BUILDING BRITAIN’S FUTURE
FOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT

UKGBC’s policy platform ‘Building Britain’s Future’ sets out 4 key opportunities for the next government to tackle the crises facing our country by renewing and greening the built environment.

This briefing explores the third opportunity and the game-changing policies urgently needed.

3. PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES FROM CLIMATE RISKS

WHAT’S THE OPPORTUNITY?

Our climate is changing rapidly and dangerously. Every part of the UK is threatened by more frequent extreme weather events caused by hotter, drier summers and wetter, windier winters. People are concerned about what the future holds.

The next government has an opportunity to reassure and protect people with a coherent vision for how we’re going to adapt as a country. In doing so they can harness the power of nature, with tree-lined streets, urban parks, and green roofs for flood and overheating protection, which will also reduce air pollution and boost mental and physical health, reducing pressure on the NHS.

Acting now will avoid greater disruption and costs for the economy and property owners, including through stranded assets.

CURRENT POLICIES

Despite the gravity of the issue, the Government’s National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) lacks leadership, urgency, funding, and oversight. It doesn’t have clear targets or metrics for progress, making it difficult for local governments and industry to get behind the effort.

Every planning decision is an opportunity to improve climate resilience and harness the power of nature, but adaptation currently doesn’t have legal priority over other considerations in planning policies.

Tree cover reduces overheating and flash flooding, but is sparse in most urban areas with limited national policies to support increased planting.

There is no strategic plan to retrofit the UK’s existing homes and commercial buildings for greater resilience to extreme temperatures and flooding, or with improved water efficiencies.

55% of UK homes suffer from overheating

Over 3,000 people died from the 2022 heatwave

3°C air temperature reduction from urban trees
GAME-CHANGING POLICIES
WE’RE CALLING FOR:

A ROBUST NATIONAL CLIMATE SAFETY PLAN

The next government must prioritise climate resilience and put it at the centre of government decision-making with clear ministerial responsibility and cross government coordination. The post-election Spending Review should announce a step-change in funding.

An urgent refresh of the National Adaptation Programme should set out a high-level vision with clear targets and metrics, so it is meaningful to organisations seeking to understand what role they need to play as part of a wider national effort.

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS TO BE PRIORITISED

The next government must update the planning system to centre adaptation and resilient measures which prioritise the use of nature to protect against climate risks. They should consult on a national Urban Greening Factor (UGF), a planning tool to increase quantity and quality of green infrastructure and nature in urban areas.

These will enhance neighbourhoods’ resilience to climate impacts, increase biodiversity, and allow local communities to adapt in a sustainable and healthy way.

INCREASED URBAN TREE COVER

The next government should throw its support behind the ‘3-30-300 rule’. This means 3 trees visible from every home, 30% canopy cover in each neighbourhood, and everyone just 300 metres from a biodiverse park or green space.

This means supporting local authorities to increase tree cover from an average of 16% to a minimum of 25% by 2030, improving wellbeing, microclimate, air quality and health, as well as mitigating flood and heat risk.

INVESTMENT IN RESILIENT RETROFITS

The next government should include climate resilience measures as part of a new national home retrofit strategy.

Government funding for adaptation measures such as fans and blinds, flood barriers, and external shutters will be needed for low-income households as part of a wider £64bn government funded national retrofit programme over 10 years (see opportunity one).

GET INVOLVED

- Visit our website, a central hub for the general election and beyond.
- Read our 4 point policy platform ‘Building Britain’s Future’ and our other policy guides.
- Contact us at policy@ukgbc.org.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- UKGBC’s NAP3 Policy Scorecard
- Climate Resilience Roadmap
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- The Nature Recovery & Climate Resilience Playbook for local authorities

The UK Green Building Council represents the unified voice of the UK’s sustainable built environment industry. It is a charity powered by more than 700 members from banks, large estate owners, housebuilders, and manufacturers to innovative startups, universities, local councils and government departments - all working to transform the built environment in the face of the climate, nature and cost-of-living crises.