



House of Commons  
Business, Energy and Industrial  
Strategy Committee

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# **COP26: Principles and priorities—a POST survey of expert views**

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**Fourth Special Report of Session  
2019–21**

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## Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

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# Fourth Special Report

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1. On 6 March 2020 the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee launched a standing inquiry into Net Zero and the UN Climate Summits.<sup>1</sup> A central focus of this inquiry is scrutiny of the Government’s preparations for COP26, the UN Climate Summit, to be hosted in Glasgow in November 2021.
2. To assist with our inquiry, we commissioned the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) to conduct a survey of experts on the UN’s climate negotiation process. We specifically sought views on: Government priorities for the Summit; appropriate questions to raise when scrutinising the Government’s preparations for the Summit, and; identifying what lessons can be learned from both the Government’s handling of the COVID-19 crisis and changes in public behaviours when faced with a global crisis, to help make COP26 a success.
3. This report draws together the views of over 500 experts working on international climate policy who participated in the survey. It will prove a useful resource for our own inquiries; for colleagues across Parliament and in Government, and for wider stakeholders who are engaged with the Summit.
4. We would like to thank the POST Board for supporting this initiative, to Dr Rowena Bermingham and Jack Miller of the POST social sciences and energy and environment sections for conducting the research and compiling the report, and to the experts who contributed to this survey.

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1 [Net Zero and UN Climate Summits](#), 6 March 2020.

# Appendix 1: COP26: Principles and priorities—a POST survey of expert views

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## Executive summary

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) supports the use of research evidence across both Houses of UK Parliament, including in the work of select committees. To assist the BEIS Committee’s “UN Climate Summits and Net Zero” inquiry, POST surveyed 506 experts on the UNFCCC COP process (and related areas of climate change) to gather views on priorities for scrutiny of the COP26 Glasgow summit being held in November 2021. This allows the Committee to draw on a wide range of expertise and knowledge when conducting scrutiny of government preparations and delivery.

Specifically, the experts were asked for their views on: the most important thing the UK Government and devolved governments should consider when planning and delivering COP26, the most important question that UK Parliament should be asking UK Government while it plans for COP26, and the lessons that can be taken from the COVID-19 pandemic and applied to COP26 preparations. Responses were analysed and synthesised into themes, which are outlined below.

## *Views on priorities for COP26 planning and delivery*

Experts were asked what the most important thing the UK Government and devolved governments should consider when planning and delivering COP26. Considerations either focused on how COP26 should be organised and run, or on how COP26 could be used to influence UK and international climate policy.

## *Considerations for running COP26*

There were 355 responses from experts about how COP26 should run and what should feed into deliberations. These formed six overall suggestions:

- **Raise the ambition of emissions pledges internationally (94 responses):** Parties should be encouraged to submit more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs, see Glossary) and to adopt ambitious deadlines for achieving net zero, along with shorter-term interim targets.
- **Include diverse stakeholders (64 responses):** COP26 should include the voices of a broader range of stakeholders (including at-risk communities), both within and outside of the negotiation process to promote buy-in and fairness.
- **Promote international cooperation (64 responses):** COP26 should create the best possible environment for international cooperation, by engaging early in diplomatic activities, supporting progressive coalitions between countries, bringing in the expertise of multinational organisations and making pragmatic financial decisions to assist low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

- **Use UK climate policy and diplomacy (60 responses):** The UK should lead by example by announcing ambitious domestic climate policy, and use its diplomatic influence to encourage similar steps from other countries.
- **Engage the public (55 responses):** Greater public engagement should be used to improve the understanding of COP26, climate change and climate policy.
- **Organise a low-carbon summit (18 responses):** The summit should be as low-carbon as possible and consider the role of remote participation.

### *Future of climate policy*

There were 153 responses that raised specific suggestions about either how COP26 could influence future climate policy, or how climate policy should be incorporated into decision-making at the summit, with suggestions falling into five categories:

- **Mitigation pathways (52 responses):** COP26 should more closely consider carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS); behaviour change; and nature-based solutions; as well as greater ‘systems thinking’ that better considers the interconnected nature of global systems and climate policy.
- **Global economy and investment (37 responses):** COP26 and the COVID-19 response provide the ideal opportunity to promote greater investment in low-carbon infrastructure, green finance, circular economy and a green recovery.
- **Energy systems (34 responses):** Low-carbon flexible energy systems should be facilitated with international, national and regional plans. This would be reliant on innovation (such as electric vehicles) and changes to supply chains.
- **Infrastructure and the built environment (16 responses):** Climate policy should seek to reduce emissions from the built environment (both existing and new) as well as making it resilient to future climate impacts.
- **Natural environment (12 responses):** COP26, and climate policy in general, should focus more on enhancing ecosystems and preserving biodiversity.

### *Questions for the UK Government*

When asked for views on the most important question that UK Parliament should be asking the UK Government in the run-up to COP26, experts suggested 463 questions in total, focusing on four themes and several sub-themes. The example questions in the below reflect the main considerations raised in these responses.

#### *COP26 ambitions*

##### **Addressing issues in specific policy areas (75 questions):**

- How will COP26 be used to promote decarbonisation of transport, energy and housing?
- What investments and incentives would this require?

- How will COP26 be used to address biodiversity loss and protect nature?

**Seeking agreement (58 questions):**

- How will UK diplomacy be used to further agreements on climate change?
- How will the negotiations seek fairness between countries with differing levels of emissions?
- Will COP26 engage a wider variety of stakeholders in decision-making than previous summits?

**Level of ambition (48 questions):**

- How confident is the UK Government that existing UK and international climate commitments are sufficient for limiting global warming to 1.5°C?
- Under what circumstances would the UK submit a more ambitious NDC?

**Impacts on wider society (27 questions):**

- How will the UK Government manage the potential adverse impacts arising from decisions made at COP26 (including protecting vulnerable workers)?

*Ensuring progress*

**Economy and climate finance (48 questions):**

- How will financial stimulus packages support a green recovery?
- How will the UK Government encourage firms to direct climate finance investments towards projects that support decarbonisation?

**Planning and strategy (29 questions):**

- How could COP26 be used to draw up plans for countries to meet their targets and commitments, and present strategies to help them meet their targets?

**Accountability (25 questions):**

- How will the UK Government and other nations be held accountable to the targets and commitments set at COP26 and previously?

**Promoting innovation and behaviour change (24 questions):**

- How will COP26 promote the development of rapid technological innovation, alongside behaviour change, to drive decarbonisation? What measures will it focus on to deliver this?

*Delivering the UK's net zero commitments (94 questions)*

- How will the UK meet the net zero target and communicate its progress?

- When will the Government publish a robust and accountable set of policies capable of delivering this goal, to prevent the UK's COP26 Presidency being undermined?
- Is the 2050 date too late to reflect genuine ambition to limit global warming to 1.5°C? Will the Government review the target date?

### *COP26 plans and priorities (36 questions)*

- How is the Government prioritising COP26 within its wider policy agenda?
- What are the Government's intended outcomes for COP26? How will the Government ensure maximum transparency around these aims and its progress towards them?
- To what extent will Government prioritise reaching an agreement on Article 6 of the Paris Rulebook, and closing the international ambition gap to 1.5°C?

### *Lessons for Parliament and Government from COVID-19*

When asked what lessons Parliament and Government could take from the COVID-19 pandemic to apply to COP26 preparations, experts made 543 suggestions. These were categorised into four broad themes and several sub-themes:

#### *Changing what is possible (125 responses)*

Experts suggested that the international COVID-19 response has demonstrated that some things that were not previously considered conceivable can be achieved, and that similar responses could be used to address the climate emergency. Suggestions include:

- **Public engagement (87 responses):** Government communications have encouraged lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of COVID-19. This could inform public engagement on climate change, and governments could consider how to sustain the environmentally beneficial behaviours witnessed during lockdown.
- **International cooperation (41 responses):** The level of international cooperation employed to respond to COVID-19 could be replicated to address climate change.
- **Urgent action (37 responses):** Rapidly implemented measures averted a larger crisis, and an equally urgent approach is needed to address climate change.
- **Use of research evidence (30 responses):** The use of research evidence and scientific expertise during the outbreak provides lessons that could be applied to climate change, where there is a need for more science-led policy-making and more research into mitigation, adaptation and resilience.
- **Cooperation and collaboration (12 responses):** The scale of cooperation between central and local government, public services, and the private sector in response to the outbreak could be replicated to address climate change.
- **Government mechanisms (8 responses):** New mechanisms, such as emergency legislation and daily televised briefings, could be used to address climate change.

### *Post-COVID-19 approaches (137 responses)*

Experts suggested how approaches to climate change should be adapted in a post-COVID-19 world. These suggestions include:

- **Economy (79 responses):** Countries should consider how their economic response to COVID-19 interact with their domestic climate ambitions, and the importance of a green recovery that prioritises climate finance and investment.
- **Transport (29 responses):** Government could examine ways to sustain environmentally beneficial changes in travel, such as improved public transport, active travel and digital infrastructure.
- **Environment (17 responses):** Lockdown has changed people’s experiences of green spaces and nature, and governments should use these changes in attitudes to implement environmental policies.
- **Inequalities (15 responses):** COVID-19 has exacerbated social, economic and health inequalities, and governments should consider how to address these to prevent them widening as climate change impacts increase.

### *Preparedness (122 responses)*

Experts identified several considerations that COVID-19 has revealed about global preparedness for emergencies, and raised concerns about the ability to adapt and respond to climate change. Main areas of concern include:

- **Emergency planning and risk management (51 responses):** The initial response to the outbreak indicated that many countries did not have good emergency planning or risk management strategies for dealing with a global crisis.
- **Resilience (50 responses):** The outbreak has exposed local and global systems’ lack of resilience to shocks (particularly those of supply chains, food systems, working conditions and public health systems).
- **Complex systems (21 responses):** The outbreak has highlighted the complexity and interdependence of the economic and environmental systems that governments should keep in mind as they move into the recovery phase while responding to climate change to avoid unforeseen negative outcomes.

### *Practicalities (66 responses)*

Experts discussed practicalities for the organisation of COP26 in the wake of COVID-19. Key areas include:

- **Digital participation (36 responses):** COP26 should facilitate digital participation for those who cannot (or do not wish to) travel to Glasgow.
- **Wider engagement (14 responses):** COP26 should better consider previously underrepresented groups, many of whom have been marginalised during the COVID-19 outbreak while experiencing the worst impacts of climate change.

- **Other practicalities (6 responses):** Specific measures should be put in place to make COP26 COVID-secure, and a contingency plan should be prepared in case the summit cannot happen in person.

## Introduction

The UNFCCC ‘COP26’ climate change summit, due to be held in Glasgow in November 2021, will be a critical event for international efforts to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Many individuals and organisations will be involved in making this summit a success. To support UK Parliament and the devolved parliaments in accessing the knowledge of these individuals and organisations, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) established a COP26 expert database. In July 2020, POST invited anyone who had experience or knowledge in areas relating to COP26 to sign up to the expert database. Over 500 experts had signed up by the end of July. These experts were also asked to complete a survey, asking them three key questions relating to COP26:

- What is the most important thing the UK Government and devolved governments should consider when planning for and delivering COP26?
- What is the most important question UK Parliament should be asking the UK Government while it plans for COP26 and why do you think it is important to ask this question?
- What lessons can parliaments and governments in the UK take from the COVID-19 pandemic to apply to COP26 preparations?

Experts were also asked for information about their institution, their specific expertise and whether they had attended previous summits. A full list of questions can be found in Appendix 3. Respondents could also complete an optional anonymous diversity and inclusion form.

In total, 506 responses were received for the COP26 expert survey:

- A majority (57%) were from academics, with the next largest contribution from NGO/charity/campaign group representatives (12%) (see figure 1).
- Experts in a range of fields and disciplines responded to the survey. When describing their expertise, respondents were asked to select up to 3 pre-defined categories from a list of 13 (including ‘other’). Aside from ‘other’, the most frequently selected categories were ‘civil society and climate change’ (181 selected), ‘energy systems transition’ (174) and ‘adaptation and resilience’ (174) (see figure 2). 58 respondents indicated that they had helped organise or deliver a previous COP event.
- Around 30% of respondents had previously attended a COP, either as a representative of an observer organisation (128), as a representative of a State Party or Observer Party (17), or as a member of the media and press (3).
- A majority of respondents (65%) had previously engaged with UK Parliament in some form.

Figure 1

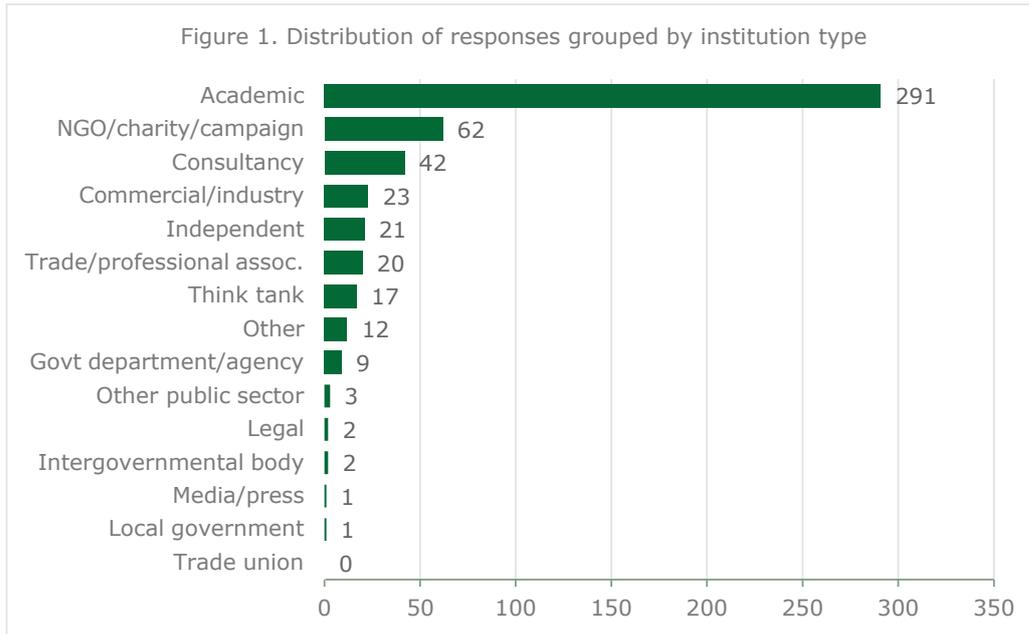
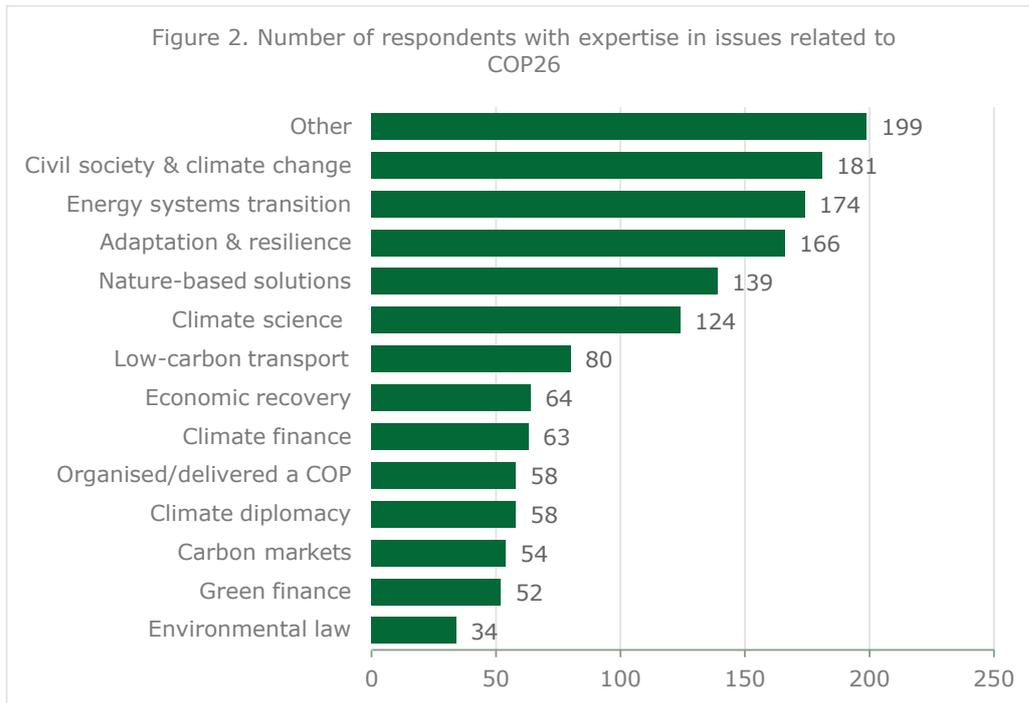


Figure 2



Responses to the three survey questions above were explored using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis identifies, analyses and interprets patterns within qualitative data. This involved reading the responses and identifying topics and ideas that came up repeatedly. Responses were then sorted into general categories before being re-analysed to identify sub-categories. A complete summary of the responses can be found later in the report.

The remainder of this report provides background information on COP26, followed by the results of this analysis in order of the questions outlined above.

## Background

### *The UN climate change negotiations and COP26*

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an agreement between 197 signatory countries, which has the ultimate aim of preventing dangerous human interference with the climate. It is the international community's primary means of negotiating on and agreeing the global response to climate change—both by preventing further effects of ('mitigating') climate change, and helping countries adapt to its impacts. Each year UNFCCC signatories gather at international summits known as 'Conferences of the Parties' (COPs), to make decisions on the global response to climate change. The UK and Italy are joint hosts of the 26th COP (COP26), due to be held in Glasgow on 1–12 November 2021 following its postponement from November 2020.

COP26 is widely considered to be one of the most significant COPs in recent years, as it is the first to take place after the measures of the Paris Agreement (the landmark climate accord agreed at COP21) have come into effect. Most significantly, it is the first summit in which State Parties (see Glossary, Appendix 2) are due to have presented updated, more ambitious pledges to respond to climate change over the coming decades. These pledges, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs, see Glossary), are a key feature of the Agreement. They are the plans submitted by Parties to the UNFCCC setting out how each will reduce its national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change impacts over the coming decade. Importantly NDCs are iterative, in that each Party has pledged to reconsider theirs every five years with the intention of increasing its level of ambition (by reducing emissions more quickly, for example). This 'Ratchet Mechanism' (see Glossary) is designed to increase the Paris Agreement's ambition over time to meet its goal of limiting global warming to a maximum of 2°C above pre-industrial levels (it is thought that first-round NDCs would likely result in warming of around 3°C by the end of the century).

Since the COP21 Paris summit, the focus of COP negotiations has shifted from establishing an agreement to deciding the technical detail of its implementation over the coming years. This is set out in the Paris Rulebook—the wide-ranging set of guidelines and procedures that focus particularly on how NDCs are updated, monitored and communicated over successive ratchet periods. While the majority of the Rulebook was agreed in 2018 at COP24 in Katowice, a few unagreed issues remain that must be finalised in Glasgow, following unsuccessful attempts to do so at COP25 in Madrid. The main sticking point is the highly technical set of rules for Article 6 of the Agreement, which broadly sets out the governance of international carbon markets and non-market cooperation between countries. Parties have failed to reach an agreement on the technical details in part because of the Article's complexity, as well as contentious issues around how emissions reductions are accounted for globally. This leaves COP26 negotiators the task of finalising the Agreement's rules while simultaneously beginning to implement it.

### *COP26 themes and delivery*

Government preparations for COP26 are being led by the COP26 Unit in the Cabinet Office. Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Minister for COP26 and Secretary of State for BEIS, has stated that the summit will feature five key themes:

- **Clean energy.**
- **Clean transport.**
- **Nature-based solutions:** Actions that protect, manage and restore ecosystems to address societal challenges (e.g. climate change) while enhancing human wellbeing.
- **Adaptation and resilience:** Improving the ability of natural and human systems to respond to climate change impacts (e.g. extreme weather events) before or after they have occurred (adaptation), or improving their inherent ability to absorb and withstand after an adverse event (resilience).
- **Climate finance:** Investment in all of the above, as well as disinvestment (divestment) from high-carbon industries.

The UK Government has not specified how the themes will be incorporated into COP26.

There is widespread agreement that planning and delivering a successful COP26 will be a challenging task, not least because it will take place in the context of the global response to COVID-19. Sustaining pre-pandemic momentum on climate action during the economic fallout—particularly in securing Parties’ more ambitious NDCs—could require substantial political and diplomatic efforts from the UK and Italian governments over the next 13 months. Continuing uncertainties around COVID-19 restrictions will present further logistical challenges given that roughly 30,000 delegates could be expected to attend. These include State Party representatives; a wide-ranging of observer groups such as NGOs, researchers and business groups; and media representatives. Wider organisations, both in the UK and internationally, will play a role in the success of COP26 as they engage business, civil society and the wider political sphere to raise the level of ambition brought to the summit.

### ***The role of Parliament and the COP26 survey***

UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures have a unique role as they carry out government scrutiny over the next 13 months, holding departmental preparations to account. It is therefore important that parliamentarians are equipped to carry out this function with the highest levels of expertise. To assist in this task, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) has established a database of experts for parliamentary use, and simultaneously issued a survey to those registering with the database. In it we asked experts to share their views on Government priorities for COP26 preparations, and parliamentary scrutiny priorities (the questions asked are outlined in the introduction). Responses to these questions were explored using thematic analysis, as outlined above.

The remainder of this report outlines the results of this analysis, in order of the questions outlined in the introduction. Some responses have been directly quoted along with information on the respondent’s stakeholder group and, where applicable, that they have attended a previous COP.

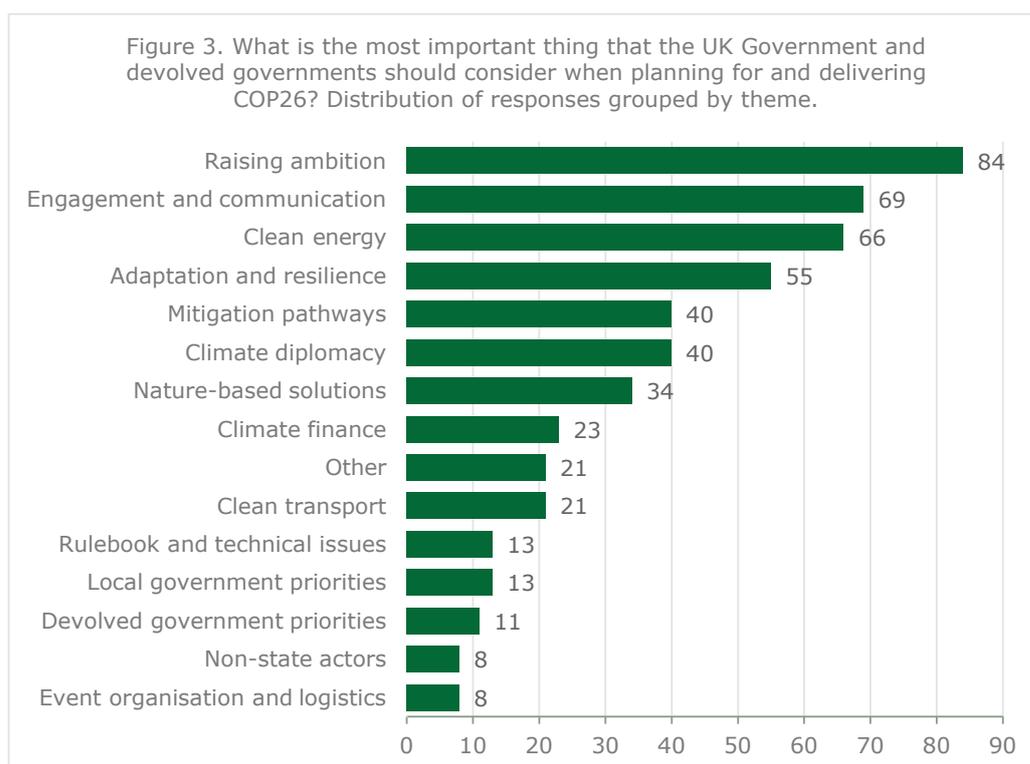
### **Priorities for COP26 planning and delivery**

Experts were asked the following question:

- Aside from the response to COVID-19, what in your view is the most important thing the UK Government and devolved governments should consider when planning for and delivering COP26?

There were 473 responses to this question. Respondents were then asked to select one of fifteen areas that their response was most relevant to, which included the five COP26 key themes (see figure 3). However, despite categorising their responses into one area, analysis indicated the experts felt that the most important considerations for COP26 are more cross-cutting than the categories offered.

**Figure 3**



They also tended to fall into two types of response:

- Responses that discussed considerations for how COP26 should be organised and run;
- Responses that raised specific suggestions about the future of climate policy.

The responses are summarised below under these two broad types.

### **Considerations for running COP26**

There were 355 responses that raised suggestions for how COP26 should run and what should feed into deliberations. Experts made suggestions around raising ambition (94 responses), who should be involved in COP26 (64), encouraging international cooperation (64), using UK climate policy and diplomacy (60), engaging the public (55), and event organisation (18).

### *Raising the ambition of emissions pledges internationally*

There were 94 responses that discussed how COP26 could raise the ambitions of the commitments and targets set out at previous summits. In particular, experts suggested that Parties should be encouraged to submit more ambitious NDCs and to adopt ambitious deadlines for achieving net zero. However, experts warned that overambitious targets could backfire and reduce the likelihood of some countries striving to meet them. They noted that some countries already consider previous targets overambitious and unattainable. There were some responses suggesting that there should be a greater focus on short-term targets to ensure global progress is being measured and clearer action plans for how countries could meet the targets.

There were also 20 responses that suggested a need for greater accountability for countries that were falling behind on commitments or for particular industries/organisations with high emissions. Experts emphasised that more urgent action and ambition now would mean less drastic action further down the line when the effects of climate change are being widely felt.

“COP26 will focus on raising the ambition of the NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions), long-term strategies for achieving net zero emissions. The UK’s NDC has to be clearly defined well before next COP26 in order to get the maximum number of other nations to take an ambitious step forward.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

“Ambition of NDCs and the UK needs to engage in early negotiation of these commitments. COP26 must deliver an ambitious agreement on emissions with targets that are consistent with the need to limit warming to 1.5C. This includes revision [of] existing 2030 commitments and delivery of long-term strategies to 2050 that enable us to achieve net zero by 2050 globally.” (*Consultancy, COP attendee*)

### *Including diverse stakeholders*

There were 64 responses that focused on the stakeholders who should be involved in COP26. Experts suggested that COP26 should focus on inclusivity, ensuring that the deliberations included a diverse range of perspectives. In particular, responses noted that there were some groups who would experience climate change impacts sooner and more severely (for example, poorer communities living in the global south). Experts noted that the perspectives of those already living with the impacts of climate change should be given greater prominence.

“Diversity in climate action: in our methods, approaches, people and target areas. We need to ask ourselves “Is climate action inclusive?” Whilst climate change is a global phenomenon, some populations may be underrepresented in the discussion and solutions. With more and more people displaced and disrupted by climate change, we need to confront how climate action should help those most vulnerable and reassess if the current course of action is inclusive. On top of this, the movement has been critiqued for being western and middle-class activity. And, if this is the case, how can the movement evolve?” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“Alongside the need for urgent action to drive down emissions the most important consideration is the impact of climate change on most vulnerable communities, particularly in the global south. It’s vital that global south voices (including governments and civil society) are not side-lined and have meaningful opportunities for influence. The perspectives of countries already suffering from climate change must be heard and acted on. This means rapid increase in mitigation ambition, huge investment in adaptation, and addressing loss and damage [see Glossary]. Failure to address those could lead to collapse of COP26, and a potential derailing of what progress has been made.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group, COP attendee*)

“That culture, indigenous people, communities, are an important asset, in climate action solutions. By including culture in every level of ambition, and allowing culture to be the conduit to civil society, social cohesion will not only produce greater solutions, but they will be embedded in a way that is more sustainable. People and their culture are incredibly important and an untapped resource.” (*Government department or agency*)

Other groups that experts suggested should have greater involvement included the private sector, scientists and researchers from a range of different disciplines, young people, women, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people, and local government representatives. Experts noted that involving the widest group possible is likely to create greater buy-in for decisions and ensure that commitments are realistic and fair. Some experts also note that inclusion of a wider range of stakeholders underpins the commitment to a ‘just transition’ (see Glossary) adopted in COP21.

“There is a long-standing recognition that the social sciences and humanities are underrepresented in climate change debates (e.g. IPCC). Engaging with a diversity of perspectives will be the most important means to ensure that COP26 will be successful. This will entail drawing on multiple forms of knowledge, focusing on not only technological but also social innovation, and securing participation from a variety of groups (youth movements were already represented at COP25, but it would be valuable to cast a wider net and consider how organisations like Black Lives Matter and others can contribute with new perspectives).” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“While much of the civil society participation that runs with and alongside the COP may be done online, ensuring consistent spaces for non-government participation in the substance of the COP will be key. This is especially true for marginalised groups, both in the UK and in less developed countries. A lack of inclusion of these groups will undermine the impact of the COP’s outcomes, especially in areas where civil society organisations view their governments with suspicion or where these groups are the most impacted by the negative impacts of climate change.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“Intergenerational equity: including children and young people not only in planning for COP26, but in planning for and achieving sustainable transitions and mitigations for climate change. This should be a multidisciplinary and multifaceted aim—ensuring that efforts to address intergenerational

environmental justice intersect with similar goals around health, technology and income. It should also be acutely mindful of difference—especially in terms of income, gender and ethnicity.” (*Academic*)

### *Promoting international cooperation*

There were 64 responses that mentioned the need for COP26 to create the best possible environment for international cooperation. Experts suggested that to achieve progress on previous commitments and/or to raise ambitions, all countries should feel invested and included in the agreements reached. The responses noted that geopolitical shifts and the long-term effects of the COVID-19 outbreak could make international cooperation particularly difficult compared with previous summits. However, they suggest that COP26 organisers need to use all the tools they have at their disposal to create an atmosphere of collective purpose. This includes engaging in diplomatic activities prior to the event, supporting the formation of progressive coalitions between nations, bringing in the expertise of multinational organisations, and making more pragmatic financial plans for low- and middle- income countries (LMICs) with high emissions. There were also particular concerns raised about how COP26 would ensure the agreement of Article 6.

“The need for bold international cooperation, especially on financing for sustainable development and climate action. We need exceptional leadership commensurate to our exceptionally fraught circumstances, but bold leadership and vision is not yet in evidence.” (*Think tank, COP attendee*)

“Success is dependent on level of ambition and how many countries fully back it. That will require a significant amount of ongoing engagement with each country to ensure COP26 is truly a success. All levers should be utilised, including getting the support—and working with—the business community. Adaptation will likely be the key focus for future COPs—this one is possibly the last chance for complete focus on rapid decarbonisation.” (*Trade or professional association*)

“UNFCCC COPs have only delivered when a progressive coalition has been brought together (AOSIS, LDCs, AILAC [see Glossary], African Group [of Negotiators], EU and others), but this will require listening and responding to these countries’ concerns. Engagement with China to build bridges on the CBD COP [see Glossary] is important [...] reaching out and having dialogs with other countries to hear their concerns and understand their priorities will also be important for COP success.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group, COP attendee*)

“Anticipating previous areas of disagreement or stagnation (e.g. Article 6) and formulating a plan of action in advance to ensure that there is a success story to tell at this COP. This should include consideration of how we can drive international carbon pricing ambition in the absence of an Article 6 agreement.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

### Using UK climate policy and diplomacy

There were 60 responses that suggested how the UK should use its role in COP26. Experts suggested that the UK needs to lead by example and set ambitious targets for itself in order to encourage other countries to follow. They also proposed that the UK should showcase some of the work it has been doing to meet its net zero targets. Responses raised the importance of diplomacy during COP26, suggesting that early and effective diplomatic activities would be a deciding factor in how successful the outcomes of the summit would be. Several responses made a direct comparison with French diplomatic efforts in advance of COP21. Some experts noted that COP26 presents a valuable opportunity to promote a positive image of a sustainable and innovative UK, which would be particularly valuable following its withdrawal from the EU and assist in the forging of new international arrangements. There were also some responses that emphasised the need for a coordinated response from across the UK to ensure that all four UK nations present a united front.

“The UK must set an example by declaring early its Nationally Determined Contribution, set an example of how to drive a Green Recovery, complete numerous important policy tasks (Energy White Paper, Heat Strategy, Treasury Review of Net Zero) and also initiate key shovel-ready major projects such as the Swansea Tidal Lagoon.” (*Trade or professional association, COP attendee*)

“COP26 presents a major opportunity for the UK to influence international progress on climate policy. It can do this through both diplomatic routes and through ‘walking the talk’. By ensuring the UK Government and devolved governments all develop and implement ambitious action plans to ensure the UK is on track to meet its domestic target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the latest, it can credibly engage others in setting similar targets and putting in place their own ambitious delivery plans. Without this, the UK will be less credible in influencing others to make ambitious commitments.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“The UK has one of the best diplomatic networks in the world, and it will be crucial to mobilise this network for the success of COP26.” (*Intergovernmental body, COP attendee*)

“To ensure the full breadth of British soft and diplomatic power is thrown behind a coordinated strategy to raise climate policy ambition in the core areas identified by the COP President. The main lesson to learn from the successful Paris Agreement in 2015 was the scale of the French diplomatic effort in the year that led up to it from their embassies, ministers, officials, NGOs, unions and scientists. Having an extra year to do so with the COVID delay is a priceless opportunity for the UK Govt to mobilise the forces needed to ensure a successful COP.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group, COP attendee*)

“The French diplomatic corps were widely praised at COP21 for the way in which they drove the process at COP. We have a skilled foreign service in

the UK, still widely respected for governance and diplomacy, and we should make sure we fully use this resource.” (*Trade or professional association, COP attendee*)

“Showcase the amazing work that is already being done to reduce emissions and inspire others to participate. The good thing is that this work is easily affordable with payback very quickly and gains to last decades. It is also well within the “build back better” remit and provides massive employment growth.” (*Commercial/industry organisation*)

“Reducing emissions is [a] target that can only be achieved if everyone works together and pushes in the same direction. Having responses and efforts that differ across the devolved Governments may be counterproductive. It is important that the UK presents a united front. This doesn’t mean ideas and innovation cannot come from any corner of the UK.” (*Academic*)

### Public engagement

There were 55 responses that suggested the need for greater public engagement during COP26. Experts emphasised that the public would feel the effects of climate policies and that their behavioural changes were likely to be key in meeting targets. They proposed that the UK public was already widely supportive of green initiatives but that more needed to be done to help them understand COP26, climate change and climate policy. Many experts suggested that the public should be consulted more when deciding which actions to take on climate change, noting that civic participation was likely to make policies fairer and targets more realistic. Responses also emphasised the need for clear communications within the UK around COP26 and its importance in the lead-up to the summit.

“The most important thing is to build in engagement with communities and people, building on initiatives like the Climate Assembly UK [see Glossary]. Communities and people are key to the transformative changes needed to achieve what is agreed at COP26, across all sectors.” (*Consultancy*)

“Governments need to come up with innovative ways of engaging the public fully in their plans. This engagement may well involve new approaches to changing people’s implicit values about climate change, as well as ways of overcoming possible biases as to how the public process messages. The Government needs to segment the population and design new campaigns aimed at different target audiences.” (*Academic*)

“The most important issue is to see how they can ensure public acceptability of policy options and different event scenarios. Government needs to display how the policy will be inclusive and deliver more fair outcomes whatever the new challenges of society bring such as a pandemic, financial crisis or even the increased effects of climate change. Hence, each predicted policy outcome needs to display how it will be fair, just and equitable.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

### Organising a low-carbon summit

There were 18 responses that laid out suggestions for event organisation in COP26. Experts suggested that COP26 should lead by example and be as sustainable as possible, including providing only vegan catering, allowing remote virtual participation to reduce delegates' air miles, and improving the sustainability of transport connections to Glasgow. Experts also noted that it was unclear whether the COVID-19 outbreak would be ongoing in 2021 so the event organisers should ensure that they have arranged social distancing, remote participation, and contingency plans in case travel is disrupted.

“Green transport—as much as possible, the transportation of people and goods related to the event should be ‘green’ and showcase UK engineering.”  
(*Academic*)

“From a public perspective, green access to COP is key for the ‘optics’ of a good event. Remote access (especially given COVID) should get a huge boost and be prioritised so that high quality remote access is possible (not just watching a live stream). Effort should be put into the interactive parts, perhaps learning from recent UNFCCC and IPCC events.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

### Future of climate policy

There were 153 responses that raised specific suggestions about the future of climate policy. Experts made suggestions around mitigation pathways (52), the global economy (37), energy systems (34), infrastructure and the built environment (16), and the natural environment (12).

### Mitigation pathways

There were 52 responses that discussed mitigation pathways (see Glossary). Experts emphasised the need to recognise that all climate policies operate in a complex system and many responses encouraged better systems thinking in decisions made at COP26. They noted that the COVID-19 outbreak has shown how interconnected global systems are and that it has raised a number of concerns around global adaptation and resilience. Some experts raised concerns that carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS, see Glossary) had not been prioritised at previous summits. Other experts highlighted that meeting targets would require reducing demand as well as technological solutions and suggested a need for more consideration about how to change behaviour to achieve this. Other experts suggested the need for greater investment in nature-based solutions that have the combined benefits of enhancing wellbeing and acting as carbon sinks (see Glossary). Some experts also questioned whether there were routes to meeting targets that did not include high-income countries offshoring emissions.

“The UK Government (and all government authorities) must consider and understand that climate change is inextricably linked throughout all of their work. When planning for COP26, we must realise that this is not just a climate summit. To be successful, we need to think carefully about the diverse interactions between climate and the rest of the society in order to ensure a wide coalition of issues can be involved in the event. If

COP26 is frame[d] and planned narrowly as a climate summit, we will fail. COP26 must be seen holistically as an opportunity to facilitate society-wide transformations.” (*Academic*)

“Our nation is not prepared for the change in climate already embedded in our natural systems. We need significant and fundamental measures to make our critical infrastructure resilient to this change and able to adapt. Without this there will be catastrophic impact on people’s health and lives, our natural systems and our economy.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

“Carbon capture and storage has yet to enter into the agenda of COP meetings. Technology to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere already exists, and is being trialled but it will require a big commitment from governments to initiate and fund projects to scale up the process to make a meaningful difference. It will be essential to gain agreement from all countries to participate in these programs.” (*Academic*)

“Demand reduction is vital to decarbonisation. We have, [until] now, relied on technological shifts to reduce emissions, through renewable energy, electric vehicles, or smart meters. The time has come, though, to address the issue of energy use and demand. Much of the efficiency gains from car engines, for example, have been swallowed-up by longer and more frequent journeys.” (*Academic*)

“A lot of focus is on how to reduce emissions and drop CO<sub>2</sub> levels, as it should be. But there is a big gap in awareness of protecting natural carbon sinks (i.e. Nature Based Solutions) that already exist and work efficiently. The ocean carbon sinks are great examples of these. We need to protect these carbon sinks by reducing any warming to the oceans, but also protecting the ecosystems from exploitation (e.g. fishing, mining).” (*Academic*)

### *Global economy and investment*

There were 37 responses that discussed the global economy and, in particular, climate finance. Many experts noted that COP26 following the COVID-19 outbreak presented an opportunity to rethink economic systems and pursue a ‘green recovery’ from the economic impacts many countries are experiencing. They suggested that it presents the ideal opportunity for investment in widescale infrastructure projects (in areas such as transport, energy and housing) to support more sustainable lifestyles in the future. Other experts suggest that COP26 should set out plans for how to offer green financing for infrastructure changes. Other responses raised suggestions for more discussion around incentivising a circular economy, the negative effect of some subsidies and implementing a carbon tax.

“A green post-COVID recovery is the most important thing all governments should be considering when planning and delivering COP26. Unprecedented amounts of money are being injected into economies around the world. The money will only be spent once and how it is spent will have implications for decades/generations to come on populations and the environment (that sustains us).” (*Academic*)

“The way in which the mitigation and adaptation activities, which the objectives set out in the Paris Agreement require, will be financed. A significant change is required to infrastructure across energy, heat, transport, agriculture and waste across the world, which will require a significant capital investment and ongoing cost. How the ‘externality’ of climate change is internalised into economic systems to drive the desired decision-making is a key question that needs addressing.” (*Commercial/industry organisation*)

“Promote public private-partnerships for green finance. Effective nature-based solutions, properly implemented, using climate finance and green investments, can drive economic growth, establish diverse and resilient rural economies and deliver climate resilient livelihood opportunities, and contribute to diplomatic and ODA objectives. Green investments from environment ministries and ODA are insufficient when compared to the need (e.g. an annual \$1bn gap in financing for Africa’s Protected Areas) and compared to the scale of the investment threats (e.g. climate threats, species and habitat loss). Green investments need to attract significant budgets from treasuries in tandem with the private sector.” (*Consultancy, COP attendee*)

### Energy systems

There were 34 responses that made suggestions about the future of energy systems, specifically around moving towards clean energy. Experts suggested the need for international, national and regional plans for energy infrastructure to be able to achieve a reduction in emissions and move towards the smarter and more flexible energy system needed for other innovations to become embedded (such as widespread use of electric vehicles). They noted that individual energy companies are reliant on supply chains that they have no control over, limiting their ability to tackle emissions effectively without support. Responses also highlighted the need for Government investment in energy infrastructure as individual companies are not in a position to invest in these changes. Experts also suggested that COP26 should accelerate the move away from fossil fuels and that greater investment in renewables and nuclear will be essential to meet this ambition.

“Security of supply of raw materials is fundamental for achieving emission targets. Without the raw materials, we cannot transform the energy production and transport sectors and limit our reliance of fossil fuels. A revised energy infrastructure with a transport sector on centralised electricity production requires huge investment and expansion.” (*Academic*)

“Foundational for almost every single aspect of the transition, the energy networks will provide the digitalised backbone to the national uptake of electric vehicles, a fully flexible power system, the shift to a hydrogen economy and the decarbonisation of our heavy industry. The networks have already connected over 30GW of Distributed Generation to the distribution grid, most of which being low carbon, and even more renewables going offshore and being connected at a local level; thus there is a need for strategic investment in Network infrastructure ahead of need. Similarly work needs to begin in earnest on decarbonising the gas network which is currently a third of our emissions.” (*Trade or professional association*)

“Focus on the importance of delivering international agreement and pragmatic solutions that will accelerate the energy transition globally away from fossil fuels, and to involve the oil and gas industry in this process, as considerable relevant expertise resides within it.” (*Academic*)

“Decarbonising electricity generation should be the first priority for COP26. While renewables are currently a fashionable cause, sight should not be lost of the vital part to be played by nuclear energy.” (*Academic*)

### *Infrastructure and the built environment*

There were 16 responses that focused on how climate policy should influence infrastructure and the built environment in the future. Experts suggested the need to focus both on sustainable urban planning but also on how to adapt pre-existing buildings. Some experts also suggested that incentivising the development of clean transport would require more interventionist policies such as scrappage schemes and investment in new infrastructure.

“Developing just solutions, beginning with, for instance, insulating homes in areas of poverty, with non-toxic, non-flammable materials, will transform public enthusiasm for taking climate action.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

“By improving the energy efficiency of building stock, we can address two challenges of reducing strain on energy systems by reducing demand, and reducing the number in fuel poverty by reducing the cost of energy bills.” (*Academic*)

### *Natural environment*

There were 12 responses that discussed the future of policy for the natural environment. Experts suggested that, as well as a focus on global warming, there needed to be greater focus on biodiversity loss and an understanding of how to draw up policy that addresses both. They noted that preserving biodiversity is a key aspect of nature-based solutions and is a motivating factor for the general public who feel connection with their local environment. Experts also raised food systems as an under-explored area where policy changes could lead to more sustainable practices. They note that localised sustainable agriculture can prevent food supply issues, reduce global emissions, and help with adaptation and resilience.

“The impending collapse of ecosystems and biodiversity threaten human health and survival. Whilst being connected to climate change the risk of mass extinctions and declining biodiversity threaten our global economic, financial and capitalist systems.” (*Academic*)

“More sustainable farming practises that improve the soils is most effective methods of preventing flooding in the UK. Even if rainfall increases, if we improve infiltration of rain into the soils we can keep the rainwater in the land, for crop use and for drought mitigation in other times of the year. It is cheap, scalable, and achievable.” (*Consultancy*)

## Questions for UK Government

Experts were asked the following two questions:

- In your view, what is the most important question UK Parliament should be asking the UK Government while it plans for COP26?
- Following on from [the previous question], why do you think it is important that it is asking this question?

In total there were 463 suggested questions, falling into four broad themes: how ambitions for COP26 will be set (208 responses), how to ensure progress in these ambitions (125), delivering the UK's climate change commitments (94), and what the plans and priorities are for COP26 (36).

### *COP26 ambitions*

There were 208 questions around setting ambitions for COP26. Experts discussed specific policies (75 responses), how COP26 should seek agreement on these ambitions (58), the level of ambition that should be set (48), and potential impacts on wider society arising from decisions made at COP26 (27).

### *Policies*

There were 75 questions around how COP26 could address issues in specific policy areas.

Over 50 experts wanted to know what plans could be agreed for decarbonising various types of infrastructure (specifically transport, energy and housing) and what investment this would require. This included questions around how to incentivise the development and deployment of clean energy. They also questioned how existing infrastructure could be adapted to be more sustainable and energy efficient in the meantime. Other responses focused on fossil fuel subsidies, suggesting that these should be ended, and that countries should be incentivised to divest from high-carbon industries. Some experts questioned how the costs for low carbon technologies would be kept low enough to ensure they made economic (as well as environmental) sense. There were also questions about how to reduce carbon emissions in global supply chains.

“What is the strategy for decarbonising heat and heavy industry? Power is being rapidly decarbonised following subsidy regimes successfully driving down the cost of renewable generation, however this represents just one third of the UK's energy related emissions. Transport is a further third where there is a degree of clarity from Government with the roll-out of electric vehicles, however the deployment of the underlying energy infrastructure to support them needs further guidance from Government.”  
(*Trade or professional association*)

“What it plans to do about the poor quality of housing stock in the UK (it's not all just about insulation)? Also, how it plans to address the lack of regulation on energy efficiency in buildings—developers are continuing to build homes that will need retrofiting. Why not just build a good quality home from the get go? 50% of the UK's primary energy use directly

attributed to buildings. Buildings are responsible for 30% of the national greenhouse gas emissions and use up to 60% of electricity generated. All considered, there is no realistic, or affordable, energy development strategy that is not led by energy efficiency in our homes and other buildings. By providing building services (e.g. heating, hot water, etc.) at a lower energy and environmental cost we can move faster towards net zero by 2050.” (*Academic*)

“How are you tackling the biodiversity and mass extinction crises in the UK? We are at a critical point in the ongoing mass extinction process and if urgent action is not taken we will experience a collapse of ecosystems in the UK and globally.” (*Academic*)

Over 20 experts asked questions about the natural environment. They suggested that COP26 ambitions needed greater focus on biodiversity loss and protection of nature. Some experts also welcomed the theme of nature-based solutions in COP26, suggesting this area needed more research, ambition and investment. Similarly, several experts welcomed the theme of resilience and adaptation but stated the need for COP26 to agree more specific ambitions and plans in this area.

“How can Natural Climate Solutions be used more effectively to mitigate climate change? It delivers on carbon sequestration, and co- benefits for biodiversity and human well-being.” (*Academic*)

“What is your [UK Government] detailed plan of actions for a +4 degrees world by 2030, 2040 and 2050? We need impactful actions and solutions to be implemented between every COP from now on [...] to pave the sustainable way of living on Earth as per the last scientific data and models available projecting an +4 degrees instead of +2 as previously thought.” (*Government department or agency*)

### Seeking agreement

There were 58 questions around how COP26 would make sure that there was agreement for any new targets or commitments.

Over 30 experts considered the need for international cooperation in their response. They asked questions about how the UK Government planned to use its diplomatic service to seek agreement, whether climate considerations would be reflected in international trade talks, how to include low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) more in decision-making to ensure agreements are fair, and how would COP26 persuade countries with the highest emissions to commit to ambitions. Experts also emphasised that rising global populism and political tensions following the COVID-19 outbreak would likely make international agreement at COP26 more difficult without early diplomatic efforts from the UK.

“What concrete steps the UK Government is taking in 2020 to ensure countries showing up for COP26 come up with meaningful INDCs (intended nationally determined contributions) and where does this sit within government priorities. One of main reasons behind COP15’s (Paris) success was French government’s use of its resources for diplomacy and

actions over a year to ensure all parties to the COP came well prepared with their negotiating positions. Other groups like indigenous people and Africa were given substantial time to voice their concerns.” (*Commercial/industry organisation, COP attendee*)

“How are we engaging with China to convince them to commit to net zero? Without China, all the emissions reduction we achieve will be made up by the emissions increases from China.” (*Academic*)

There were over 20 questions around how to engage a wide variety of stakeholders in decision-making to ensure commitments made at COP26 are reasonable and equitable. Experts note that engaging widely also creates more buy-in, with people feeling ownership of the commitments (as opposed to feeling they are imposed). In particular, experts asked how the following groups would be more involved in COP26: researchers from a range of disciplines, the general public, the private sector, local government, and children and young people. Some experts also noted that over the last few years there had been citizens’ assemblies on climate change held in various regions and nations (including Climate Assembly UK) that present the public’s desired approaches to climate change. They questioned how these findings would feed into deliberations.

“How will you engage with the public and local government such that we can fully implement the changes we need to see in our neighbourhoods and communities to fully combat climate change? Convincing people to make the changes needed to achieve the Net Zero goal will be the most difficult challenge on our journey. When done badly—it can be disastrous—as the gilet jaunes example has shown. The public will be attracted by some aspects of the transition—and rebel against others. The costs of tackling climate change have also not been fully explored with the public. Ensuring people understand what the COP negotiations are for, and how it will impact on their lives going forward, will be a key measure of the summit’s success.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group, COP attendee*)

“How are you planning to build meaningful networks with non-state actors for implementing net zero emission targets and policies? The purpose of the UNFCCC negotiations has shifted from negotiating an international agreement to implementing the Paris Agreement. This means countries need to deliver on their nationally determined contributions (NDCs)/ domestic climate policies while increasing ambitions. Only if they are confident they can implement their international targets, they are willing to become more ambitious towards net zero targets by 2040–2060 in line with the 1.5–2°C target. This can only be achieved in partnership with civil society, the public, cities and businesses, who together are responsible for 70–90% of greenhouse gas emissions. National-level policies remain crucial to set incentives and framework conditions.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“Does the UK Government collaborate or engage with academics in the UK to contribute to and deliver COP26? Collaborating and engaging with academics from different disciplines is very important as they have in-depth knowledge of climate change and the effect it has on countries and

people. Additionally, science diplomacy is becoming more important as can be seen in other countries whose government works with academics to draft and promote climate policies.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“Will you implement the recommendations from the Climate Assembly UK and if not why not? Climate Assembly UK was commissioned by 6 select committees and parliament now needs to use this to hold the government to account. It is an extremely robust process that ensures participants are representative of the public, informed on climate change and decarbonisation and have had the opportunity to reach a considered set of unpartisan opinions.” (*Academic*)

### *Level of ambition*

There were 48 questions around the level of ambition COP26 should aim to set. Experts suggested that in order to limit global temperatures to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, commitments and targets would need to be more ambitious. They asked whether the UK could take a strong stance by submitting an ambitious NDC ahead of other countries to encourage widespread ambition. Experts also raised concerns that target dates were too far away to create the meaningful change needed. They asked how countries could be encouraged to respond more quickly and implement policies to reduce emissions as soon as possible.

“How will the UK raise its climate ambition to bring the rest of the world to an agreement that gives us a chance of achieving 1.5°C? To hold our Government to account for raising ambition in the UK and internationally in accordance with the latest science. A step change is needed and we must ask every day what Government is doing to make this happen to avoid tipping points and run away climate change that will have far reaching impacts on our planet.” (*Consultancy, COP attendee*)

“What is the UK Government’s strategy (with regular updates) to mobilise all major economies to deliver 1.5-aligned commitments and plans in the lead up to COP26? The delay in COP26 means that it is crucial now, more than ever, for governments around the world to show their commitment to climate action and achieving the Paris Agreement goals. The success of COP26 will largely depend on the ability of the incoming UK Presidency to convene and mobilise global leaders around the biggest challenge we have ever faced.” (*Trade or professional association, COP attendee*)

“How does the Government plan to use its leadership position to create a coalition of the willing across nations for an effective and rapid global low-carbon innovation transition that enables to achieve the Paris Agreement? Plans of the UK Government on how to develop its leadership position at COP26 are obscure, not known. Clarity would allow coordination across UK institutions as well as internationally. The time is short, COVID-19 has disrupted the process and it is not clear a strategy will be in place in time for COP26 to be a successful meeting.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

### *Impacts on wider society*

There were 27 questions around the wider impacts on society and the environment that may arise from decisions on climate change mitigation, and how they would be reflected in COP26 discussions. Experts noted that climate policies affect the economy and people's daily lives and therefore potential unexpected negative outcomes should be considered. In particular, experts questioned how COP26 could help reduce (rather than unintentionally widen) social and global inequalities.

“Do the UK's climate policies meet the UK's historical and current responsibilities for climate change mitigation while maintaining or increasing the wellbeing of all its citizens? Because if the climate crisis is not understood and addressed as a social crisis, it will not gain the necessary support from the public. Additionally, proposed climate policies must have wellbeing at their core, otherwise risking deepening social division and inequalities.” *(Academic)*

“How is the UK Parliament planning to support a rapid and equitable low-carbon transition that protects workers in vulnerable sectors, protects members of society with pre-existing vulnerabilities and prevents new vulnerabilities emerging? I'll keep this response very short: because the transition toward low-carbon needs to be extremely rapid, and yet people can't be left behind.” *(Academic)*

“What is the current UK COP26 strategy and how is this part of a coherent cross-Whitehall approach to tackle the ‘triple emergency’ of poverty and inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation in developing countries? How will the UK use COP26 [to] close the gap on adaptation, and deliver the needs of the most vulnerable countries and communities?” *(NGO/charity/campaign group, COP attendee)*

### *Ensuring progress*

There were 125 questions around how to ensure progress on the commitments and targets set during summits. Experts asked questions on the role of climate finance and economic recovery packages (47 responses), the need for clear plans on how to achieve targets (29), the need for accountability (25), and promoting technological innovation and behaviour change (24).

### *Economy and climate finance*

There were 48 questions around financial packages to support climate policies and around economic recovery packages following the COVID-19 outbreak. Experts asked questions about how economic recovery packages across the world (and the UK's ‘build back better’ recovery plan) could ensure a ‘green recovery’. Many suggested it was an ideal time for countries to implement a Green New Deal (see Glossary), which they suggested would provide jobs, economic recovery and the green infrastructure needed to reach climate commitments. Experts also focused on climate finance. They wanted to know how the UK Government would direct investment towards sectors leading on decarbonisation and

how it would incentivise private investment in green initiatives. Other experts questioned the actions the UK Government was taking on divestment from fossil fuels and high-carbon industries.

“How is the post COVID economic recovery package going to contribute to net zero by 2050? How is support aligned with tackling the urgent climate emergency? One chance only to plan post-COVID economic recovery package—we must not miss this opportunity to kickstart a future compliant with net zero by 2050.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“How does the government plan to ensure that financing an ambitious green new deal is both practical and equitable? Most citizens seem to regard the fight against climate change as one that is unaffordable, and feel that building back after the pandemic will only make it less affordable. However failure to mitigate climate change has unthinkable consequences, and for this reason tends to be ignored by too many citizens. In a democracy, a responsible government that has the interests of all its citizens in mind must think beyond the next election. It must form cross-party commitments in order to ensure that financing the transition is acceptable to the voters.” (*Academic*)

“How is the UK leading on incentivising private sector investment in decarbonising its economy? To drive any global decision-making or consensus the UK needs to lead by example. The Committee on Climate Change has made references to the UK not being on track to hit its targets, particularly in relation to heat. A number of historic support mechanisms for renewable technologies (e.g. the [Renewables Obligation], [Feed-in Tariff], [Renewable Heat Incentive]) have closed or are no longer available and, outside of offshore wind, there is limited new development of decarbonisation projects in the electricity, heat and transport sectors.” (*Commercial/industry organisation*)

“How you will support the economic and industry sectors in the transition to green recovery? Any transition to green economy will require strengthening the regulation on carbon (and hopefully) pollution targets. This is likely to result in a need for lot of economic and industry sectors to change their ways of operation and service delivery, with direct implications for jobs and peoples’ livelihood. The key aspects here may be incentives for innovation in technology and more close collaboration between academia and industry, ultimately leading to developing new skills and creation of a green jobs.” (*Academic*)

“How do you plan to achieve effective consensus on climate finance and accelerating [environmental, social and corporate governance] reporting to drive realignment of capital? Focusing on public funds and movements alone fails to engage with one of the most fundamental transitions happening to the capital markets and private investment. Only by integrating the understanding of long- term risk and value creation, shifting horizon awareness and the unforeseen consequences of climate change (pandemics driven by degraded ecosystems). The communication of this is failing

outside very specific areas and climate activists are not being made aware of the potential for effective change, nor are the public, the consumers of investment fund offerings, pensions etc.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“What can the UK Government do to accelerate the reallocation of trillions in private and public capital across the globe? Carbon emissions do not produce themselves. Instead, they are produced by existing capital assets, many of which must be replaced or retrofitted at significant cost and risk to the entities that own and finance them.” (*Consultancy*)

“With the London Stock Exchange and London’s debt markets being one of the largest funders of the fossil fuel industry globally, how is the Government ensuring market alignment with the Paris goals? The UK finances around 15% of the world global emissions from fossil fuel production/supply (via equity listings, debt issuance, insurance, debt finance and fossil fuel project finance), compared to being responsible for 1% of emissions. Government only ever talks about the 1% emissions, not the UK’s role in financing the global fossil fuel industry’s expansion plans. Ensuring UK Government properly regulates insurance, equity & debt markets in London in their role in funding fossil fuels is crucial to ensuring the UK plays a key role in global decarbonisation.” (*Think tank, COP attendee*)

### *Planning and strategy*

There were 29 questions around how COP26 could draw up clear plans and strategies for countries to meet their targets and commitments. Experts suggested that there was a general lack of transparency for how countries were planning on delivering on their commitments. They noted that without plans to ensure progress, the targets set were unlikely to be delivered and commitments without a strategy were somewhat meaningless. Experts noted that agreement on rulebook issues, such as Article 6, during COP26 would make planning and strategy easier for countries.

“What policies and law need to be in place within 3 years so that energy and climate targets are realised in 2030 and beyond? Each stakeholder at COP26 needs to ask the question of their own government, institution or organisation and develop subsequent strategy, policies and legislation to deliver on this three-year timeframe.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“How will COP26 ensure/support implementation of commitments made as part of a negotiated agreement? While negotiated agreements are important, it is equally important to have mechanisms to ensure delivery. For example, although the Paris Climate Agreement is in place, we are yet to agree on rules for carbon trading, which will be crucial for implementation.” (*Intergovernmental body, COP attendee*)

“What is the actual roadmap for the government to deliver on the zero carbon commitment and how will it positively or negatively impact British people? Real climate action will only happen if there is strong leadership, a clear plan and full understanding of the role and impacts of a range of

stakeholders. There is a window of opportunity after COVID, which has been so disruptive, to harness a ‘we are all in it together’ mentality which needs to be equally adapted to climate change.” (*Consultancy, COP attendee*)

“Where is the clear roadmap for climate action that the public can understand, including mapping, resource planning, timeline and responsibility? We have seen how government can communicate and act at pace when required. The wealth of information developed by researchers and the UK Committee on Climate Change is overwhelming. It is now time for government to practically begin to work as one entity; to act and seize the opportunities of early adoption and the co-benefits of climate action for society and the economy as a whole.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

### *Accountability*

There were 25 questions around how the UK Government and other nations would be held accountable to the targets and commitments set previously and in COP26. Experts expressed frustration that accountability measures were not in place to compel countries to deliver on their commitments. They suggested that without accountability measures, commitments were somewhat meaningless.

“How it [the UK Government] will be held to account on meeting carbon reduction targets? I do not think that the environment has been a high priority for government for many years, but Brexit and now COVID-19 have exacerbated this problem. There is a certain inertia in the general public to act now, but if this is not backed up with serious government action it will become a missed opportunity.” (*Academic*)

“What accountability mechanisms will be in place to ensure that the COP26 plans and goals will be achieved? A main issue that prevents the implementation of actions to mitigate climate change is the lack of strong accountability systems. Establishment of mechanisms to hold governments and private-sector actors accountable for their actions that have negative environmental impact are necessary, so it is important to understand how the UK and the other nations plan to support this area.” (*Academic*)

### *Promoting innovation and behaviour change*

There were 24 questions around how the UK Government would use different levers to drive progress. Experts wanted to know how the UK and other countries would support technological solutions and innovation to help them meet their climate commitments. Some suggested that reduction of emissions would not be enough to meet targets and that rapid technological innovations would be required. They proposed that climate finance should be directed towards research and development in innovative technologies. Other experts highlighted the need for widespread behaviour change to meet commitments. They questioned how COP26 would consider the role of behaviour change in its discussions. They also noted that governments needed to consider how they would encourage widespread sustainable behaviour.

“Have you secured funding for a green shift? Without a large amount of funding the revolutionary shift in green technology and uptake won’t be possible—instead we will get window dressing that keeps greenhouse gases rising.” (*Academic*)

“How will the government support technology and innovation to aid economic growth and meet Net Zero? Previous UKRI figures estimate that every £1 spent on research and development delivers £7 in economic and social benefit. The Committee on Climate Change’s 2020 progress report to Parliament recommended that ‘COP26...should prioritise accelerating the international flows of clean technology, knowledge and climate finance that will be required’ as well as provide leadership on technologies such as hydrogen and CCUS.” (*Commercial/industry organisation*)

“How does the Government intend to increase low-carbon human behaviours? Climate warming stems from human behaviours and a relationship with the natural world heavily biased towards resource use and dominion. There is a need for a new relationship with nature.” (*Academic*)

“How do we enable individuals and organisations to deliver solutions? Because solving the climate emergency requires a culture change—not just technological solutions. We need to enable individuals and organisations to help solve the problem.” (*Academic*)

### ***Delivering the UK’s net zero commitments***

There were 94 responses that focused on the UK Government’s current commitments on domestic climate policy, and progress on these commitments. The majority of these responses supported the UK Government’s commitment to achieving net zero GHG emissions by 2050, although many suggested that the target date should be sooner if there is a genuine ambition to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Most questions focused on the Government’s plan to deliver on this commitment and how it was monitoring and sharing its progress. Experts noted that there was a lack of transparency around the UK Government’s research and policy development in this area. Questions centred on the following:

- What are the overall plans for how the UK will meet the net zero target?
- What evidence is being used to decide the policy plans for delivering net zero?
- How have different stakeholders (including civil society) been engaged in planning?
- What cost-benefit analyses have been carried out for net zero? How much will different policy options for meeting net zero targets cost?
- What are the potential societal impacts of different policy options for meeting net zero targets?
- What policies will be needed to meet net zero targets?
- What legislation will be needed to meet net zero targets?

- How will different sectors be involved in decarbonisation? What investment and support will they receive?
- What role will carbon offsetting, carbon capture, emissions reduction and demand reduction have in meeting targets?
- How will the devolved nations join up to deliver net zero?
- How will progress against net zero targets be measured and reported?
- How will future governments be held accountable by legislation to meet net zero targets?

Over 30 experts also suggested that stating ambitious targets without having a plan to meet them would reduce the credibility of the UK's COP26 Presidency. They proposed that the UK should be leading by example and showing how to implement policies and proving that rapid progress on targets is achievable.

“When are the policies required to reach net zero going to be implemented? The government has agreed for the UK to be net zero by 2050 but the policies to achieve this are not in place.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“How does the UK's net zero ambition translate into specific policy actions? Net zero is a good goal, but it is meaningless if it is not met. There is a risk that the goal will not be matched by sufficient specific actions to achieve net zero, or by actions that are too weak or have too many exceptions to achieve net zero.” (*Academic*)

“What net zero policy package is the UK Government adopting now to meet the criticisms of UKCCC 2020 Progress Report, and what specific investments are attached to those? How will progress be measured and monitored for accountability? The answers are fundamental to accountability of Government to Parliament and society for meeting legislated carbon budgets, and thus developing resilience, and minimising climate-related disasters.” (*Academic*)

“How is the UK Government working with devolved administrations to ensure implementation of the whole of the Paris Agreement, including mitigation and adaptation, and advocating for a loss & damage outcome? We must have a unified set of plans, that reflect the urgency of the situation, aligned to achieve 1.5°C, support adaptation and deliver action on loss and damage. These plans must be specific, ambitious, and aligned with the principle of equity. Vague, imprecise commitments to action will not be sufficient. For example, the aim to achieve “net zero as soon as possible” may be interpreted broadly and delivery of this won't necessarily align with Paris. Moreover, climate finance increases must be [of] quality, invest in adaptation and reach the communities most in need. Parliament must scrutinise the detail of Government commitments.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group, COP attendee*)

“How does the UK show the world a credible pathway to Net Zero is an achievable goal not just a lofty ambition? Many countries are looking

towards the UK and close neighbours for credible pathways to achieve ambitious climate targets. If ambitions and statements are not reinforced by decisive and clear actions then other nations will not raise ambitions and global climate targets will not be achieved.” (*Trade or professional association*)

“How will the UK Government ensure that it is leading by example in relation to mitigation pathways? Credibility in hosting COP26 depends on the level of commitment the UK Government shows in practice.” (*Academic*)

### **COP26 plans and priorities**

There were 36 responses that questioned the UK Government’s plans and priorities for COP26. Experts suggested that the Government needs to be more transparent about what it is seeking to achieve at COP26. Over 10 responses raised concerns that COP26 was not being given the attention and priority required to make it a success. Experts proposed that the UK needed to be clear about what long-term achievements COP26 could deliver. In particular, experts suggested that the priorities include agreeing Article 6 and, if possible, raising the ambitions of other climate commitments. Some experts suggested that to be able to deliver these achievements, the UK Government need to start work now (especially around diplomacy to engage other nations in delivering on priorities).

“Is COP26 seen as a government priority, and if not, why not? It is the perception of many climate researchers that the UK Government is not devoting the time and resources needed to ensure the success of COP26.” (*Academic*)

“What outcomes [are] the UK Government preparing to deliver through COP26 and how? With ambition across the spectrum of climate change issues and actors the core purpose of COP26, outcomes will need to be targeted and well-resourced, particularly on diplomatic might. The UK has already set out a series of ambitious campaigns for the actions it aims to drive greater ambition on: as well as the negotiations themselves and raising countries’ NDC ambition, the UK set out campaigns on building resilience, driving clean and low-carbon transition of energy and mobility sectors, and transforming global and national financial systems. Parliament should scrutinise the outcomes and diplomatic campaigns the UK is pushing within these campaigns.” (*Think tank, COP attendee*)

“How does the UK Government plan to ensure the rulebook for the Paris Agreement’s market-based Article 6 will be agreed at COP26? Article 6 could establish a policy foundation for an emissions trading system, which could help lead to a global price on carbon, by enabling countries with low emissions to sell their additional allowances to larger emitters, with an overall cap on global emissions. Supply and demand for emissions allowances would lead to the establishment of a global carbon price that would tie the negative externalities of GHG emissions to polluters. The successful implementation of Article 6 could create new channels for

private and public sector climate finance and lead to technology transfer and capacity-building for countries undergoing a low-carbon transition.”  
(*Consultancy*)

“How are you going to ensure that there is a meaningful legacy from COP26, like you would expect from an Olympic games? Because it will help to use COP26 as a springboard for positive action, rather than an event that people forget ever happened.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“What more could you do now to ensure that COP is a success when it happens in 2021? The success of previous COP conferences has built upon the work done in advance. The UK Government now has an extra year to prepare for COP26, so the most important question UK Parliament should be asking the UK Government is whether it feels it is doing enough to make sure that that preparatory work is being carried out to the best of its ability.”  
(*Trade or professional association*)

## Lessons from COVID-19

Experts were asked the following question:

- What lessons can parliaments and governments in the UK take from the COVID-19 pandemic to apply to COP26 preparations?

In total there were 543 suggestions, falling into four broad themes: what COVID-19 has shown is possible (215 responses), how to adapt responses to climate change in a post-COVID-19 world (137), what COVID-19 has shown about global preparedness for emergencies (122), and practicalities for the organisation of the COP26 summit (66).

### *Changing what is possible*

There were 215 responses noting that the global and national response to the COVID-19 outbreak has demonstrated that some things that were not previously considered conceivable can be achieved. The experts noted that if similar responses were applied to the climate emergency then there would be substantial progress on meeting previous COP commitments and the potential to set more ambitious future targets and commitments. The responses discussed were public engagement (87 responses), international cooperation (41), urgent action (37), use of research evidence (30), collaboration (12), and new Government mechanisms (8).

### *Public engagement*

There were 87 experts who highlighted the response from the general public in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak. They noted that the majority of people across the world had acted responsibly and followed governments’ advice to reduce the public health risk of COVID-19. This involved very rapid behaviour change, including accepting sudden lifestyle changes that may previously have been seen as implausible (such as a sudden switch to remote working or a reduction in international travel). Experts suggest that this could inform the way scientists and policy-makers communicate with the public about the threats posed by climate change. They also note that many of the behaviours that

people adopted during the COVID-19 outbreak (such as travelling less) were likely to have beneficial environmental impacts and suggested that governments should consider how to sustain some of these behaviours long-term.

“The response to COVID-19 has demonstrated that the British public are prepared to change their behaviour in support [of] the greater good where there is a clear threat to society. This provides a positive example that governments and parliaments should draw upon when taking the difficult decisions to nudge public opinion and making demands of change in response to the challenge of net zero.” (*Consultancy*)

“The world’s response to COVID-19 demonstrates that it is possible for governments to take decisive action to avert an imminent crisis. The approach to solving both [COVID-19 and climate change]: 1) identify the precise cause of the problem through expert scientific advice, 2) with support by the public, pass legislation focused on the cause of the problem, and 3) employ a robust feedback mechanism to assess progress and adjust the approach.” (*Academic*)

### *International cooperation*

There were 41 responses that noted the international cooperation and global response to the COVID-19 outbreak and suggested that it indicated a similar response could be achieved in addressing climate change. Some responses also noted that the COVID-19 outbreak was likely to affect the economies of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) more negatively. Therefore, they suggested that there should be a global discussion about how to support these countries in rebuilding their economies in a sustainable way.

“COVID-19 made it clear that a unified global approach is necessary to these bigger problems. COP26 needs to focus on how we can build a stronger global coalition that gets behind a unified and equitable approach. UK Government needs to make it clear that it is ready to support poorer countries in the global south reach higher development levels while being able to arrest future carbon emissions. Low carbon energy will play a key role in this and should be a major focus of discussions.” (*Academic*)

“The pandemic has certain similarities to the climate crisis, in that neither respect national boundaries. It has shown that the global community can work together to address the pandemic. The key learning outcome from this is how we can turn the necessary individual actions needed to solve the crisis into a global trend.” (*Academic*)

### *Urgent action*

The speed of response to the COVID-19 outbreak was discussed by 37 experts. They noted that governments were able to react quickly and implement measures to avert a larger crisis. Many experts suggested that equally urgent and radical actions are needed to address climate change, noting that the possible negative consequences of inaction could be far greater than for COVID-19.

“The primary lesson is that the earlier that government action takes place, the better the outcome. This is as true for climate change mitigation as it has proven for COVID-19 measures.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

“The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that governments can respond and change systems quickly, with interventionist solutions being acceptable to the populace where the need is clearly understood. The climate crisis is not being seen with the urgency of response as the global pandemic, and direct Government intervention would help ensure the pace of change required. The Government should use the COP26 preparations to demonstrate how COVID-19 recovery and stimulus can build back better and set a pathway to a low carbon, resilient economy, whilst creating new jobs and industries.” (*Consultancy, COP attendee*)

### *Use of research evidence*

There were 30 responses focusing on the use of research evidence and scientific expertise in reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak. Experts suggested that the general trend across many different countries was to follow the advice given by scientists. They also noted that investment in research was key to understanding more about how to combat COVID-19. Experts argued that these lessons could be applied to climate change, where there is a need for more science-led policy-making and more research into mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shown all of us the vital importance of science and innovation. Research and development will be critical to economic and social recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, enabling us to build a greener, healthier and more resilient UK. Science and innovation have helped drive major progress in global development over the past two decades and are vital to achievement of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.” (*Academic*)

“The role of science in decision-making has been shown to be important. COP26 is a great time to showcase the role of evidence-based policy-making in tackling climate change, clarifying and making transparent the political decision-making, and how evidence is used to make pragmatic choices.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“Listening to scientific advice is of paramount importance during a global crisis and politicians should act on the evidence presented to them in a more technocratic way.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

### *Cooperation and collaboration*

There were 12 responses that discussed how the COVID-19 outbreak has led to unprecedented levels of cooperation and collaboration between different levels of government (national and local), various public services (healthcare, social services and police) and private companies. Experts suggested that this unified response, often featuring public-private partnerships, could be used to meet more ambitious climate commitments.

“The key message should be about collaboration—and business is an integral part in achieving our Net Zero goal. For this to transform infrastructure and customers hearts and minds, we need a network of collaborators to work together to assist each other.” (*Consultancy*)

“The need to work in a more inter-disciplinary, cross sector manner, linking national government, local government, academia, industry and civil society. The climate challenge will only be met by working together.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

### Government mechanisms

There were 8 responses that mentioned how new government mechanisms (such as emergency legislation and daily televised briefings) were used during the COVID-19 outbreak. Experts suggested that these could be used to bring greater attention and action to addressing climate change.

“As a direct result of the daily COVID-19 TV briefings the wider public has a greater understanding of and appetite for scientific and technical data, quality visualisations and monitoring. COP26 is the ideal time to build on that to drive new energy into the response to climate change.” (*Other, COP attendee*)

### Post-COVID-19 responses

There were 137 responses that discussed how responses to climate change should be adapted in a post-COVID-19 world. There were 4 main considerations raised about how to adapt approaches, focusing on the economy (79 responses), transport (29), the environment (17), and inequalities (15).

### Economy

There were 79 responses that mentioned how the economic impacts of COVID-19 could interact with climate policy. Experts expressed concern that countries attempting to return to ‘business as usual’ following the COVID-19 outbreak could fall behind on the commitments made at previous COP summits. They emphasised that global economic recovery could have widespread negative or positive environmental impacts depending on the type. Experts suggested that it was important for governments to focus on a ‘green’ recovery that prioritised climate finance, ensuring investment in environmentally responsible companies and not subsidising high-emission industries.

“Economic recovery from COVID-19 should not be about bailing out industries that pollute the environment. Rather, money should be diverted in creating environmentally friendly jobs. Some examples where financing could be provided are: retrofitting of existing fossil fuel vehicles to turn them into hybrid/electric vehicles; investment on recycling plants (for batteries, plastics, etc.) etc. Also, while bailing out businesses, it has to be ensured that the businesses operate in a new paradigm which is more environmentally friendly. This can be done by promoting circular economy.” (*Academic*)

“As we recover from the pandemic we need to ensure recovery plans are socially and environmentally responsible, supporting decarbonisation and delivering an economy that works for people and avoids repeating the mistakes made in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. If we can deliver this type of green recovery in the UK, there is an opportunity to share this learning with other countries both in the lead up to and at COP26.”  
(*Academic, COP attendee*)

### Transport

There were 29 responses that focused on how to sustain the reduction in transport and travel that occurred during the COVID-19 outbreak. Experts noted that governments could prioritise investment in digital infrastructure to allow greater remote working and remote participation in global events. They also suggested governments needed to focus on clean transport systems (especially public transport and infrastructure for active travel) that would meet the needs of their citizens and help reduce the likelihood of a rebound in emissions and air pollution through increased car use.

“There are so many lessons to be learnt for environmental preservation. A lot of businesses have continued to survive successfully without people driving into work, using public transport and indeed using aeroplanes. The digital world has helped significantly in this regard. By encouraging businesses to continue in this manner would reduce CO2 emissions especially that created by automobiles and aeroplanes etc.” (*Academic*)

“The ‘Lockdown’ resulted in a significant immediate reduction in carbon emissions and improvement in local air quality due to the decline in all forms of transport use. As restrictions have been eased, there has been a rise in emissions. This is exacerbated by a decline in public transport usage, particularly outside of major conurbations. This is a particular issue for the UK, as other countries have seen public transport use increase at a greater rate. The limitations to car use and associated pollution reduction demonstrates a need for alternative methods of transport that the public will engage with.” (*Academic*)

### Environment

There were 17 responses that considered the changes to how people are likely to view the environment following the COVID-19 outbreak. Experts suggested that experiences during lockdown had increased people’s appreciation of green spaces and nature, because they had acted as a solace during the most severe restrictions. They proposed that public opinion on measures to protect the environment is likely to be at its most positive in the next few years. They suggested that governments should use this renewed appreciation for the environment to implement policies that might previously have been unpopular, such as carbon taxes or urban transport restrictions.

“The government will also do well to explain commitments in terms of improvements to air quality as well as the climate because research shows that the public feels the pain of air pollution more acutely than climate breakdown.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

## *Inequalities*

There were 15 responses that discussed how the COVID-19 outbreak exacerbated social, economic and health inequalities. Experts noted that some regions and groups were more affected by the COVID-19 outbreak than others (for example, people living in more economically deprived areas). They drew parallels with how the negative consequences of climate change are likely to affect some regions and groups more than others. They suggested that governments needed to consider how to address these inequalities to prevent them widening as climate change impacts increase.

“COVID-19 has caused huge social and economic disruption. Although the virus does not discriminate, it is clear that the poorest in society are suffering the most. The significance [of] this inequality must not be underestimated. Consequently, it is the same group in society that bear the brunt of climate change impacts and of extreme weather events.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“The pandemic has brought economic and health inequalities into sharp focus. We must heed the evidence that poorer and marginalised people suffer most in all disasters, and ensure national and international planning for the climate crisis addresses this inequity.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group*)

## *Preparedness*

There were 122 responses focused on what COVID-19 has shown about global preparedness for emergencies. There were 3 main areas that experts indicated were of concern for global preparedness: emergency planning and risk management (51 responses), resilience (50), and understanding complex systems (21).

### *Emergency planning and risk management*

There were 51 responses that discussed global emergency planning and risk management. Experts noted that the initial response to the COVID-19 outbreak indicated that many countries did not have good emergency planning or risk management strategies for dealing with a global crisis. They highlighted that many governments acted slowly or did not initially follow evidence-based advice. The responses noted that a pandemic was not an unpredictable or unlikely event. Therefore, they argued, governments should have been better prepared to deal with this event. Experts drew parallels to the impacts of climate change, noting that the potential negative consequences are known but many countries do not have good emergency planning or risk management strategies in place for these impacts.

“Planning for low probability but high impact scenarios linked to climate change and variability is vital. Investment in scientific measurement, prediction and understanding helps governments to be ready for these challenges.” (*Academic*)

“Lack of preparedness leads to systemic failures. COVID-19 was predictable, and predicted, just as is climate change. The cost of failing to prepare far outweighs the costs of mitigating while adapting to unavoidable change.

Real solutions to the challenges of climate change integrate across sectors and scales and attack root causes. The current growth- and efficiency-oriented economic system exacerbated COVID-19 outcomes, just as it worsens climate change—real solutions will be found in new conceptions of society.” (*Other, COP attendee*)

### Resilience

There were 50 responses that highlighted how the COVID-19 outbreak has shown local and global systems are not resilient to shocks. In particular experts noted that supply chains have stalled, food systems have been shown to be insecure, businesses have failed under new economic and working conditions, public health systems have been overwhelmed, and the energy sector has struggled to adapt generation to meet sudden changes in demand. They suggested that this reveals a fundamental lack of resilience in many sectors that should be addressed to ensure society is prepared for potential shocks caused by the impacts of climate change or policies to meet climate commitments. Some noted how these issues should be considered in the COP26 adaptation and resilience theme.

“COVID-19 pandemic can serve as a useful stress test of a sudden transition to a net zero world. This should spur action to facilitate a managed and gradual transition. Further, the importance of wider nature-related risks to the sustainable agenda should not be underestimated.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“The reliance in other countries to obtain basic products should be an attention call. We have to be more aware of the reality of our supply chains and how can we make them more local and socially and environmentally friendly.” (*Academic*)

“In the energy sector, the pandemic gave grid operators a foretaste of the future. Whilst demand was lower than in the future, the generation mix being managed was reflective of a heavily decarbonised future. This has provided valuable lessons to be learned in terms of grid management but also the type of infrastructure we will need in a net zero future, the preparation for which needs to begin now.” (*Trade or professional association*)

### Complex systems

There were 21 responses that centred on how COVID-19 has revealed that society, the environment and the economy create a complex international system. Experts noted that actions in one country or one part of the system can have wider (and sometimes unpredictable) consequences. They suggested that governments must keep the complexity of the system in mind as they move towards recovery from COVID-19; some policy decisions could have unforeseen negative outcomes (such as increased emissions). Equally, many experts noted that this could provide new ways of viewing climate change policy and could help governments identify new levers to make system changes.

“Human health and economic health are linked to the health of our planet. Outbreaks of animal-borne illness, such as COVID-19, will become more frequent due to the accelerating destruction of nature, exploitation

of natural resources and habitat loss. Therefore, to combat the threats of pandemics and climate change, governments need to slow deforestation and habitat destruction and stop the illegal wildlife trade.” (*NGO/charity/campaign group, COP attendee*)

“COVID-19 highlights and reiterates the interconnectivity of the world we live in. Our economy is intrinsically linked to our health and wellbeing. This is true for climate and other governance issues. A focus on health and wellbeing can be the quickest route to economic gain alongside climate goals.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

“The interdependency of systems is more strong than previously considered. Climate change, response to the pandemic, are likewise intertwined. We must make progress and decisions that have multiple benefits, work with non-traditional partners, and learn from existing examples—build upon frameworks—if we are going to recover from the pandemic and continue to meet the climate action targets.” (*Government department or agency*)

### **Practicalities**

There were 66 responses that discussed practicalities for the organisation of COP26 in the wake of COVID-19. These responses focused on 5 key areas: use of digital participation (36 responses), ensuring wider engagement (14), ensuring the event was COVID-19 secure (6), having a contingency plan (5), and starting discussions before 2021 (5).

### **Digital participation**

There were 36 responses that suggested COP26 should facilitate digital participation for those who cannot (or did not wish to) travel to Glasgow. They note that the COVID-19 outbreak has seen many organisations productively using videoconferencing platforms. Experts suggested a number of benefits to moving discussions wholly or partially online; it reduces the carbon footprint of the event, it sets a good example by reducing air travel of delegates, it opens the event up for participation for those who could not ordinarily attend, it is less likely to be affected by potential future waves of COVID-19, and it allows easier streaming of public content to a wider audience. Some experts noted, however, that digital participation may be more difficult for delegates from areas with poor digital connectivity and this would need to be considered in planning.

“COP26 needs a comprehensive digital strategy that allows for much greater participation from accredited and non-accredited observer organisations. It must avoid negative perceptions by limiting the number of participants in Glasgow whilst at the time same increasing access to civil society and business organisations.” (*Consultancy, COP attendee*)

“The COVID lockdown experience shows that people can be effective working remotely. Is it really necessary to bring together 10,000–20,000 people from around the world for the COP26 conference across two locations in UK and Italy? The COP26 conference should really consider its own carbon footprint and whether there are ways to do things differently. How much of this could be done remotely via videoconference?” (*Consultancy*)

“The switch to online platforms for communication has opened up so much to those who might otherwise [have] been unable to participate in various climate action activities. Working from home means that many do not need to incur the monetary and carbon cost of travelling to attend meetings. It is also more inclusive as it allows those who are shielding to continue to engage with others. I think COP26 should be open to exploring opportunities for online participation across all levels of the planned events.” (*Academic*)

### *Wider engagement*

There were 14 responses that suggested the COVID-19 outbreak had shown how some voices are marginalised or underrepresented while they experience the most negative effects. Experts suggested it was important to ensure that COP26 included underrepresented groups and involved them in decisions that would most affect them.

“Include a wider group of stakeholders. Panels of diverse speakers—amplify the voices of Black, indigenous, and persons of colour who disproportionately experience the effects of climate change. Amplify the voices of developing nations who are bearing the brunt of climate change impacts.” (*Academic*)

### *Other practicalities*

There were 6 responses that proposed ways to ensure that COP26 is COVID-19 secure. Experts suggested testing and temperature checks on site, limiting attendance numbers, ensuring social distancing, streamlining the agenda to minimise face-to-face contact time, and access to hand sanitisers and handwashing facilities. There were 5 responses that raised the need for a clear contingency plan in case COP26 could not be held in 2021 for whatever reason: many of these experts suggested a wholly digital summit in that case. There were also 5 responses that proposed discussions should start earlier than 2021 using online platforms. They noted that this would increase the chance of reaching agreements during COP26.

“Contingency plan to allow the event to go ahead regardless of the COVID situation at the time, even if this includes an entirely “remote” event.” (*Consultancy*)

“Use informal meetings and diplomacy ahead of time. There isn’t time to negotiate big policy change at a COP; it needs to have groundwork laid far ahead of time. And work in tandem with the secretariat, because you don’t have the institutional capacity for this kind of diplomatic work on your own.” (*Academic, COP attendee*)

## Appendix 2: Glossary of terms

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**Adaptation and resilience:** Improvement in the ability of natural and human systems to respond to climate change impacts (e.g. extreme weather events) before or after they have occurred (adaptation), or improvement in their inherent ability to absorb and withstand after an adverse event (resilience). One of the five COP26 themes.

**AILAC:** Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean, a UNFCCC negotiating block of 8 nations.

**AOSIS:** Alliance of Small Island States, a UNFCCC negotiating block of 39 nations.

**Article 6:** An element of the Paris Rulebook that must be agreed upon at COP26. It broadly relates to the rules that govern international carbon markets (such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme) and non-market cooperation.

**Carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS):** The process of capturing waste carbon dioxide, then storing it somewhere or using it in such a way that it cannot contribute to climate change.

**Carbon sink:** A natural or human object or process that absorbs more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than it emits (e.g. a forest or ocean).

**Climate Assembly UK:** The citizens' assembly on climate change commissioned by six House of Commons select committees in 2019–20 to understand public preferences on how the UK should meet its net zero targets.

**Conference of the Parties (COP):** Annual summits at which UNFCCC signatories make decisions on the global response to climate change.

**CBD:** The Convention on Biological Diversity UN framework for addressing biodiversity loss, reflecting the UNFCCC mechanism for addressing climate change.

**Green New Deal:** A programme of policies proposed in the UK, US and elsewhere that would collectively aim to address climate change and economic inequality. While definitions vary, it broadly encompasses substantial investment and regulation programmes alongside redistributive measures.

**Just Transition:** A policy framework for protecting workers' rights and livelihoods as economies undergo sustainable transitions. Examples include the set of interventions to reskill or otherwise support oil and gas workers as these industries decline or change outputs.

**LDCs:** Least Developed Country Group, a UNFCCC negotiating block comprised of the 48 least economically developed nations.

**Loss and damage:** The negative impacts and damages from climate change that are occurring and will occur in future that cannot be avoided through mitigation, adaptation or resilience. Loss refers to irreversible loss (such as human life or species) while damage refers to things that can be repaired or restored, such as infrastructure.

**Mitigation Pathway:** Planned future trajectories for national greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for potential technological, economic and social developments.

**Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** The pledges that signatories to the Paris Agreement are required to make, outlining how they plan to respond to climate change to 2030 and beyond through emissions reduction and adaptation. New, more ambitious NDCs are due to be presented every five years, beginning in 2020.

**Nature-based solutions:** Actions that protect, manage and restore ecosystems to address societal challenges (e.g. climate change) while enhancing human wellbeing. One of the five COP26 themes.

**Paris Rulebook:** The set of guidelines, procedures and operations that set out how the Paris Agreement is implemented over the coming decades (particularly focusing on how NDCs are updated, monitored and communicated over the course of the ratchet mechanism period). The majority of the rulebook was agreed at COP24 (2018) in Katowice (the rulebook is also known as the Katowice climate package), but a few issues remain unagreed upon. These issues—primarily rules for carbon markets and other forms of international cooperation under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement—were meant to be resolved at COP25 in Chile/Madrid, but were not. These will need to be agreed at COP26, simultaneous to the Agreement being implemented for the first time.

**Ratchet mechanism:** A process within the Paris Agreement that is designed to increase its ambition and effectiveness over time with respect to its level of global emissions reductions. Signatories to the Agreement pledge to revisit their NDC every five years to see whether they are able to increase its ambition. The outcomes of the first round of ratcheting will be communicated at COP26.

**State Party:** A signatory to the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement. Most Parties are nation states, though the EU jointly ratified the convention and submits a collective NDC. COP26 is the first summit at which the UK is due to have communicated an independent NDC.

**UNFCCC:** UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Appendix 3: Full list of COP26 database questions

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1. Name
2. Email address
3. Phone number
4. Institution
5. Institution type (tick one)
  - Academic
  - Commercial/industry
  - Consultancy
  - Government department or agency (inc. devolved)
  - Independent
  - Intergovernmental body
  - Legal
  - Local government
  - Media/press
  - NGO or charity/campaign group
  - Other
  - Other public sector
  - Think tank
  - Trade union
  - Trade or professional association
6. Department
7. Link to a professional profile, e.g. university or LinkedIn page
8. Links to key publications and/or videos of you speaking publicly on a relevant area of your expertise
9. ORCID ID
10. Have you previously attended a COP?
  - Yes, as a representative of a Party State or Observer State

- Yes, as a representative of an observer organisation
  - Yes, as a member of the media and press
  - No
11. Please summarise your expertise in this area using fewer than 100 words.
12. Please tick the following that describe the area of your experience or expertise (tick up to three)
- I have helped organise or deliver a previous COP event
  - Adaptation and resilience
  - Carbon markets
  - Civil society and climate change
  - Climate diplomacy
  - Climate finance (international finance for mitigation or adaptation)
  - Climate science
  - Economic recovery
  - Energy systems transition (inc coal phase-out)
  - Environmental law
  - Green finance
  - Low-carbon transport
  - Nature-based solutions
  - Other
13. If you answered 'other' to the previous question, please state your area of expertise in fewer than 5 words
14. What lessons can parliaments and governments in the UK take from the Covid-19 pandemic to apply to COP26 preparations?
15. Aside from the response to Covid-19, what in your view is the most important thing the UK Government and devolved governments should consider when planning for and delivering COP26?
16. Please tick the category that your answer to the previous question applies most to
- Adaptation and resilience
  - Clean energy
  - Clean transport

- Climate diplomacy
- Climate finance
- Devolved government priorities
- Engagement and communication
- Event organisation and logistics
- Local government priorities
- Mitigation pathways
- Nature-based solutions
- Non-state actors
- Other
- Raising ambition
- Rulebook and technical issues

17. In your view, what is the most important question UK Parliament should be asking the UK Government while it plans for COP26?

18. Following on from the previous question, why do you think it is important that it is asking this question?

19. How did you find out about this database?

20. Have you engaged with UK Parliament before? For example, engaging with a Select Committee, Library, POST, APPG, or an individual MP or Peer?