



Climate change policy

United Future does not pretend to be able to predict precisely all the consequences or outcomes of climate change, but through the growing scientific and economic evidence we understand the risks and the need for a timely response.

Climate change is a global challenge that through international and domestic cooperation can be managed to mitigate the risks whilst, in a New Zealand context, presenting a range of opportunities for environmental sustainability and social and economic development.

It is United Future's opinion that the benefits of responsible and practical action now will be realised in the long-term health and prosperity of New Zealand's environment and its people.

The environment is our basic life support system and must remain in good health. If people want to use the environment for outdoor recreation, economic development, or to simply admire and appreciate it, then it must be used in ways that do not cause permanent widespread damage or compromise the needs of future generations to meet their own needs – i.e. in ways that are sustainable.



Policy Framework

United Future will promote “no regrets” policies to address climate change – i.e. measures that will provide both environmental and economic benefits.

United Future will seek solutions that offer positive alternatives to otherwise punitive measures e.g. rather than just a carbon tax on coal used to generate electricity (and higher costs for consumers), sequester the carbon or encourage the generator to plant a new forest.

United Future will promote both public and private climate change initiatives e.g. working with the banks to finance home insulation and retro-fitting.

United Future will support the creation of CO₂ emissions trading mechanisms to provide economic incentives to reduce greenhouse gases and boost carbon capture and other greenhouse gas reduction/mitigation efforts whilst continuing to oppose a general carbon tax.



Householders

United Future will:

- ❑ Continue to promote energy efficient homes and technology via the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA).
- ❑ Substantially boost funding to EECA for a comprehensive nationwide programme of retro-fitting existing homes with energy saving improvements (including better insulation, low-flow shower heads, solar water heating etc).
- ❑ Adopt a national strategy, including private sector funding, to insulate all New Zealand homes to at least 1977 standards. This also has benefits related to health and family finance.
- ❑ Move to enable EECA to explore with the NZ Bankers Association a partnership to smooth the way for homeowners to obtain financing to expand the programme of insulation/retrofitting of energy-inefficient homes, and other energy-efficiency enhancements.
- ❑ Require all existing dwellings sold to be assessed for energy efficiency (e.g. insulation, double glazing, heating methods, and use of solar energy) and given a standardised energy efficiency rating.
- ❑ Require all new homes to be given a standardised energy efficiency rating based on insulation, double-glazing, heating methods, use of solar energy etc.
- ❑ Require all flats and rental properties to be advertised as to whether or not they are insulated. This will help tenants make an informed choice and will incentivise landlords to improve the insulation and energy efficiency of their properties.



Transport

United Future will:

- Require that all new Government vehicle fleet purchases be hybrid vehicles where possible in order to help reduce the cost of purchasing and servicing such vehicles for all New Zealanders.
- Implement policies to reduce the average age of New Zealand's vehicle fleet, thereby reducing average fuel consumption and vehicle emissions. (For example, instigate a minimum payment by the Government for every older vehicle with a WOF that is taken off the road and dropped off at a 'wrecker' for disposal.)
- Actively encourage and mandate ethanol and other bio-fuel alternatives to petroleum based fuels.
- Substantially boost investment in research and development for alternative energy systems and technologies (including hydrogen, ethanol and other biofuels).
- Support the creation of CO₂ emissions trading and emissions reduction mechanisms, provided these result in positive climate change outcomes for New Zealand.



Forestry and Agriculture

United Future will:

- ❑ Support the Permanent Forest Sinks Initiative. While creating an opportunity for further carbon sinks, the trees will also prevent soil erosion, the leaching of nitrates and the intrusion of stock into rural waterways.
- ❑ Promote the planting of native trees and bush along or close by all inland waterways where practical, in order to act as carbon sinks, limit soil erosion and reduce agricultural runoff.
- ❑ Encourage landowners to return non-viable farming land to native forest in order to create carbon sinks.
- ❑ Require the internalisation of all greenhouse gas costs when forested areas are converted to intensive agriculture. For example where forested land is converted to dairy farming the landowner would bear the Kyoto costs arising from the loss of the carbon sink, rather than leave those costs to the taxpayer.
- ❑ Defer final income tax on income derived from forestry until harvest where partly grown trees are sold. When partly grown trees are sold the seller will be assessed income tax in the usual way. However, an amount equivalent to the income tax paid by the seller will be paid to the buyer by way of a forest encouragement grant.
- ❑ Ensure that New Zealand producers of sustainably-harvested timber products are not undercut via the “dumping” of imported timber and products that have been harvested without regard to sustainability criteria.



Industry

- Remove regulatory barriers, including legislative barriers to encourage new electricity generation using hydro, geothermal, wind and tide.
- Make EECA the central funding agency for contestable funding programmes aimed at reducing long term energy consumption in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- Boost research and development funding through GNS Science for carbon sequestration from thermal electricity generating plants.
- Support the creation of CO₂ emissions trading mechanisms to provide economic incentives to reduce greenhouse gases and boost carbon capture and other greenhouse gas reduction/mitigation efforts whilst continuing to oppose a general carbon tax.



International

- Ensure that New Zealand meets its obligations under the first commitment phase of the Kyoto Protocol, through the “no regrets” and other initiatives set out above.
- United Future will consider joining other multilateral international efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. e.g. The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate that includes the United States, Australia, China, India, Japan and South Korea. *N.B. we will not support measures that seek to meet our Kyoto obligations in ways that will reduce New Zealand’s international competitiveness.*
- In addition to attempts to limit greenhouse gases, thought should be given to a humanitarian resettlement plan. Countries in the Pacific region such as the Tokelaus, Tuvalu and Kiribati are all likely to disappear in the likely event of a rise in sea levels.
- It is prudent to prepare a robust contingency plan of resettlement to cater for the thousands who will be physically displaced by such an occurrence. New Zealand should play a full part in this plan in cooperation with other nations in our region.