



COP26 Guide

How you can take part in COP26





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In November senior leaders from some 200 countries are due to meet in Glasgow for one of the most important meetings for the future of our world. Their role is to come up with a viable plan that will protect humans, animals and nature from a climate catastrophe, of unknown scale, but of certain devastation.

If global temperature rise goes above 1.5°C the outcomes could change the face of the world as we know it. As a result, the collective forces of governments, businesses and people need to work together to cut carbon emissions in half by 2030.

In this report we detail how every individual can get involved with helping achieve the aims of COP26. Not only are the 4 key aims of COP26 crucial for governments, they are also relevant to every citizen of the world. This report explains why.

Background to COP

Every year United Nations Climate Change conferences are held to assess progress in dealing with climate change. These meetings are called COPs (which stands for Conference of the Parties). Each annual meeting has its own number. The first COP was held in Berlin in 1995 and, in November, Glasgow will host the 26th COP.

This is a crucial meeting because the targets announced at the Paris COP meeting (number 21) in 2015 would result in warming of around 3°C by 2100¹. This would bring far more flooding, wildfires, extreme weather and species extinction than we've seen in recent years.

Scientists and the political community were aware of this at the time, and as a result, within the Paris agreement of 2015 there is a system whereby countries agree to restate increasingly ambitious targets² (called the ratchet mechanism). 5 years on from Paris, new commitments need to be made in Glasgow. These commitments need to be aligned with keeping temperature rise below 1.5°C, and must translate into real action.³



¹ <https://climateactiontracker.org/>

² <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs>

³ [COP26 Explained](#)

Why COP26 is so important

In August 2021 a momentous scientific report was published which drew together research from the world's most eminent climate scientists. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the body which reports to governments on climate change and this summer they produced their sixth assessment report looking at scientific, technical, social and economic knowledge on climate change. It ran to 4000 pages, but within the text there were four very clear messages.

1. The science is unequivocal, climate change is happening and is caused by humans.
2. We have already seen 1 °C of global warming. There is increased warming on land, and in certain parts of the world such as the Arctic, warming is happening at a faster rate.
3. Extreme weather events, in particular floods and extreme heat, have increased since the 1950s due to climate change. They will continue to do so as long as we fail to cut emissions.
4. In almost all emissions scenarios global warming is expected to hit 1.5 °C in the early 2030s and go up from there if we don't cut emissions.⁴

As a previous IPCC lead author, Professor Michael E Mann said on a recent interview: "The scientific community is literally yelling from the rooftops... [the report] drives home the unprecedented impact we are having on this planet."⁵

The key take home is one of certainty and urgency. It is very clear from the findings that we must do everything we can to address the causes of climate change. With almost three quarters⁶ of global greenhouse gas emissions coming from households, this includes action not just from policy makers and businesses, but also from people – that means every single one of us!

To address this challenge, we need to cut emissions globally in half this decade in order to achieve a 1.5 °C world. We will only achieve this if we change the way we do things.

"The scientific community is literally yelling from the rooftops... [the report] drives home the unprecedented impact we are having on this planet."

⁴ <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg/#SPM>

⁵ <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/ipcc-report-the-tipping-point-for-action-with-michael-e-mann/id4594646?i=0005549948>

⁶ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/behaviour-change-public-engagement-and-net-zero-imperial-college-london/>

The 4 aims of COP26 and how we can get involved

The COP26 team have stated 4 key aims for the conference this November. Below we explain what these are, and how individuals can get involved in each one.



COP26 Aim 1

Secure Global Net Zero by mid century and keep 1.5 °C within reach



What this means ?

Ensure that by 2050 any greenhouse gas emissions are balanced by the same amount being removed from the atmosphere. The end result: no additional greenhouse gas emissions are added to the Earth's atmosphere by human activities.

What this means for you?

The average per capita carbon footprint in wealthy nations is 10 tonnes per person per year⁷. This needs to reduce to 2.5 tonnes per person globally by 2030, to achieve a halving of global emissions⁸. The largest components of personal carbon footprints tend to be diets, home and transport. In this section, we detail some big impact steps we can make in these three key areas, starting with food.

⁷ Giki analysis based on consumption

⁸ The average global per capita carbon footprint is 5 tonnes, however wealthy nations have a higher per capita footprint, so need to reduce by more than half by 2030.

⁹ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data>

Cut your diet footprint: Try Plant based food

Food typically makes up one quarter of the average carbon footprint, and switching to a plant based diet can cut your food footprint in half. This is because the production of meat, dairy and fish have a higher carbon footprint than the production of plant based foods. There are several key reasons for this:

1. Greater amounts of land are required to produce the same amount of calories from animal products, than plant products. This is due to the requirement for additional land to grow feed for animals. Land used for agriculture typically absorbs less carbon than forestry, or uncultivated land.
2. A lot of soy animal feed is grown in Brazil and is linked to deforestation. Agriculture and land use create approximately one quarter of total global greenhouse gas emissions,⁹ and the majority of deforestation is to provide more land for agriculture.
3. Animals, in particular red meat from cattle and sheep, produce methane, which is a highly potent greenhouse gas.



Here's a three step process to get more plants into your diet:

1. Try a few plant based products. Either try a vegetarian meal, instead of a meat meal, or opt for one of the many new plant based products on the market. You can now get plant based bacon, burgers, sausages, chicken pieces, even chicken nuggets, and as food technology evolves, they are becoming much more tasty.
2. Try a period of time without red meat, for example one month. There are many vegan or vegetarian chefs and recipes online now for inspiration.
3. Try animal products once a day. This is an excellent way to make a significant cut in your food footprint. It can be easiest to avoid animal products at breakfast and lunch. For example, if you have cereal in the morning try it with plant based milk or yogurt. For dinner, try swapping your sausages, burgers or kiefs for a plant based alternative.

It is projected that by 2025 one quarter of British people will be vegetarian, and half will be flexitarian (Predominantly plant based with occasional meat or dairy)¹⁰. As numbers grow, supply of plant based options is expected to continue to grow quickly.

The great thing about food is that you can start at the next meal, and start reducing your impact straightaway.

¹⁰ https://www.about.sainsburys.co.uk/~/_/media/Files/S/Sainsburys/pdf-downloads/futureoffood-10c.pdf

Find greener transport: Switch to Electric Vehicles

In wealthier nations, transport can be one of the largest parts of personal carbon footprints. Transitioning away from fossil fuels in transport is crucial to achieving the goals of keeping temperature rise below 1.5 °C. Electric cars are one of the fastest growing solutions in the transport sector.

Figure 1: Breakdown of an average transport carbon footprint in the UK¹¹

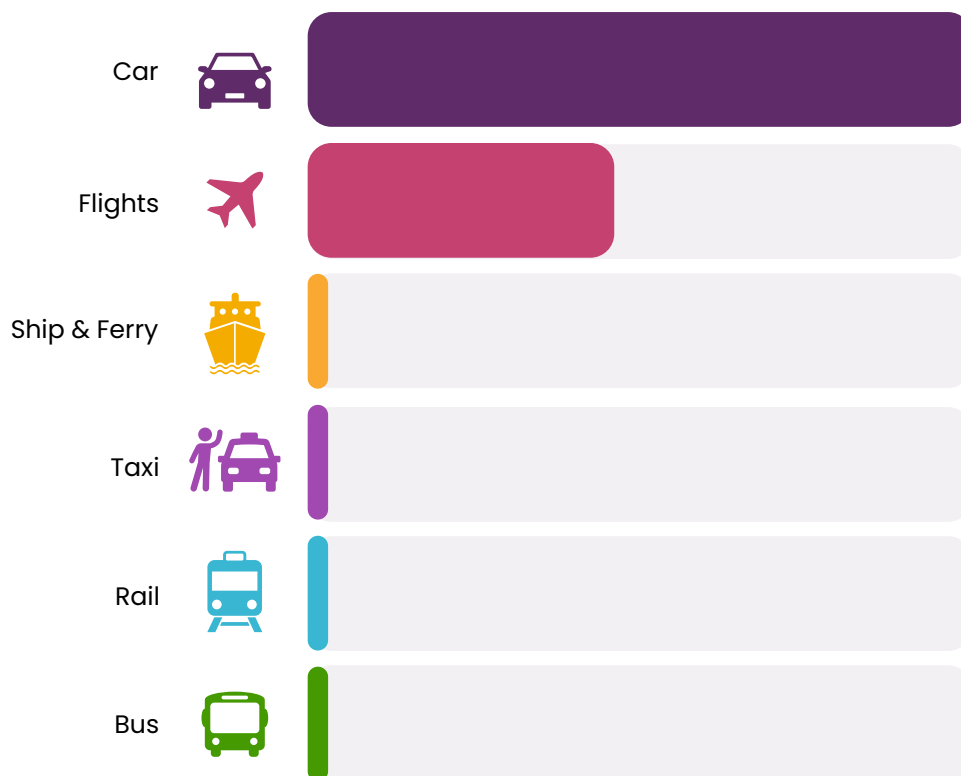


Figure 1 shows how petrol and diesel cars are one of the biggest contributors to individual transport carbon footprints¹². They are also slowly being banned. Electric vehicles (EVs) on the other hand typically emit zero emissions, do not emit other harmful pollutants¹³, and are also a lot cheaper to run. This is due to lower fuel costs and even the ability to charge at times of day when electricity is cheaper. Every year the price of electric cars versus their fossil fuel predecessors gets closer and closer.

¹¹ Source: Giki Zero

¹² Represents the average UK carbon footprint

¹³ Each year over 350,000 premature deaths around the world are attributable to car pollution. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable.

Are EV cars really so much better?

Although Electric cars typically require more energy to build because of the battery, this is cancelled and more out over the lifetime of the car. This is called embedded carbon and it means you have to drive a certain amount before the EV emits less carbon overall. The key factors to consider when making the switch to EV cars are:

- how large your car is,
- how far you drive,
- how old it is,

and when you switch to electric:

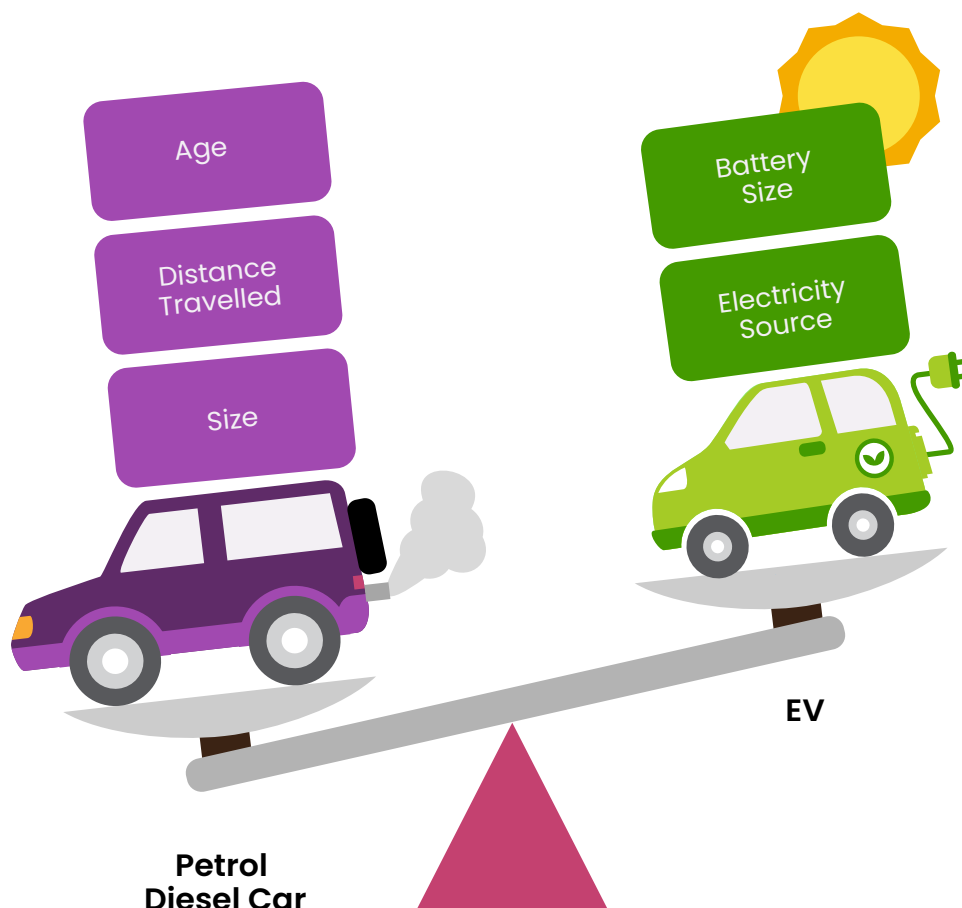
- how big the battery is,
- whether it's charged by renewable electricity.

Over the whole life of a car, and including embedded carbon, EVs emit 65% less carbon per km than petrol cars. With renewables it's 80% less.

Whilst EVs look to be one of the most promising technologies for the future, the majority of vehicles on the road today are still powered by fossil fuels. There are ways to reduce the amount of petrol or diesel used in this case.

Here's a three step process to cut emissions and pollution from petrol and diesel cars immediately:

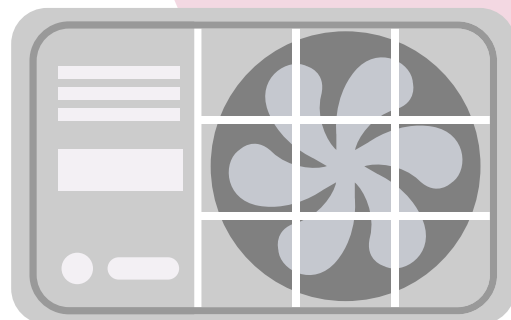
1. Accelerate gently: Acceleration is one of the biggest uses of fuel so the smoother it is, and the more you can maintain your speed, the more fuel you'll save.
2. Drive more slowly. 50mph is 25% more efficient than 70mph.
3. Drive less: when the engine is off, it isn't burning fuel. Get public transport or try to walk short distance trips which both reduce your footprint.



Cut back on fossil fuels at home: Install air source heat pumps

Heating and cooling our homes, along with all the other energy demands such as electronics, heating water and cooking are another significant part of personal carbon footprints. New technologies including solar panels, ground source and air source heat pumps can all deliver on these energy needs through renewable energy (eg wind, solar). Air source heat pumps are one of the fastest growing technology solutions for the home and could satisfy 90% of global heating needs¹⁴. The highest installation numbers so far are in Sweden where nearly 2 million are in operation in a country with just 4.8 million households¹⁵.

Installing an air source heat pump is a big step, but by the end of this decade, more and more homes will need to adopt such technologies if we are to achieve a 1.5 °C limit on temperature rise.



Key facts

- We cannot heat our homes with fossil fuels and reach Net Zero.
- Heat pumps are extremely efficient, and as a result cheaper to run than many alternatives, and provide low or no carbon heating and hot water.
- Compared to a new gas boiler you can save over 2 tonnes of carbon every year by installing a heat pump.
- New gas fire boiler phase outs are also on the cards from the 2030s.

¹⁴ <https://www.iea.org/reports/heat-pumps>

¹⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/86401/heat-pumps-in-operation-sweden/>

Useful tips

- When researching heat pumps make sure that the refrigerant that the company uses has a low GWP (Global Warming Potential). Aim for under 5 which is possible with new refrigerants some of which are natural.
- Heat pumps in the EU and North America come with an Energy rating which you can check to see how efficient they are.
- You'll save money every year if you apply for a government scheme to help you. A number of countries support heat pump installation including the UK, Germany, France and more.
- Switch to a renewable electricity tariff at the same time. This will mean your heating and hot water are getting close to zero emissions.

Installing a heat pump is a long term project, and there are ways to reduce immediately the amount of fossil fuels needed to heat our homes and our water supplies. Heating and domestic hot water account for around 75% of household energy requirements so there's lots of scope to cut carbon emissions and costs.

Here's a three step process to cut carbon at home immediately:

1. Turn thermostats down and turn radiators off in unused rooms. Turning your thermostats down by just 1 °C can save a big chunk of carbon throughout the year and reduce energy bills too. The majority of households in the UK and US could turn their thermostats down by 1°C and still be at 18°C or above.
2. Insulate your home: This means less fuel is required to achieve the same level of heating, so cuts carbon and cuts bills. It is estimated that you get payback on any investment within 3 years.¹⁶
3. Switch to renewable electricity: Renewable energy uses nature to generate power rather than burning fossil fuels. Switching to renewables can lead to a big reduction in your carbon footprint and is one of the most important steps everyone needs to make. You can cut your electricity carbon footprint by over 90% if you use 100% renewable electricity.

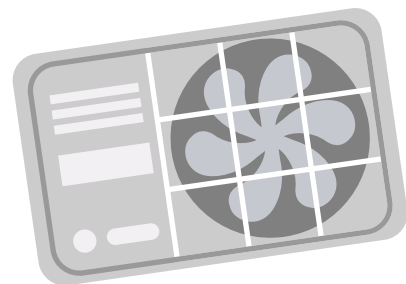
¹⁶ <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/roof-and-loft-insulation>

Together these changes make a big impact

Bringing these three areas together, we have calculated the carbon reductions for a person who lives in a semi detached house with a gas boiler, eats a regular diet and drives a Volkswagen Golf and who switches to a mainly plant based diet, installs an air source heat pump, powered by renewable electricity, and drives an electric vehicle.

The result - they will nearly halve their personal carbon footprint each year.¹⁷

These are all big, sometimes long term changes. The most important way to participate in this goal for COP26 is to get started, because quick wins can help lead to bigger steps, which collectively are a really important part of keeping temperature rise below 1.5 °C.



HALF your
carbon
footprint



¹⁷ They will go from a footprint of 12.4 tonnes to 7,7 tonnes with just these changes. This analysis is based on Giki Zero footprints and analysis.

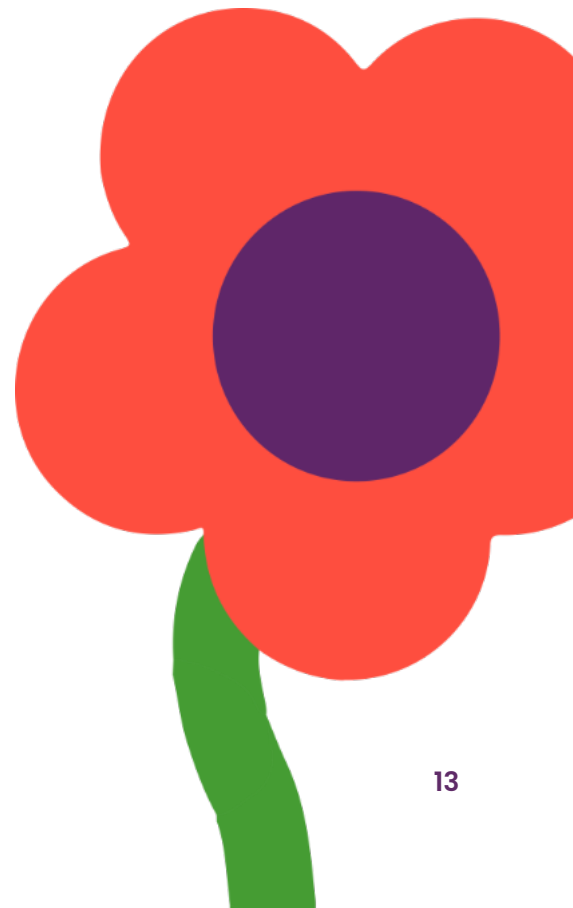
COP26 Aim 2

Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

What this means ?

Adaptation means helping people protect themselves from the devastation of climate change, including floods, fires, extreme heat and droughts. In tandem we need to protect nature and natural environments as so far the human impact on the nature means that 1 million animals face extinction (out of a total of 8 million species known to exist).¹⁸

Lives and lifestyles of local communities are also threatened by climate change. The first famine conditions driven solely by climate change happened in Madagascar in 2021. In the same year floods killed hundreds in Germany and Belgium, while fires burned in Greece, Spain and the USA causing hundreds more deaths.



¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

What this means for you?

Many of the small choices we make, can collectively have a huge impact on nature, both positive and negative. The two example chocolate bars below illustrate the difference in environmental impacts between two seemingly similar products. If millions of bars of chocolate Bar B are sold, the environmental impact will be much higher than the sale of the same amount of chocolate bar A.

When millions of people, even billions across the globe make the same minor environmental mistakes, this can lead to major environmental impacts.

So below we focus on 2 types of minor choices, which seem small but have massive collective impact.



Cut back on single use plastic

In the case of single use plastics, the impacts of our small decisions are highlighted frequently in the media, at local beach cleans, and by campaign groups. As a result of human use of single use plastic, 8 million pieces of plastic find their way into the sea every day¹⁹, and if we continue at this pace there will be more plastic in the sea than fish by 2050.²⁰ If everybody cut back significantly, or even better, cut out single use plastic use, these figures would be significantly reduced.

Here is a three step process to cut your use of single use plastics:

1. Whenever you can shop locally, and take your own bags, or only shop where there are paper rather than plastic bags, and minimal plastic packaging.
2. Try a Zero waste shop – this is the ultimate in no packaging!
3. Avoid single use plastic containers like water bottles or coffee cups.

Plastic comes from fossil fuels and lasts for hundreds of years even if it's only needed for a few hours.

People in wealthier countries create 100kg of plastic waste every year, well over the weight of the average human.

Only 20% of plastic gets recycled worldwide.



¹⁹ <https://www.sas.org.uk/our-work/plastic-pollution/plastic-pollution-facts-figures/>

²⁰ <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics-and-catalysing>



Avoid unsustainable palm oil

It is not just single use plastic that is changing the face of the natural world. The production of many commodities is transforming regions and countries too. Palm oil is one example and palm oil production in Indonesia has led to the felling of rainforests which are home to orangutans, rhinoceros, tigers and thousands of other species, threatening many with extinction as a result. In total about 12 million hectares of forest on Sumatra have been

This is due to significant global demand for palm oil, which is a vegetable oil that is highly efficient, cheap and very versatile. It is grown in tropical areas and often huge swathes of rainforest have been felled to produce it, often through fires, which cause major pollution to surrounding areas. Palm oil can be grown sustainably, but much of it is not. Unsustainable palm oil leads to deforestation and accelerates climate change.

²¹ https://www.panda.org/discover/knowledge_hub/where_we_work/sumatra/?

Your palm oil checklist

Some people try to avoid palm oil completely. Others try to avoid unsustainable palm oil. You can do this by:

- **Looking at the ingredients list for the products in your cupboards. Start with processed snacks first. Unprocessed food is much less likely to contain palm oil. On foods it is a requirement in Europe to list palm oil if it is an ingredient.**
- **Look at the ingredients list for products in your bathroom. Start with shampoos and shower gels. Look out for names with palm in the name, and sodium laureth sulphate (and similar variants),²²**
- **Research online, or in a shop, for the palm oil free products, or products made using sustainable palm oil.**

Through changing some of our regular habits and choices, and encouraging people we know to do the same, this can play a role in helping to protect nature and also bringing pressure to bear on companies who are loath to change.

²² Common names for palm oil include: Palmate, Palmitate, Palmolein, Glyceryl, Stearate, Stearic Acid, Elaeis Guineensis, Palmitic Acid, Palm Stearine, Palmitoyl Oxostearamide, Palmitoyl Tetrapeptide-3, Sodium Laureth Sulfate, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Sodium Kernelate, Sodium Palm Kernelate, Sodium Lauryl Lactylate/Sulphate, Hydrated Palm Glycerides, Etyl Palmitate, Octyl Palmitate, Palmityl Alcohol



COP26 Aim 3

Mobilise Finance

What this means ?

Create incentives for the financial sector to invest in low carbon technologies and projects. Many of the solutions to climate change need investment, and policy can accelerate this and encourage investors and banks to finance low carbon solutions.



What this means for you?

Our personal bank accounts and investments are all part of the financial system. As a result, money we save, or invest may be invested in fossil fuel companies, and our pension funds may also be invested on the stock market, which often include large shareholdings in fossil fuel companies. We can decide how our money is used, and whether it funds old power, such as oil and gas companies, or is invested in new low carbon technologies.

A number of banks are making Net Zero commitments for 2050 but this is too far away. Look for organisations that are trying to cut emissions from financing by 50% by 2030 as that's in line with the Paris agreement and the same as the targets that individuals need to achieve.

The same process goes for investments in the stock market, so for every pound, euro or dollar you save, some of it may be used to create more fossil fuels.

Fossil Fuel Facts

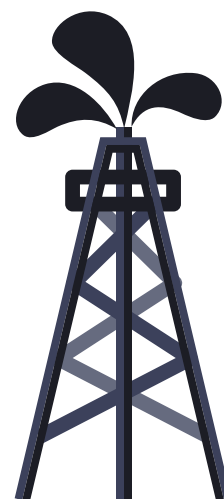
- This COP is in Britain, the country where fossil fuels were first used at scale during the Industrial Revolution in the 18th Century. Coal fired steam power, was followed by electricity created by burning coal. Gas and oil became more widely used such that from mid 20th Century, oil surpassed coal as the most commonly used fossil fuel.²³
- 100 fossil fuel companies account for over half of global emissions since the Industrial Revolution. The harder it is for fossil fuel companies to find finance the less exploration and exploitation they can do.
- Shell, one of the largest oil companies has total emissions of over 1.5 Gigatonnes of carbon dioxide every year. That's 1,500,000,000 tonnes!
- The Bank of England²⁴ found that you can divest from fossil fuels without hurting your investment performance.



Deposit money at the bank.



Banks lend to companies.
Some banks lend to fossil fuel companies



Fossil fuels companies use this money to explore for oil and gas, dig it out and sell it.

²³ Burning Up, Simon Pirani

²⁴ <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/events/2016/november/the-financial-impact-of-divestment-from-fossil-fuels-speaker-slides>

Greening your money

To help make your money greener here are a few questions you can ask to help you find out more about your bank.

1. Are your financed emissions aligned with the Paris agreement?
2. Are you planning to cut financed emissions by 50% by 2030, if so are you on track?
3. Do you lend to coal companies, companies that explore in the Arctic or companies that don't have a Net Zero target?

You can also look beyond the banks to institutions like Credit Unions in the USA, Building Societies in the UK and other similar organisations which are usually owned by their members and lend to people, not companies. As a result they can be a good fossil fuel free option.

Whatever you choose to do, try to avoid banks that lend to companies who mine coal, burn coal for electricity or drill in the Arctic.

Greening your pension

Pensions, especially for people who have been working for a long time can have a significant carbon footprint. If you're working hard to reduce your own carbon emissions, it can be counterproductive to be supporting companies who are increasing them.

1. Ask you pension provider how much you've got invested in oil, gas, and coal (sometimes referred to as the Energy sector) and what options they have for switching to a lower fossil fuel option.
2. Many countries have divestment campaigns that you can join. Check out <https://gofossilfree.org/> to find a campaign near you.
3. If you've got a company pension talk to your Human Resources department about what your options are. The more people who discuss this issue with HR, the more incentive for your HR team to provide sustainable options.
4. You can go further by divesting from petrochemical companies, airline firms or utility companies which don't use renewables.

You can also switch to more sustainable investing by looking for ESG funds. They might still have some fossil fuel companies in them but it should be much less. A good place to start.

Greening your money is one of the toughest steps, it takes time, but the impacts can be really significant.

COP26 Aim 4

Work Together to Deliver

What this means ?

Commitments were made at COP21, held in Paris in 2015, which now need to be detailed. There is also a commitment to accelerate collaboration between governments, businesses and civil society to tackle climate change.

How can you get involved?

Use your voice, your influence, and encourage your employer, your community, your friends and your colleagues to follow your lead in living more sustainably. This is such a crucial moment in time, don't miss the opportunity. As people become more aware of the realities of climate change, you can inspire them to change the way we do things, to achieve a 1.5 °C world.



Inspire your employer

There are some excellent initiatives that can help your employer take control and reduce the company environmental impacts and carbon footprint:

- CDP is a charity that has pioneered corporate carbon measurement and reduction. Encourage your employer to take this crucial first step. If you don't measure, you can't manage.
- Look at other great initiatives, including the UN Race to Zero campaign, Science Based targets and We Mean Business.



Encourage your colleagues

It is easy to forget our own personal impacts, but if every person in wealthy nations cut 10% of their carbon footprint every year, for the next ten years – we would be in great shape to hit the all important halving of global emissions. Inspire your colleagues to join you. Don't underestimate what a positive influence you can have!

Don't stop there!

More and more people care about the planet and the crisis we face. Frequently people want to take action, but don't know what to do. Why not help your friends, or your family to understand and reduce their own carbon footprint.

There is so much we can all do differently to reduce carbon footprints. COP26 marks an important milestone in climate negotiations but, without individuals, a 1.5°C world is not possible. Hopefully this report has shown a few places where we can all start.

Want to take action now?

Giki Zero helps you understand, track and reduce your personal carbon footprint.

[Sign up for free](#)

Your employee sustainability programme

Giki Zero also helps companies who want to engage staff on sustainability issues and measure the impacts of their actions.

[Learn more](#)

“As the High Level Champions for COP26, we are delighted to support Giki Zero. Giki Zero is a fantastic tool to create that pathway for meaningful action – through Giki Zero, we can each measure our carbon footprint and make a plan, with concrete steps, to define and achieve our own net zero journeys.”

Nigel Topping and Gonzalo Munoz
UN High Level Champions



Thank you

from the authors

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