

To the representatives and boards of all UKHACC members: A Call to Arms

29th June 2026

This year's weather makes clear that climate change impacts are with us. 40 days of continuous rain over the winter in some places. Five months of drought in the Southeast, Record temperatures in May. A cold snap. Then record temperatures in June, with storms and flash floods.

I thus write to make absolutely clear the need for urgent action at pace & scale. Please take a few moments to read what follows.

The Threat

Greenhouse gases (GHG) now trap 14.8 Hiroshima Bomb's worth of energy in our atmosphere every single second. This had already driven atmospheric temperatures up by 1.63°C by 2023, and we may breach 1.7-1.8°C within 14 months. Talk of 'being able to stay below 1.5 °C' is thus erroneous. The failure to report the breach is because the 'Paris Deal' of 2012 measures 20 year rolling averages, which cannot reflect fast-moving change.

Meanwhile, *emissions are still rising*: last year, they totalled nearly [60Gt of CO₂e](#).

Worse, *GHG concentrations are rising faster than emissions* because:

- [Sinks are failing](#)
- Multiple +ve feedback loops have been triggered, where heat drives other GHG emissions:
 - Melting methane clathrates from carbonate rock, and hydrates from land and undersea
 - Methane release from fermenting wetlands
 - Fires releasing (heating) black carbon & carbon monoxide which extend methane's half life
 - Destruction of trees & the bark microbiomes normally destroy methane
 - Warming tundra, which is now respiring and releasing CO₂
 - Release of CO₂ (a GHG) from fires (another 11Gt CO₂ last year alone)
 - Release of CO₂ release from respiring (unfreezing) tundra
 - Rainforest heating and destruction, now making them net CO₂ emitters
 - Increasing ozone flux from stratosphere to troposphere (where it acts as a GHG)
 - High altitude evaporated water (19km up) acting as a GHG

Worse still: *heating is rising faster than GHG concentrations*

- Loss of [surface albedo](#) less light reflected back into space (as we lose tree cover, snow and ice)
- Loss of [low altitude cloud](#) – [here](#) and [here](#)

But if this is bad, *we have grossly underestimated the hazards associated with any temperature rise*:

- IPCC data are shown in this on [Burning embers via Paul Behrens](#)
- The recent [Nature paper](#) states that for societal extreme weather impacts, "... **2 °C of global warming may turn out to be much more extreme than model-averaged projections at 3 °C or 4 °C warming**"

And *we have passed/ will soon pass irreversible tipping points*:

- [Coral Reefs will be lost](#)
- [AMOC is weakening already](#) and this won't stop
- [Amazon loss may soon be triggered](#)

Our very civilisation, and with it our health and survival, is [under immediate threat](#).

- The [food industry warns](#) that that our food supply can no longer be relied upon
- The [UK Joint Intelligence Committee review](#) (2026) stated that: "The UK's national security is under severe threat from the climate crisis " with, "food shortages and economic disaster potentially just years away".

- [DEFRA state](#) that it was "almost certain" that "by 2030...Britain's food and water supply and international trade networks are at strategic risk of catastrophic failure".
- [Actuaries warn](#) "Without immediate transformative change, our economy may not exist at all".

Limitations to Adaptation

This week, these have been laid bare. In London, on 22nd June, the Hammersmith and City lines and the Circle line were shut. There was (ironically) no rail connection between 2 Heathrow terminals. For national rail, heat causes overhead power cables to sag, and transformers to fail. Steel rails in the sun are 20°C hotter than air temperature. Network Rail typically enforces speed restrictions when track temperatures reach 46°C (roughly equivalent to an air temperature of 30°C- we will be at 38°C this week). Thermal expansion causes buckling. The Rail network asked that people make only essential journeys. Tarmac temperatures can be 20°C above air temp (65°C if air is 40°C), and standard tarmac (asphalt) road surfaces begin to soften and bleed bitumen when ground temperatures reach roughly 50-55°C. Think of the cost of adaptation for just transport, to the temperatures we are seeing this week. Meanwhile, schools were shut, impacting the economy as parents took time off for childcare. The London Ambulance Service saw its highest number of 999 calls ever seen. Hospitals faced collapse of IT systems, and failing operating theatre cooling. Critical Incidents were declared. Operations cancelled. Clay is already desiccating, meaning that 30% of London properties will be affected by subsidence by 2030. We see mounting wildfires, meaning that we need to re-equip and expand fire services. Electrical transformer life is shortened by raised temperatures, and very high temperatures can cause acute failure. Power lines sag too.

The problem, though, is that climate change isn't just about heatwaves. Parts of the UK saw 40 days of continuous rain this winter, with massive floods- likely to have cost the agricultural sector >£2bn. Then we had a drought for 5 months. Then a heatwave in May. Then a cold snap, when some put central heating back on. Then this heatwave and an associated massive thunderstorm, bringing floods and fires. Recent years have seen huge storm damage at coasts, and power lines felled across Scotland.

Action. Now.

What we see now is not the 'new normal'. These are the foothills of catastrophe. For any new stable CO₂ concentration, it takes <300 years for 80% of the heating to occur, and 1000 years until maximum temperature is reached. But we have entered a phase not of stability in CO₂ concentrations and heating, but of self-reinforcing collapse (above).

I thus write to ask that you take this seriously as individuals and as organisations. That you take personal action, and help your members to do the same. That you engage politically and publicly. Now.

UKHACC was soon to share its revised and simplified Commitments for Members. Given the evident emergency we face, we include a summary of them here (Appendix). The full set with expanded guidance will be released this week. We would ask that every member organisation take every step now which it is possible to take, and at speed. Convening boards as Emergency Meetings may indeed be necessary,

Your voice is important. We all need to act. Now. Financially. Politically. Socially.

There is no time left.



Prof Hugh Montgomery OBE FMedSci

Professor of Intensive Care Medicine, UCL; Co-chair Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change; Co-chair, UK Health Alliance on Climate Change.

APPENDIX: ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN. – *to be updated with commitments wording*

Declare a Climate Emergency

Move Bank Accounts and investments

The Problem: Every major high-street bank funds further fossil fuel extraction. The top 25 banks provided nearly \$1Tn in funding last year alone. Most investment portfolios fund climate change.

The Solution: Cooperative Bank and Triodos Bank do not fund fossil fuel extraction and use. For those organisations needing international bank transfers and financing, Handelsbanken is a large international bank which has this capacity. We can make C-Suite introductions if needed. It is possible to move investments to 'clean' fund, yet obtain good returns. We can provide detail of how this has been done by other organisations such as the UK Intensive Care Society.

Move Power Supplier and Electrify

The Problem: (i) The carbon footprint of electricity generation (ii) Moving money to a clean grid is needed.

The Solution: If having control over the power supply, move to a company such as GoodEnergy, Octopus or Ecotricity. If funds and space are available; install solar panels and air source heat pumps; replace gas cooker and boiler with electric.

Food

The problem: Nearly 38% of GHG emissions come from the food supply chain, much from meat and dairy production.

The solution: Plant-based/vegetarian/vegan meals at all meetings and conferences and at home.

Travel

The Problem: Emissions from powered transport

The Solution: For all meetings and conferences: online or cycle/walk (and make this possible) >> public transport (including ferries) >>> car share >>>>>> flying.

Communication

The Problem: Lack of Leadership

The Solution: Sessions in every conference; regularly refreshed dedicated and prominent material on websites; regular newsletter and email material. Encourage and support individual member action.

Political

The Problem: No politician will make unelectable choices

The Solution: Public communication over the need for climate action. Making the public health case. Support government ambition.

We ask that all member organisations take these actions as soon as is possible.

If not now, then when? If not us, then who?