

Briefing Notes and Key Takeaways

Compiled by [Dr. Victoria Harvey](#)

Introduction

On 27 November 2025, Westminster Hall hosted a National Emergency Briefing, bringing together more than 1,200 invited politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport, and the media. Introduced by Chris Packham CBE, ten of the UK's foremost experts addressed the audience on the threats posed by climate change and nature loss - along with the opportunities from genuine emergency action.

- **Chair:** Professor Mike Berners-Lee
- **Weather Extremes:** Professor Hayley Fowler
- **Climate:** Professor Kevin Anderson
- **Tipping Points:** Professor Tim Lenton OBE
- **Nature:** Professor Nathalie Seddon
- **Food Security:** Professor Paul Behrens
- **Health:** Professor Hugh Montgomery OBE
- **National Security:** Lt General Richard Nugee, CBE
- **Economics:** Angela Francis
- **Energy Transition:** Tessa Khan

This National Emergency Briefing has since been adapted into a film for public release: the People's Emergency Briefing. The goal is to reset the national conversation and secure a government-led televised emergency briefing from independent experts - an essential first step towards the emergency action now needed.

This document accompanies both the original event and the film, offering notes from each expert talk - including key issues and suggested solutions - equipping you with the facts needed to start conversations within your community, with colleagues, peers, friends, and family.

With news recently of suppressed government reports on the threats from nature collapse, and of serious food supply concerns, it is clear that government is choosing not to be fully transparent with the UK public. So civil society is stepping up.

Thank you for being part of this initiative to raise public awareness so that we rise to the challenge.

Simon & Nick Oldridge
on behalf of the team at

National Emergency Briefing

www.nebriefing.org

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Weather Extremes - Professor Hayley Fowler

Newcastle University

The increase of greenhouse gases means more trapped heat, loading the atmosphere with more moisture. It drives warmer, wetter winters, and hotter, drier summers, and it supercharges extremes – storms and downpours, and heatwaves that persist for longer, fueling wildfires.

Key Issues:

- By 2050, 1 in 4 properties - 8 million in England - will be at risk of flooding
- UK winter rainfall has increased by 10% since 1980 because of the fossil fuels we're putting into the atmosphere - equivalent to 3 million Olympic sized swimming pools.
- Heatwaves in Europe are intensifying faster than anywhere in the world and much faster than climate models predict.
- In 2025, a wildfire in Dorset was so severe that 17 fire services had to respond. UK fire services no longer have the resources to keep the public safe in extreme heat. And as heatwaves get longer and hotter, fires will become more common.
- Blocked jet stream patterns are causing heatwaves that persist for longer, fueling wildfires, and causing slow-moving storms with catastrophic floods.
- The mega floods seen in recent years in Europe could happen here. These storms can produce two thirds of a year's rainfall in just a couple of days. Over London, that would mean about 35cm of rainfall falling over a large area. A flood of this scale will be a national crisis. Recovery would take years.
- England alone has over 2,000 raised reservoirs, many built more than a century ago and designed for what was then a 1 in 1000 year rainfall event. But these extremes are no longer rare.
- In the Global South, some heatwaves can now kill even a healthy person resting in the shade.
- The Climate Change Committee warns that the UK is not prepared. Across all sectors assessed, not a single outcome was rated as being delivered at a good level.
- We're still building infrastructure that isn't resilient to today's climate - never mind tomorrow's
- We're not adequately addressing cascading climate risks and failures where another event hits before recovery from the first.

Key Solutions

Until we stop burning fossil fuels, extreme weather will continue to get worse. Cutting emissions isn't enough. We must also adapt to protect people and livelihoods which means:

- upgrading flood defenses, drainage and early-warning systems to cope with more intense rainfall
- retrofitting homes to withstand extreme heat and cold - which also cuts energy bills, reduces emissions, improves health, especially for people in low quality housing
- planting trees and building flood-absorbing parks - which also cools cities, it cleans the air and it gives people green spaces that boost wellbeing and biodiversity
- stress-testing critical infrastructure so it keeps going during extreme events
- Address the gaps identified by the Climate Change Committee: weak governance, unclear responsibilities, and insufficient funding.

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Climate - Professor Kevin Anderson

Universities of Manchester and Uppsala

Human civilisation has flourished thanks to a stable climate where carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere (measured in 'parts per million' - ppm) remained within a very narrow band. But since the 1850's we have dramatically increased CO₂ concentrations from 280 ppm to up to around 424 ppm - which has driven up average temperatures by around 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. We now risk 3°C or 4°C of warming by the end of the century, threatening societal and systemic collapse.

Key Issue Statements:

- The 1.5°C target is now effectively out of reach — virtually no climate scientists believe it's still achievable.
- To stay within 2°C, global emissions must fall 8% every year — more than the peak reduction seen during COVID.
- The UK's fair share of the remaining 2°C budget (somewhere around 2.0 to 2.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide) is only about 7 years' worth of current emissions, requiring cuts of around 13% per year.
- The CO₂ we're putting in the atmosphere now is not being absorbed at quite the same level as it was previously by the biosphere.
- The UK is the first nation to have cut its emissions by 50% since 1990, but, that excludes international aviation and shipping and our imports and exports. If you include those, the reduction is about 20% since 1990 - 0.6% every year on average.
- The pathway the UK government is following to net zero would consume three times the UK's equal per person share of the global carbon budget for 1.5°C.

Key Solutions

- What works: home retrofitting, zero-carbon new builds, rapid public transport, EV charging, zero-carbon electricity, and electrification - deployed at a wartime ("Marshall Plan") scale.
- Aviation cannot be decarbonised within any realistic 1.5 – 2°C timeline - deep cuts are necessary.
- The following are only delay tactics: gas or bioenergy with carbon capture and blue hydrogen. Carbon capture technology has been promised for 30 years but still captures less than 0.03% of all fossil fuel emissions.
- Discretionary emissions are locked into the lives of us high income, high emitters – we need a future of private sufficiency and public luxury.

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Nature - Professor Nathalie Seddon

University of Oxford

When we destroy nature, we expose ourselves to escalating risks: floods, fires, heat waves, food insecurity and economic instability. When we protect and restore nature, we can build resilience, create jobs, and strengthen the foundations of a safe, happy and prosperous community and country.

Key Issues:

- The UK ranks in the bottom 10% of countries globally on the Biodiversity Intactness Index.
- Only about half of the UK's biodiversity remains.
- UK monitored wildlife populations have declined by around 19% since the 1970s, with 1 in 6 species now at risk of extinction.
- Only 14% of rivers in England are in good ecological health under our own water framework regulations.
- Only 7% of our woodlands are healthy, 3% of our land and 8% of our waters are considered effectively protected for nature.
- The Government is largely off track on almost every target set under the Environment Act.
- Over 5 million properties in England are already at risk of flooding from rivers, surface water or the sea.
- Soil degradation costs England and Wales around £1 billion per year.
- Pollinators contribute over half a billion pounds annually to UK agriculture – but pesticides and habitat loss continue to push them into steep decline.
- 2022, nearly 3,000 people in England died from heat related causes - more than from road traffic accidents.

Key Solutions

- We need to treat nature as critical infrastructure and recognise that the economy is embedded within the environment.
- Stop public and private finance flowing into activities which cause harm like polluting rivers, degrading soils, and destroying habitats.
- Instead, reward restoration: restoring wetlands, peatlands and hedgerows cuts flood peaks, improves water quality, creates jobs, and stores carbon.
- We need to redirect finance and measure what actually matters to us - The Bank of England needs to stress-test nature related risks, just as it does for climate.
- The UK is actually among global leaders in natural capital accounting - let's build on that.
- We have to cultivate a culture of care in this country. National security begins in our communities - we need nature woven back into our daily lives.

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Tipping Points - Professor Tim Lenton

University of Exeter

A tipping point can be found by leaning back too far on your chair. A small amount of self propulsion is going to make a big difference to your fate. Tipping points can happen in all kinds of complex systems, and there's plenty of evidence that we're heading towards several of these tipping points, risking a cascade - where damaging changes propel one another and we lose control.

Key Issue:

- The Global Tipping Points report 2025, shows we're likely to cross 1.5° in 2030, and have already crossed a tipping point for the world's coral reef ecosystems that support the livelihoods of around half a billion people.
- As we head over 1.5°C of global warming in the future, we risk a tipping of the Amazon rainforest - a catastrophe for nature, adding carbon to the atmosphere and removing reflective cloud cover.
- The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, (AMOC¹) is crucial for regulating Earth's climate, particularly by maintaining Europe's relatively mild climate. But it is weakening and can pass a tipping point in some of the state-of-the-art climate models that we run.
- If AMOC crosses a tipping point, in some models, it shows that London would be -20°C in three frozen months of the year, and Edinburgh would be -30°C in five and a half frozen months of the year. And yet the summers will still be hotter than today because it's a 2°C warmer world.
- This scenario eliminates the possibility to grow crops in the UK - and there would be not enough water from the winters to get through the summers in the south east of England.
- If we go anywhere near 2°C, then the odds of crossing that tipping point are definitely worse than Russian roulette, or a one in six chance - rising to a 50% chance at 3°C of warming.
- The risks go up markedly for every fraction of a degree.

Key Solutions

- Do everything in our power to limit the amount by which we exceed 1.5°C - which requires a "radical acceleration of action towards zero emissions".
- Promote positive tipping points across personal and goods transport as well as heating homes - crucial sectors that make up a large portion of total emissions.
- The most effective policies are mandates to phase out the fossil fuel tech and phase in clean technology.
- There's a key role for civil society in helping create a positive tipping point that can accelerate us out of trouble.

¹ The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, (AMOC), (a massive system of ocean currents acting carrying warm surface water from the tropics northwards to the North Atlantic and returning cold, deep water southward.

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Food Security - Professor Paul Behrens

University of Oxford

The increasing pressure on global food supplies in the face of accelerating climate change and nature loss affects every family and every constituent in this country. When food systems fail and we see empty supermarket shelves with people queuing for hours for food, protests and civil unrest start to occur.

Key Issues:

- Before climate change, a major corn harvest failure might happen once every 16 years. At 1.5 degrees of warming, that rises to once every three years, at 2°C, it's once every other year.
- Projections suggest that overall we'll lose around a third of the land suitable for food by the end of the century.
- Britain has seen three of the five worst cereal harvests on record occur this decade.
- Animal agriculture takes up around 85% of total agricultural land in the UK.
- The UK is deeply dependent on the rest of the world, importing around 40% to 50% of its food, - much of this from regions that are hammered by climatic impacts.
- One third of the food price inflation that we saw in 2023 was driven by extreme weather events. When families can't afford to feed their children, societies break down.
- Civil unrest driven by food supply crises is 40% possible within a decade or possibly 80% likely within 50 years - yet our agricultural policies barely acknowledge these risks.
- Our food system is damaging the very foundations of our food security – it drives the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, catastrophic habitat loss, pollutes our water, our air, depletes our freshwater, drives antimicrobial resistance and creates the conditions for the emergence of new pandemics.

Key Solutions

- We need a great food transformation built on four main pillars: (1) shifting to plant-rich diets, (2) reducing food waste, (3) improving production and (4) increasing climate resilience.
- Sustainable, healthy diets can still include some meat and dairy, just far less of it - a red meat burger once every two weeks, a chicken breast once a week and a quarter of a pint of dairy each day, maybe a bit of cheese.
- Implement the excellent recommendations in the National Food Strategy.
- Plant-rich diets would reduce our agricultural emissions by about 60% and we'd spare an area almost the size of Scotland across the UK - as well as delivering a wide range of co-benefits.
- We can use some of the spare land to grow more of our food here in the UK - and some to restore nature.
- When New York hospitals made their foods plant-rich by default, they found greater satisfaction among patients, better health outcomes and bigger budget savings.
- We can cut over-reliance on imports and feed many more people per hectare on a plant-rich diet – the UK could be largely self-sufficient in many major crops if we made a shift.

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Health - Professor Hugh Montgomery OBE

University College London

In my view, climate change is the greatest threat to human health of the 21st century. I am scared - I'm 63, I'm scared for my own life and future, and I'm absolutely terrified for that of my son. And you should be too.

Key Issues:

- The Lancet Countdown² maps 20 indicators of the health hazards of climate change, in 2025, with twelve breaking records, including hazards to respiratory health, as well as changes in communicable diseases.
- At 3°C or more of heating by 2050, there could be more than 4 billion deaths.
- Overall, the effects of climate change – crumbling economies, food shortages, migration, means our health service becomes overloaded.
- We won't be able to fund a health service if we continue down this path. Climate losses to extreme weather events are \$10,000 **a second** globally, with the Institute of Actuaries warning recently that the global economy could drop by 50% by 2070.
- The State of the Climate report from 2024 stated - "We are on the brink of an irreversible climate disaster." "Much of the very fabric of life on Earth is imperiled. This is a global emergency beyond any doubt."³

Key Solutions

- We need transformational change now if we're going to survive.
- We need to get rid of particulate pollution, therefore reducing impacts on respiratory health and using active transport and physical activity to move around.
- We need to move to plant based diets, reducing cancers, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke and more - if we make these moves to the recommended diet, we get longer lives, lower emissions, and enormous cash savings.
- These changes also reduce obesity - if we fix that, it would save this country £126 billion a year.

² The Lancet Countdown is an international research collaboration that monitors the evolving links between public health and climate change.

³ Ripple et al, "The 2024 state of the climate report: Perilous times on planet Earth", BioScience, Volume 74, Issue 12, December 2024, Pages 812–824. [Link](#).

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Economics - Angela Francis

Director of Policy Solutions at WWF-UK

In every transition, every industrial and agricultural revolution, new technologies replace the old, societies change, and innovation and productivity leaps. There are two big issues which are slowing us down towards a green transition - market rules are not driving the right outcomes and the old world is not making way for the new.

Key Issues:

- Market failures exist - companies reporting their carbon emissions and investing in sustainability face disadvantages: they absorb higher costs and a short-term dip in financial performance before long-term gains, while competitors who do nothing face no penalties.
- Just as we saw with the tobacco industry, too many companies put profit before progress - they buy lobbyists, media space, and even politicians - to sow doubt and distrust.
- Inflation would have been 7% lower if we had decarbonised the power sector ahead of Russia invading Ukraine. It would have been a further 9% lower if our food system wasn't linked to fossil fuels through fertiliser prices, which went up 400% at that same time, and it would have been 11% lower if we had switched to heat pumps earlier.
- The costs of inaction massively outweigh the cost of action.
- Bad arguments, such as “we can't afford net zero” don't hold – for example the Climate Change Committee's balanced pathway⁴ is equivalent to about £4 billion a year - that's 0.2% of GDP and we can start seeing that pay back from 2041.

Key Solutions

- It's government's job to change the rules when there are obvious market failures like this.
- Align incentives so standards, taxes, subsidies, procurement all back the businesses that are investing and innovating to reduce risk - reward businesses that are working to lower carbon, restore soils, maintain forests, practice circular use of resources and reduce waste.
- Fossil fuel companies and big agricultural companies could diversify and clean up their act.
- Independent voices – such as academics and civil society are really important right now.
- Support for retraining people is essential - we want people to find better jobs in more successful, more productive firms.
- The majority of investment towards net zero (40% to 90%) would be paid by the private sector and the public sector share could be funded by national banks and asset backed lending.
- The Oxford Martin School compared a fast, a slow and no transition - faster is cheaper saving \$12 trillion compared to staying on fossil fuels - more than twice the saving of a slow transition.
- The cost of the whole UK transition is now 73% cheaper than thought only five years ago.

⁴ The Climate Change Committee's (CCC) Balanced Pathway recommends reducing UK emissions by 87% by 2040 (against 1990 levels) to meet net zero by 2050. ([Link](#))

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National Security – Lt Gen. Richard Nugee CBE

Non-Exec Member - Defence Safety and Environmental Committee

The MOD⁵ is now looking at environmental impacts with a team working on climate security, energy self-sufficiency for our forces, and how they can adapt to a rapidly changing planet. The Chief of Defence staff is engaged in factoring climate into national security, other countries and NATO are doing the same - because the threat picture is shifting faster than we anticipated.

Key Issues:

- The Strategic Defence Review calls for a whole of society approach and NATO Article 3 stresses the need for each country's ability to withstand and recover from all types of shocks, whether they are military, natural disasters or other crises.
- Climate change can be thought of as a threat multiplier, making existing threats worse or more frequent, and introducing new threats.
- Climate shocks fuel global instability - when farmers can no longer earn a living, they're recruited by non-state actors, we saw this in Afghanistan, and with ISIS in Iraq.
- Competition for water, food and land is rising. We see this in tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia and potential flashpoints already seen involving Pakistan, India and China. "There are only nine meals between mankind and anarchy."
- "What concerns me most is not any single crisis. It's crises cascading together. Multiple crises: food, health, infrastructure, migration, energy, extreme weather etc, all hitting at the same time, eroding trust in government by slow or failed responses... Government systems and institutions risk being overwhelmed, not just strained. The biggest concern is that we're facing the potential of an ungovernable state unless Government takes this seriously."
- People are forced to move within countries and across borders and that puts pressure on receiving regions, stokes instability and feeds into wider political tensions.
- The climate crisis is now shaping strategic and military competition. For example, with sea ice receding at four times the rate of the rest of the world, the Russian Duma has claimed the Arctic as a Russian internal sea, whereas we treat it as international waters - bringing risk of conflict over access, resources, and over shipping routes.
- UK infrastructure is at risk: in 2019, the Royal Air Force had to send Chinooks to drop concrete and prevent a dam collapse after torrential rain. Not long after that, two dams collapsed in Libya.

Key Solutions

- Acting on climate will make Britain safer and more resilient.
- Energy independence, - renewables storage on a decentralised grid reduces our dependence on foreign oil and gas and they're less vulnerable - decentralised and dispersed energy cannot be knocked out with a single missile.
- "Some are using the threat from Russia to say, well, let's not worry about climate change now — or not at all. But that's a false choice. Tackling climate is central to our national resilience today. It's part of all today's security threats, not tomorrow"
- In the military, you learn a clear principle: face the threat that is in front of you, not the threat as you would wish it to be. Let's make sure we follow this principle.

⁵ Ministry of Defence

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Energy Transition – Tessa Khan: Executive Director at Uplift

Our skyrocketing energy bills have been a major factor driving inflation and the cost of living pressure felt by so many people and businesses. This is a significant political risk for that energy transition. Thankfully, the evidence is clear that an energy system powered by renewables will indeed be more affordable and more economically secure.

Key Issues:

- Around half of the UK's recessions since 1970 have been caused by fossil fuel price shocks.
- The UK Government spent £64 billion to help households and businesses after the spike in wholesale gas prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine - more than the UK's annual defence budget that year.
- In addition, the extra cost of gas, electricity and fuel paid by households was another £60 billion.
- The UN Fuel Poverty Coalition states there are now more than 12 million households across the UK who are struggling to pay their energy bills.
- We heat more than 80% of our homes across the UK with gas and this has led to an intolerable financial crisis for countless people.

Key Solutions

- An energy system shift - based on sun or wind which is free forever, whereas the price that you pay for a barrel of oil is determined by a cartel of petrostates or dictators.
- No reason to delay the shift - the cost of electricity from offshore wind has dropped more than 50% in the last decade, more than 70% for solar, and the price of battery storage has dropped more than 80% in that same period.
- Electric cars - renewables are vastly more efficient than fossil fuels - a typical petrol car only uses about 25% of the energy in its fuel to actually move its wheels. Most is lost as heat, and the fossil fuel system as a whole wastes about two thirds of the raw energy that goes into it.
- Fix our drafty, 'coldest housing stock in Europe' with insulation as well as upfront investment and shift our infrastructure to support clean electricity, upgrading our grid and switching to heat pumps.
- Structure our bills so that they reflect the true lower costs of renewable power.
- Break the link between gas and electricity prices by taking gas powered stations into public control.
- Investment to back the Government's plan for creating almost a million clean energy jobs (the jobs supported by the oil and gas sector have halved).
- History shows we can make the transition - to move from coal to gas we retrofitted or replaced more than 30 million appliances, constructed vast new transmission networks, and rebuilt regional gas distribution. We need another transition, ensuring fairness for those working in it.

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Chair: Professor Mike Berners-Lee

Expert on the polycrisis, Lancaster University

Closing Statements

- In the words of James Baldwin, human rights campaigner, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced”.
- The situation is not yet hopeless, but we do have our backs right up against the wall. As we've heard, it's not surprising that the climate is coming to bite us after 30 Conference of the Parties (COP) have failed to even reduce the rate at which we're putting fossil fuel emissions into the atmosphere. And now, even after COP30, attended by 1,600 fossil fuel lobbyists, the words 'fossil fuels' have been taken out of the final text. Our response couldn't be more inadequate.
- But through these briefings, we have faced the main issues, so that together, we can start to deal with them.
- Firstly, we want a reset of the national conversation, to establish the evidence and the stakes. We are asking for a World War Two level of leadership because our society depends on it.
- We need emergency legislation, investment and job creation. And none of that is possible without a campaign of public information and engagement. And we're calling on your help in this regard.
- One specific ask on this right now is that you [sign this letter](#) to Keir Starmer, and to all the public service broadcasters and to Ofcom.
- We also ask that you show the Public Emergency Briefing Film to as many people in your community as you can, arrange viewings and spread the word. Engage with your political leaders – ask them to be accountable and to take action.
- Between us all, we can give the UK the credibility to help lead the global response along with other proactive countries. This situation is not hopeless, but hope is a discipline. It needs human endeavor to make it a reality. So we are asking you now to have courage in this critical moment. Think of yourself looking back in 20 years time and asking what you did. Think how good it will feel to have been here and to have done the right thing.