How climate action will help people in Ashfield

Friends of the Earth

Responding to the negativity around climate targets and Net Zero

23,800
households with warmer homes

54%
of neighbourhoods with safer air

A reversal of the
50%
decline in buses since 2010

Our television screens regularly show the human consequences of extreme weather events driven by climate change. From the floods in Valencia, Spain which killed more than 220 people, to the wildfires in Los Angeles which caused up to $164 billion in damage, and the harm caused to farming in the UK through unprecedented wet weather with harvests declining by as much as 38%.

According to Environment Agency data on flooding from rivers and seas, in Ashfield, 140 properties are at risk of flooding. Many more properties will be at risk of flash flooding from overwhelmed drainage systems during periods of intense rainfall. Poorer people in our communities and overseas are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather and the welfare of future generations is significantly endangered.

What is less in the media is the benefit from acting on climate change, the jobs, warmer homes, cleaner air, etc. This briefing outlines how people in Ashfield will benefit.

The context is that on 26th February the Climate Change Committee – the government's official advisors - will recommend a target for carbon emission reductions by 2040 and a pathway for meeting it.

Warmer homes and cheaper energy bills

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine global gas prices sky-rocketed and they remain high. The UK was particularly hard hit because our homes are poorly insulated compared to others across Europe, we mostly use gas for heating, and a large proportion of our electricity is produced from gas. The fact that gas is still produced in the North Sea made no difference because the private companies involved sell the gas at market prices; we don't benefit but they make bumper profits. Even though the last government subsidised energy bills by more than £40 billion, household energy bill debts has risen to almost £4 billion.

Meeting carbon targets requires insulating homes and producing more of our energy from renewable sources, which are now the cheapest source of energy. As well as reducing energy bills this will also increase energy security.

> In Ashfield, 56% of homes are rated EPC "D" or below, meaning those houses are particularly bad at retaining heat. That's 23,800 households with unnecessarily high energy bills. The previous Conservative government promised as many homes as possible would be well insulated to EPC C standard by 2035. The new government is likely to set its own target later this year in its Warm Homes Plan.

Fixing-up homes to meet carbon emission reduction targets won't only save household energy bills, according to the 2024 Marmot Report on cold homes, tens of billions of pounds are lost each year through ill health and lost productivity. The UK also has 80% higher missed school days than the EU average due to illnesses associated with damp and mould.

Cleaner air

Electric cars are cleaner, quieter and much more energy efficient than petrol and diesel cars. They are also much cheaper to run, saving £700 per year in fuel costs. Someone buying a new electric vehicle in 2026 will recoup the additional upfront cost of purchase within 5 years and after that they will be saving money compared to someone driving a petrol or diesel equivalent car. The price of electric vehicles is also falling due to cheaper but better batteries and many cheaper models are scheduled for release this year.

Petrol and diesel vehicles are also a major contributor to air pollution. Air pollution costs up to 43,000 lives in the UK and is responsible for health impacts ranging from lung cancer and worsening asthma symptoms to triggering heart attacks and strokes. Dirty air creates a massive burden on health services and business – the costs of illness and lost workdays are estimated to add up to £20 billion a year.

> In Ashfield, levels of the harmful pollutant nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) are above World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines in 54% of neighbourhoods and levels of the equally harmful pollutant $PM_{2.5}$ are above WHO guidelines in 100% of neighbourhoods. 9,150 constituents in Ashfield suffer from a respiratory disease like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

The government has a target for 100% of cars sold in 2030 to be electric. This will make a significant contribution to meeting carbon emission reduction targets as well as improve health and reduce pressures on the NHS.

Better buses

The government is speeding up greater regulation of bus services, that started with Manchester under the last government. Buses are the workhorse of the public transport system and essential to enable those without a car to access jobs, services and social networks. Buses also help reduce congestion and can lead to carbon reductions if the services are good enough to enable people to leave their car at home.

> In Ashfield 20% of households don't have access to a car. Bus services have also declined by 50% since 2010 according to research by the University of Leeds.

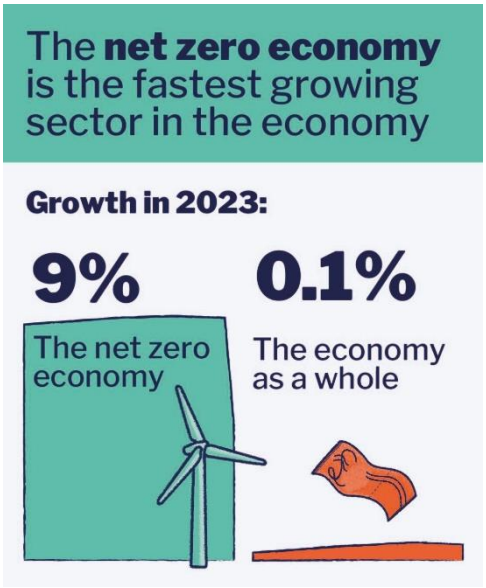
More jobs and economic growth

Contrary to what some politicians and some of the media say, reducing carbon emissions can boost the economy and create jobs. That isn't to say that in some locations job losses aren't a worry. In these areas action is needed to enable these workers to retrain and get new jobs. But overall, there will be many more jobs and significant economic gains.

According to the latest data, the net zero economy is the fastest growing sector in the economy. It grew by 9% in 2023 compared to 0.1% for the economy as a whole. The jobs it provides also have 20% higher salaries than average according to the Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit.

> There are 1,300 people working full-time in net zero jobs in Ashfield and contribute £153 million to the economy.

The green economy includes sectors such as renewable energy and storage, housing retrofit, low-carbon vehicles, climate adaptation and management of the natural environment.



What voters think

Ahead of the 2024 General Election 61% of voters in Ashfield said that environment and climate change policies were important issues for them. Their MP should speak-up for them and call for a fair and ambitious climate plan that improves the quality of their lives and the local economy.

Methodology and data sources

Properties at Risk of Flooding: Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea - Postcodes in Areas at Risk, Environment Agency, 2025: https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/5a98b0a1-2741-4b2f-a51b-5b42f13219f2/risk-of-flooding-from-rivers-and-sea-postcodes-in-areas-at-risk2. Postcode level data assigned to parliamentary constituencies using a postcode to constituency lookup derived by Friends of the Earth from ONS data.

Number and proportion of homes in EPC bands D or below (cold homes). Energy Performance of Buildings Data: England and Wales data, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2024. https://epc.opendatacommunities.org/ . Address level data assigned to constituency using a postcode to constituency lookup derived by Friends of the Earth from ONS data.

Prevalence of respiratory diseases: Constituency data: health conditions, House of Commons, 2023. commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-data-how-healthy-is-your-area/ . This data is only available for England, not Wales.

Neighbourhoods with NO_2 and $PM_{2.5}$ levels above WHO guidelines: Friends of the Earth analysis of modelled background air pollution, 2021-23. uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/pcm-data . 1x1 km grid data aggregated to LSOA boundaries by Friends of the Earth.

Households without access to a car: Census 2021. www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/c2021ts045 . Data aggregated to constituencies using a LSOA to constituency lookup derived by Friends of the Earth using ONS spatial data.

Bus service trends: Friends of the Earth and University of Leeds analysis: Bus service trends 2010-2023. policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/how-britains-bus-services-have-drastically-declined

Net Zero Economy: The UK's net zero economy: Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit, February 2024. https://eciu.net/analysis/reports/2024/the-uks-net-zero-economy-2024 . Local authority data aggregated to constituency data using a lookup derived by Friends of the Earth using ONS spatial data.

Polling on importance of climate change to voters: Commitment to Climate Change: Survation Topical MRP Constituency Modelling on behalf of Greenpeace, September 2023. https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/resources/climate-opinion-poll/

Friends of the Earth