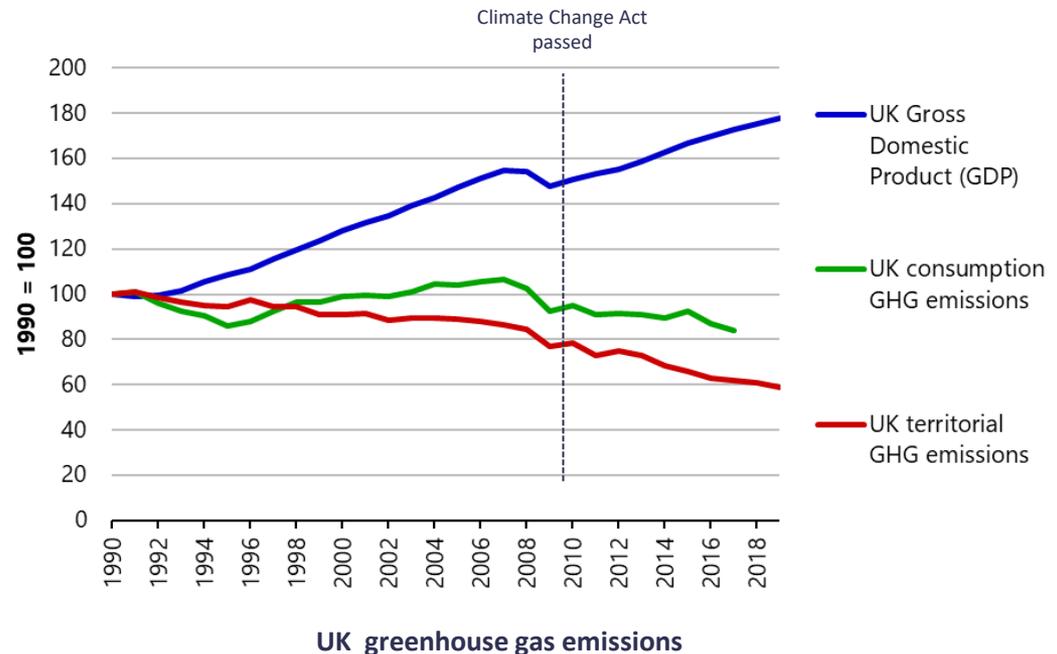
- A long-term greenhouse gas target
 - Clarity on the direction of travel
- Binding 5-year carbon budgets
 - Define the path to the long-term goal
- Continual adaptation planning
 - Timely response to unavoidable impacts
- Scrutiny by an independent committee
 - Safeguard against political short-termism
- Duties and powers to deliver
 - Clear responsibility and accountability

How does the UK Climate Change Act work?



The UK has decoupled emissions from GDP

- UK GHG emissions are down by >40% since 1990, while GDP is up by ~80%
 - CO₂/GDP down by a factor 3
- The Climate Change Act played an important role
 - Emission reductions accelerated after 2008
- But so did wider socio-economic factors
 - Structural shift from industry to services (“offshoring emissions”)
 - Energy market trends (“dash for gas”)



Source: Committee on Climate Change (2020)

The political debate on climate change has improved

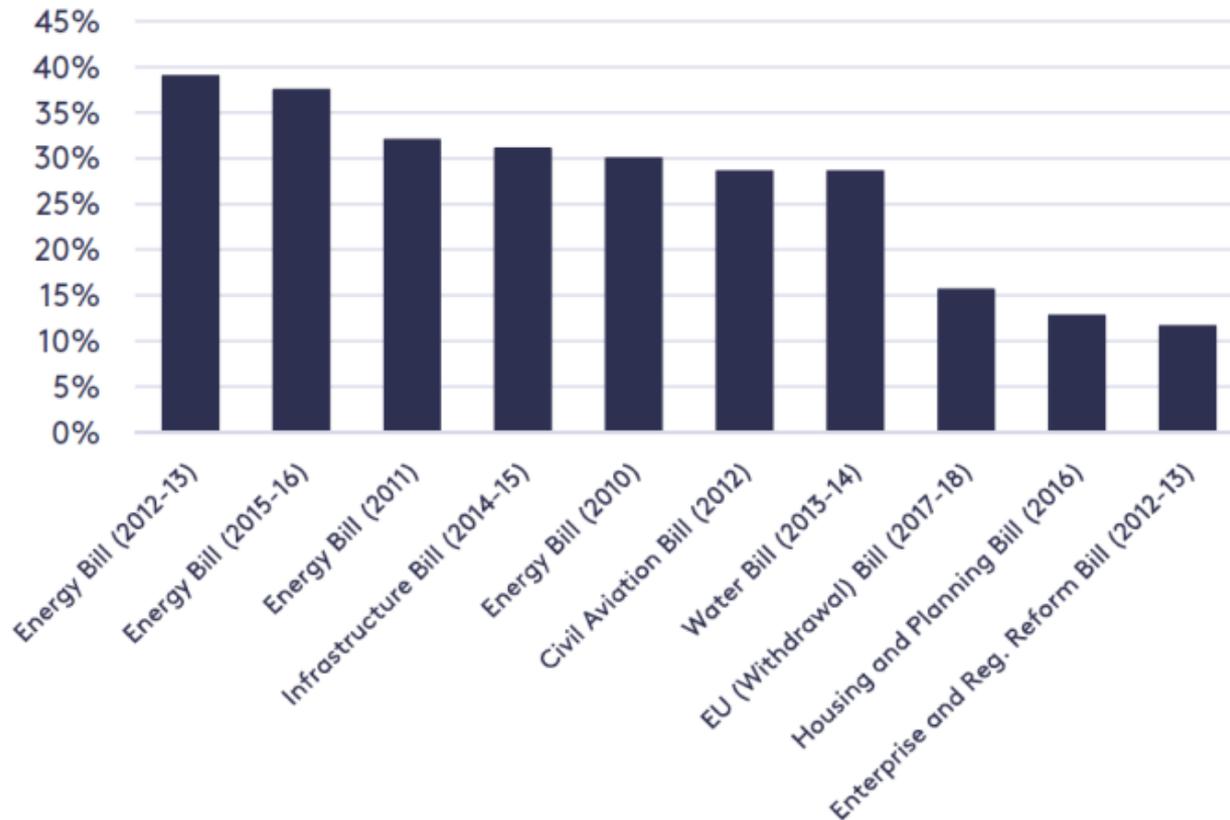
- The Act provides a clear structure for debate
 - There is a sense of orderliness, regularity, routine
 - Clear reporting and monitoring processes provide focus
 - Progress reports and carbon budgets “galvanise activities”
- The Climate Change Committee as a custodian of analytical rigor
 - CCC analysis provides an independent, trusted evidence base
 - CCC analysis is used on all sides of the debate (politicians, high-carbon representatives, clean tech, NGOs)
- But much less impact on the public debate, e.g. in the media



The central role of the Committee on Climate Change

- A tangible impact on objectives (carbon targets), process (climate debate) and substance (policy)
- Providing long-term credibility and outlook and ensuring evidence-based policy making:
Cited 5 times more in Parliament than the IPCC
- Monitoring government performance: statutory obligation to assess and report on progress

Share of sittings where the Committee was mentioned



- ✓ Effective knowledge broker, occasionally acting as a policy entrepreneur
 - ✓ CCC advice on carbon targets is broadly followed (though not all policy advice)
- ✓ Strongest influence on core areas of responsibility (carbon targets) but also wider debates (e.g. airport expansion, shale gas)

Source: Alina Averchenkova, Sam Fankhauser & Jared J. Finnegan (2021) The influence of climate change advisory bodies on political debates: evidence from the UK Committee on Climate Change, Climate Policy.



Clear mandate



Government's accountability

- mandated to respond to input



Allocated predictable
funding

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS OF THE INDEPENDENT CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY BODIES



High level of technical
expertise



Independence from the
Government

- financial and administrative



Parliamentary oversight

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 Climate Change Act
 - Commitment has held over 5 Governments, 4 general elections, 3 political crises
 - Political consensus allowed an increase in the long-term ambition to Net Zero emissions by 2050 (passed in 2019)
- The Act is both a beneficiary and a cause of the political consensus on climate change
 - Much political capital has been invested by all parties
 - The institutional architecture created by the Act has (so far) safeguarded against deviations



Sets a long-term direction for climate policy in the face of future political change



*David Cameron
September 2005*

“Vote blue go green”



*David Cameron
November 2013*

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

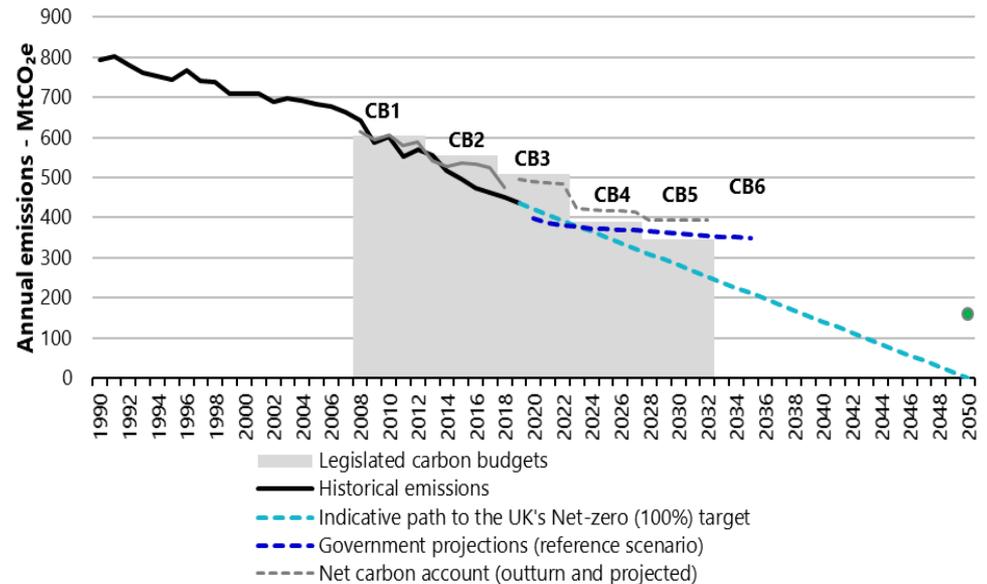
Areas where expectations have not been met in the UK

- The Climate Change Act on its own is not sufficiently investible
- There may be insufficient protection against backsliding
- There has been more adaptation planning than adaptation action
- Targets and rhetoric are not matched by measures to deliver them

The hardest part is yet to come

Though perhaps the politics are easier?

- Current policy will not deliver legislated 2030 ambition (4th and 5th carbon budget)
- This ambition has to be strengthened in light of the new Net Zero target
 - 68% vs 57% cut by 2030
- Move from “easy” sectors (power, maybe cars) to difficult emissions (industry, residential, aviation, agriculture)



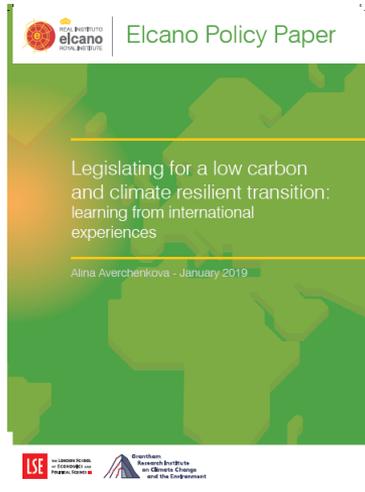
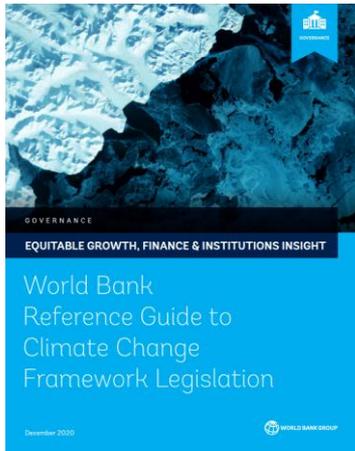
Source: Committee on Climate Change (2020)

Key Learnings

- A good framework law is an effective way to orient, coordinate and advance ambitious climate action
- Independent advisory bodies play a central role in informing policy making process and strengthening policy legitimacy and accountability for implementation
- A framework law is not a substitute for political leadership on climate change



For more information see:



Thank you!

Alina Averchenkova
a.averchenkova@lse.ac.uk
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/profile/alina-averchenkova/>