

BRIEFING NOTE FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Why Climate Change Matters for MPs: Roles, Responsibilities and Legal Obligation

Purpose: to support engagement in MPs and their staff in engagement with schools and young people as part of GLOBE's Student-MP Climate Surgeries at London Climate Action Week

UK's Legal Commitment to Net Zero

The UK has a legally binding commitment to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This target was introduced through an amendment to the **Climate Change Act 2008**, positioning the UK as the first major economy to embed a net zero goal in law. Members of Parliament (MPs) are responsible for supporting, scrutinizing, and enacting legislation that aligns with this long-term national objective.

Parliamentary Committees

MPs contribute to the UK's climate policy through a number of mechanisms, including parliamentary select committees. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) oversees the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), reviewing issues related to farming, food security, and environmental protection. The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) plays a cross-departmental role by assessing how policies contribute to sustainable development and whether the UK is on track to meet its environmental targets. These committees are two of a number of key select committees that produce evidence-based reports that influence policy decisions, parliamentary and public debate.

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

While no APPG focuses exclusively on climate change, several relevant groups provide platforms for MPs to engage with experts, industry, and civil society. These include the APPG on Net Zero, the APPG on the Environment, and the APPG on Sustainable Finance. These informal cross-party groups host briefings, facilitate discussions, and publish recommendations that can inform parliamentary work.

Cross-Committee Engagement During COP26

During preparations for COP26 in 2021, six parliamentary committees coordinated efforts to scrutinize the UK's climate strategy. This included regular engagements with the COP26 President, Lord Alok Sharma, and the production of joint reports. This collaboration demonstrated a model of effective cross-party and cross-committee engagement on climate issues, providing a precedent for future parliamentary coordination.

Legislative Responsibility and the Constituency Role of MPs

- Legislative Responsibilities

Members of Parliament are central to the legislative process. They are responsible for scrutinizing, debating, and passing laws that affect all areas of public life, including climate policy. MPs also engage in post-legislative scrutiny, which involves reviewing whether laws are achieving their intended outcomes and remain fit for purpose. Additionally, MPs vote on the national budget, including funding allocations for climate-related infrastructure, education, and adaptation efforts. These responsibilities mean that MPs are key actors in shaping and implementing the UK's climate agenda.

- Constituency Responsibilities

Alongside their national duties, MPs have a fundamental responsibility to represent the interests of their constituents. This includes listening to and engaging with young people who are increasingly concerned about the long-term impacts of climate change. Climate change disproportionately affects future generations, making youth engagement not only relevant but essential to informed and representative decision-making.

MPs serve as a bridge between national legislation and local impact. By engaging with students through climate surgeries, they fulfil their role as local representatives while gaining insight into the perspectives of the next generation of voters and leaders.

Why It Matters?

Ensuring that MPs and their staff understand their role in addressing climate change is critical to achieving national climate targets. Climate surgeries provide an opportunity for informed, constructive dialogue between students and their elected representatives. They also promote transparency, accountability, and youth participation in democratic processes, helping MPs make evidence-based, future-focused decisions in both their legislative and constituency work.

How the Student-MP Climate Surgeries can support citizenship and climate action

The **Student-MP Climate Surgeries** were initiated by GLOBE Legislators (also known as GLOBE International) at the inaugural London Climate Action Week in 2019. They were developed as an educational response by GLOBE to the student climate strikes and surge in youth climate activism in 2018/2019. More here about the [origin of the Climate Surgeries](#) and their relevance in the London context.

The Student MP Climate Surgeries complement the Lesson Plan on “[Write to your London MP](#)”, which is part of the [LCAW London Climate Curriculum](#), a free resource shared annually with London’s schools, as preparation for London Climate Action Week.

The Climate Surgeries are an annual flagship event of **London Climate Action Week**, now the world’s largest whole-of-society climate mobilisation event. Both LCAW and the Surgeries have since gone global. LCAW has now inspired similar climate action weeks in **Auckland**, [Baku](#), [Bangkok](#), **Dublin**, **Prague**, [Rio de Janeiro](#) and **Sydney**.

The Climate Surgeries have also been featured at Pavilions at **UNFCCC COP27 (Sharm El-Sheikh)**, **COP28 (Dubai)** and **COP29 (Baku)**. They are recognised as a pioneering way of engaging students and their elected members of parliament in informed conversations on climate change and democratic participation. They are intended as a mutually beneficial two-way dialogue and learning opportunity, making visible young people’s concerns and identifying solutions.

ABOUT GLOBE LEGISLATORS

[GLOBE Legislators](#) is an independent, non-partisan, cross-party organisation, founded in 1991 by Al Gore, John Kerry and their counterparts across the globe, working to promote legislative leadership on climate change and sustainable development.

GLOBE also serves as the **UNFCCC Focal Point for parliamentarians** bringing the world’s parliamentarians and parliamentary networks together at UNFCCC COPs and keeping them updated on developments.

The **Student-MP Climate Surgeries** are part of GLOBE’s educational mandate and help implement the ACE (Action for Climate Empowerment) obligation of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. They link with GLOBE’s broader educational engagement with young people and the education sector, including the [LCAW schools action initiative](#), initiated by GLOBE in collaboration with national and international partners.

More at: <https://globelegislators.org/student-mps-climate-surgeries/>

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