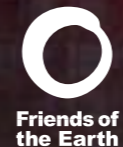


# the big ask

*Climate change is the biggest challenge facing our generation. Friends of the Earth's Big Ask campaign enables people to ask for change and get answers*

*Help make the Climate Change Bill law*



Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems which make life better for people

Friends of the Earth is:

- the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation
- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost 1 million supporters across five continents and over 70 national organisations worldwide
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in more than 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.

**Friends of the Earth Trust**

England, Wales and Northern Ireland  
26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ  
Tel: 020 7490 1555 Fax: 020 7490 0881  
Email: [info@foe.co.uk](mailto:info@foe.co.uk) Website: [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

Friends of the Earth Trust. Company number 1533942,  
registered charity number 281681

Art directed and designed by Plan-B Studio, London.

May 2005

# contents

- 2 Leading by example / thinking globally
- 4 Why we need a Climate Change Bill
- 6 It's a top down thing / why Government has to take a lead
- 8 Solution #1 year-on-year cuts
- 10 Solution #2 targets across the economy
- 11 Solution #3 policies to deliver sustainability and environmental justice
- 12 Your home in 2015 / low-carbon living is cleaner, greener, cheaper
- 14 The world in 2015 / energy-efficient and fair
- 15 The Big Ask explained
- 16 You can make history

# let's show the way

*“The biggest question facing our generation is whether we will summon the political will to take simple actions to protect people and wildlife from dangerous climate change. Although emissions of carbon dioxide – the main greenhouse gas – are rising, the technologies and policies needed to reduce them every year are well known, and they work. This means we can take control and cut our emissions – enabling the UK to deliver reductions of around 3 per cent every year over the next 40 years. **Friends of the Earth wants new laws in place that make year-on-year reductions a legal requirement.** If we can do this the UK will show the rest of the world the way, encourage others to follow and ensure a far better future for people and the environment on which we all depend.”*

Tony Juniper  
Friends of the Earth's Executive Director



# Leading by example

*The UK is in a powerful position to show leadership and stimulate international action on climate change because it is one of the richest and most powerful nations in the world. It is an important member of the EU, and the Commonwealth – and has a close relationship with the United States*

The UK owes its wealth and global influence to successful, early industrialisation – achieved long before the world realised what CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were doing to our climate.

It is the poorest people in the countries which have done least to contribute to the problem of greenhouse gas emissions, who will suffer most from climate change. As the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) noted: “Small island states account for less than one per cent of global

greenhouse gas emissions, but are among the most vulnerable of all locations to the potential adverse effects of climate change and sea-level rise.”

“Climate justice is about taking into account each country’s historical contribution to climate change, their capacity to act and their stated commitment to sustainable development. Rich countries, including the UK, which are responsible for the majority of emissions released over the past 200 years, must take a lead in cutting emissions. This is not only the responsible approach, it will also show leadership to other countries,” explains Friends of the Earth’s International Climate Campaigner, Catherine Pearce.

By taking the lead and demonstrating how economic growth can be permanently decoupled from carbon emissions the UK will be showing the rest of the world that it takes its responsibilities to act seriously. This will reassure vulnerable countries and help to convince others that they too must act.

Action at home will not be enough to solve the problem. The UK must continue to press for robust international agreements to reduce global emissions and re-orient global financing institutions away from funding development with high emissions and towards sustainable energy solutions. We must also help the most vulnerable countries cope with the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

*“Some... effects are by now inevitable and, indeed, we may already be seeing – in the increased incidence of drought, floods and extreme weather events that many regions are experiencing – some of the devastation that lies ahead.”* Kofi Annan, Director General of the United Nations

*“I believe that long-term the threat to the stability of the planet comes from climate change.”* Tony Blair, May 2004

*“When we speak about environmental crisis, we are not to think only of spiralling poverty and mortality, but about brutal conflict... It will be the poorest countries that suffer first and most dramatically, but the developed world will not be able to escape: the failure to manage the resources we have has the same consequences wherever we are.”*

Rowan Williams Archbishop of Canterbury, March 2005

*“I stand before you as a representative of an endangered people... As a result of global warming and sea level rise, my country, may disappear from the face of the Earth.”*

Maumoon Abdul Gayoon  
President of the Republic of the Maldives, June 2001

# why we need a climate change bill

All the major political parties support a cut in climate emissions, and all our political leaders have spoken for the need for action. So why do emissions keep rising, threatening the global community?

Climate change is the most serious threat facing humanity, but there are three political obstacles to action:

1 *Ballot box thinking*: Politicians are reluctant to take long-term decisions if it might jeopardise their election chances. *A new law will change this.*

2 *Global teamwork*: Solving climate change problems requires global action – and the world’s leaders aren’t used to that. *The UK needs to show leadership, see how on page 2.*

3 *Resisting change*: Groups with vested interests in polluting activities resist change, particularly if they think other countries are not taking the issue seriously. *Government needs to tackle this, see how on page 11.*

These sticking points have to be overcome, otherwise global warming, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, flooding, droughts and the spread of tropical diseases will have a devastating impact. If we don’t act the risks just get greater.

Scientists believe we need global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to start falling within the next 10-15 years in order for world temperatures to rise by no more than 2°C above

pre-industrial levels. Even this level of warming will bring problems.

In a bid to meet this international target – of no more than 2°C our Government has already committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 20 per cent by 2010 and 60 per cent by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels).

But Government keeps on delaying action to reduce emissions – as it is under pressure from vested interests in industry and fears lost votes if it, say, challenged the powerful motor lobby or let energy prices rise. During Tony Blair’s first two terms in Government emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> rose by about 3 per cent, despite the Prime Minister and Chief Scientist stressing the importance of tackling climate change.

This is why MPs need to set a legal requirement on Governments to reduce emissions year on year, with powerful mechanisms to get them back on track if they fail.

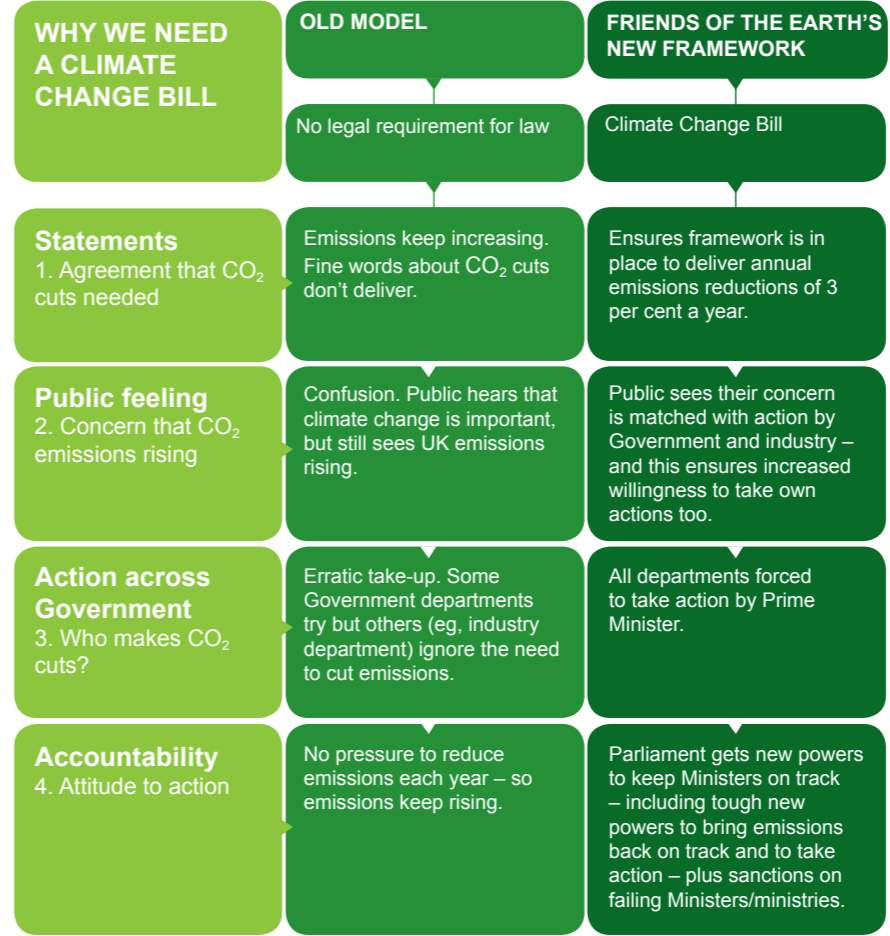
“Tackling climate change must become a priority for the new Parliament. MPs have to reverse the failure of the previous Parliaments – when carbon dioxide emissions rose significantly. Far from the promised 20 per cent cut, emissions have risen since Labour was first elected in 1997. This is a disgrace,” said Friends of the Earth’s Senior Climate Campaigner, Bryony Worthington.

*“Our house is burning down and we are blind to it. The Earth and humankind are in danger and we are all responsible... We cannot say we did not know! Climate warming is still reversible. Heavy would be the responsibility of those who refuse to fight it.”*

French President Jacques Chirac, August 2002

*“Climate change is a far greater threat to the world than international terrorism.”*

Sir David King, Government Chief Scientific Advisor



**Just keeps rising**  
Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> in the UK rose between 1997-2005, despite regular announcements by Labour politicians and the Prime Minister that climate change was the “single most important issue we face as a global community”.

**Tested formula**  
Since Friends of the Earth began life in 1971 it has helped get eight important new laws, including the Warm Homes [and Energy Conservation] Act and new wildlife laws on to the statute book. One outstanding success was the Household Waste Recycling Bill which became law in October 2003. It took more than 6,000 of our supporters, all lobbying their local MPs, to create the momentum to ensure doorstep recycling for everyone by 2010.

*What will your home be like in 2015?.....See page 12*  
*Join The Big Ask.....See page 15*  
*Help make history.....See page 16*

# it's a top down thing

*If Government takes action now on climate change it will be easy and affordable. In contrast relying on voluntary approaches that fail to meet targets will leave us in the difficult position of having to make tougher cuts over a shorter timescale*

*The 10 hottest years ever recorded have all occurred since 1991. Yet just 2-3° C of warming could mean up to 300 million more people will be at risk of malaria, 3 billion people will face water shortages and 100 million people will be more at risk from coastal flooding.*

*In 2003 a total of around 700 natural catastrophes killed more than 50,000 people worldwide and caused economic losses of around £32 billion (according to insurers Munich Re)  
The Guardian, August 2004*

The single biggest challenge for rich countries is to exert control over their emissions to deliver sustained year-on-year reductions from now on. And it is Government which needs to do this.

Lots of people have tried making their homes and businesses more energy efficient, by using the sort of tips in Friends of the Earth's book *Save cash & save the planet*, and those actions do make a difference. But time is pressing and it is Government which is able to make the greatest difference when it comes to climate change. Government can:

- introduce new laws and taxes to encourage cleaner technologies
- clean up inefficient, polluting industries including dirty power stations
- force car manufacturers to make more efficient cars
- make fossil fuel companies switch to renewable fuels
- force energy companies to focus on saving energy (rather than making money by selling more energy)
- invest in alternative transport options
- plan for more energy efficient homes

With muscles like this it is clear that the most important thing people can do is to ask their MP and Government to do more about climate change.

Without a clear CO<sub>2</sub> target that must be met the majority of departments of Government will always have other priorities. For example departments of trade and industry invariably ask for less stringent measures to apply to existing businesses that pollute; or departments responsible for housing will resist requirements that oblige house builders to install renewable energy, claiming that this will be too expensive in the short-term.

Government could resolve these sticking points by setting a clear carbon budget for the whole economy. *Find out more about this in the box, Why a carbon budget?*

Friends of the Earth's report *What the government should do about climate change* (see page 15) shows how we can achieve year-on-year cuts.

"We want a steady transition from polluting practices to cleaner ones. The bill will provide certainty for industry because it can then plan around steady annual reductions as required across the economy," said Friends of the Earth's Head of Campaigns, Mike Childs. "One of the cheapest ways for the Government to meet its targets would be to close down some of the dirty, coal-fired generating plants – an approach long overdue – and replace them with cleaner, more efficient power stations."

## What about the devolved administrations?

While important aspects of climate change policy are devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, a UK-wide Climate Change Bill is essential. The UK Government represents all four areas at international climate change negotiations and must meet international targets such as the Kyoto protocol. It also retains control of several key policy levers such as taxation. Action is needed at the UK and devolved levels. The Bill would provide a framework for the actions of both to work in tandem to deliver year-on-year cuts. Devolved administrations would also need to put targets and programmes in place to play their fair role in delivering UK wide targets.

More at:  
[www.foecymru.co.uk](http://www.foecymru.co.uk)  
[www.foe-scotland.org.uk](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk)

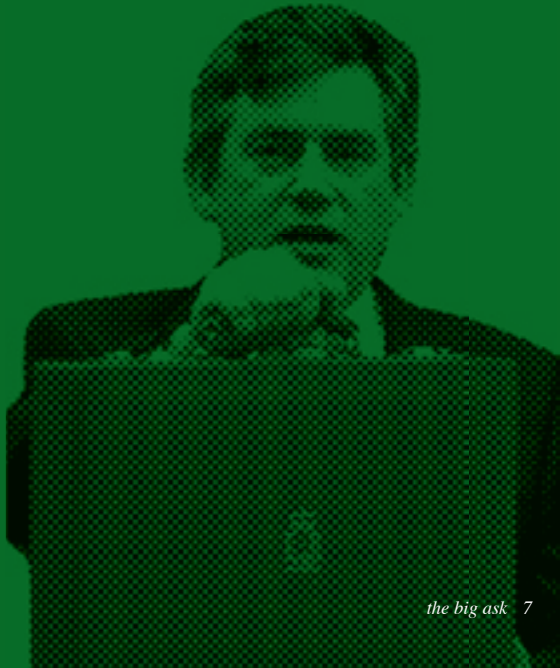
## Why a carbon budget?

Carbon emissions are beginning to have a financial value attached to them. For example, countries which cannot meet their Kyoto targets will need to buy carbon credits from those countries which have beaten their targets. Taxpayers will have to pay for this. The sensible approach would be for Governments to start to think about carbon emissions in monetary terms and to integrate the cost of carbon into the public accounts. Many companies in the EU already have to do this because they now must hold certificates to match their carbon emissions. If they don't have enough they must pay another company assuming it is prepared to sell spare certificates. Setting an annual carbon budget for UK emissions would help Government manage the economy so that emissions are reducing.

## How can we reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions?

*Solution #1 year-on-year cuts..... see page 8*  
*Solution #2 targets across the economy..... see page 10*  
*Solution #3 policies to deliver..... see page 11*

"Environmental issues – including climate change – have traditionally been placed in a category separate from the economy and from economic policy. But this is no longer tenable."  
Chancellor Gordon Brown, March 2005



## solution #1 year-on-year cuts

*Setting a carbon budget to cut emissions year-on-year is critical – every second more greenhouse gases are pouring into the atmosphere where they remain heating up the planet for years. That's why taking action now will prevent the need for stringent, painful changes at a stage when it may almost be too late*

Every carbon molecule survives in the atmosphere for up to 100-200 years – but no one knows for sure what the long term consequences of this carbon build-up will be. There is strong evidence that there is an unacceptable risk of massive human suffering and environmental damage if global average temperatures were to rise by more than 2°C (they are already 0.6°C higher now than pre-industrial levels).

The amount of change we see in the climate will be determined by concentration levels of greenhouse gases. Concentration levels increase as emissions continue over time. They are already higher than at any time in the past 400,000 years, and quite possibly 40 million years.

Because concentrations are determined by total volume over time, how we reduce emissions is as important as the emissions reductions target we set. For example, if we continue with high emissions before steeply reducing these in 20 or 30 years, we will have committed the world to more warming than if we begin taking action now.

To avoid committing the globe to more than a 2°C increase in global average temperature, latest scientific thinking indicates that global emissions will need to peak and decline within 10-15 years.

Responsibilities for achieving this will vary in different parts of the world. Some countries will need to reduce their emissions, while some poorer countries may need to increase their emissions as they modernise.

**To avoid the worst of climate change, 1990 emissions should be cut by 80 per cent. If this cut is spread over the 60 years between 1990 and 2050 an annual cut of almost 3 per cent is needed.**

During the 1990s, UK emissions were reducing by roughly one per cent each year thanks to a massive fuel switch between coal and gas; and the building of more efficient power stations. More recently they have been rising.

Friends of the Earth is opposed to nuclear power. It is far more expensive than cleaner alternatives, has intractable waste problems and poses a security threat.

### Staying on target

Annual reduction targets are more effective than long-term targets because they keep us on a steady pathway. They also help show that reductions need to be made now – an understanding which has been lost in recent political discussions in the UK. For example difficulties setting caps on industry through emissions trading schemes.

Success or failure can also be very easily measured and adjustments made in good time if policies are failing to reduce emissions.

Immediate action at home will send the strongest signal that rich countries are serious about climate change – and are determined to work together with the rest of the world to tackle it.

*“There are two ways we can take to make effective emissions cuts – the gently sloping track now or the sheer leap off the cliff later. It has to be better to make a gradual shift to cleaner ways of powering our businesses and homes – which don't just tackle climate change, but also provide many extra benefits, from new jobs to innovation.”*

Bryony Worthington,  
Friends of the Earth's Senior Climate Campaigner



## **solution #2**

### **targets across the economy**

*With a national carbon budget in place Government can take a top-down approach to managing savings across the economy. To do this, principles need to be applied*

*More detail at [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate)*

#### **Principle 1:**

##### **The environment has limits**

Every tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted remains in the atmosphere for 100-200 years. Sectoral targets must reflect the need for immediate reductions wherever possible.

#### **Principle 2:**

##### **It's everyone's business**

Government intervention will be unpopular if some sectors of the economy are being asked to deliver savings, while these same savings are undermined by rising emissions in other sectors (eg, aviation).

#### **Principle 3:**

##### **Competitiveness matters**

Government needs to develop a clear methodology for identifying industries genuinely affected by international competition so it can create appropriate policies, introduce protective trade regimes or shift emphasis for achieving savings from other sectors insulated from global competition. Concerns need to be addressed – but the potential benefit of intervention in stimulating innovation and investments also needs to be considered.

#### **Principle 4:**

##### **Social impacts must not be forgotten**

Cutting carbon emissions will have positive knock-on effects for people because climate change hits the poorest hardest (eg, flooding). Some changes will put up prices (eg, domestic fuel), but this problem can be tackled by Government ensuring that grants are available so poorer families have homes that are well insulated and efficiently heated.

## **solution #3 policies to deliver**

*Making the transition from the carbon age to a cleaner future will require Government intervention*

The key to solving climate change will be policies that really deliver sustainability and environmental justice. They will need to include these vital ingredients:

#### **1. Force innovation**

The petrol combustion engine has hardly changed over 100 years and yet there have always been plenty of ideas for alternatives (even back in Henry Ford's day). Policies that seek to introduce new products to replace existing ones cannot just rely on price signals, there also needs to be real incentives for existing industries to pick up new ideas, develop and market them.

#### **2. Control and adaptiveness**

Savings can be made through increasing efficiency and introducing cleaner technologies. Policies will need to deliver both to be effective. Policies must also be flexible enough to adapt to changes outside Government control. For example the level of investment that companies are now required to make towards renewable

electricity increases if the total demand for electricity increases. In contrast the level of effort required to deliver energy efficiency in households does not increase with demand.

#### **3. Recycle cash flows into a low-carbon economy**

To get the best impact, policies need to make doing the wrong things more difficult – and doing the right thing easier. If economic instruments are used to achieve this, money raised should be spent on low-carbon projects. This can be done through Government spending or through a market in carbon credits.

#### **4. Deliver long-term objectives**

Modest short-term cuts are needed now. But policies also need to be developed with long-term reductions in mind. This should ensure that carbon saving technologies that are currently too expensive will be available in future years.



# your home in 2015

Government did this to your house... but you didn't even notice – and now it is warmer, cosier and far more energy efficient

Imagine a world 10 years from now where you don't need to be an eccentric genius, millionaire or a committed green campaigner to have a modern high performance, low emissions home.

Tackling climate change has not made radical changes to our lifestyles. The Climate Change Bill has created a new framework for Government action that has really delivered results.

Future low carbon solutions may include renewable heat, renewable transport fuels, greener cars, green public transport, cleaner, more efficient fossil power.

Since 1998 Dyfi Valley, Wales has been using a combination of hydro, wind solar thermal, solar electric, wood heat and ground source pump to create 100 per cent renewable electricity supply for the area's 12,500 people.



**Cycling & public transport**  
*Cycling has never been safer.* There's a detailed network of routes and lots more "no car" zones to enjoy. *Taking the car is really now much less easy* than jumping on one of the frequent lightweight hydrogen-fuelled tram systems that run like clockwork and link up with buses, the metro/underground and river ferries.

**Energy**  
*Energy bills now show exactly how much you have consumed compared to this time last year.* They tell you how the energy you used was produced (eg, self-generated renewable, purchased in wind energy, etc), and let you know how much money you have made by selling your spare renewable energy back to the grid while you were out at work.



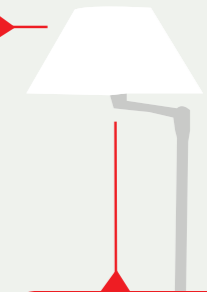
**Radiators**  
*Heating homes using renewable energy is now easier than ever* with Government backing for solar and biomass heating and pumping systems that use the heat energy trapped in the ground. Renewable gas from biodegradable plants and waste is now also being fed directly into the gas network.



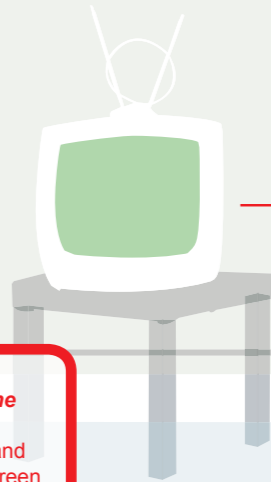
**Hybrid cars**  
*This family's light weight car is the greenest around.* It is part battery powered, part combustion engine, and runs on a blend of bioethanol (the green alternative to petrol).



**Lighting & appliances**  
*To save energy, more and more homes now have their energy systems wired up to a home computer that adjusts temperature and automatically switches lights and equipment off when they are not needed.*



**TV & appliances**  
*15 per cent of all electricity is now generated from renewables – but in many homes the figure is 100 per cent* thanks to Government incentives for energy companies to help customers save energy and fit their own renewables such as solar panels and mini wind turbines.



## the world in 2015

*It started with leadership, it brought about results – and now there is competitiveness about who is doing best*

It's 2015 and the UK's practical approach of making the Climate Change Bill law has shown that it is possible to reduce emissions steadily – a useful way to meet its Kyoto targets on time. This success has helped persuade the EU to adopt a similar approach.

The UK's lead inspired Canada and Japan to work out how to take control of their emissions. But even the United States, India and China are bringing their emissions under control – unwilling to be left behind.

Around the world there is large scale investment in clean and renewable energy products. Businesses are all much greener, and those involved in producing clean energy are flourishing. People across the planet are increasingly getting their energy needs from renewable sources and understanding why this makes sense.

As a result the rate at which the world was adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere has stopped rising. Next decade's challenge is to reduce them. Even so climate impacts are more apparent – but this serves only to encourage politicians to go even further in their efforts to bring about change.

Steve Price/Plan-B Studio

## the big ask explained

*Friends of the Earth's Big Ask campaign is about asking difficult questions and demanding answers. It will see our supporters pressing politicians to pass a law that mandates Government to make annual 3 per cent CO<sub>2</sub> emission cuts year-on-year*

Climate change is the biggest question facing humanity. All the major parties in Westminster support CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions but without a law mandating annual cuts it is hard for politicians to keep to targets. "The long term nature of this problem does not sit happily with our electoral cycle," explains former Environment Minister Michael Meacher. "It is too easy for Government to ignore the problem and hope that a future Government will sort it out."

Already three top environmental MPs have put aside party differences to bring a new Climate Change Bill to Parliament. A similar Bill needs to be introduced in the new Parliament – but for it to succeed as many MPs as possible need to support it.

### In the know:

- For simple ways to make energy efficiency changes at home before Government steps in see *Save Cash & Save the Planet* by Andrea Smith and Nicola Baird (Collins, £12.99). For an easy read about climate change see *High tide*, Mark Lynas (Harper, £8.99) or the authoritative *How we can save the planet*, Mayer Hillman (Penguin, £7.99). All available from Friends of the Earth publications despatch, tel: 020 7490 1555.
- You can also order or download our free booklets – *Energy and climate change* and *Wind power: your questions answered*.
- For technical detail see Friends of the Earth's detailed submission for government policy makers, *What the government should do to tackle climate change*, which can be downloaded at [www.foe.co.uk/resource/consultation\\_responses/ccpr\\_foe\\_submission.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/consultation_responses/ccpr_foe_submission.pdf). Also see the excellent think tank report, *Up in smoke*, Andrew Simms (nef, Oct 2004) and Chapter 12 of *Natural capitalism*, Paul Hawken, Amory B Lovins and Hunter L Lovins (Earthscan, 2005).

**Can you make the Big Ask and convince your MP to back the Climate Change Bill?**

**Visit [www.thebigask.com](http://www.thebigask.com) to find out how:**  
**1. To write to your MP to ask them to do more about climate change**

**2. To keep up-to-date on latest campaign developments. Join The Big Ask email list at [www.thebigask.com](http://www.thebigask.com)**

**3. To help us spread the word and get others asking questions about climate change.**

*"By cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions the UK will protect the environment and help to solve many social problems. Think of better access to public transport, regeneration of urban centres, limited night flights and an end to fuel poverty for vulnerable households. That's an impressive legacy!"*  
Tony Juniper,  
Friends of the Earth's  
Executive Director



# your chance to make history

*In April 2005 distinguished former Environment Ministers from the Labour and Conservative Parties, along with the current Liberal Democrat Environment spokesman introduced the Climate Change Bill at Westminster.*

*There is a long way to go before the Bill becomes law - but this was an historic first step towards making sure we cut our CO2 emissions.*

*Next step is to persuade your MP to back the Bill. Here's how.*

## **More about**

To find out more about the ways you can help Friends of the Earth's campaign visit:  
[www.thebigask.com](http://www.thebigask.com)

Dear Friend,

Climate change will be a huge challenge for every Government over the next century – whatever their party colours. Doing nothing is not an option – climate change is just too much of a threat to our way of life.

The good news is that we still have time to cut our energy use, find alternative sources of power and to clean up our use of fossil fuels so that we do not generate huge quantities of carbon dioxide and other climate change gases. But we must start now, and must sustain the effort for many years to come.

This is a difficult thing for Governments to do. It requires Ministers to act now to prevent a disaster that would not arrive until long after their Government has left office. It is perhaps not surprising if the pressure to do all sorts of other things with a more immediate impact pushes this down the priority list.

That is why Friends of the Earth wants MPs to create a framework for the next 40 years which ensures action is taken. Already two distinguished former Environment Ministers, Michael Meacher and Conservative ex-Secretary of State, John Gummer, together with Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat environment spokesman have introduced a law to tackle climate change – happily putting aside party differences so they could jointly sponsor the Climate Change Bill.

But to make progress, the Bill will need your support as well. Please join this campaign and help push the Climate Change Bill into law.

Yours sincerely

Tony Juniper  
Friends of the Earth's Executive Director