

Zero Carbon Act Q&A

Friday 7 April 2017

Why did Generation Zero develop the Zero Carbon Act?

While many other countries are reducing their emissions, New Zealand's continue to rise. There is no plan to meet existing national targets. To keep global warming to well below 2°C, as agreed in the Paris Agreement, global CO₂ emissions need to fall to net zero by early in the second half of the century. All countries including New Zealand need to get to zero carbon, and we need to start the transition today.

Is the UK Climate Change Act working?

Yes. The UK has [reduced its CO₂ emissions 28% since the Act was passed in 2008](#), to a level last observed in 1894. The country met its first carbon budget (2008 to 2012) and is on track to outperform on the second (2013 to 2017) and third (2018 to 2022) [according to the UK Committee on Climate Change](#). The UK Government is due to release a policy plan to put the country on track to meet the fourth and fifth carbon budgets.

Does the UK Act have cross-party support?

Yes. A draft bill was developed by Friends of the Earth UK and championed by David Cameron and the Conservative Party while they were in opposition. The Act was passed in 2008 with all but three MPs voting against it, and maintains support from all parties except for UKIP.

Has this been adopted in any other countries?

Yes. Similar legal frameworks have been put in place in Denmark, Finland and Ireland, and in several states and provinces in the United States, Canada and Australia. The state of Victoria passed a Climate Change Act in February 2017 committing to zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. [Sweden announced it will introduce a similar law this year](#) committing to be carbon neutral by 2045, with support from seven out of eight parliamentary parties.

What does zero carbon mean?

It means achieving zero net emissions, after accounting for carbon stored by forests or other carbon sinks. In the Zero Carbon Act, this target applies to all long-lived greenhouse gases (mainly CO₂ and nitrous oxide). These gases need to go to zero to stop global temperatures increasing.

What is the two baskets approach?

The Act will set separate targets and pathways for long-lived greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide) and short-lived greenhouse gases (mainly methane). Long-lived gases must go to net zero by 2050 or sooner. Short-lived gases must be significantly reduced to sustainable levels, but not zero. The Climate Commission will be asked to advise on a long-term target for short-lived gases.

Will the Zero Carbon Act allow international carbon trading?

The targets in the Act will apply to New Zealand's domestic emissions only. This will create a 'firewall' between domestic action and international carbon trading, to ensure our own zero carbon transition is on track. Future governments can continue to engage in international carbon trading to meet commitments set under the Paris Agreement. In other words, New Zealand will have binding domestic emissions targets alongside international 'responsibility targets'.

Is zero carbon by 2050 possible?

The [Net Zero in New Zealand](#) report by Vivid Economics, commissioned by cross-party group GLOBE-NZ,

shows pathways for New Zealand to achieve the Zero Carbon Act's goal. The 'Innovative NZ' and 'Resourceful NZ' scenarios in the report both achieve zero net long-lived greenhouse gas emissions before 2050. We need to improve energy efficiency, continue progress towards 100% renewable electricity, electrify our transport and heat systems, and shift land use in favour of more forests.

Will the Zero Carbon Act prescribe specific policies?

No, it simply sets out legally-mandated outcomes and process. It sits above any particular policy instrument such as the Emissions Trading Scheme. It combines long-term clarity on policy direction with flexibility in its delivery.

How was this work funded?

Generation Zero is run entirely by unpaid volunteers. The Zero Carbon Act website and other campaign resources were funded through small donations.