



## 'Net zero' is not zero:

### Ways to take action for climate justice instead

In June 2019, then Prime Minister Theresa May announced the UK was committing to reduce its emissions to 'net zero' by 2050. This followed sustained pressure from campaigners to introduce a new target aligned with the Paris Agreement. Quakers in Britain cautiously welcomed it.

But what does 'net zero' actually mean? The term arises from the likelihood that whatever action we take, there will be some residual emissions which we need to deal with by removing carbon from the atmosphere. This is where the problem now lies.

Current plans to reach 'net zero' rely on geoengineering technologies that are not proven at scale and that try to solve the symptoms rather than the causes of climate breakdown. It has come to represent a way of taking action without addressing the injustices that created climate breakdown. Instead, it perpetuates these injustices. And it has become a form of corporate greenwashing. Find out more in [this briefing from Corporate Accountability and partners \(PDF\)](#) and in our blog '[Not zero: why we should be wary of 'net zero' climate targets](#)'.

As a result, Quakers in Britain no longer use the term 'net zero' in our advocacy and campaigning work, except to refer to others' existing pledges which use this language. If you choose to reject 'net zero' too, there are still lots of commitments that you can make!

- Root your commitments in the principles of climate justice, for example by acknowledging that the UK, as a rich nation which has benefited from 'cheap' fossil fuel energy, must do its fair share to address the crisis and repay its 'climate debt' to countries most affected.
- Commit to ensuring your community's money, including savings, investments and insurance payments, does not support the fossil fuel industry or others who profit from environmental destruction.
- Pledge to use your community's assets to support the climate movement, for example by providing space to groups working for climate justice.
- Support local projects which contribute to a **just transition** to **zero carbon**, such as cycle infrastructure or community energy schemes. This support may include offers of time, meeting space, financial support or contacts.
- Commit to working together to put pressure on local and national government to adopt strong climate policies rooted in justice.
- Pledge to uphold those in your meeting engaged in nonviolent climate action.