

CLIMATE CHANGE ACT 2008

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Part 1: Carbon Target and Budgeting

The target for 2050

Section 1: The target for 2050

25. *Subsection (1)* of this section imposes a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that “the net UK carbon account” for 2050 is at least 80% lower than the “1990 baseline”.
26. *Subsection (2)* defines “the 1990 baseline” to mean the aggregate amount of: net UK emissions of carbon dioxide in 1990; and net UK emissions of the other targeted greenhouse gases in the “base year” for each gas.
27. The term “targeted greenhouse gas” refers to the gases which are covered by the targets and budgets in the Act as set out in section 24(1); the “base year” for each targeted greenhouse gas other than carbon dioxide is set out in section 25(1). The targeted greenhouse gases, and their base years, are: carbon dioxide (1990), methane (1990), nitrous oxide (1990), hydrofluorocarbons (1995), perfluorocarbons (1995) and sulphur hexafluoride (1995). Under section 24, the Secretary of State is given the power to add more gases – the commentary on that section provides details of the process. The commentary on section 25 provides more details on base years.
28. The term “the net UK carbon account” is defined in section 27. For 2050, it means the level of net UK emissions of targeted greenhouse gases in 2050 after numbers of “carbon units” have been added and subtracted in accordance with carbon accounting regulations. The commentary on sections 26 and 27 provides a more detailed explanation of carbon accounting and the net UK carbon account.
29. The target for 2050 is set by reference to a 1990 baseline rather than a particular quantum of emissions because the baseline emissions are subject to revision as understanding of historic emissions improves. 1990 is the baseline year used for emissions of carbon dioxide under the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to limit emissions of greenhouse gases, to which the UK is party; where a gas has a different base year, emissions of the gas in the base year are treated as being emissions of the gas in 1990.