# Rupert Read warns UK infrastructure faces flood risks amid government climate inaction



Rupert Read, a prominent figure in the climate action movement, has recently articulated a profound concern regarding the UK’s readiness for the escalating impacts of climate change. As he reflects on the recent weather patterns in East Anglia, the recent rains have offered temporary relief but have not alleviated the previous severe droughts impacting farmers and food producers. This situation underscores an urgent demand for an effective governmental response, as Read points out the alarming findings of the government’s own Climate Change Committee, which has indicated that the UK is ill-prepared for the imminent consequences of climate change. Addressing the issue, he states that within a generation, significant infrastructure — including half of the country's roads and rail links — could be at risk of flooding.

The context of Read's statements comes amid a significant shift in the UK’s climate activism landscape. The activist group Just Stop Oil has recently paused its direct actions, creating a gap that Read suggests may open avenues for alternative, inclusive forms of community engagement. He emphasises a shift from disruptive protests to proactive community building, positing that a silent majority, previously reluctant to act due to feelings of isolation or ineffectiveness, may now find a voice in collective action. This sentiment is supported by research indicating that while 89% of the public desires stronger climate initiatives, less than 10% are currently involved in related activism.

However, the situation is further complicated by critiques of the government’s commitment to climate adaptation. Alastair Chisholm, Policy Director at the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, has voiced disappointment over the Labour government's perceived drift from its historical leadership role in climate policy. He argues that despite an election manifesto promising to enhance climate resilience, the lack of evidence supporting robust actions in key areas, such as agriculture and water management, is alarming. The Climate Change Committee has consistently flagged the government's insufficient responses since the enactment of the 2008 Climate Change Act, warning that inadequate preparedness could lead to economic ramifications, including losses amounting to 7% of GDP by 2050, alongside increased mortality rates related to heatwaves.

This narrative of inaction resonates throughout several reports reflecting concerns over the UK’s overall approach to climate change. In recent findings, the Climate Change Committee's Adaptation Committee has noted alarming trends regarding flooding risks and extreme weather. They warn that over 6.3 million properties currently face significant flood threats, a figure expected to rise dramatically as climate change exacerbates weather extremes. Despite some government investment in flood defences — cited at £2.65 billion — critics argue that these measures fall short of addressing the underlying vulnerabilities in infrastructure and food systems. There are also projections of heat-related deaths reaching over 10,000 annually by mid-century if proactive measures are not implemented.

In this multifaceted landscape, Read urges individuals not only to protest but to actively participate in shaping their communities for a resilient future. His message serves as an invitation to transcend traditional forms of activism, fostering connections that allow for localised efforts, such as community farming initiatives, to flourish. This approach aims to redefine resilience as part of a larger narrative of hope and collective action. The overarching theme is clear: adapting to the dire climate reality is not an admission of defeat but an essential step toward ensuring a sustainable legacy for future generations.

As the Climate Majority emerges from its previous silence, emphasizing community and collective engagement may pave the way for innovative solutions in addressing climate challenges. The moment calls for both courage and community spirit, guiding everyone towards a more actively engaged and resilient future.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25203919.rupert-read-climate-change-requires-collective-action/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/9af67d0a-129b-4e2c-8675-656538a33925)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25203919.rupert-read-climate-change-requires-collective-action/?ref=rss), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/93620fc7-14c8-4f3f-be50-632eb993f605)
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* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/9af67d0a-129b-4e2c-8675-656538a33925), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/cop/britain-unprepared-worsening-impact-climate-change-advisers-say-2025-04-29/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25203919.rupert-read-climate-change-requires-collective-action/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/britain-needs-huge-switch-evs-heat-pumps-eat-less-meat-hit-net-zero-2025-02-26/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25203919.rupert-read-climate-change-requires-collective-action/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/4bbb1377-0fa0-4ce5-be85-6df06098555f> - Alastair Chisholm, Policy Director at the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, criticises the current Labour government for drifting from its historical leadership on climate change adaptation. Despite the party's election manifesto commitments to bolster climate resilience, there is little evidence of enhanced efforts within key departments such as Defra. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) continues to flag inadequate government responses, a trend persistent since the 2008 Climate Change Act. Key sectors like agriculture, infrastructure, and water are increasingly vulnerable, with potential consequences including economic losses of up to 7% of GDP by 2050 and significant human impact, such as a rise in heat-related deaths. Chisholm asserts that while the government continues to shift blame onto previous administrations, sufficient time has passed for Labour to demonstrate tangible progress. He urges ministers to take decisive and proactive measures in line with their stated ambitions.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/c9919c02-8328-4fa0-af4d-a108770a9f73> - Several senior staff members have resigned from the Bank of England (BoE), criticising the institution for deprioritising climate and nature risk under Governor Andrew Bailey. These former employees claim Bailey shifted focus away from such 'soft' risks, hampering mainstream supervision efforts. The BoE's climate strategy has notably diverged from predecessor Mark Carney's proactive stance, particularly with reduced commitment and resources post-2020. Critics argue the central bank risked falling behind private sector capabilities and international counterparts in climate modelling and financial supervision. The UK government also removed climate change from the BoE’s list of critical policy aims in 2023. Some insiders acknowledge reduced staff hours allocated to climate roles and a lack of attention to nature-related risks. Although the BoE remains involved in initiatives like the Climate Financial Risk Forum and consults on climate risk expectations, critics argue these efforts are insufficient. The bank’s lone climate stress test from 2021-2022 projected notable financial impacts but hasn’t been repeated. External experts view the BoE's current approach as cautious and less committed, prompting calls for renewed investment in climate expertise and analysis.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/britain-needs-huge-switch-evs-heat-pumps-eat-less-meat-hit-net-zero-2025-02-26/> - Britain must shift to electric vehicles, heat pumps, and reduce meat consumption to achieve its 2050 net zero emissions goal, according to the Climate Change Committee (CCC). The CCC's seventh carbon budget outlines the challenges and recommends an 87% reduction in emissions by 2040 compared to 1990 levels. Despite a 53% drop in greenhouse gas emissions by 2023, significant actions are required in transportation, buildings, industry, and farming. The report suggests that 80% of cars should be electric by 2040, with most new car sales being electric from 2030. It also targets more than half of homes to use heat pumps, up from the current 1%. To meet these targets, renewable electricity must double. This transition could lead to household savings by reducing energy bills by 700 pounds by 2050. Additionally, meat consumption should reduce by 25% by 2040 and 35% by 2050. The government, which has adopted previous carbon budgets, will need to address these recommendations to meet its legally binding climate targets.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/93620fc7-14c8-4f3f-be50-632eb993f605> - The UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) advises that one-third of the emissions cuts needed by 2040 must come from consumers, emphasising an overhaul of home heating systems and potential higher airfares. The CCC report outlines the necessary changes across the economy from 2038 to 2042, aiming to make Britain more resilient by reducing dependence on international fossil fuel markets. Recommendations include increased adoption of heat pumps and electric vehicles, curbing meat and dairy consumption, and reflecting the cost of decarbonising aviation in flight prices. Electrification and cleaner energy could account for 60% of emissions reductions by 2040, and the net cost of achieving net zero by 2050 is estimated at 0.2% of UK GDP annually. The committee suggests a significant reduction in livestock to reduce methane emissions and supports less reliance on bioenergy with carbon capture (BECCS) than previously advised. The shift is expected to create new job opportunities in sectors like heat pump installation and green finance while challenging industries such as oil, gas, and certain farming sectors.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/9af67d0a-129b-4e2c-8675-656538a33925> - The UK government’s preparations for climate-related flooding and extreme weather are deemed inadequate, according to the Climate Change Committee (CCC). In its latest report, the CCC criticises slow and ineffective progress in addressing the risks posed by climate change to the country’s infrastructure, food systems, health, and economy. The report, the committee’s first under CEO Emma Pinchbeck, evaluates the implementation of the 2023 adaptation plan and finds it lacking. Despite commitments from the current Labour government, there has been minimal improvement in resilience planning. The CCC warns that over 6.3 million properties and major portions of agricultural land and transport infrastructure are already vulnerable to flooding. The report also flags a potential rise in heat-related deaths to 10,000 annually by mid-century and a possible 7% GDP reduction due to extreme temperatures. The CCC urges the government to establish long-term flood risk reduction targets and consider climate impacts on the national energy system. Though the UK is making some progress in reducing carbon emissions, adaptation measures remain dangerously insufficient. The Environment Department responded by citing a £2.65 billion investment in flood defences and promised to review the CCC's findings.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/cop/britain-unprepared-worsening-impact-climate-change-advisers-say-2025-04-29/> - Britain is inadequately prepared for the escalating impacts of climate change, according to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) Adaptation Committee. Chair Julia King warned that the country is not ready for worsening climate effects, and in many areas, preparations have not even begun. Recent years have seen severe consequences including widespread flooding, heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires. The CCC’s biennial report revealed that rising sea levels could increase the number of flood-prone homes to 8 million by 2050, up from 6.3 million currently. Heat-related deaths could also surge to over 10,000 annually by 2050, compared to 3,000 in 2022. Additionally, more than half of England's high-quality farmland is already vulnerable to flooding, with risks expected to intensify. The committee emphasised the need for clearer adaptation targets and better government coordination to address climate impacts, particularly concerning infrastructure and the health system. These findings follow a record hot 2024, attributed to global climate change, which is driving more frequent and severe extreme weather events.