

14th August 2024

Dear Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

We are writing to you from Disability Rights UK, as we are working to ensure that policies and plans arising from the impact of climate change are inclusive of the needs and priorities of Disabled people.

It is proven that Disabled people experience the impacts of global warming, worse than anyone else, yet currently we have no input into discussions on the topic and no voice in designing policy. This leads to solutions that exclude the Disabled community.

Disabled people are excluded from developing solutions to climate change, meaning that laws, policies, and programmes, fail to consider the needs of Disabled people and the impact of proposed changes. This is known as **“Eco-ableism”**.

The UN has recognised that people with disabilities are at increased risk of the adverse impacts of climate change – including threats to health, food security, water, sanitation, and livelihood, insisting that policy makers should “include the experiences and perspectives of people with different types of disabilities when taking action to address climate change.”

The previous government acknowledged that very little work had been done on resilience-building for Disabled people, in the context of climatic and environmental change.

We are writing to you to ask that the new vision for your department includes building collaboration with Disabled people’s organisations such as ours, which have been campaigning on these issues.

As leaders in this area, we have been working with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and [NPC](#) with whom we are actively collaborating on the [Everyones Environment programme](#). We also have a coalition of Disabled environmental campaigners from around the world. A working relationship with the UK Government is essential, if things are to change.

The fact that the Disabled community are feeling the very worst effects of climate change are undisputable, and they include the following examples:

- Higher temperatures are more likely to affect people with disabilities or those with pre-existing conditions that limit the body’s ability to stay cool. Medications that Disabled people rely on to manage their conditions can also interact negatively with heat.
- Disabled people are frequently unable to leave their homes and reach safety in the event of evacuation due to environmental catastrophes, leading to the loss of many lives. Disabled people are twice as likely as any other group to die in disasters. Emergency planning is not designed to meet the needs of Disabled people.



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- Electric vehicles are becoming the cars of choice and over the next decade will be the only type of car that can be purchased. This raises issues of affordability and accessibility. Cars are being banned from streets, to minimise air pollution, resulting in some city centres becoming no-go areas for some Disabled citizens.
- Charging points for electric vehicles are being built that are unusable by Disabled drivers and create obstacles for Disabled pedestrians, while blue badge bays are being removed for electric charging points.
- Pandemics strike Disabled individuals harder than anyone else due to long term health conditions including weakened immune systems, and unequal access to health care. Covid-19 is believed to be the first of many Pandemics which will sweep across the Globe as the climate changes, and it was responsible for Disabled people being 6 out of every 10 Covid deaths. The recent report from the COVID Public Inquiry on pre-pandemic planning, points to the failure of government to plan with our needs in mind.
- Environmental illnesses of many kinds are on the rise. Environmental Pollution, such as air pollution is a major cause of ill health: creating childhood disability, impairing children's health, diminishing their capacity to learn, and reducing their life chances. In short, climate change is increasing the numbers of Disabled people.

It is vital that the voices of Disabled people are heard, and that our ideas, solutions, and representations are included and given weight. As a Disabled people's organisation, we ask you to engage with us on all aspects of climate change, and to allow us seats at the table. With our lived experience, contacts, policy solutions and passion we have much to offer. We hope you can break the cycle of government uninterest and inaction and allow us to contribute to shaping the future.

Our existing policy work can be found [on our website](#).

I look forward to your early response and to future discussion and collaboration.

Yours sincerely,

Disability Rights UK