

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT ADAPTATION 2025

The Glacier Trust and the
Climate Majority Project
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Climate
Majority
Project

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A FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF UK ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS' CLIMATE ADAPTATION COMMUNICATIONS

We used to break the ice with 'Lovely day, isn't it?' Now each gust, flood, and heatwave barges into our conversations demanding action. Our weather has become strange and sometimes scary, going from small talk to Big Talk—and environmental organisations need to lead the conversation.

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Back in 2020, The Glacier Trust published *We Need to Talk About Adaptation*, the precursor to this new report. The Glacier Trust is delighted to be collaborating with the Climate Majority Project on this vital follow-up review and welcome their knowledge and experience to this work.

THE GLACIER TRUST

The Glacier Trust is a UK registered charity (no. 1124955). It enables climate adaptation in the remote mountain communities of Nepal through place-based, community-led agroforestry projects. Nepal is one of many countries on the front-line of the climate crisis, where the impacts challenge vulnerable populations on a daily basis. Through adapting livelihoods and local systems, these communities are not only able to survive but thrive. The Glacier Trust's successes are just some of the numerous climate adaptation projects from across the globe, which should be viewed as examples of action that needs to now be seen in the UK.

For more on the work of The Glacier Trust in Nepal, please visit us at www.theglaciertrust.org

THE CLIMATE MAJORITY PROJECT

The Climate Majority project exists to accelerate effective, coordinated climate action by a broad-based coalition of citizens – from grassroots initiatives to high-level policy. Our key leverage points are: local and national adaptation and resilience, future-fit education, mobilising the insurance sector, and policies that can enable truly sustainable business.

For more on the work of the Climate Majority Project, please visit us at <https://climatemajorityproject.com/>

FOREWORD

The climate emergency is deepening. 2024 was the warmest year on record, after a decade of record hottest years - and it was also the first calendar year that average global temperature exceeded 1.5 °C above its pre-industrial level. Unsurprisingly, extreme weather also broke records in 2024, according to World Weather Attribution, showing how dangerous life has already become.

The record-breaking temperatures fuelled heatwaves, drought, wildfire, storms and floods that killed thousands of people and forced millions from their homes. Small Island and developing states experienced the highest number of dangerous heat days, despite only being responsible for a small amount of historic carbon emissions, highlighting the need to increase finance for low-income countries to help them cope with the impacts of extreme weather. And greenhouse gas levels are still rising, ensuring that climate impacts will continue to escalate.

That's why adapting to the climate breakdown that is already happening has to go hand in hand with accelerated efforts to decarbonise. Yet for too long climate adaptation has been sidelined, misunderstood as a concept and deprioritised as a policy. As the Government's own advisors, the Climate Change Committee, has repeatedly warned, progress is either too slow, stalled, or heading in the wrong direction. It has therefore fallen to the UK's main environmental organisations and leaders to champion the cause of climate adaptation and to pioneer new approaches.

This new report from The Glacier Trust and the Climate Majority Project assesses their progress in doing exactly that. Based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the communications of five leading organisations (FoE, WWF UK, Greenpeace UK, RSPB, and the Green Party) from 2021 to the present, it compares the findings to a 2020 baseline. And while it finds that all five have mainstreamed adaptation to a degree almost unimaginable five years ago, there are still untapped opportunities for a deeper, broader engagement of UK audiences.

That task couldn't be more urgent. As this report shows, climate adaptation is a story unfolding in real time, in communities facing floods, farmers navigating droughts, and cities redesigning for heat resilience. And done well, with measures that are strategic, regenerative and transformative, adaptation has the potential not just to build community resilience, but – in the face of the weaponisation of climate action by the populist right – to restore collective purpose and identity, offering people both agency and authentic hope. It's therefore more important than ever that adaptation becomes a core narrative for all of us: one rooted in justice, shaped by communities, and carried by organisations with the reach and trust to make it matter. It is, in the words of the report, not just a technical fix or a policy add-on: it's a lived reality and a moral imperative.

Caroline Lucas

Former Leader of the Green Party

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We used to break the ice with ‘Lovely day, isn’t it?’ Now the climate crisis barges into every conversation, demanding that adaptation become more than small talk—it must become our Big Talk. The Climate Majority Project and The Glacier Trust have collaborated on this report, “We Need To Talk About Adaptation,” to explore how adaptation is being discussed by the top 5 environmental organisations in the UK. It serves as a critical assessment for policymakers, the public, and the green sector on the path from planning to on-the-ground resilience, showing the gaps that remain, and making recommendations for raising the volume on adaptation.

The crisis is here: climate impacts demand immediate action

The climate crisis is now a definitive reality, necessitating immediate and large-scale adaptation measures alongside ‘mitigation’.

2024 was the warmest year on record, after a decade of record hot years, and extreme weather globally broke records. These escalating impacts have killed thousands worldwide and forced millions from their homes. In the UK, severe events like the scorching summer of 2022, which led to 2,803 excess deaths in England, and major storms have made climate breakdown a concrete, lived reality.

However, the UK’s formal preparations for unavoidable climate impacts (including heatwaves, floods, and coastal erosion) remain significantly deficient. The UK’s independent climate advisers, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), recently warned that the country is “not yet adapted” even to current levels of warming, “let alone” what is expected to come. The CCC has urged the government to ensure the UK can cope with at least 2°C of global warming by 2050, supported by a framework of clear long-term objectives, departmental accountability, and regular five-year adaptation targets. ([BBC News, 2025](#)).

The good news: adaptation is no longer sidelined

For too long, climate adaptation—how we live with change and redesign systems for resilience—was sidelined and misunderstood. A 2020 baseline found adaptation to be a “very marginal topic”.

Since 2020, our report finds that the conversation around adaptation has undergone a profound strategic and qualitative shift among the five organisations studied (Friends of the Earth UK, WWF UK, Greenpeace UK, RSPB, and the Green Party). Adaptation has moved from a marginalized, barely-mentioned topic to a central, public-facing, and sophisticated component of their climate agendas. The discourse has broadened to accept that some level of severe climate impacts is now unavoidable, compelling a dual strategy of prevention and preparedness.

The new narrative: strategic adaptation is key

Leading organisations have successfully integrated adaptation into powerful, interconnected narratives:

- **Adaptation is a matter of justice and accountability:** The conversation is now often

rooted in fairness, highlighting how climate impacts disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society. There is no climate justice now without taking adaptation completely seriously. Friends of the Earth (FoE) exemplified this by pursuing high-stakes legal action against the UK government's adaptation plan (NAP3), arguing that its inadequacy breaches human rights. Greenpeace UK is linking adaptation finance to accountability through its “Polluters Pay” campaign, demanding that fossil fuel companies pay for the damage and finance a just transition.

- **Nature is a powerful solution:** Adaptation often is and even more often should be framed around ‘Nature-based Solutions’ (NbS). The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) provides technical advocacy, showing that ecosystem health—such as restoring peatlands and saltmarshes—is essential national infrastructure for resilience against flooding and heat.
- **Resilience is an economic and financial imperative:** Climate impacts are now a fundamental threat to economic stability. WWF UK focuses on high-level global finance, promoting “Nature-Positive Transition Pathways” and “insetting” to address climate risk in corporate supply chains. The Green Party has integrated adaptation into its core political manifesto, linking resilient homes and infrastructure to economic stability and better public services.

Reflecting on critiques

While this shift is positive, the state of adaptation communication should not be without criticism. Certain strategies, particularly the high-level focus on private finance and corporate partnerships, have led to concerns about “adaptation-washing,” where resilience measures may prioritize protecting corporate assets over addressing the root causes of climate vulnerability or guaranteeing resilience for affected local communities. In short: this is merely defensive/reactive rather than transformative/strategic adaptation.

Furthermore, a fundamental concern remains: for all that we are talking more and better about adaptation, the sector's overall communication volume remains too heavily focused on mitigation (e.g., “net zero”, an obscure and net-harmful term), obscuring the immediate necessity and high impact and leverage of adaptation.

The warning: the action gap must close

While the sector has dramatically increased its communication on adaptation, a disconnect remains. The CCC consistently warns of an undeniable gap between government planning and tangible delivery of adaptation measures. Closing that gap begins but does not end with going further in the direction of talking adaptation seriously.

The abstract concept of “net zero” often alienates people. Adaptation is generally less polarising than mitigation and connects with people across the economic spectrum because action to address local threats makes the issue real, fostering agency and collective identity.

Environmental organisations, research institutions, and charities collectively hold over half of the overall share of voice (53%) on adaptation, giving them an unprecedented platform to shape policy and public understanding. This platform must be used wisely, boldly, and inclusively. Let's really take adaptation seriously, at last.

Recommendations: talking adaptation for action and cohesion

The challenge for policymakers and civil society is to refine how we talk about adaptation to ensure it maximizes impact, drives action, and strengthens social cohesion.

1. Stop obscuring the reality; be strategically honest

Dismantle the optimism imperative: Communications must drop the false optimism that current ‘mitigation’ efforts will avert impacts. Be honest about living in a post-1.5°C world to foster a realistic, action-oriented public understanding of climate risk.

Reboot the discourse: Stop equating ‘climate’ with the abstract framing of “net zero,” which is often impenetrable and alienating. Instead, make climate impacts and strategic adaptation central to all communications, framing the direction of travel as becoming #safer.

Define adaptation boldly: Move public messaging beyond reactive, defensive measures to champion transformative, regenerative, and strategic adaptation that aims for long-term systemic change.

2. Make fairness and vulnerability part of the core narrative

Weaponise Accountability: Use high-stakes legal challenges—such as those arguing inadequate adaptation breaches human rights—as a powerful communication tool to move the debate from theoretical to concrete and legally actionable.

Mobilize support for frontlines: Support legal and financial campaigns, like “Polluters Pay,” to ensure the most vulnerable people and nations, who played little role in causing the crisis, are protected and aided in adapting.

Centre the Vulnerable: Focus communications on the lived experience of adaptation: use tangible stories of those disproportionately affected, such as people whose homes were demolished due to coastal erosion or disabled people struggling with extreme heat.

3. Translate policy into tangible, local agency

Amplify local success: Shift away from abstract policy and highlight town, neighbourhood, or sectoral case studies to make adaptation tangible, especially in under-served urban communities. We need success-stories for strategic adaptation (and a better-understood, exemplified picture of the limits to reactive adaptation).

Showcase co-creation: In communications, demonstrate how local action works, such as community energy, food growing, or citizen-led insulation schemes, showing that adaptation action grows public agency.

Expand storytelling: Dedicate content to critical but under-addressed themes essential for national resilience, including insurance and risk transfer, comprehensive public health adaptation (especially for heatwaves), and industrial supply chain resilience.

4. Create a bigger picture

Combat greenwashing with action: To unlock private finance while maintaining trust, communications must emphasize the verifiable implementation of strategic adaptation measures, showcasing tangible socio-ecological outcomes ('walk') rather than just announced corporate targets ('talk').

Demand strategy integration: Communicate clearly that adaptation is not a niche policy but an essential component of all government and corporate strategy, including infrastructure and public health.

The Glacier Trust and The Climate Majority Project believe that “We need to talk about adaptation” is the unavoidable necessity of our time. Using our collective voice we can demand and deliver the transformative resilience that secures a safer future for all. Much safer, that is, than we will be if we fail to heed the messages in this report.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Any artist who isn't dealing with climate change is not writing science fiction. They're writing fantasy.

Kim Stanley Robinson

This provocation speaks to a broader cultural imperative: if our stories, strategies, and visions for the future ignore the climate crisis *that is now well underway*, they risk irrelevance. For environmental organisations, and everyone else, this means decisively expanding the narrative beyond 'mitigation' alone. Climate adaptation—how we live with change, protect the vulnerable, and redesign systems for resilience—must be part of the conversation. To meet the moment, we need communications that reflect the full scope of the challenge and the creative, collective responses it demands. We need to talk about adaptation.

In February 2020, The Glacier Trust published *We Need to Talk About Adaptation*, a timely intervention highlighting a disparity in the UK climate discourse.ⁱ At the time, 'mitigation'—the effort to cut emissions and prevent climate change—was found to overwhelmingly dominate communications, while adaptation—the work of preparing for its unavoidable impacts—was largely relegated to the shadows. The report's central question, "Do we need to talk MORE about adaptation?", served as the foundational inquiry for that analysis. The report found that as a "casual follower" of the five organisations studied, one would be "forgiven for knowing little or nothing at all about climate change adaptation".ⁱⁱ This lack of public pressure, it was argued, hindered action on adaptation at the highest levels of government and international negotiations.ⁱⁱⁱ

The period since that report's publication has been defined by a series of pivotal events that have rendered adaptation an impossible topic to ignore. From 2021 to the present, the climate landscape has undergone a profound transformation. The UK has hosted significant international policy events and experienced severe domestic climate impacts, which have made the abstract threat of climate change a concrete, lived reality for the public.

COP26 in Glasgow (November 2021): As the host nation, the UK was at the centre of global negotiations. While largely focused on mitigation, COP26 made tangible progress on adaptation, with the Glasgow Climate Pact explicitly mentioning the need for more climate finance for adaptation in developing countries.^{iv} This event put adaptation on the world stage with renewed urgency. As this report goes to publication, the Belem CoP is about to begin; and it is being billed as 'the adaptation CoP'.

Escalating climate crisis: 2024 was the warmest year on record, after a decade of record hottest years - and was also the first calendar year that average global temperature exceeded 1.5°C above its pre-industrial level.^v Unsurprisingly, extreme weather also broke records in 2024, according to World Weather Attribution, showing how dangerous life has already become.^{vi} The global surface warming rate since 1994 is estimated to be around 0.20°C per decade. However, recent short-term trends suggest an acceleration to a rate closer to 0.27°C

or 0.3°C per decade, leading some scientists, like former NASA climate chief James Hansen, to warn that the rate of heating is accelerating faster than previously understood.^{vii}

Escalating UK climate impacts: Beyond international policy, the UK has faced a succession of extreme weather events. The scorching summer of 2022 led to 2,803 excess deaths in England, and Storm Babet in October 2023 claimed 7 lives, displaced hundreds, and cut power to thousands; and was then swiftly followed by Storms Ciaran and Henk.^{viii} These events have demonstrated the immediate and tangible need for adaptation, forcing the beginnings of more immediate and localised discussions.

Derailment risk: As the climate and nature crisis accelerates and starts to bite, it has a tangible impact in the real world. Hailstorms, floods, high winds, sea level rise, droughts all hit harder and more often. They inundate, bend, break and starve whatever is in their path, including the infrastructure we are building to mitigate the crisis. A solar farm that is destroyed every other year by a hurricane is not a ‘climate solution’. Climate breakdown - if we don’t adapt well to it or build resilience in the face of it - will derail our efforts to slow it down.^{ix}

The Climate Change Committee’s (CCC) scathing assessments: The UK government’s own official advisors, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), have issued a series of damning reports. They have consistently labelled the UK’s preparations for climate change as “inadequate” and “strikingly unprepared,” a message repeated across their 2023 and 2025 reports.^x They have explicitly criticised the slow pace of change and the failure to move from planning to effective delivery.^{xi} This relentless, high-level criticism has created an undeniable political and public pressure to act.

A worsening politics: Meanwhile, the climate-denying or -delaying Far Right has leapt into (USA) or closer to (UK) power, undermining what progress had been made on mitigation. This further delays multilateral policymaking and threatens worse impacts for a long time to come.

This report from The Glacier Trust and Climate Majority Project conducts a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the communications of the five original organisations (FoE UK, WWF UK, Greenpeace UK, RSPB, Green Party) from 2021 to the present. It compares the findings to the 2020 report’s baseline, identifying key shifts and offering an analysis of their significance.

With the crisis now upon us, have enough people woken up to the need for immediate climate adaptation?

THE 2020 BASELINE: ADAPTATION A MARGINALISED TOPIC

In 2020, The Glacier Trust analysed the adaptation-related content on the websites of the UK’s biggest five environmental organisations for the *We Need to Talk About Adaptation* report. This snapshot showed that about half of their news articles related to climate change, and about 10 percent of those mentioned either adaptation or loss and damage.^{xii}

The research method involved a review of 857 articles from the blog and news sections of five leading UK environmental organisations. The findings of the 2020 report were clear: adaptation and loss and damage were “very marginal topics”. Of the total articles reviewed, a mere 7 (0.82%) were specifically focused on adaptation. The vast majority of climate stories were focused on mitigation strategies, campaigns, or accounts of the problem itself. This

demonstrated a sectoral-wide silence on the issue, with only two organisations, Friends of the Earth and WWF UK, publishing any articles with a dedicated focus on adaptation. Greenpeace UK, RSPB, and the Green Party of England and Wales had no adaptation-focused articles whatsoever. The report concluded that this comparative lack of coverage on adaptation had an “out of sight, out of mind” effect that filtered through to the highest levels of negotiations and debate.

The report’s intention was not just to observe this phenomenon but also to directly challenge it, by sharing its findings with the organisations as well as environmental journalists - expressing a hope that by highlighting that absence and communicating about the importance of climate adaptation, the report became part of the “new climate reality” that it helped to shape.

The analysis presented in this report reveals a fundamental and widespread shift in the climate discourse of the UK’s leading environmental organisations. Since the publication of the 2020 report, the period from 2021 to the present has seen a dramatic increase in both the quantity and, more importantly, the strategic quality of communications on climate adaptation. The initial observation of adaptation as a marginalised topic has given way to its re-emergence as an urgent, actionable, and central component of a more sophisticated climate agenda.

This transformation is driven by the strategic reframing of adaptation, which has been integrated into three interconnected narratives:

Climate justice: Adaptation is now more often framed as a human rights and social justice issue, with the costs and impacts of climate breakdown disproportionately borne by the most vulnerable in society. Adaptation is how the climate crisis is most relevant to the most vulnerable.

Nature as a ‘solution’: The focus has expanded from protecting nature from dangerous anthropogenic climate change to leveraging nature for societal resilience through “nature-based solutions.”

Financial and economic resilience: Adaptation has been elevated from a niche environmental concern to (what is gradually becoming seen as) a core issue of business risk, investment, and national economic stability.

But is it enough? And: is it enough to ensure adaptation is taken seriously in local and national policy-making, negotiations and planning?

WHY WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT ADAPTATION

Telling the story of adaptation does two key things:

- It puts adaptation on the agenda; doing this increases the chances that the adaptation needs of those suffering from climate impacts are heard.
- It raises awareness of good practice in adaptation, helping it to spread and reducing the risk of widespread maladaptation.

The Climate Majority Project’s report *SAFER: Strategic Adaptation For Emergency Resilience* explains the untapped potential for adaptation measures to drive public climate engagement

and accelerate action.^{xiii} The report notes that while decarbonisation has become prone to political polarisation, adaptation brings new possibilities to engage marginalized groups and counter perceptions of climate action as elitist or irrelevant. While mitigation only works if billions of others join in, adaptation action directly benefits those who participate. Local collaboration in the face of a common threat can help strengthen collective identity. In fact, adaptation measures can improve quality of life, from home economic benefits to community cohesion.^{xiv}

The SAFER report makes clear the stakes in adequately ‘defining’ adaptation. It is literally vital to move from a default assumption of adaptation measures being reactive, piecemeal and defensive of the existing system to instead a picture of adaptation measures being able to be strategic (looking to the long-term, looking ‘upstream’), wholistic (including, crucially, regenerative / ecosystems-based), and transformative of the existing system.^{xv} Otherwise we fragilise ourselves further (Think of the elevated disaster-risk consequent upon encircling a settlement within a (high-carbon!) flood wall).

While (and in fact because) adaptation does not suffer from the same collective action problems as mitigation, it is vitally important to talk about adaptation action in order to make it visible, so that action e.g. in the UK or at local level can influence the priorities of other nations and locations. And so that collective awareness spreads: so that people feel part of something larger, what ultimately needs to be something like a wartime style mobilisation. Here, and echoing abroad: supporting adaptation globally can help vulnerable regions remain habitable, reducing displacement pressures and potential social tensions.^{xvi}

From a psychological perspective, committing to transformative and strategic adaptation allows us - forces us - to drop the false optimism that current ‘mitigation’ measures will be sufficient to avert climate impacts, and encourages us to start fostering a realistic public understanding of climate risks.^{xvii} The SAFER report notes that action to address local threats makes climate breakdown real for communities, bridging global issues with daily life.^{xviii}

Finally, the world is - like it or not - entering the age of adaptation. With or without the backing, support, or even awareness of policy and global climate leaders, people are starting to adapt. Humans are an adaptable species, it is what we do. The adaptation strategies we pursue, however, are not always going to be the most suitable, effective, or compassionate. If we are not talking about adaptation, reflecting on it, analysing it, then we are not talking about the good examples that inspire, nor – equally importantly – the bad and ugly ones that can (with a little bit of guidance, support, and scrutiny) be avoided.^{xix}

So why have environmental organisations, other institutions and authorities - as well as the media - been reluctant to talk about adaptation? One of the reasons might be the “optimism imperative”: an unwritten rule that public climate change communication should always be optimistic when delivering ‘bad news’, according to researchers at People Get Real.^{xx}

Climate campaigners and politicians have long unfortunately assumed or hypothesised that only telling a simplistically happy story can motivate people. But: a UK poll commissioned from IPSOS Mori (by PGR) revealed that while optimism is held as important by half of UK adults (51%) when being given ‘bad news’ about climate change, significantly more – 68% – said it

is important that ‘bad news’ is shared whether there are solutions or grounds for optimism or not.^{xxi}

The research also revealed that more than one in five UK adults believe “It is now too late for governments around the world to take urgent climate change action and secure a liveable future for all.” and only one percent believe the target of almost halving global greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 ‘definitely will’ be achieved.^{xxii} However, this did not necessarily correspond to feeling helpless: the poll revealed that a majority of UK adults consistently judge a range of examples for climate action - by governments or individuals - to be effective in reducing the rate/impact of climate decline.^{xxiii}

The authors of the People Get Real report conclude that those of us whom the public trusts to keep them informed are instead frustrating the very action they say is urgent, by persisting with claims that implausible climate targets can be met, and thus generating a false sense of security.^{xxiv}

Which leads us back to the question: are we talking about adaptation to the extent that (and in the ways that) we need to? *The report that follows answers that question in respect of five leading UK environmental organisations.*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

We used AI-assisted media and social listening analysis to assess the outputs of five of the UK's largest environmental organisations: four NGOs and one political party. Included in the study are:

1. Friends of the Earth (FoE)
2. World Wildlife Fund UK (WWF UK)
3. Greenpeace UK
4. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
5. The Green Party of England and Wales

The research identified communications related to climate adaptation and resilience, including web pages, articles, press releases, campaign materials, social media posts, and videos, from the five target organisations between January 2020 and September 2025. Only those explicitly referencing at least one of the following adaptation search terms were counted: *climate adaptation, climate resilience, climate risk, adaptation to climate change, adaptation strategies, climate-proofing, climate readiness, nature based adaptation, climate risk management, adaptation finance, nature based solutions, ecosystem based adaptation, disaster risk reduction, resilient infrastructure, coastal resilience, drought resilience, flood resilience, water security, food security, urban resilience, forest restoration, biodiversity resilience, extreme weather adaptation, insurance and risk transfer, heatwave adaptation, agricultural adaptation, public health adaptation, ecosystem resilience, and supply chain resilience.*

This quantitative work was supported by a qualitative deep dive into each of the five organisations. To provide further context and identify thematic gaps, the report also references additional UK organisations prominent in the adaptation space. The analysis includes trends in coverage volume, sentiment *and* thematic emphasis over time, alongside an evaluation of the broader adaptation communication landscape and its relative visibility across sectors.

ON THE PATH FROM MARGINAL TO STRATEGIC: THE ONGOING EVOLUTION OF ADAPTATION COMMUNICATION

This section provides an organisation-by-organisation comparison, directly contrasting the 2018-2019 communication baseline with the strategies observed in the post-2021 period.

While obtaining an exact numerical tally comparable to the original study is difficult due to the evolution of digital communication (reports, legal filings, video), the nature of the shift is undeniable: every organisation now features adaptation in high-level, dedicated communications (reports, campaigns, legal action) that often command thousands of words, not just a few sentences. Adaptation has moved from the blogosphere to the boardroom, and the courtroom, and the community.

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH: FROM POLICY TO LITIGATION

2018-2019 BASELINE

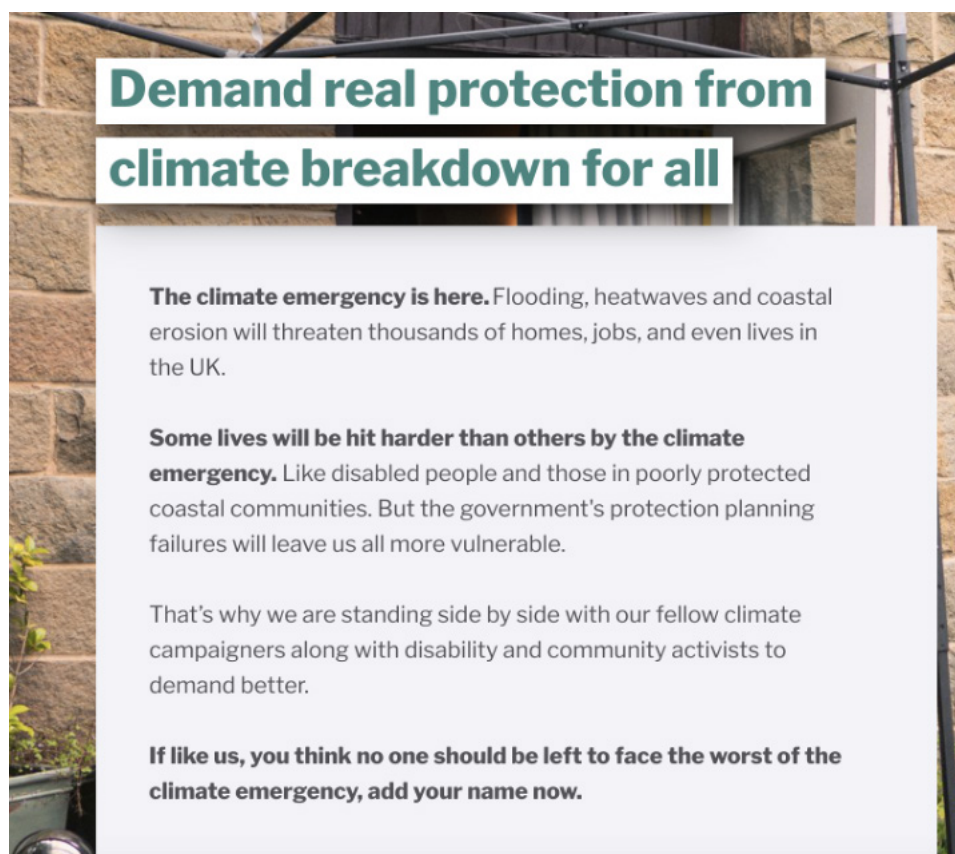
The 2020 report by The Glacier Trust noted that Friends of the Earth had two articles specifically focused on adaptation during its study period. These included a brief reaction to a government flooding strategy and a call for more urban trees to combat heatwaves. While these were noted as a “significant improvement” over the *previous* study, their scope was still limited, and they were framed as reactive commentary.^{xxv}

2021-TODAY’S STRATEGY

The new analysis reveals a profound strategic shift for Friends of the Earth. The organisation has moved from incidental commentary to an aggressive, multi-front legal campaign that embeds adaptation within a broader framework of human rights and justice. Friends of the Earth has taken the government to court over the National Adaptation Programme (NAP3), arguing it is “unlawful under the Climate Change Act 2008”.^{xxvi} The organisation’s campaign has consistently cited the government’s own advisors, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), who warned that the UK is “strikingly unprepared” for climate change.^{xxvii}

The legal case is not just about policy; it is about human rights. Friends of the Earth argues that the plan “breaches their human rights to life, home, possessions and freedom from discrimination”.^{xxviii} They have filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and are representing claimants disproportionately affected by climate impacts, such as a disability rights activist who struggles with extreme heat and a person whose home was demolished due to coastal erosion. Communications on the case explicitly highlight how “disabled people are always among the first against the wall” and that the government’s plan fails to consider the views of those “most at risk in society”.^{xxix}

The pivot from a simple communication strategy to a legal one represents a significant maturation of the climate movement. Litigation is a high-cost, high-stakes tactic that demonstrates deep commitment. The decision to pursue this avenue indicates that the organisation no longer views communication alone as sufficient. The legal challenges are themselves a powerful communication tool, generating media attention, galvanising public support, and forcing a public conversation about the inadequacy of the UK's adaptation efforts.^{xxx} This moves the debate from a theoretical one to a concrete, legally actionable one with real-world consequences for individuals. This new strategy suggests a pivot from campaigning for awareness to campaigning for accountability, elevating the issue to a moral and legal imperative.



FoE brings together the issues of mitigation and adaptation, noting that public subsidies to fossil fuel industry, airlines etc are promoting further climate change, while spending 24 billion pounds per year on climate damages - which is projected to rise to 73 billion pounds per year by 2100. There is a strong focus on inequality and the injustice of a minority making profits while “sacrificing a safe and stable climate for everyone else.”^{xxxi}

WWF (UK): FROM LOCAL PROJECTS TO GLOBAL FINANCE

2018-2019 BASELINE

The Glacier Trust's 2020 report noted that WWF UK was a leading voice on adaptation in the study period, with five articles focused on its “Coastal Kenya Programme”. These articles were framed as inspiring, tangible stories of “farmers who are planting trees” to build resilience and provide income.^{xxxi} The focus was tangible and local, showcasing a community-based approach.

However, what was needed to be a ‘leading voice’ on this established only a pretty low bar, five years back.

2021-TODAY’S STRATEGY

While WWF still communicates on local initiatives, its new strategy is overwhelmingly focused on a high-level, systemic approach involving finance and business. WWF UK has partnered with entities like the Green Finance Institute and financial institutions like Aviva to develop “Nature-Positive Transition Pathways”.^{xxxiii} This is a conceptual leap from community-based projects to influencing the flow of global capital. Their communications now advocate for “insetting,” where companies address their environmental impacts within their own supply chains to build resilience and mitigate business risks.^{xxxiv} This is a more sophisticated concept that goes far beyond tree planting. They are also advocating for “Nature-based solutions” (NbS) as a core tool for corporate transition plans.^{xxxv}

WWF’s messaging is now targeting financial decision-makers, urging them to integrate nature and climate resilience into corporate transition plans and investment strategies.^{xxxvi} Their “Climate Finance Program” aims to close a massive “funding gap” for nature-based solutions, which they state must triple by 2030 to meet global targets.^{xxxvii} The evolution of WWF’s strategy increasingly reflects a recognition that conservation and climate action must be underpinned by a fundamental shift in economic models. By framing adaptation as a material business risk and an investment opportunity,^{xxxviii} WWF is moving the conversation from a moral one to an economic one. This approach suggests a belief that the scale of investment required for adaptation cannot be met by charities or governments alone and must involve the private sector. It positions nature not just as a victim of man-made climate change but as a powerful asset for both climate and economic stability. This reframing is arguably essential for unlocking the trillions in private capital needed for a truly resilient future. But it has hazards implicit in it.^{xxxix}

Adaptation

The adjustment in natural or human systems to actual or expected climate and its impacts. Adaptation efforts include the use of drought-resistant crops, adoption of water conservation measures and building of storm surge barriers. Wildlife try to follow their preferred climate in behaviours called range shifting, which is also an adaptation.

source: WWF UK, The A to Z of climate change^{xl}

It’s clear the WWF has made a major commitment to climate adaptation. However, the strategy adopted by WWF UK to mobilize private finance and partner with major corporations for climate adaptation and nature-based solutions has faced criticism between 2020 and 2025, often from environmental journalists, ethical observers, and academic researchers.

WWF’s partnerships with extractive corporations and financial institutions have been critiqued: collaborating with businesses widely regarded as “enemies of nature,” such as fossil fuel producers and leading plastic polluters, provides a “green shield” that allows them to continue environmentally destructive activities while leveraging WWF’s reputation to appear sustainable. Environmental groups assert that this strategy risks “adaptation-washing,” where resilience measures protect corporate assets and supply chains from climate impacts—such as investing

in Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to secure water supply for a factory—instead of addressing the root causes of climate vulnerability or providing resilience for affected local communities.^{xli}

Academic research has flagged a “greenwashing risk” in corporate climate transition planning, noting a gap between target setting (‘talk’) and the implementation of strategies (‘walk’).^{xliii} Admirably, one of these critiques was funded by WWF Switzerland, demonstrating the organisation’s own awareness of the integrity challenges inherent in these disclosure processes.^{xliii} Specific financial tools promoted for adaptation, such as “insetting” (neutralizing emissions within a supply chain), have been criticized by the New Climate Institute for lacking a universally accepted definition and potentially leading to “low credibility GHG emission neutralisation claims” and the double counting of emission reductions, undermining trust in their climate efficacy.^{xliv}

Finally, the focus on scaling land-intensive adaptation mechanisms like NbS through private investment carries “considerable risks of harm to Indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ human rights”. This risk arises because the massive land requirements for large-scale NbS and insetting projects often intersect with complex land tenure issues, generating potential for social conflict, displacement, or maladaptation—where interventions designed to increase resilience for corporations actively decreases the resilience of vulnerable local populations.^{xlv}

To overcome charges of greenwashing, WWF could strategically shift its communication to emphasize the verifiable implementation of (strategic, not merely reactive) adaptation measures, moving beyond announced corporate targets (‘talk’) to demonstrate tangible socio-ecological outcomes (‘walk’). This communication could showcase projects that guarantee the equity and governance rights of vulnerable communities over merely protecting corporate financial assets.

In addition, it would be impactful to emphasise that reactive adaptation (which maintains the status quo) is not good enough: transformative adaptation^{xlvi} that aims towards systemic change, is required. Such adaptation can be exemplified by ecosystem-based adaptation, especially if undertaken at landscape scale, and with a deliberately eye towards fairness to local/indigenous people.

GREENPEACE (UK): FROM MITIGATION-FIRST TO CLIMATE JUSTICE

2018-2019 BASELINE

The 2020 report found zero adaptation-focused articles from Greenpeace UK. Its communications were a textbook example of mitigation-only direct action and campaigning, with a strong focus on issues like plastic pollution and a lack of any mention of adaptation or loss and damage.^{xlvii}

2021-TODAY’S STRATEGY

While still heavily mitigation-focused, Greenpeace has integrated adaptation into some of its core messaging, primarily through the lens of climate justice and accountability. Greenpeace is now campaigning for “Polluters Pay,” explicitly linking the need for finance for “adaptation and recovery” to the profits of fossil fuel companies.^{xlviii} The campaign demands that these

corporations “pay for the damage and finance a just transition” for communities hit by extreme weather events.^{xlix}

In a departure from their traditional campaigning, Greenpeace UK’s investigative journalism unit, Unearthed, collaborated on a “FutureProof” series.ⁱ This series explicitly explores “solutions for a more resilient world” and showcases “people and organisations who are working... to strengthen the resilience of their communities”.ⁱⁱ It delves into adaptation themes such as urban planning, sustainable food systems, and even universal basic income as a tool for resilience, citing research from the COVID-19 pandemic as an analogy for preparing for future climate shocks.ⁱⁱⁱ

Greenpeace’s shift is significant because it represents an acknowledgment that even the most successful mitigation efforts will not prevent all climate impacts. The “Polluters Pay” campaign is a helpful fusion of their core mitigation message (attacking fossil fuels) and the need for adaptation finance. It moves beyond a simple “stop doing this” message to a “you must pay for what you have done” demand.



Greenpeace activist Victorine Che Thoener campaigning on Loss and Damage issues: “Climate impacts are not a future threat; they are happening now. Just last year, heatwaves, droughts and floods hit parts of Germany, where I now live. I saw hectares of corn fields completely dried up. From my country of origin Cameroon to Germany, where I call home, climate change is not local, it is global. No one will be able to escape it, we are in this together.”^{liii}

The “FutureProof” series demonstrates an even more profound conceptual shift, moving away from a single-minded focus on preventing climate change to actively exploring how to live in a

world where climate change is already happening.^{liv} This signifies a broadening of Greenpeace’s strategy from reactive, direct-action campaigns to a more proactive, justice-based framework.

“It can be hard to talk about preparing for the climate crisis. It might feel like admitting defeat. The word ‘adaptation’ can conjure images of billionaires building bunkers to ride out the collapse of civilisation in comfort, or wealthy nations erecting expensive sea walls to buy themselves more time while poorer countries – that have contributed the least – are consumed by the tides.

But ignoring it is worse. Bringing carbon emissions down as fast as we can is critical, but for people all over the world, the crisis is already here – we need to work out how to reconfigure every part of our societies to keep us safe.

Preparing for the next crisis allows us to rework a world that wasn’t working anyway.”

Greenpeace UK’s FutureProof series tackled adaptation and resilience issues in greater depth including acknowledgement that adaptation can feel like giving up, and focusing on the possibilities for transformative adaptation.^{lv}

We urge Greenpeace to accelerate its focus on climate adaptation. We envisage that Greenpeace could increase its vital role by advocating for strategic industrial adaptation—measures that are demonstrably effective, nature-positive, equitable, and ultimately supportive of mitigation efforts. To achieve any modicum of climate justice now, we must seriously and publicly admit and confront the reality of a post-1.5 degrees C world - and that means genuinely embracing a strategy that begins with adaptation (and loss and damage).

RSPB: FROM GENERAL POLICY TO TECHNICAL ADVOCACY

2018-2019 BASELINE

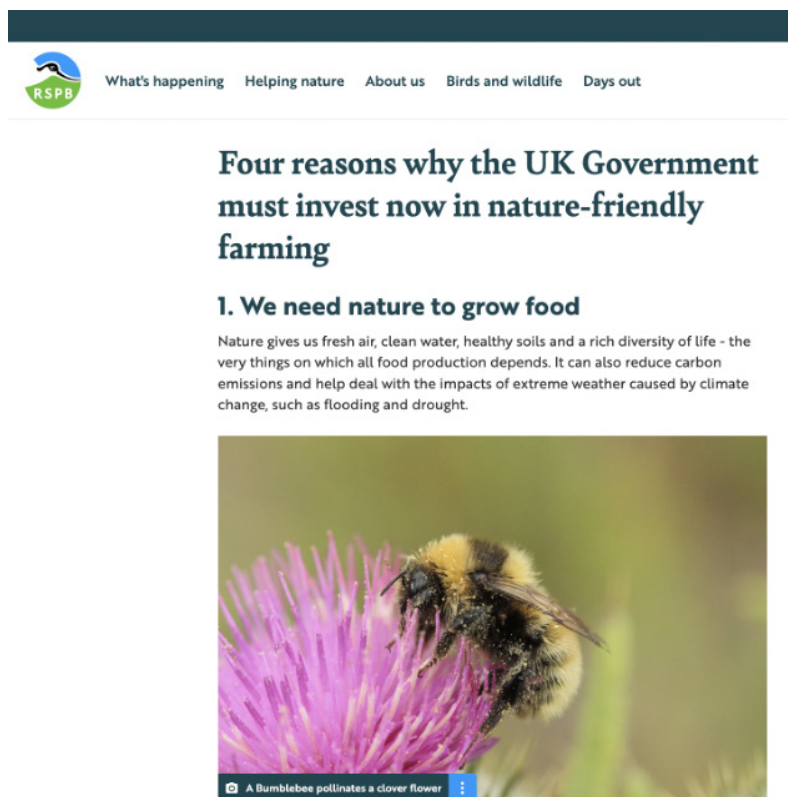
The 2020 report by The Glacier Trust found that the RSPB’s policy position on climate change recognised the importance of “helping wildlife to adapt”. However, their public-facing communications during the study period contained no articles specifically focused on adaptation, despite their internal policy position.^{lvi}

2021-TODAY’S STRATEGY

The RSPB has moved from a general, high-level policy statement to producing detailed, technical, and evidence-based communications and policy recommendations. The RSPB’s communications now specifically define and advocate for “nature-based solutions” (NbS), providing concrete examples of how they work.^{lvii} These include using healthy peatlands and saltmarshes to reduce flooding and coastal erosion, and urban trees for heat resilience.^{lviii} They explicitly frame these solutions as a way to “tackle the joint nature-climate crises”.^{lix}

The RSPB is now actively submitting detailed written evidence to the UK Parliament, advocating for specific policy changes such as greater investment in “Natural Flood Management” measures and the restoration of floodplains.^{lx} They are also articulating the economic benefits of their approach, citing research that shows restoring peatlands, saltmarshes, and woodlands could generate benefits worth £176 billion for the UK economy.^{lxi}

The RSPB's strategy highlights a crucial conceptual link: that the health of ecosystems is directly tied to the resilience of human society. The shift from "saving the birds" to "using nature to save homes and economies" is a powerful re-branding of their core mission. By providing concrete, evidence-based examples and citing specific economic values, they are making a compelling case that nature conservation is not a luxury but a fundamental part of national infrastructure and climate resilience. This approach expands the audience for conservation from wildlife enthusiasts to policymakers, civil engineers, and the broader public, positioning the RSPB as an authority on national resilience.



source: The RSPB News page features a petition telling the UK Government any cuts to the farming budget would be a disaster for farmers and nature. Climate adaptation and mitigation are highlighted as reasons to protect nature.^{lxii}

With real leadership on climate adaptation from CEO Beccy Speight, and with land where it is actually able to do the work of ecosystem-based adaptation, the RSPB (like FoE) is increasingly leading the way on not just talking about but doing adaptation, making it happen.

THE GREEN PARTY OF ENGLAND AND WALES: FROM ANONYMITY TO CORE MANIFESTO

2018-2019 BASELINE

The Glacier Trust's 2020 report found the Green Party of England and Wales had the lowest proportion of climate-focused articles, with only one passing mention of adaptation. Adaptation was not a prominent part of their public-facing platform or campaign messaging.^{lxiii}

2021-TODAY'S STRATEGY

Adaptation is now deeply integrated into the Green Party's political platform, manifestos, and public statements. The party's 2024 manifesto explicitly states that "the social and economic impacts of climate breakdown are already being felt" and outlines policies to address them.^{lxiv}

The Green Party is advocating for a "Just Transition" and linking climate action to "better public services, warmer homes, stronger communities and a restored natural world".^{lxv} Their policy proposals are specific and adaptation-focused. They call for making "climate-change resilience integral to planning" and requiring new construction to incorporate features that mitigate the impact of extreme weather.^{lxvi} They advocate for retrofitting homes for heat and cold resilience, investing in flood defences, and increasing funding for local authorities to adapt.^{lxvii}

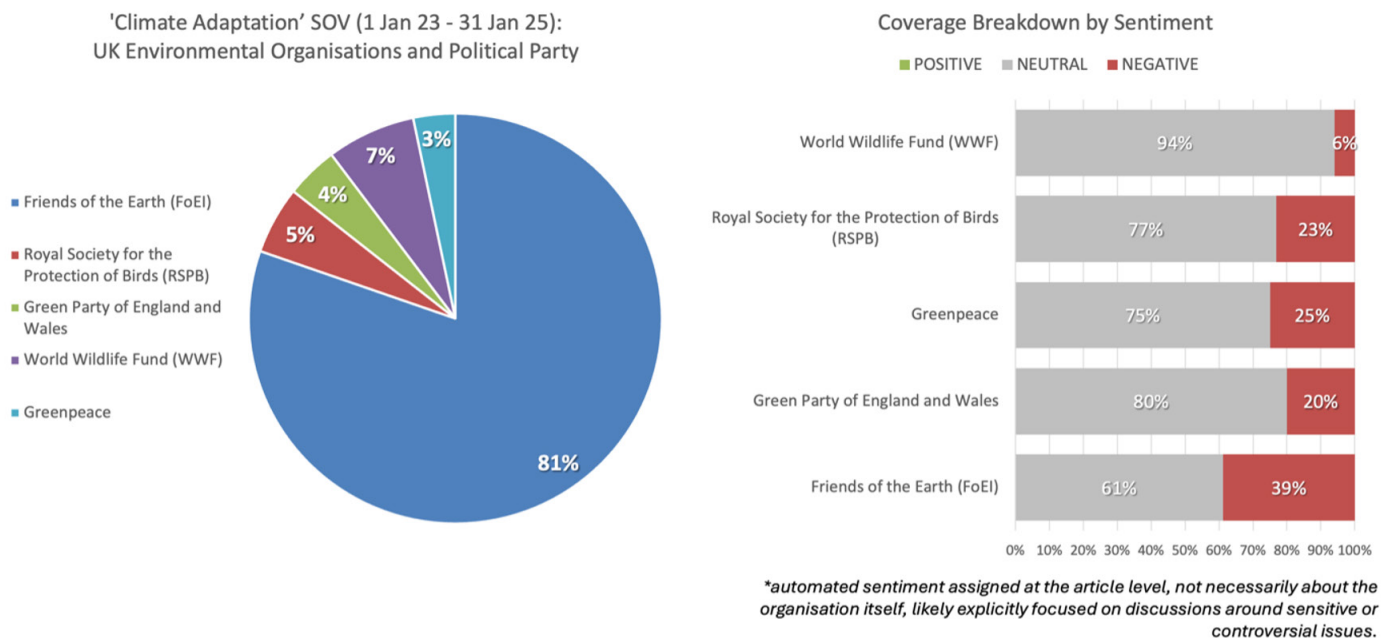
The Green Party's communication on adaptation is now holistic, connecting it to public health,^{lxviii} the economy,^{lxix} and the need to end the obsession with economic growth.^{lxx} This shift represents the mainstreaming of adaptation as a political issue. While the 2020 report showed it was largely absent from their discourse, it is now woven into the fabric of their platform, from housing to health and infrastructure. This is not just a communication change but a fundamental re-evaluation of what a "green" political party must stand for in the age of climate consequences.

Particularly impressive has been the shift in the public stance of former Green MP Caroline Lucas^{lxxi} and of former Party Leader Adrian Ramsay MP, who now regularly includes adaptation and resilience in his speech-making.^{lxxii} It remains to be seen how deeply climate adaptation will be integrated into the brand new leadership of Zack Polanski AM (though encouraging signs include the major panel at the latest Green Party conference on climate adaptation^{lxxiii}). For the Green Party to really put adaptation up front would require it to let go of some of the more over-optimistic messaging it still sometimes likes to undertake: around the 1.5C target, or through its continued habit of sometimes emphasising mitigation over adaptation. Once again: 'climate justice' now *requires* a reality-based foregrounding of (fair, transformative, strategic) adaptation.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: SCALE AND CHANNELS OF ADAPTATION COMMUNICATION

Quantitative share-of-voice data confirms Friends of the Earth as the most prominent communicator on adaptation, followed by RSPB and WWF UK. Greenpeace and the Green Party trail behind, suggesting that while all five organisations engage with adaptation, their visibility and emphasis vary significantly. This reinforces the need for more consistent, accessible, and high-profile adaptation messaging across the sector.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION SHARE-OF-VOICE AND SENTIMENT (JAN 2023–JAN 2025)



This sentiment data reveals how adaptation-related communications were received. Friends of the Earth dominated coverage volume, with 120 neutral and 76 negative articles—likely reflecting its confrontational legal stance on government adaptation plans. RSPB and WWF UK received more balanced coverage, while Greenpeace and the Green Party had lower volumes overall. Notably, positive sentiment was absent across all organisations, suggesting that adaptation is framed more as a contested or urgent issue than a celebratory one.

TOP MEDIA OUTLETS COVERING ADAPTATION BY ORGANISATION

An analysis of top media outlets reveals the diversity of channels through which the UK's top five organisations communicate, ranging from specialist environmental and business publications to mainstream news and local outlets.

Friends of the Earth (FoEI)	vol
businessgreen.com	9
edie.net	8
dailymail.co.uk	6
independent.co.uk	6
electricityinfo.org	5
express.co.uk	3
heraldscotland.com	3
eadt.co.uk	3
bourne-mouthecho.co.uk	3
theguardian.com	2

World Wildlife Fund	vol
lbc.co.uk	3
carbon-pulse.com	3
dailymail.co.uk	2
belfasttelegraph.co.uk	2
expressandstar.com	2
thenational.scot	2
shropshirestar.com	2
pressandjournal.co.uk	2
businessgreen.com	2
edie.net	2

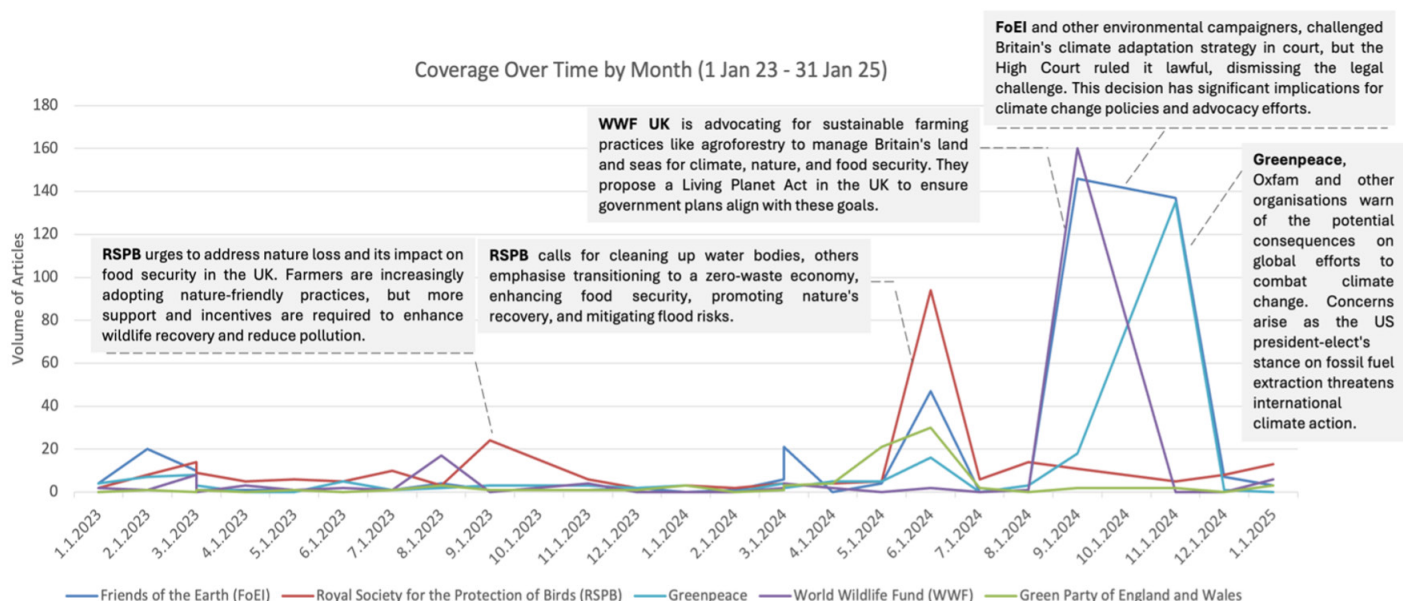
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	vol
businessgreen.com	9
fwi.co.uk	7
wildlifetrusts.org	5
worcesternews.co.uk	5
theyworkforyou.com	4
edie.net	4
express.co.uk	3
carbonbrief.org	3
iema.net	3
theguardian.com	2

The Green Party	vol
independent.co.uk	7
walesfarmer.co.uk	4
maldonandburnhamstandard.co.uk	3
itv.com	2
walesonline.co.uk	2
lancs.live	2
businessgreen.com	2
morningstaronline.co.uk	2
lincsonline.co.uk	2
westerntelegraph.co.uk	2

Greenpeace	vol
businessgreen.com	14
dailymail.co.uk	3
mirror.co.uk	3
standard.co.uk	3
heraldscotland.com	3
worcesternews.co.uk	3
theguardian.com	2
express.co.uk	2
scotsman.com	2
theengineer.co.uk	2

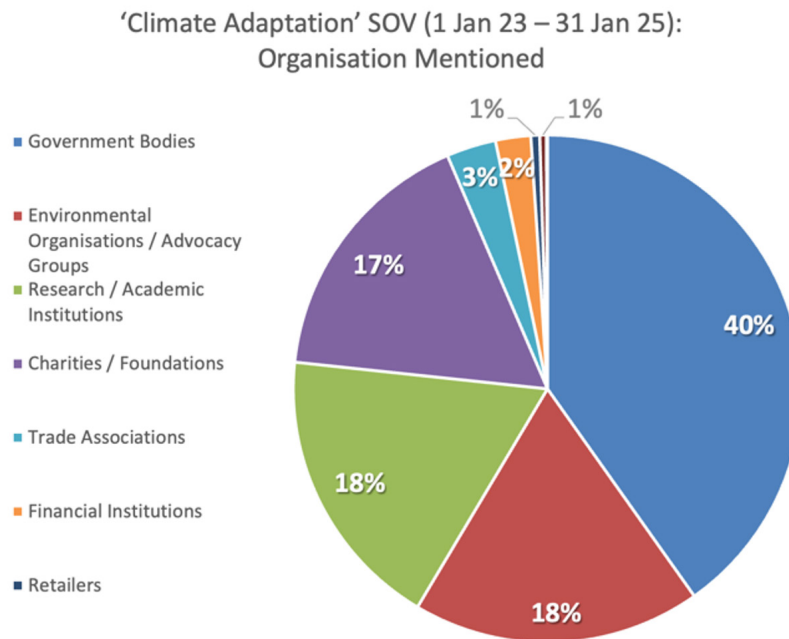
Media outlet analysis shows that adaptation-related stories were most frequently published by specialist platforms like BusinessGreen and Edie.net, with occasional coverage in mainstream outlets such as the Daily Mail and The Guardian. Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace had broader media reach, while RSPB's coverage was concentrated in farming and conservation-focused outlets. This distribution suggests that adaptation messaging is still largely confined to niche or sector-specific media, limiting its visibility among the general public.

COVERAGE OVER TIME: MEDIA TRENDS AND MILESTONES



Monthly coverage data reveals spikes in adaptation-related media attention tied to key events. RSPB's advocacy around nature loss and food security saw steady attention throughout 2023. WWF UK's agroforestry proposals and Living Planet Act campaign also contributed to peaks. Around a quarter (26%) of all adaptation-related coverage between January 2023 and September 2025 stemmed from Friends of the Earth's legal challenge against the UK Government's National Adaptation Plan (NAP3). This single event temporarily elevated adaptation into national debate, but the concentration of coverage highlights how discussion of adaptation is still largely reactive, surfacing most prominently through moments of controversy or crisis.

OVERALL SHARE OF VOICE: WHICH SECTORS ARE BEING HEARD WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT ADAPTATION?



This final image reveals a compelling insight: while government bodies account for 40% of the overall share of voice (SOV) in climate adaptation communications, environmental organisations, research institutions, and charities/foundations collectively make up a larger 53%. This signals not only the scale of their influence, but also the strategic importance of how these actors communicate adaptation. With such a dominant presence, their messaging has the potential to shape public understanding, policy momentum, and sector-wide priorities. It also underscores a critical opportunity: by refining and amplifying adaptation narratives, these organisations can reach diverse audiences—from local communities to decision-makers—and help embed resilience thinking more deeply across society. In short, this is a communication space that must be used wisely, boldly, and inclusively.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

The central question of the 2020 report by The Glacier Trust, “do we need to talk MORE about adaptation?”, has been answered with a fairly resounding “yes” from the UK’s leading environmental organisations. The data from 2021-today provides a stark contrast to the 2018-2019 baseline. Each of the five organisations has made adaptation a more central, strategic, and publicly visible part of its work.

The most significant finding is not just the quantitative increase but the qualitative shift in how adaptation is being framed. Organisations are no longer speaking in abstract terms; they are using tangible, relatable examples: a person’s storm-demolished home, a care home resident struggling with heat, a farmer planting trees for resilience. While mitigation remains a priority, the discourse has broadened to accept that some severe level of climate impact is now unavoidable.^{lxxiv} The conversation has moved from a narrow and sadly unrealistic focus on “stopping climate change” to a dual-pronged strategy of both prevention and preparedness.^{lxxv}

The most powerful new development is the convergence of adaptation with other key themes. This is a significant reframing, where adaptation is now a core component of:

- **Climate justice:** As demonstrated by Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace UK, the unequal burden of climate impacts is now a central argument for accountability and action.^{lxxvi}
- **Nature-based solutions:** The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and WWF UK are demonstrating that the health of ecosystems and human society are inextricably linked, and that nature can be a powerful asset for resilience.^{lxxvii}
- **Economic and financial resilience:** The work of WWF UK and the Green Party highlights that climate impacts are no longer just an environmental concern but a fundamental threat to economic stability and a core issue for financial markets and government policy.^{lxxviii}

IS ADAPTATION PROMINENT ENOUGH?

While adaptation is more explicitly prominent in communication strategies since 2022–2023, it is still generally outpaced by mitigation in terms of total messaging volume and campaign prioritisation. However, the trend lines are unmistakable: nearly all organisations increase the frequency, depth, and standalone treatment of adaptation over the period. WWF UK and RSPB are leaders in mainstreaming adaptation in their web architecture, dedicated hubs, and campaign portals, with a growing fraction of public campaigns now featuring adaptation as an equal or principal objective.

Greenpeace UK, while not leading in pure volume, has integrated adaptation language more consistently into organisational advocacy, particularly in relation to international climate negotiations and the financing agenda. The Green Party, despite smaller overall output, is

increasingly giving adaptation and resilience equal standing to carbon reduction demands, especially at a policy and planning level.

FoE UK, with its “explainer” model, is building public literacy around adaptation while using campaign tools to pressure government and business for more robust action. Their push for transparency and justice—the reality that adaptation-shortfalls most affect the vulnerable—is increasingly foregrounded, especially in the light of recent UK heatwaves, floods, and extreme weather episodes.

THEMATIC GAPS

Despite the increase in adaptation communication, several gaps remain in the thematic coverage of the top five UK green organisations:

- **Insurance and risk transfer:** Except for sporadic references (mainly in WWF UK material), “insurance and risk transfer” is rarely addressed in depth despite being a critical adaptation theme for business and the public.^{lxxxix}

Positive example: The Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership’s 2022 report “Risk Sharing in the Climate Emergency”^{lxxx} exemplifies NGO-led communication on insurance solutions and risk-pooling approaches that help businesses and communities understand how underwriting strategies can build resilience.

- **Heatwave and public health adaptation:** Although extreme heat has become more common in the UK, detailed guidance, data, or campaign materials on adaptation to heatwaves and public health risks are less frequent, except in some FoE UK and Green Party posts.

Example: The British Red Cross’s 2023 policy briefing “Public perception of heatwaves in the UK”^{lxxxi} leverages poll results and human stories to spotlight vulnerabilities, drive home cooling-centre guidance, and galvanise government and community action.

- **Supply chain and food security:** More present since 2023–4, especially from WWF UK and FoE UK, but explicit communication on “supply chain resilience” and “food system adaptation” could be amplified.

Example: Policy Exchange’s 2024 report “Strengthening the UK’s Food Security”^{lxxxii} calls for a National Food Security Strategy, long-term regulatory certainty, inclusion of food manufacturing in the Industrial Strategy, and a dedicated Food Security Research Centre—to guide both government and industry in building resilient supply chains. (Food is an area where it is surprising that there hasn’t been more from the five organisations studied, as there are other key recent examples in relation to food: consider also for instance Tim Lang’s major recent report “Just in Case: 7 steps to narrow the UK civil food resilience gap”,^{lxxxiii} and the major story of food industry whistleblowers in 2025, when a group of senior staff across the food industry anonymously wrote a letter to investors, warning that their businesses are not transparently disclosing the true scale of cascading climate-related risks, which could cause international supply chains to collapse.^{lxxxiv})

- **Adaptation finance:** While this is now more prominent, especially post-2023, only WWF UK and Greenpeace UK engage with deeper financial and investment topics for lay audiences.

Example: Oxford University's Smith School "Case Studies in Adaptation Finance"^{lxxxv} curates NGO-driven stories on how diverse funding models—from green bonds to public–private partnerships—actually deliver resilience, using accessible narratives and infographics to demystify money flows.

- **Urban adaptation and vulnerable groups:** Urban resilience and the plight of at-risk groups under climate stress (elderly, low-income, racial minorities) are gaining salience but are still relatively nascent as core public-facing themes, typically featured by FoE UK.

Example: Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 2020 policy brief on poverty, climate, and urban resilience^{lxxxvi} shows how local authorities can embed climate risk assessments into anti-poverty strategies, mandate heat- and flood-resilient housing standards, and establish ring-fenced adaptation funds for low-income neighbourhoods—concrete institutional steps to safeguard society's most vulnerable.

OTHER UK ORGANISATIONS WITH SIGNIFICANT ADAPTATION COMMUNICATIONS

Beyond the 'top five', several other UK organisations have become central to adaptation communication efforts, including but not only:

- **The Climate Coalition (TCC UK):** A major umbrella organisation with campaigns around adaptation, resilience, and climate justice.
- **Environment Agency:** Frequent adaptation reports, such as the 4th Adaptation Reporting Round. Under-resourcing is an issue for the EA.
- **Natural England:** Research and guidance on ecosystem-based adaptation, including nature-based flood management strategies. Under-resourcing is an issue for NE.
- **Climate Outreach:** Focuses on communication strategies, public engagement, and framing adaptation for non-expert audiences. (Although it would be good to see an increase in the profile of impacts/adaptation in CO's most publicly-prominent work.)
- **Committee on Climate Change (CCC):** Key adaptation reports audited annually (e.g., 2025 Progress Report), which serve as reference points for the NGO community. Encouragingly, the CCC used to have an adaptation 'sub-committee', but that has now been absorbed into the CCC's central work, to make its approach more holistic and to ensure that adaptation is not literally sub-ordinated.
- **Local Partnerships and AdaptationUK:** Provide toolkits, guidance, and outreach documents targeting local authorities and infrastructure planners. Under-resourcing is a serious issue for UK local authorities; and this increases risk for the UK population, given that local authorities will be crucial to ensuring governance if the

central state apparatus falters under the cosh of climate impacts in coming years and decades.

These organisations contribute to a broader adaptation discourse, often filling technical or audience-specific gaps left by larger organisations.

WE STILL NEED TO TALK ABOUT ADAPTATION

Despite these positive trends, a disconnect remains. The CCC's reports consistently highlight a gap between government planning and the effective delivery of adaptation measures, noting that while plans may be slowly progressing, tangible action is lacking.^{xxxvii} This indicates that while environmental organisations are doing a better job of *talking* about adaptation, the country is definitely still not *acting* effectively on it. Communication is a crucial first step, but it needs ramping up and refining further, as it has not yet fully translated into the large-scale, coordinated action required to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing climate. How might we all support each other to talk more about adaptation, in a way that supports action at every level?

So while we are talking about adaptation more, the question now is whether the way we are talking about it is enough? And serious enough? Strategic enough?

The shift in adaptation communications noted in this report is significant. However, for an organisation like the Green Party, adaptation is a policy priority, but its visibility in high-volume, public-facing news and social media remains a challenge. For organisations like Greenpeace, adaptation is powerfully framed as a matter of justice and accountability, but the sheer volume of climate communication still seems dominated by 'mitigation' campaigns.

Meanwhile, there is still far too much talk about 'net zero': a hopelessly abstract, alienating, technocratic framing, which is in practice irrelevant from the perspective of building resilience. Mitigation-discourse which is isolated from adaptation is a recipe for continued climate failure. With climate diplomacy teetering, the climate movement uncertain, and climate policy and politics on the defensive, it is high time to get serious and strategic about adaptation. Resilience and adaptation are ways into the topic of climate breakdown that makes more sense to ordinary people, especially the most vulnerable. Adaptation can be a helpful way of reframing and even rebooting people's entire sense of what climate is as a question and a concern. The UK green sector is no longer ignoring adaptation. It is tackling it through sophisticated, specialized lenses—the courtroom (FoE), the financial sector (WWF), the policy floor (Green Party, RSPB), and the social justice lens (Greenpeace). The challenge for the next five years is to ensure this high-level, technical, and strategic work grows further and filters down to the public conversation in a way that truly mobilizes society to confront the immediate necessity of adaptation to the climate impacts that are here and the worse impacts that are definitely coming.

The current communications show the UK green sector is committed to this vision, but the conversation with the public is only just beginning.

Crucially, it has to be understood that mitigation in isolation is now a way of burying our heads in the sand. And that equating 'climate' with 'net zero' is doing more harm than good; because it obscures the pivotal importance of impacts/adaptation, with a phrase that moreover

alienates and is impenetrable. Instead, climate impacts and strategic adaptation should be central to all climate work, including most definitely communications. (This is the purport of the Climate Majority Project's 'Safer' work,^{lxxxviii} with becoming #safer as the needed direction of travel being itself comprehensible and appealing.)

RECOMMENDATIONS: THE PATH FORWARD

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

- **Deepen the new narratives:** Continue to build upon the successful reframing of adaptation as a matter of fairness, nature, and finance. Focus on tangible, local examples that resonate with the public and link them to high-level systemic change. Use adaptation as a constant focuser of minds and hearts.
- **Increase collaboration:** The convergence of themes provides an opportunity for unprecedented collaboration. Organisations focused on climate justice should work with those focused on nature-based solutions and finance to build a more powerful, unified front. All should stress that the age of consequences that we are in is by definition an age of adaptation: and that the question now is how to define adaptation adequately,^{lxxxix} in practice, and in the public forum.
- **Move beyond critique to implementation:** As the CCC has pointed out, the UK needs to move from planning to action.^{xc} Organisations should not only criticise the government's lack of action but also provide and showcase scalable, on-the-ground examples of successful adaptation.

FOR THE PUBLIC

- **Demand local action:** Engage with local authorities and demand that adaptation and resilience be a central part of local planning, from (nature-friendly) flood defences to green infrastructure.
- **Co-create local action:** In the absence of sufficient guidance or resourcing from authorities, citizens should seek collectively to defend themselves, whether through 'climate hubs'^{xc} or 'lifestones',^{xcii} citizen science (e.g. on water quality) or citizen vigilance (eg volunteer firewatching), food growing or community -energy and -insulation schemes.
- **Support campaigns on accountability:** Support organisations engaged in legal challenges and campaigns that demand accountability for climate damages, ensuring the costs of adaptation are not unfairly distributed.

FOR POLICYMAKERS AND BUSINESS

- **Integrate and fund adaptation:** Treat adaptation not as a separate, niche policy but as an essential component of all government and corporate strategy, from infrastructure to public health. It is no longer enough to talk and act on 'mitigation': the crisis is here, and must be integrated into businesses' awareness of their entire business model and supply chain. The CCC has highlighted a lack of measurable targets and clear roles for different actors, which must be rectified.^{xciii}

- **Incentivise nature-based solutions:** Fund and support ‘nature-based solutions’ that provide multiple benefits for both mitigation and adaptation, recognising their economic and ecological value. The RSPB’s research demonstrates the vast economic returns of such investments.^{xciv}

THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Greater focus on local, practical solutions:** Highlighting town, neighbourhood, or sectoral case studies makes adaptation tangible—especially in under-served urban communities. And adaptation-action grows agency: which we badly need a sense of, in relation to climate.
- **Expansion into neglected subthemes:** Dedicated content (and campaigns) on “insurance and risk transfer,” comprehensive “public health adaptation,” and “industrial supply chain resilience” would round out the communication landscape.
- **Story-led and community voices:** Environmental organisations should expand storytelling, platforming the lived experience of adaptation—building a public sense of ownership and urgency. Positive examples should be mined and showcased; and negative examples (where adaptation has been too reactive or defensive, maladaptation) should be learnt from.
- **More educational outreach:** Beyond campaigners and policymakers, making adaptation a core component of climate literacy at schools, health services, and business forums would multiply impact. The Climate Majority Project’s Climate Courage campaign has curated helpful resources that support leaders and educators with this vital work.^{xcv}

CONCLUSIONS

Adaptation: the unavoidable, non-negotiable reality

The findings of this report are a wake-up call, not a celebration. The UK's leading environmental organisations—WWF UK, Greenpeace UK, Friends of the Earth, RSPB, and the Green Party—have dramatically increased their communication on climate adaptation since 2020, and this shift represents their decisive realization that climate strategy must meet the worsening reality on the ground. Adaptation is no longer the quiet, secondary concern; it is the unavoidable, non-negotiable reality of what we do in bringing about an effective response to our climate breaking down.

The new narrative is strong, but not loud enough

The qualitative shift is profound: organisations are now fighting for adaptation in the courtroom (FoE), the financial sector (WWF), the policy floor (Green Party, RSPB), and through the lens of social justice (Greenpeace). They are using visceral, tangible stories—the flooded home, the heat-stricken elder, the collapsing supply chain—to replace abstract talk of mitigation.

But this hard truth remains: the prevailing mitigation discourse must be seamlessly integrated with adaptation. It must no longer prevail over adaptation. The overall volume of 'net zero' messaging—a concept that can sometimes feel abstract or alienating to the public—must be recalibrated (down) to foreground the vital conversation about immediate impacts and resilience. A conversation which can unloose a full-spectrum awareness of the immediacy and importance and actionability of climate concern: thus over time rebooting decarbonisation programmes too.

The ultimate challenge: from talk to mobilization

The UK's independent climate advisers, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), recently warned that the country is “not yet adapted” even to current levels of warming, “let alone” what is expected to come. The CCC has urged the government to ensure the UK can cope with at least 2°C of global warming by 2050, supported by a framework of clear long-term objectives, departmental accountability, and regular five-year adaptation targets.^{xvii} Our communication, therefore, has not yet translated into the wartime-style mobilization that the crisis demands.

This is a moment of unprecedented leverage: environmental organisations collectively hold over half the share of voice on adaptation. It is time to stop treating adaptation as a policy ‘add-on’ and mainstream it in all climate work, including communications.

The opportunity is not just to talk more about adaptation, but to speak better, braver, more boldly. We can collectively use our dominant platform to:

1. Dismantle the optimism imperative: Be honest about the post-1.5°C world to foster a realistic, action-oriented public understanding of climate risk.
2. Make it local and tangible: Translate high-level strategy into visible, on-the-ground examples that empower citizens and local authorities to build immediate, community-led resilience.

3. Put people - especially vulnerable people - first: support legal and financial campaigns on loss and damage, ensuring the most vulnerable are protected from the worst of the crisis. Those on the climate frontlines, at home as well as abroad, are going to need help, to adapt to something which they played very little role in causing.
4. Effect a wide appeal: Adaptation is less polarising than 'mitigation' / 'net zero'^{xcvii} and more relevant to the well-off as much as to the poor. Let's make impacts - and strategic adaptation to them - what people first think about when they think about climate. Then, when they/we talk about climate, what they/we talk about will resonate.

Adaptation is here. The conversation is just beginning, and we must raise the volume in a calculated manner until it enables sufficient action.

Appendix

Comparative Analysis of Adaptation Communications (2018-2019 vs. 2021-Today)

Organisation Name	2018-2019 Communication (from 2020 report)	2021-Today Communication (from new research)
Friends of the Earth	2 adaptation-focused articles on urban heat and flooding; a brief, reactive stance.	A profound strategic shift to legal challenges, framing adaptation as a human rights issue. Pursued legal action against the UK's National Adaptation Programme (NAP3). ⁴
WWF UK	5 articles focused on a local case study: the "Coastal Kenya Programme." A tangible, project-based approach. ¹	A systemic, high-level approach focused on global finance. Partnered with financial institutions to promote "Nature-Positive Transition Pathways" and "insetting" as a business risk strategy. ¹⁰
Greenpeace UK	0 adaptation-focused articles. Entirely focused on mitigation and direct action. ¹	Integrated adaptation into a climate justice framework. Launched the "Polluters Pay" campaign to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for adaptation and recovery costs. ¹⁶
RSPB	0 adaptation-focused articles, despite having a policy position on helping wildlife adapt. ¹	A highly technical and evidence-based approach. Actively advocated for "nature-based solutions" (NbS) to Parliament, providing economic arguments and specific examples like peatland restoration. ²⁰
The Green Party of England and Wales	Only 1 passing mention of adaptation; the lowest proportion of climate-focused articles. ¹	Adaptation is now a core part of its political platform. The 2024 manifesto explicitly includes proposals for resilient homes and infrastructure, linking climate action to public services and economic stability. ²⁴

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