

# The Fossil Fuel Treaty

## Tricky questions answered

March 2024



Protesters in New York City demand a Fossil Fuel Treaty during the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2023

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty campaign is a bold demand for a global exit plan from the fossil fuel era that is picking up pace worldwide.

Endorsements from MPs, councillors, elected mayors and members of the public are key to the campaign. Some are not yet convinced that a transition from fossil fuels is necessary or even possible, so talking to them about it could bring up some tricky questions.

This document is designed to help you understand Global Justice Now's position on key questions about the fossil fuel phase out and to equip you with the information you need to campaign locally for the Fossil Fuel Treaty.

Although you can read the guide from beginning to end, it's not necessary to. It's designed so that you can look up key questions you're interested in, or feel less confident talking about, and get the information you need.

### Other briefings

You can read the basic case for the treaty in our campaign briefing *The Fossil Fuel Treaty: A global plan for a fossil-free future*. You can find this briefing, along with a guide to persuading your local council to support the treaty and other materials on our website at: [globaljustice.org.uk/resources](https://globaljustice.org.uk/resources)



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## SECTION 1: The basics

### What is the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (Fossil Fuel Treaty)?

The Fossil Fuel Treaty is a global exit plan from fossil fuels. It would use international cooperation to create a legally binding treaty to end the era of coal, oil and gas - fast, fairly and forever. It has three pillars, which the text of the treaty would eventually be built around. These are:

- Non-proliferation: an immediate end to the expansion of new coal, oil and gas production;
- A fair phase out: wind down existing production in line with the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C quickly and fairly;
- Just transition: global support to ensure no worker, community or country is left behind.

### Is it even possible to phase out fossil fuels?

We must urgently reduce our dependence on fossil fuels to cut emissions and avoid climate catastrophe around the world. This is entirely possible: 90% of the world's electricity could come from renewables by 2050, and the International Energy Agency reported a 50% growth in renewable energy globally in 2023.<sup>1,2</sup> In 2022, 113% of Scotland's overall electricity consumption was from renewable energy sources, showing the huge potential that exists.<sup>3</sup> We can build low carbon societies and economies that actually cater to our wellbeing and enhance prosperity worldwide. The Fossil Fuel Treaty would put countries on a path to doing this quickly and effectively.

### I'm worried about ending fossil fuels suddenly, won't that just really hurt ordinary people?

The treaty campaign aims to deal with exactly this problem. Fossil fuel emissions pose a huge risk to humanity, we must end our dependence on them as soon as possible. A sudden, chaotic or unmanaged energy transition, however, would be painful for people around the world. The treaty would bring countries together to plan a well-managed energy transition that is fair and helps to create a more equal world.

International cooperation is vital to achieving this. Without it, we will see individual countries engage in unplanned, chaotic transitions as the climate crisis becomes too great to ignore. This will leave oil and gas workers stranded in an industry which shuts down suddenly, with potentially dangerous impacts on energy supply around the world and here in the UK.

By bringing countries together to negotiate quickly and effectively, the treaty would oversee a global reduction

in the use of fossil fuels over time that is in line with ambitious scaling up of renewable energy capacity.

### Is there a text for the Fossil Fuel Treaty? Can I read it?

Not yet, although there are many people working on what the details might look like. The campaign's current focus is on getting as many governments as possible globally to endorse the need for a treaty and its three pillars: a ban on any fossil fuel expansion, a fair phase out of existing supplies of fossil fuels, and a globally just transition. Once there is a strong enough group of champion countries demanding a treaty, those countries will initiate formal negotiations; this is when a text will start to be created.

### Which governments are already on board with the Fossil Fuel Treaty?

National governments around the world are increasingly joining the call for a Fossil Fuel Treaty. In December 2023, at COP28, Colombia became the first oil producing country to endorse the treaty. In doing so, it joined a contingent of climate vulnerable Pacific Island States – including Fiji, Vanuatu and Tuvalu – who have been spearheading calls for the treaty. Other endorsers include Samoa, Palau and Nauru, all of whom also announced support for a treaty at COP28.

The European parliament has also called for a Fossil Fuel Treaty, including it in its formal demands for both COP27 and COP28. Local and subnational governments around the world are also calling for a Fossil Fuel Treaty. The list includes but is not limited to: California and Hawai'i State Legislature, Kolkata, and Buenos Aires.

### Who else supports the Fossil Fuel Treaty?

As well as national and regional government endorsements, the Fossil Fuel Treaty is supported by many elected officials. Parliamentarians from countries as diverse as Colombia, India, France, Germany, Sweden the US and more have endorsed the treaty or incorporated its pillars into their demands. The list also includes UK figures like Lord Deben (former Chair of the UK Climate Change Committee), and parliamentarians from the Labour Party, Green Party, SNP and Liberal Democrats.

Other supporters include global institutions such as the World Health Organisation, youth leaders from groups like Fridays for Future, over 100 nobel laureates, and thousands of academics, scientists and civil society organisations.

## **How will a Fossil Fuel Treaty impact the climate crisis? Why is this specifically what is needed?**

Fossil fuels are the number one driver of the climate crisis. They account for 90% of all carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>4</sup>

The fossil fuel industry's plans for coal, oil and gas production vastly exceed the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C. Due to governments and oil companies delaying vital action, we are now left with an ever-shrinking window to permanently end the era of coal, oil and gas and create a safe, sustainable world. The transition must be fast, fair and financed. The global nature, as well as the urgency, of the climate crisis means we cannot rely on unilateral action to make this happen; countries must work together.

The fossil fuel industry has encouraged a focus on changes individuals can make in their day to day lives that can reduce demand for fossil fuels. This is a purposeful tactic used to distract from the continuation of a business model that helps companies make billions from producing destructive coal, oil and gas. While it is important to reduce demand for fossil fuels, this will not make the required impact on its own. Without also cutting off fossil fuel production at its root and transitioning to clean energy supply, we are cutting with one half of the scissors.

We need a plan that dismantles the climate-wrecking business models of polluting corporations. The UN's COP process has been far too slow to achieve this, partly because it requires every country in the world to sign up to its agreements. The Fossil Fuel Treaty would complement the COP process, by creating a higher ambition group of countries to encourage a 'race to the top', creating a global mandate for a fast, fair and financed fossil fuel phase out.

## **Do we need a complete fossil fuel phase out when there are carbon capture technologies?**

Carbon capture technologies are a risky gamble. Despite being first suggested in 1977, carbon capture is still not yet proven to be deliverable at the scale that would be needed to offset the emissions of fossil fuels. Concentrating money and political energy on it is a dangerous distraction in the face of the ever-escalating climate crisis.

Top climate scientists have said that carbon capture should not be prioritised in the UK's energy strategy, and that the focus should be a transition to renewable energy.<sup>5</sup> This is partly because carbon capture technologies are currently mostly used to facilitate continued fossil fuel expansion, with big oil accused of using them as cover to carry on polluting.

Even carbon capture on fossil fuel equipment like power stations or drilling rigs is not likely to help us hit climate targets unless part of a rigid framework for phasing out fossil fuels – rather they will simply encourage fossil fuel use.

Carbon capture technologies will keep business as usual going and do nothing to address global inequality. They allow oil and gas companies to continue ripping up parts of the global south, destroying local environments, while still failing to actually provide reliable energy access for all. By contrast, transitioning to renewable energy could see affordable, reliable energy supplies the world over and could be used as a vehicle to create a fairer world.

## **How does nuclear power fit into the clean energy transition?**

Nuclear power should not be part of a clean energy transition. It's often referred to as 'clean' because there are no greenhouse gas emissions released when electricity is produced from it. But nuclear power creates radioactive waste at every stage of production, from the mining of the uranium through to the reprocessing of spent reactor fuel. Some of this waste will remain dangerously radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years, with no foolproof way to safely store it for those timescales.

Nuclear power stations are also expensive and slow to build. There are many examples of reactors going vastly over budget and over time. The UK's new Hinkley C reactor was supposed to be producing energy by 2017 but it now isn't due to be completed until as late as 2031 and is expected to end up costing more than £46 billion.<sup>6</sup> These kinds of timescales and costs aren't compatible with the urgency of the climate crisis. Moreover, they compare very unfavourably with the speed and cost of installation of wind and solar. While advocates of nuclear power often use the argument that wind and solar can be intermittent, which is true, the answer to that is not to build nuclear power stations but to make other adjustments to the energy system to compensate.<sup>7</sup>

The just transition pillar of the Fossil Fuel Treaty would not include new nuclear power stations. There could be a case made for existing nuclear power stations to continue generating electricity until a certain point, or even in some cases until the end of their originally planned lifetime. This could depend on which countries they were in, what capacity that country had to move to renewable sources of electricity and how that fitted into a globally agreed plan for a just transition.

## How does gas fit into the clean energy transition?

To keep the 1.5°C global temperature rise goal within reach, all fossil fuels need to be phased out. Gas is a fossil fuel, and as such must not be used as a 'bridging' or 'transition' fuel to maintain energy security.<sup>8</sup> Such a scenario would require heavy reliance on the use of technologies such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon dioxide removal (CDR). When you look at the real-world constraints on the potential for CCS and CDR, it's clear that these technologies are not likely to be available at the scale needed in the timescale available to get to zero carbon.<sup>9</sup>

A much better focus for government action and investment is to increase electrification through scaling up renewable energy, strengthening the electricity grid and storage options, and improving energy efficiency across the board to reduce demand.

## SECTION 2: The Fossil Fuel Treaty and global politics

### Why do we need a fair phase out? What does this actually mean?

Wealthy, fossil fuel-producing countries like the UK are responsible for most climate pollution to date. When emissions from the British Empire are accounted for, the UK's historic emissions are the fourth highest of any country in the world.<sup>10</sup> As the world's fifth largest economy, the UK also has significant capacity to transition from dependency on oil, gas and coal to clean energy, and to support other countries to do the same. By contrast, low-income countries in the global south are often least responsible for the climate crisis, and find their economies constrained when transitioning to renewable energy or low-carbon solutions.

Many countries in the global south are economically dependent on fossil fuels for significant proportions of their national budget, in the most extreme cases more than 80% dependent.<sup>11</sup> The Fossil Fuel Treaty could be designed to facilitate a phase-out with fair timelines. Wealthy nations – which have built their economies on using most of the carbon budget – should move first, and fastest. The UK should aim to phase out all fossil fuels by the 2030s and be providing finance to others to do the same. Low income countries like, for example, South Sudan, should not be expected to phase out until 2050, and should receive help from wealthy nations to do so. If these timelines are followed, it is still possible to meet the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target.

### What is a globally just transition?

The fossil fuel economy is predicated on global inequality, resource grabs and dispossession. This is reflected in many ways including, for example, the way our trade system works. Lower income countries that produce fossil fuels often help to provide reliable energy supply to the global north, while millions of their own population live without reliable access to power.

A good example of this is Nigeria, a major oil producer in Africa. Most Nigerian oil is shipped to European countries for refining. There have been disturbing reports that the portion of the fuel Europe does export back is some of the dirtiest in the world. The impacts of this system on the Nigerian people are stark: Nigerian air pollution is some of the worst globally and 85 million people (43% of the population) have no access to grid electricity; the largest energy deficit in the world.<sup>12</sup>

A successful transition from fossil fuels will address the needs of affected workers and communities, including in cases like Nigeria's, where the fossil fuel economy is deeply embedded in daily life, even though it is failing to provide

for the most basic energy needs of most people. A globally just transition would need to support people in these communities to transition energy systems away from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

The Fossil Fuel Treaty would need to tackle the ways that the global economy drives inequality and exacerbates climate change. This would include focusing on economic diversification away from fossil fuel dependency, a transition to decentralised, people-centred energy systems, and a just transition for workers and communities most affected by the fossil fuel phase out.

A treaty could outline collective, global actions that countries would need to take. Options could include international financing mechanisms, reparations to enable countries to make the right choices and deal with inevitable climate catastrophes, and making sure all countries have fair access to the technology they need to build a clean economy.

Governments will also need to take action domestically to achieve economic diversification away from fossil fuels. These could include immediately cancelling subsidies to the grotesquely wealthy fossil fuel industry and fast-tracking fair production of renewable energy technologies.

### **How will the Fossil Fuel Treaty relate to the COP process and address its weaknesses?**

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a critical body for international cooperation and the COP process must continue, but it is weakened by a range of factors.

Perhaps most urgently, the COP process is increasingly mired in industry influence. At COP28, fossil fuel industry delegates collectively outnumbered delegates from any single country except Brazil and COP28 hosts, the UAE.<sup>13</sup> The impact of this outsized presence is evidenced in ineffectual COP outcomes, with a transition from fossil fuels only weakly outlined for the first time at COP28.

The proposed treaty draws clear lines between itself and the UNFCCC system, to ensure that the fossil fuel industry cannot derail negotiations. A Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty can fill the gap in international cooperation and would be driven by a group of first mover countries, rather than requiring every country to be on board. Additionally, a civil society campaign for a Fossil Fuel Treaty continues putting pressure on the COP process by consistently raising the need for a fast, fair and financed phase out, and building support for this process.

A Fossil Fuel Treaty could move faster than the UNFCCC process which created the Paris agreement, with the possibility of securing a negotiating mandate in the near future. Pressure for a global treaty to address plastics began within UN processes in 2019, and in 2022 a

resolution to begin negotiations for a Global Plastic Pollution Treaty was adopted by 175 countries.

Moreover, the Fossil Fuel Treaty would create a binding legal framework, which would focus on a fair and equitable transition. This could avoid a situation where low-income and low-emitting countries are being pressured to phase out fossil fuels ahead of big emitters without wealthy countries in the global north providing the finance that they owe to facilitate this.

### **How will the Fossil Fuel Treaty work in solidarity with frontline activists globally?**

Around the world, people are fighting on the frontlines to keep fossil fuels in the ground. In the UK, activists with the Stop Rosebank campaign are fighting the climate-wrecking Rosebank Oilfield (which is projected to emit as much carbon annually as the world's 28 lowest income countries) from the streets to the courts. Ecuadorian people made history in 2023 by voting to ban oil drilling in the Amazon's Yasuni National Park. This was the culmination of a long battle to protect this precious piece of the Amazon rainforest, which is home to two uncontacted tribes and more species in a single hectare than exist in the whole of North America.

Global movements like this are why a fossil fuel phase out has become politically conceivable. The Fossil Fuel Treaty could help strengthen the impact of these individual battles and push the anti-fossil fuel movement forward by being an extension of democratic movements against big oil. It would honour the fight of the Ecuadorian people by mandating a fair phase out of fossil fuels, and ensure low-income countries are not left to foot the bill for leaving oil in the ground while the wealthy in the global north profit from oil production.

### **What is the step-by-step process which could make the Fossil Fuel Treaty a reality? How many countries will need to sign up to initiate negotiations?**

There is no set number required to initiate treaty negotiations, but we need a strong group of champion countries from around the world. This group is already building and starting to establish what will be necessary to regulate and phase out fossil fuels globally, picking up new supporters as they go. When there is a strong enough group, negotiations could begin, which would establish a whole range of things, including how many signatories are needed for the treaty to be legally binding. Once the text is finalised, it will be adopted by supporting countries, and governed by a central treaty body.

This process requires building support for, and awareness of, the treaty in consumer and producer countries, like the UK. We will achieve this through building grassroots

support via our activist networks, securing endorsements from local governments, the devolved administrations, non-governmental institutions like trade unions, and individual MPs, MSs and MSPs. This process will mean the UK government is pressured from all sides to be part of the global exit from fossil fuels, making business as usual increasingly difficult. Additionally, if we do soon see a UK government that is keen to reclaim the title of 'climate leader' for the UK, the treaty can be presented as a vehicle to help it achieve this goal.

### **What happens if large fossil fuel producers like Saudi Arabia and the US don't join a treaty? Will it still work?**

We do not expect the Fossil Fuel Treaty to be a 'universal treaty', rather a space where first mover, high ambition countries work together and pressure other nations to act. Over time, we envisage this process changing global foreign policy goals, making 'business as usual' inoperable, and forcing even large scale fossil fuel producers to act.

In developing the treaty there are many lessons to learn from other treaties on nuclear and chemical weapons, landmines, cluster munitions, ozone depleting substances and more. One model is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a treaty led by non-nuclear-armed states to stigmatise and ban nuclear weapons. It seeks to change global norms on nuclear weapons and prohibit producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing or stockpiling them. While the treaty has not yet achieved universal sign up, the movement around the treaty has shone a light on the continued security risks of nuclear weapons, and generated actionable solutions to drive progress on disarmament. A mass campaign for a Fossil Fuel Treaty can have the same impact on fossil fuels as it progresses.

Additionally, the Fossil Fuel Treaty will complement global efforts to reduce demand for fossil fuels, shrinking the market for coal, oil and gas much more quickly than would otherwise happen. This process will make it increasingly less viable for even big fossil fuel producers to continue investing in fossil fuels.

### **Isn't China really to blame for climate change? Why should the UK have to act first?**

Of course China needs to move away from fossil fuels. It is simply untrue, however, to say that China is primarily responsible for climate change, or that action taken by governments like the UK will be inconsequential due to China's activities.

The Chinese government is investing heavily in both fossil fuels and renewables: China's installed solar power now accounts for around 40% of the global total.<sup>14</sup> Moreover,

while China's emissions are currently extremely high, total emissions per head since the industrial revolution began are still much higher for the UK. This reminds us that the UK government has a responsibility to act, and be at the forefront of a life-saving fossil fuel phase out.

When it comes to fossil fuels, a Fossil Fuel Treaty with strong global support will push China in the right direction. By endorsing the treaty and committing to its pillars, the UK can show leadership and demonstrate that ambitiously increasing reliance on renewables is the most viable path to energy security – something that many governments prioritise – persuading other countries to do the same. Furthermore, the Fossil Fuel Treaty would initiate a mass exit from the fossil fuel economy, which, coupled with reduction in demand for coal, oil and gas, would limit the profit incentives and practical possibilities of continued dependence on fossil fuels.

Finally, climate change is by definition a global problem. It is simply not viable or acceptable for the UK to refuse to take vital climate action that would help secure a liveable future for generations to come and save lives in the global south because of another country's activities. We must demand that our government shows leadership and comes to the negotiating table with as many others as are willing to plan an exit from the urgent crisis we currently face.

### **Colombia's credit rating took a hit after it committed to ending fossil fuel exploration. What's the possibility that this would happen to other countries?**

We know that the global fossil fuel economy is built on and around the enormous profits that a privileged few are making from coal, oil and gas. It's therefore no surprise that this same system will punish those brave enough to take the first steps to dismantle it. The more governments, however, that truly commit to a fossil fuel phase out, the less power certain institutions will have to mete out individual penalties, and the more likely it is we can dismantle these institutions as required. We must continue fighting and working with allies worldwide to transform the global economy, so that first-mover countries like Colombia are not penalised for their bravery.

## **SECTION 3: How would the Fossil Fuel Treaty work for the UK**

### **What are the benefits of adopting the Fossil Fuel Treaty for the UK?**

People in the UK could benefit hugely from their government showing leadership and being a constructive part of this vital global exit plan.

Fossil-fuelled climate change has a range of impacts, felt most acutely by people already experiencing the sharp end of inequality. Take global health as an example. In 2018, air pollution from burning fossil fuels caused approximately one in five deaths globally.<sup>15</sup> In the UK, the government's own research shows that air pollution is the largest environmental public health risk, with impacts including asthma and slower lung development in children, and higher risk of dementia, lung cancer, and strokes in older adults.

Air pollution is also a crisis of inequality. The most deprived groups in the UK are the most exposed to air pollution – across urban and rural areas. A plan for phasing out fossil fuels is urgently needed to reduce air pollution-related illnesses and the pressure they place on the NHS and social care sector, as well as global health systems. The World Health Organisation has endorsed the Fossil Fuel Treaty as a way to manage this process.

The climate crisis is a crisis of inequality. The world's richest 1% of people create more emissions than the poorest 66%.<sup>16</sup> Dependence on fossil fuels is perpetuating inequality and depressing living standards in the UK. The government's current approach to improving energy security is to invest more in fossil fuels, but this will only increase reliance on a harmful, finite resource without helping those struggling to meet energy payments. Most of our oil is exported anyway, and so we are simply contributing to dependence on a volatile global market, leaving all of us exposed to continued price shocks.

By contrast, if existing renewables commitments are delivered on time, the UK can produce 98% of its electricity from domestic clean energy sources by 2030, which would equate to an average household saving of £300 on energy bills. Currently, however, the UK government is lagging on delivery, particularly in England with its de facto ban on onshore wind. The Fossil Fuel Treaty would ensure all future governments are committed to pressing forward with the clean energy revolution through a legally binding framework for phasing out fossil fuels.

A Fossil Fuel Treaty could ensure an orderly and fair transition from fossil fuels to improve wellbeing and reduce inequality in the UK. The crisis is too urgent, and the world too interconnected for unilateral action alone

to achieve the same effect. The Grantham Institute has identified “catastrophic disruption” to the global economy (defined as 25% or more of global GDP lost) as the biggest economic risk to the UK from climate change, projected to cost 4.1% of domestic GDP by 2100. The Fossil Fuel Treaty could leverage fast and effective international cooperation, with a focus on fairness and a just transition, to help to avoid this eventuality, and build a sustainable future for all.

### **Aren't UK emissions really low anyway? What difference does it make to the global climate crisis for us to join the Fossil Fuel Treaty?**

The UK's current carbon emissions have fallen significantly since 1990. This is partly as a result of our electricity system shifting from burning coal to burning gas – something our activists played an important role in when we campaigned to stop the construction of new coal-fired power stations at Kingsnorth and Hunterston alongside an increased use of renewables. At the same time, UK manufacturing has declined, and some big emitters such as steel works have closed down here and moved abroad, so emissions associated with the consumer goods we use are counted elsewhere. Nevertheless, average UK per person emissions still stand at around five tons CO<sub>2</sub>e per year, far above where we need to be, with the harder-to-decarbonise parts of the economy still to be tackled. At the same time, the current government is encouraging new oil drilling in the North Sea.

The UK is the birthplace of the industrial revolution and has a long history with fossil fuels. The UK's emissions are now falling, but cumulatively emissions per head since the industrial revolution are very high, with both India and China lagging far behind the UK's total contribution. While this does not provide carte blanche for other countries to pollute, it does remind us of the role that the UK has played in the climate crisis, and its responsibility to decarbonise as quickly as possible while supporting developing countries to reduce their dependency on fossil fuels.

By working together with other countries to manage a fair and orderly transition from fossil fuels the UK could be central to a new revolution, which creates both a safe and sustainable future and a more equal and fair society, in the UK and globally.

### **How will signing up to the Fossil Fuel Treaty affect the UK's energy supply?**

Becoming a signatory to the Fossil Fuel Treaty would mean the UK has committed to a legally binding framework to phase out fossil fuels, following rules laid out in the treaty. If the treaty achieves its desired goals, this will mean fair phase out timelines which would require the UK to transition quickly to clean energy.



A Fossil Fuel Treaty could see countries move to a diverse mix of renewables, becoming much less dependent on imported energy produced by fossil fuel giants. This would be true for the UK. Being part of the Fossil Fuel Treaty could help the UK carve out a path to greater energy independence via a globally just transition, which creates a more equal world, and results in UK energy being primarily supplied by domestically-produced renewables.

We could see some of this underway in the near future. The Labour party has already committed to clean power by 2030, as well as a moratorium on new oil and gas licenses if it comes to power. Current government targets, in fact, could see electricity supplied by 98% renewables by 2030, but Rishi Sunak's government is lagging on fulfilling them. The Fossil Fuel Treaty would commit whichever party is leading government to pushing ahead with this process, ensuring people in the UK and globally feel the benefits of a stable, affordable, domestically produced energy supply as soon as possible.

### **How will the fossil fuel phase out affect workers in the energy sector?**

The transition away from fossil fuels will require thoughtful attention and planning by governments so that it is done in a just and fair way for those whose livelihoods are currently a part of the fossil fuel economy. History has shown, for example in the case of the mine closures of the 1980s in the UK, that abrupt change can incur a hefty price on workers and society. So, the transition away from all fossil fuels needs transparent planning and the active participation of a broad range of those affected. The alternative jobs created need to be secure, with guaranteed living wages, and come with training, proper workplace safety protections and decent career prospects. These quality jobs will lift people, their families and their communities up. But they will also help attract the workers needed for the economic transformation.

The Fossil Fuel Treaty would set a framework for just such a transition. And because the transition has got to be global, then having internationally agreed norms and global co-operation on a just transition can ensure that it is as fair a process as possible that doesn't leave any worker, community or even country behind.

### **Will a fossil fuel phase out increase people's energy bills?**

If done right, the exact opposite will happen. Renewable energy is much more affordable for consumers. If existing renewables commitments are delivered on time, the UK can produce 98% of its electricity from clean sources by 2030, which would be produced primarily domestically and equate to an average household saving of £300 on energy bills annually.<sup>17</sup> Moving away from a corporate dominated energy supply to publicly and municipally

owned renewables, as well as decentralised energy via micro-renewables such as domestic solar, would radically change the way that we consume and pay for our energy for the better.

### **How will the Fossil Fuel Treaty affect oil and gas licenses that have already been approved?**

It is very difficult to see how the UK could adhere to the terms of a treaty to end the fossil fuel era while still allowing new coal, oil and gas projects to come online. A global moratorium on coal, oil and gas would follow the recommendations of the International Energy Agency, which has been crystal clear that there can be no new fossil fuel production if the world is to meet globally agreed climate targets. Any licenses already granted must be revoked.

Furthermore, investing in new fossil fuels when scientific evidence demands a phase out for human survival risks leaving workers and assets stranded. The most responsible thing the UK government can do is cancel new fossil fuel projects, invest in increasing the UK's renewable energy capacity as quickly as possible, support oil and gas workers to reskill and the communities around them to diversify economically. The Fossil Fuel Treaty would commit the government to targets for a just energy transition to help achieve this.

To make these cancellations easier, it's vital that the UK reduces its exposure to trade and investment agreements which privilege fossil fuel investments via the investor state dispute settlement (ISDS) or 'corporate courts'. This model has allowed fossil fuel corporations to sue governments for regulatory changes including necessary climate action in secretive, one-sided investor courts. This will make the fossil fuel phase out needlessly expensive. It's very welcome that the UK has announced its exit from the biggest of these treaties, the Energy Charter Treaty, but it is still a party to many more agreements, and is even signing new deals, like the Pacific Trade Deal, which contain ISDS.

### **How much will the Fossil Fuel Treaty cost the UK government?**

Joining the treaty won't cost the government anything and a fossil fuel phase out can deliver reduced costs for UK households. Governments in global north countries like the UK, however, will have a role to play in helping countries in the global south to diversify their economies away from fossil fuel dependency. It is right that the UK provides this funding due to its historical contributions to global emissions.

Take Pakistan as an example, a lower middle-income country where 40% of energy supply is currently

dependent on imported fossil fuels. Pakistan is also the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, and per capita emissions are one fifth of those in the UK. Pakistan is not responsible for the climate crisis, but it will be deeply affected by it and has less money to respond to ongoing climate catastrophes than countries like the UK.

That's why the UK has a responsibility to help finance climate vulnerable countries' transitions. How much this costs the government is to some extent up to them. Money can certainly be raised through, for example, a polluter tax that would use the obscene profits of big oil companies to pay for vital climate action, and redirecting subsidies paid to these companies by the UK taxpayer.

While renewable energy sources like wind and solar are cheaper than fossil fuels, there will be upfront costs to the domestic energy transition. Paying for this should be highly progressive, with major polluters footing a significant part of the bill. This would be part of achieving a globally just transition. Such costs also pale in comparison to the extremely imminent costs of the climate crisis, however, as well as the continuing costs of relying on a global oil and gas market where the UK's energy supply is continually exposed to global price shocks.

If the government has concerns about the potential economic losses of moving early on the necessary fossil fuel phase out, a coordinated exit plan will be the best way to manage them. If a critical mass of countries agrees a plan to end fossil fuels together, this - combined with continued efforts to reduce fossil fuel demand - could remove the profit incentive from fossil fuel production.

### **How will the Fossil Fuel Treaty be funded?**

Some financial measures will be needed to speed the transition along and if they're chosen carefully they can simultaneously tip the balance away from corporate profits and promote climate justice globally. There is no need for anyone except the very wealthy to feel significant financial impacts from a fossil fuel phase out if the government manages the process properly.

There are several sources of funding government could look to, including:

- A permanent polluter tax;
- Redirection of subsidies from fossil fuel companies to support the roll out of renewables and increased energy efficiency;
- Taxes on luxury travel, for example private jets and super yachts;
- Frequent flyer levies.

## **SECTION 4: What can you do about it?**

### **How can I lobby the UK government to support the Fossil Fuel Treaty?**

We really need as much noise and public demand around this as possible. We know that the government won't take action on its own, so we need a real groundswell of pressure from below. This includes the devolved nations, the Mayoral cities and regions, and local councils across the UK.

The best thing our supporters can do for the treaty is to lobby for it locally. This would include, but is not limited to:

- Writing to/meeting with your MP, MSP and/or MS;
- Writing to/meeting with local councillors to try and get them to pass a motion supporting the treaty;
- Writing to/meeting to your directly-elected mayor, if you have one;
- Raising awareness of the Fossil Fuel Treaty in your local community.

You can email [activism@globaljustice.org.uk](mailto:activism@globaljustice.org.uk) with any questions.

### **Is it realistic to think the UK would endorse the Fossil Fuel Treaty? What if the government remains hostile for another political term?**

We are in a general election year, which always provides fresh opportunities and ground for campaigning. For example, the Labour party has already signalled willingness to facilitate the end of oil and gas by committing to not granting any new licenses if it gets into government. There is much more work to be done here, but this policy commitment is an example of an open door for campaigning on the Fossil Fuel Treaty.

If the government remains hostile, it is even more important that it feels pressure from all sides when it comes to its dangerous and wrong-headed fossil fuel expansion. Creating as much popular demand as possible for an alternative plan - namely the treaty - with devolved nations, MPs and local councils publicly endorsing it will help contribute to this. Regardless of UK politics, global norms around fossil fuels will begin to shift as more countries sign up to the treaty. This can all create an environment in which it is impossible for the UK government to operate business as usual when it comes to fossil fuels.

## **What role do local councils have in the campaign for a Fossil Fuel Treaty?**

The strategy of the Fossil Fuel Treaty campaign at an international level is to encourage a growing chorus of government bodies at all levels, from national states to local government, to formally and publicly declare their support for a treaty. Along with the support of many individual parliamentarians, civil society organisations, academics, scientists, youth activists and more, we hope to create a rising tide of demands for a real end to fossil fuels and a clean energy transition.

Cities including London, Birmingham, Barcelona, Paris, Los Angeles, Sydney and Toronto have already endorsed the treaty, but we need more than just large cities. In the UK, many local councils have passed motions declaring a climate emergency. Some councils have also used what powers they have to create real progress on climate action, from retro-fitting council homes to encouraging the growth of renewable energy. Supporting the Fossil Fuel Treaty can complement these practical efforts with a specific demand for local councils to make of national government.

There's a history of these kinds of initiatives. In a number of countries in the 1980s, local councils declared themselves Nuclear Free Zones to build collective pressure for nuclear disarmament. In New Zealand this resulted in the whole country being declared a Nuclear Free Zone in 1987 through an act of parliament. And in the campaign against the EU-US trade deal in 2015-16, local councils declared themselves 'TTIP-free zones', joining municipalities across Europe which rejected the deal publicly.

## **What role do the devolved nations of the UK have?**

An important part of our campaign is to get the devolved governments of Wales and Scotland to endorse the treaty proposal. Doing this would significantly increase the pressure on the UK government and UK Labour. There are strong arguments to be made for supporting the treaty in the case of both nations. Wales is already a member of the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (a voluntary grouping of governments committed to moving away from those fuels) and has some very forward-looking legislation not seen elsewhere in the UK, such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The Scottish government has been praised for its international leadership on climate change, setting into law some of the strongest greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets of any industrialised country. It was also the first global north country to pledge finance for loss and damage, breaking the taboo around this among rich countries. Two First Ministers of Scotland have publicly opposed the new oilfields of Cambo and Rosebank on climate change grounds.

## **How can we push the UK to fulfil its international obligations in the context of the treaty?**

A globally-just transition and a fair phaseout are core parts of the proposed treaty. If the UK endorses or signs up, it will agree to legally binding framework that support all these pillars. When we are pushing for UK endorsement of the treaty, we should keep in mind that measures like polluter taxes, ending fossil fuel subsidies, loss and damage payments and debt cancellation for the global south should all be included in a globally-just transition.

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## Take action

To find out how you can help tackle corporate power and become part of a movement for real change visit [globaljustice.org.uk](https://globaljustice.org.uk) or call 020 7820 4900.



Global Justice Now works as part of a global movement to challenge the powerful and create a more just and equal world. Our local activist groups campaign around the country for a global economy where people come before profit.

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