

COP 26

Glasgow, November 2021

What is COP 26? Nothing to do with football or the police. COP stands for Conference of the Parties and it is the decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Why in March should we be interested in an organisation with a very long name that is having a conference in November?

Back in Paris in 2015, 196 countries made a legally binding commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1.5% below pre-industrial levels. This was the first time ever that most countries in the world agreed to do something about climate change. Countries also agreed to meet every 5 years to update their plans and so COP 26 is the delayed five year anniversary of this meeting.

Rather than wait for November in Glasgow, countries have been announcing and acting on their plans to reach this target. In June 2019, the UK was the first major economy in the world to make a legally binding commitment to reduce its emissions to net-zero by 2050. Other countries (including the EU) followed. But it was the announcement from China in September 2020 that got everyone talking, as China has committed to go carbon neutral by 2060. Up until now, countries have said that they were not going to pay to decarbonise their economies if other high emitting countries, like China, were doing nothing. That excuse has now gone. In fact, with the cost of renewable technologies falling every year, countries can just follow the money, they don't need to be pressurised to do the right thing by environmental activists.

So what does this mean for me, I hear you say? As an Eco Church, we have made a commitment to play our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. What lockdown has shown us is that we can live with less. Less driving, less flying, less waste and fewer new clothes, resulting in fewer emissions. This is called reducing your carbon footprint. Between now and COP 26, we will be encouraging you to undertake a personal carbon footprint audit so that you can contribute directly to the UK's commitment to reach net-zero by 2050.