

Climate Emergency: Bovey & Heathfield

COP26 – A CRUCIAL MOMENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE.

This month the UK will host an event many believe will be the world's best last chance to get runaway climate change under control.



COP26 is the 2021 United Nations climate change conference

For nearly three decades the UN has been bringing together almost every country on earth for global climate summits called COPs, which stands for 'Conference of the Parties' to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In that time climate change has gone from being a fringe issue to a global priority.

This year will be the 26th annual climate summit, giving it the name COP26. With the UK as President, COP26 is taking place in Glasgow.

In the run up to COP26 the UK, with its co-host Italy, has been working with every nation to reach agreement on how to tackle climate change. World leaders will arrive in Scotland, alongside thousands of negotiators, government representatives, businesses and citizens for twelve days of talks from 31 October until 12 November.

It is a huge task but it is not just yet another international summit as most experts believe COP26 has a unique urgency. To understand why, it is necessary to look back to a previous COP.

The importance of the Paris Agreement

COP21 took place in Paris in 2015 and, for the first time ever, something momentous happened. Every country agreed to work together to keep the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and try to limit the increase to 1½°; to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and to make money available to achieve these aims.

The Paris Agreement was born. The commitment to limit the increase to 1½° is important because every fraction of a degree of additional warming will result in many more lives disrupted and livelihoods damaged.

Under the Paris Agreement, each country committed itself to make a plan setting out how much it would reduce its greenhouse gases emissions. These national plans are known as Nationally Determined Contributions or 'NDCs'. They are often referred to as pledges.

They also agreed that every five years they would come back with updated emissions-reduction plans that would reflect their highest possible ambition at that time.

COP26 is the summit when these revised NDCs will be reviewed.

The run up to this year's summit in Glasgow (delayed by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic) has been the time when countries updated their plans for reducing emissions. The commitments made in Paris did not come close to limiting global warming to 1½° and the latest, 2020 Emissions Gap Report from the UN Environment Programme estimated that the NDCs made up until then would only limit the global average temperature rise to “in excess of 3° Celsius” above pre-industrial levels (i.e. at least 1° above the Paris Agreement's 2° upper temperature goal but in excess of 1½° above the hoped-for 1½° limit necessary to significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change).

The window for achieving the lower temperature target is closing and this decade, leading up to 2030, will be crucial.

So as momentous as the 2015 Paris Agreement was, countries must go much further than they did at that historic summit in order to limit the global temperature rise to 1½° Celsius. COP26 needs to be decisive.

The world will be watching.

COP26 explained

International climate summits are complex and more information may be found on the UK's COP26 Team website [HOME - UN Climate Change Conference \(COP26\) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 \(ukcop26.org\)](https://ukcop26.org/)

Mark Bailey

CEBH

cabh@boveytracey.gov.uk