# Government criticised for slow progress on climate adaptation amid rising risks



The UK government has been criticised for its lack of progress in preparing the country for the escalating risks posed by rising temperatures, according to a report by the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC). The CCC's latest assessment highlights that government efforts to adapt to climate change are "either too slow, have stalled, or are heading in the wrong direction," with significant vulnerabilities remaining across multiple sectors.

The warnings come as the UK faces increasingly extreme weather events, fuelled by climate change. These include record-breaking heat, such as the 40°C temperatures in July 2022, and unprecedented rainfall leading to England’s wettest 18 months on record between October 2022 and March 2024. The CCC emphasises that such events are expected to become more intense and frequent as global temperatures continue to rise due to greenhouse gas emissions.

Baroness Brown, chair of the CCC’s Adaptation Committee, told BBC News: "We are seeing climate impact happening faster and more intensely and increasing [but] government just doesn't yet seem to be taking it seriously." She criticised the government for failing to deliver on promises made in its manifesto to address climate resilience, saying, "We've heard some warm words… but nothing has come out yet."

The report reviewed 46 areas critical to climate adaptation and found none making "good" progress. Only three areas had "good" plans and policies in place for the future, mirroring findings from the committee’s 2023 report. Health was identified as one of the most poorly prepared sectors, with rising deaths linked to extreme heat and hospitals themselves vulnerable to climate impacts. Baroness Brown highlighted the example of Guy's and St Thomas' hospital trust in London, which experienced a failure of its data centres during the extreme heat of July 2022. This outage disrupted appointment systems, forcing a paper-based system and resulting in thousands of lost crucial medical appointments. She warned, "Unless we take into account that [the NHS] has to be resilient to the climate, we're going backwards."

Flooding presents another major challenge. The CCC noted that resilience plans and policies for river and coastal flooding have deteriorated since their previous report. The town of Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire exemplifies the issue, having suffered repeated floods over the last four years, including a significant event in November 2024. Local residents and business owners have been severely affected. Polly Pearce, owner of a charity shop, described how floodwaters surged in rapidly, destroying stock including Christmas goods. Many shops on the town’s main street remain empty, with some owners unable to afford insurance or finding it unavailable due to the flooding risk. The Environment Agency has also stated it cannot meet the estimated £25m-£30m cost needed for adequate flood defences in Tenbury Wells. The government, however, has reaffirmed its commitment to help residents, with work to improve flood resilience set to begin in the summer.

Despite these challenges, the CCC noted some progress in areas like identifying climate risks to businesses and financial institutions. Nonetheless, financial concerns remain central to the government's adaptation strategy. Baroness Brown issued a strong warning against delaying action on cost grounds, labelling it "a huge mistake" that could increase economic harm in the long term. She said, "We are very worried about their spending review... This is not a tomorrow problem; it's a today problem. If we don't address it today, it becomes a disaster tomorrow."

A freedom of information request by the BBC revealed that only 18 full-time staff at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) are dedicated to climate adaptation, representing just 0.3% of nearly 6,600 core staff. Defra noted that some employees work on adaptation part-time and other government departments also employ adaptation staff.

Floods Minister Emma Hardy responded to the report, telling BBC News: "Preparing for the changing climate is something we're really committed to. We are putting £2.65bn into upgrading, maintaining and building new flood defences. But we absolutely know, of course, there's more that needs to be done."

The CCC report draws attention to the urgent need for clearer and faster government action to protect the UK’s critical infrastructure, public health, and communities from the growing threats posed by climate change.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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