

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:00hrs on 8 December, 2017

CITIZENS SUE GOVERNMENT FOR SAFE CLIMATE TARGET

Concerned citizens have formally launched historic legal action in the High Court to force the UK Government to align its climate change plans with science and international law.

The Government claims its carbon target for 2050 is world leading - but in fact it's leading only towards climate catastrophe.

Greg Clark and the Committee on Climate Change know - and acknowledge - that the target isn't safe and doesn't meet the Government's obligations under the Paris Agreement, which it advanced, signed and ratified.

Clark claims to have decided in October 2016 to retain the target anyway, but we only even know this because we are taking the Government to court.

That decision was not made public and appears to have been kept a closely-guarded secret.

Plan B, a legal charity established to support strategic legal action against climate change, and 11 co-claimants are demanding the Government reconciles its climate change legislation with science and international law - the purpose of which is to keep us all safe.

The claimants, aged between nine and 79, include a Rabbi, a medical doctor, university students worried about their futures, a single mother in social housing, and a lawyer from the British Virgin Islands who witnessed the destruction of Hurricane Irma at first hand.

The legal action has strong support from major backers, including the British Medical Journal, which is publishing an open letter of support signed by many eminent doctors.

Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party, is also backing our case, while Sir David King, former Government chief scientist, [said in September](#): "If it takes legal action to force ministers to behave properly, then so be it."

In September, Plan B sent the Government with a 'letter before action', challenging their ongoing failure to tackle the climate crisis. In response the Government confirmed its refusal to amend the carbon target to align to the Paris Agreement.

Tim Crosland, Director of Plan B says:

"The Government knows we're heading for disaster – in our lifetimes and our children's. It's criminal and scandalous that it knows exactly what it must do to avoid tragedy, but is too weak to do it. The situation is urgent. The situation is critical. So what's Greg Clark planning to do? Nothing. That's crazy - his lame excuses just don't wash. The Government's going to have a tough job explaining its position in Court. We shouldn't have to do this, but we don't have a choice. Because the Government refuses to budge, we must intervene before it's too late."

Even with the current 1°C of warming, hurricanes, drought, flooding and wildfires are gathering momentum, stoking conflict, driving mass displacement of people and destabilising our way of life.

If we go much further than that we risk crossing 'tipping points' in the climate system, with dire consequences for humanity.

The Government must do whatever it takes to maintain a safe climate for our children and grandchildren.

Crosland says:

“People don’t necessarily understand how serious and immediate the situation is. They imagine the worst consequences of climate change lie far off in the future. Unfortunately that’s just not true. But there’s also an opportunity here. A rapid transition to a clean economy will create millions of new jobs and new businesses; it will clean our air, bring cheaper energy and keep our homes safe from flooding. The UK is getting left behind, but with strong leadership it can still join the leading pack.”

If successful, the case will prompt Clark to increase the ambition of the UK’s 2050 carbon target in line with the Paris Agreement, helping to incentivise investment in clean technology, and encourage businesses and consumers to turn their backs on fossil fuels.

It’s time for the Government to show real climate and political leadership.

This case is part of a gathering global movement to hold governments and corporates to account for climate change through the Courts.

Details about our legal action

The form of legal action we’re taking is called a **judicial review**. The paperwork includes our **grounds of review**.

The **Defendant** is Greg Clark, the Minister for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Plan B has 11 **co-claimants**, who represent different constituencies impacted by climate change.

This is the start of the formal legal process. The Government will respond to our grounds in writing.

We are represented by some of the country’s leading lawyers, including **Bindmans** and **Jonathan Crow QC**.

Our case against the UK Government can set a **precedent of global application**, helping to establish principles for equitable division of the global carbon budget.

Plan B argues Greg Clark’s failure is: **Ultra vires** (an invalid excess of authority or power); **irrational**; and a **breach of fundamental human rights**.

Meet the claimants

WE ARE – PLAN B, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, committed to holding governments to account for their climate promises and to supporting the emerging global movement of climate litigation.

WE ARE – MHB, a 9-year-old boy, who says now is the time to stand up for people and animals.

WE ARE – SEBASTIEN KAYE, a 20-year-old student at Sussex University, demanding justice for young people around the world.

WE ARE – PARIS PALMANO, a relief worker who has witnessed the consequences of humanitarian catastrophe first hand.

WE ARE – MAYA CAMPBELL, who declines to accept the unjust burden on her generation and her family in the Global South.

WE ARE – LILY JOHNSON, an artist, who believes the next generation will feel betrayed by us if we do not act.

WE ARE – ROSE NAKANDI, a mother in social housing, standing up for the poorest and most vulnerable.

WE ARE – WILLIAM HARE, a lawyer in the British Virgin Islands who witnessed the destruction of Hurricane Irma first hand.

WE ARE – DR JO-ANNE VELTMAN, a children's doctor and mother, demanding better for our nation's health.

WE ARE – MAYA DOOLUB, a mother and grandmother of Mauritian heritage, standing up for the right of her homeland to survive.

WE ARE – RABBI JEFFREY NEWMAN, a father and grandfather, who knows we must do more than watch silently as tragedy unfolds.

WE ARE – DAME CARMEN CALLIL, who can see Grenfell Tower from her window, and urges the government to prevent avoidable tragedy while it can.

Notes to editors:

- In 2008, the UK Government introduced the Climate Change Act, setting a UK carbon target for 2050, tied to what was then considered the 'safe' global limit of 2°C of warming. The Act was the first of its kind, and is still used as a model by many countries around the world.
- *No-one thinks 2°C is safe any more.*
- The Act provides for the Secretary of State (Minister) to revise the target in line with developments in science and law.
- In December 2015, 195 Governments, including our own, signed the Paris Agreement. They pledged to hold warming to *well below* 2°C and to aim for a limit of 1.5°C - not because those limits are in any way safe, but because developments in scientific knowledge make 2°C look like suicide, taking the world beyond critical tipping points in the climate system.
- Please include the link to the Crowd Fund page: www.crowdjustice.com/case/planb

For more information, contact

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