

January 2025

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# Briefing to the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee

This briefing paper on the Adaptation Sub-Committee has been prepared at the request of the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee following the oral evidence provided by Emma Pinchbeck (CEO) and Dr Emily Nurse (Head of Net Zero) at the session held on 8 January 2025.

## Adaptation Sub-Committee

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### Statutory basis

The Climate Change Act 2008 ('the Act') established the Climate Change Committee ('the Committee') to advise the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Act also created an Adaptation Sub-Committee ('ASC') to provide:

- Assessments of the risks for the United Kingdom of both current and predicted impacts of climate change. These Climate Change Risk Assessments (CCRAs) must be conducted every five years and are a statutory obligation on the UK and devolved governments. The CCC is mandated in the Act to offer independent advice to the CCRA.
  - To inform the Government's CCRA the Government has also commissioned the CCC to produce an independent assessment of UK climate risks as part of all CCRAs except for the first. This evidence base is published by the CCC alongside its statutory advice for the CCRA.
- Progress reports to Parliament, assessing the implementation of the current National Adaptation Programme (NAP), which contains the Government's plans and policies to adapt the economy to climate change risks. These reports are biennial.

### Governance

The ASC is designated as a sub-committee rather than a committee but in practise the two committees perform similar duties, with each Committee meeting 10 – 12 times a year. At least once a year, there is a meeting of both Committees to discuss work and any shared areas of research or advice.

The Chair of the ASC and the Chair of the Mitigation Committee are both appointed by Government. As well as their main responsibilities to manage the work programme for their respective Committees, both Chairs hold relationships with ministers in their sponsor departments and across Parliament. They are also both responsible for wider stakeholder engagement and some operational issues. The Government is currently recruiting a permanent Chair for the Committee. Baroness Brown is the Chair of the ASC.

ASC members are approved by Government and have similar recruitment processes as Mitigation Committee members (although these processes are run by separate departments and their term lengths are different). There is little difference in the experience of the Members or their practical responsibilities. However, the ASC members, including the Chair, are less well remunerated than their colleagues on the Mitigation Committee. [A list of current members can be found online.](#)

The ASC is sponsored by Defra (as Defra are the lead Government department for adaptation) and by the devolved governments. The Mitigation Committee is sponsored by DESNZ, and the Secretary of State for DESNZ has statutory responsibility for the CCC overall. The FCDO has also sometimes provided funding for work on international climate change advice, which includes some work on adaptation.

The Government's stated intention is to establish stronger governance arrangements for adaptation; they have suggested that the Cabinet Office will have a role in coordinating the response to climate change risks and economic resilience across Government. All government departments will be impacted by a warming world – most notably those responsible for the protection of vulnerable groups in society or those with responsibilities to manage critical UK infrastructure and UK economic resilience.

## Funding

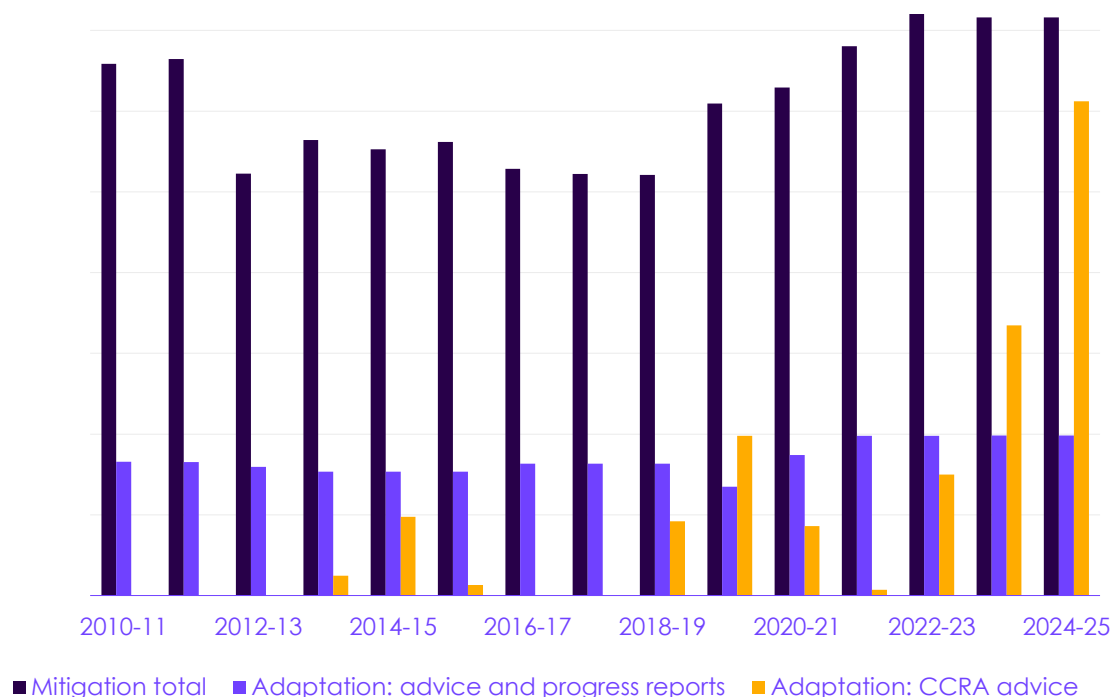
Funding constraints are a significant barrier for the ASC to provide the depth of analysis and advice necessary to support the UK and devolved governments in their work on adapting the UK for climate change risks.

The funding has historically been lower than the funding for the Mitigation Committee. In addition, neither the Committee or the ASC have received funding as multi-year settlements since the 2015 Spending Review, although both the Committee and the ASC have statutory obligations to deliver advice which requires resources across multiple years; this inevitably leads to resolve inefficiencies and challenges with maintaining and developing expertise in the Secretariat to support Committee and ASC work.

The funding which the ASC receives is shown below, as a relative comparison to the funding received by the Mitigation Committee for its duties under the Act (Figure 1), as requested. More information can be found in the [CCC's 2024 Annual Report and Accounts](#).



Figure 1 Comparison of funding by Committee



As Figure 1 shows the ASC has received a significant increase in funding to develop CCRA4 (which started in 2022-23) compared to CCRA3 (received in the financial years 2018-19 to 2020-21) and CCRA2 (received in the financial years 2013-14 to 2015-16). The ASC recognises the support received by Defra and the positive impact this will have on the quality and impact of the CCRA4 report, which will be published in Summer 2026. However, there remains a significant gap in the level of funding made available to support the Adaptation work programme compared to the Mitigation work programme overall even with this uplift.

Both Mitigation and Adaptation follow a five-year work cycle with each Committee required to provide regular progress reporting and advice in addition to a significant statutory report every five years – the Carbon Budget Advice Report for Mitigation and the CCRA for Adaptation. As shown in Figure 1, funding for the Mitigation work programme is profiled evenly across the five-year period whereas CCRA funding is profiled towards the end of each work programme. Funding for the second and third CCRA was provided across the last three years of each work programme. This caused a rapid upscaling of in-house capacity and expertise necessary to deliver the fourth assessment. It also meant that knowledge and expertise was lost at the end of the project due to a lack of funding.

## Plans to increase the profile of the ASC

We see the following as essential to ensuring the ASC can offer good advice on adaptation and resilience, and provide the necessary information to Parliament to hold Government to account:

- **Sufficient multiyear funding.** Proper resourcing for the ASC will allow it to continue to develop detailed evidence and advice on adaptation requirements for the country. This evidence can be incorporated into the adaptation monitoring frameworks developed and used by the CCC to review Government policies. In terms of outcomes, this evidence base and advice can help Government with policy making and resource allocation. We are currently proposing to our sponsoring departments that:
  - The overall adaptation funding (the core funding received over the CCRA4 period plus the funding received for CCRA4) should be increased by a small percentage (single figures).
  - Defra should provide a funding commitment for the full five-year period of CCR4, allowing the ASC to plan and manage our public grants effectively. This efficiency would allow the CCC to develop a core team for adaptation for the first time.

(To note, we have the same request for a multi-year settlement to DESNZ for the Committee's critical work on the UK carbon budgets and advice on mitigation.)

- **A strengthened overarching Government adaptation objective.** This should be evidence-based and action-oriented to drive the creation of a set of sectoral adaptation targets across Government. These should be advised on by the ASC.

The Committee asked what we could do with additional funding. These are some initial suggestions.

- **Effective data collection and monitoring for adaptation.** The monitoring frameworks developed by the Climate Change Committee in its Progress Reports highlight where data and monitoring are currently missing, making it difficult for Government to determine action and measure progress on adaptation.
- **Participate further in the network of international climate committees.** Many climate councils in other parts of the world are further ahead of the UK on adaptation and resilience and can provide new thinking and support. Conversations about funding for the CCC to do this are ongoing with FCDO.