

Climate change response – transition toward net zero

An increasing number of towns, regions and states are declaring climate emergencies, and public support for lower carbon economies is growing too. While most countries are committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, actions usually don't match the words. Increasing pressure to change, and resistance to change, is certain. Sport and recreation will be directly and indirectly affected.

What we're seeing

Net zero emissions by 2050

New Zealand has committed to achieving net zero long-lived greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The technologies to achieve this are probably already available.¹ Many other countries have committed to net zero, or substantial emission reductions over the next few decades too. Others haven't, yet.

Commitment is one thing, real action another

Countries have made commitments before, but emissions have continued to increase in some cases, or not fallen sufficiently in others. Some countries are not sufficiently ambitious.² On the other hand, "climate inactivism" is also growing, fuelled by concern about costs and disruption to the status quo.³

The "Dad dancing" problem

Even for countries with ambitious targets, some commentators point out that no country has the policies needed to achieve net zero. One referred to it as "dad dancing" – uncoordinated policies across the whole of government.⁴

NZ's Reduction Plan

The government recently released its emissions reduction plan, informed by the Climate Commissions report.⁵ While welcoming having a plan, science commentators noted that it lacks a sense of urgency, defers controversial decisions, and relies too much on technocratic rather than political solutions.⁶

Just transitions

Adoption of a "Just transition" approach to a low carbon economy is growing internationally. This is about ensuring that changes are fair and equitable for all.⁷ What this looks like in practice varies, but more communities, as well as local and central governments, are demanding or supporting the intent.

Stumbling into new era of risk

A Stockholm Resilience Centre report suggests new risks are emerging from interactions between climate and security crises. It provides five principles to create more peaceful and sustainable societies.⁸

Sport & Recreation being challenged

Athletes, and others, are challenging clubs and sport and recreation bodies to reduce their climate impacts. Such as reducing international travel and use of fossil fuels, adopting renewable energy at facilities, and reducing energy use and waste.⁹ Many clubs do not yet recognise the impact climate change may have on them.¹⁰ Sporting events, in part because of good media coverage, are becoming targets or venues for climate protests.¹¹

Sports organisations are already transitioning

Some sporting organisations are transitioning to low(er) carbon futures. At least one football club in the UK is certified as carbon zero.¹² Assessments of the impact of sports on climate change have also been undertaken, to raise awareness and highlight transition options.¹³

Potential implications

Create

- Creating low emissions economies and societies

Relate

- Increasing consensus on the need to change, but not necessarily on the means
- Rising disruptions due transition decisions and consequences

Consume

- Significant shifts in consumption and recreation practices

Degrade

- Pace and scale of environmental degradation and societal disruptions linked to global responses
- Increasing investment to improve or move places and spaces

Connect

- Building and maintenance of trust is essential for social licence

Define

- Changing perspectives of what is a sustainable activity, organisation and society

More information (links)

¹ [Ināia tonu nei: a low emissions future for Aotearoa](#)

² [Which countries met the UN's 2020 deadline to raise 'climate ambition'?](#)

³ [Beware the blowback: why climate inactivism is a growing threat](#)

⁴ [Which country has made the biggest climate commitment?](#)

⁵ [Aotearoa's first emissions reduction plan](#)

⁶ [Emissions reduction plan expert reaction](#)

⁷ [NZ commits to a just transition](#)

⁸ [World stumbling into a new era of risk](#)

⁹ [To Save Itself, Sport Must Join the Fight Against Climate Change](#)

¹⁰ ['Our futures are at stake': sport's climate crisis weakness and how to change it](#)

¹¹ [Activists Disrupt Harvard-Yale Rivalry Game To Protest Climate Change](#)

¹² [An open goal for sport transition](#)

¹³ [Playing against the clock](#)