

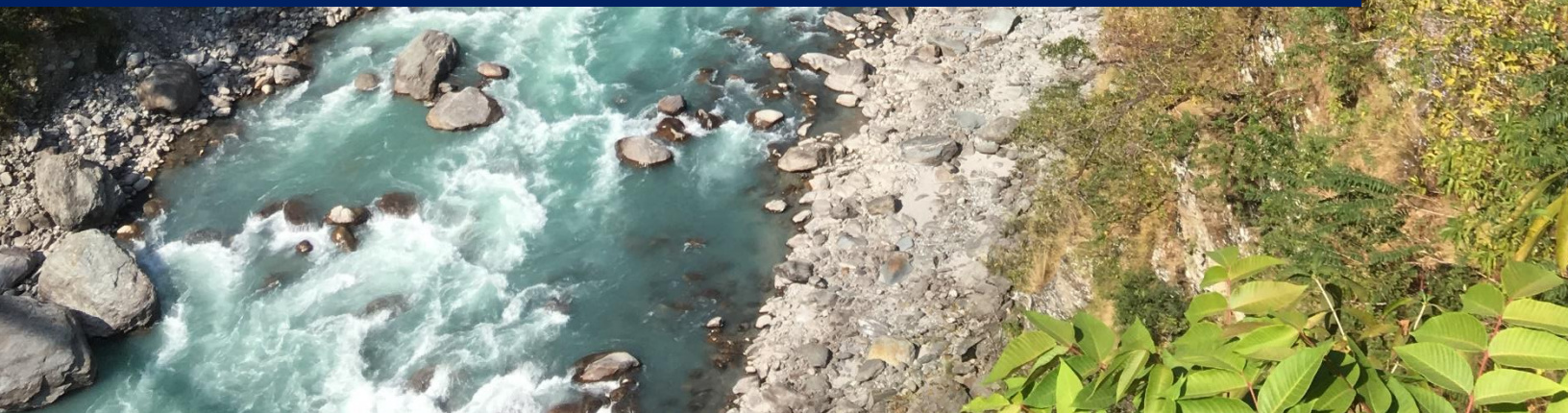


WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT ADAPTATION

The Glacier Trust
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The Glacier Trust is a UK registered charity (no. 1124955). We enable climate change adaptation in the remote mountain communities of Nepal.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

As a specifically adaptation focused charity, we have a vested interest in the promotion of climate change adaptation as an issue. Indeed, we hope that this report will generate more interest in the topic and we are happy to declare that here. Our intention is not to criticise the organisations studied here, we have deep respect for all of them and understand the context in which they operate.

In this report, we will not explore the reasons why adaptation receives the amount of coverage it does; although we do encourage others to examine this, including those organisations studied. We only wish to observe the current state of the sector in relation to this issue and hope to repeat the study on an annual basis.

For more information on the work of The Glacier Trust in Nepal, please visit our website: www.theglaciertrust.org

FOREWORD

Asher Minns (Executive Director, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research)

What if we miss the climate target?

I once asked a packed room of climate adaptation specialists from across the world if the post-Paris discourse around the hugely ambitious UN global warming goal of 1.5°C to 2°C was potentially leading to maladaptation. Nearly all the experts raised their hands. Yes, said 88 of roughly 90 people. That was in June 2017.

We Need to Talk about Adaptation detects in 2018 a similar trend of overlooking adaptation from analysing the online news of four UK environmental charities, Friends of the Earth, World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Green Party of England and Wales.

Adaptation is mostly about poor people from poor countries coping with the impacts of extreme weather that is with us now and inevitably continues into the future. One third of the 83 articles that made mention of adaptation derive from WWF, the most international of these Charities.

Adaptation to climate change is though also a story for at home. Local stories make global climate impacts known, whether a story from far away, or here in the UK. Home is what matters most to most people. We know that stories of extreme weather happening to someone never met in a place far away and in the future, does not engage as well. In the science of climate change communication, we call this psychological distance.

Another strength of the adaptation narrative is that it has people at front and centre. Stories are about people and the structure of nearly all stories are about triumph over adversity. Except tragedy, when adversity won-out. Adaptation is the compelling story about people to be told to people so that they triumph over adversity. This narrative is even more relevant to environmental charities who rely on engaging and increasing members and donations.

We have shared stories since early humans first sat around campfires. It is how we learn. There are many stories to be told about climate change now. There will be many stories to be told about climate change in the future. **We need to talk about adaptation.**

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Morgan Phillips (UK Co-Director, The Glacier Trust)

In delivering the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the UNFCCC, for the first time, gave equal weight to climate change adaptation and mitigation; at least in principleⁱ. Developed nations (now with one very notable exceptionⁱⁱ) have committed to providing US \$100 billion per year in Climate Finance from 2020 to help developing countries tackle climate change.

Putting aside concerns about whether \$100 billion will actually materialise, the bigger question is how that money will be spent. Given the urgent need to limit global warming we can expect a large proportion of it to go to mitigation programmes aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, or removing them from the airⁱⁱⁱ. This makes sense, the more we limit temperature increases, the less adapting we will need to do.

But; and it is a big but, even if we spend billions of dollars on mitigation, the prospects of limiting global average temperature increases to 1.5°C - 2°C appear bleak^{iv}. We are relying on the rapid scaling-up of untested 'negative emissions technologies'; a mass reduction in meat and dairy consumption; and a cultural, political and demographic shift of enormous and unprecedented proportions.

Achieving all this - peacefully, democratically - appears unlikely. Even if we do, 2°C of warming is only a comparative achievement. Warming of 2°C is better than warming of 3°C in the same way that a train wreck is slightly better than a plane crash.

We have already had 0.9°C of warming and the impacts are appalling for people living with (and dying from) the effects. 2°C will be far worse. More warming is coming, and more adaptation will be urgently needed. Sadly, in many cases, adaptation will not even be possible, there will be irreparable damage or complete loss of land, buildings, habitats and entire island nations.

Mitigation projects are big business, there is money to be made in inventing, developing and selling 'green' technologies; investors seek them out. Adaptation projects, in contrast, are less glamorous and often require the transfer of wealth from rich to poor.

Our fear, as an NGO that enables climate change adaptation in Nepal, is that the limited pot of climate finance made available will be funneled disproportionately into

mitigation at the expense of adaptation. It won't be the 50/50 split suggested by the Paris Agreement's promise of an equal footing.

Without adequate funding for adaptation projects, communities and countries will either not adapt at all, or maladapt. In Nepal, alone, we know that millions of people are not getting the support they need to adapt to climate change. The situation is the same in neighbouring India and China and all around the world. Billions of people (and counting) need to adapt.

Climate change adaptation, when it happens and happens well, is a good news story. We hear of communities, scientists and practitioners coming together to improve lives and natural environments.

When much of the news we hear about climate change frightens, saddens or angers us, hopeful stories about adaptation can provide an antidote.

NGOs, campaign groups, politicians and journalists can tell these positive stories and they need to. By telling the story of adaptation they do two key things:

- They put adaptation on the agenda; doing this increases the chances that the adaptation needs of those suffering the impacts of climate change are heard.
- They raise awareness of good practice in adaptation, helping it to spread and reducing the risk of widespread *mal*adaptation.

The question is, **are we talking about adaptation?** This is what we set out to examine.

METHODOLOGY

In this report we present findings from desk research into the prevalence, or not, of stories covering climate change adaptation and the case for compensation for losses or damage related to climate change.

Our research looked at the news and blog outputs of five of the UK's largest environmental organisations^v; four NGOs and one political party.

Included in the study are:

- Friends of the Earth UK
- World Wildlife Fund UK (WWF UK)
- Greenpeace UK
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- The Green Party of England and Wales

We reviewed 1,579 articles in total from a 17-month period beginning 10th March 2017, ending 9th August 2018.

Articles were analysed to determine their content and categorised as follows:

- Other environmental, social or economic issues.
- Climate change general (no mention of adaptation / losses and damage)
- Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)^{vi}.
- Climate change (focused on adaptation).
- Climate change (focused on losses and damage).

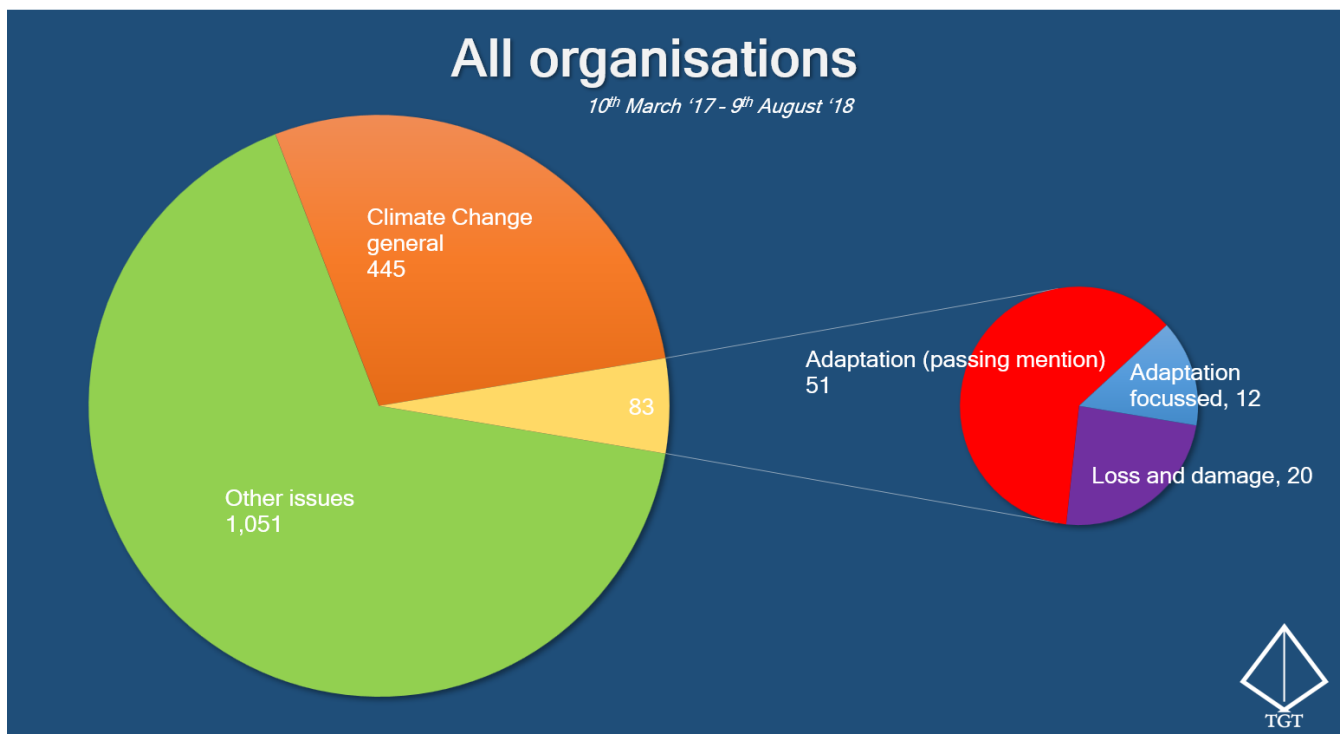
The results of this research are presented below.

RESULTS

Of the 1,579 articles studied, the majority (1,051) covered environmental, social and political issues, but made no mention of climate change. A total of 528 articles did cover climate change, of which 83 referenced or mentioned adaptation or loss and damages.

Only 12 articles (0.76%) were specifically focused on climate change adaptation.

The pattern was similar across all five organisations studied. Climate change made up around a third of all articles studied, but within this category the vast majority of stories were focused on mitigation strategies, campaigns, or on accounts of the problem itself.



WWF UK were most likely to discuss adaptation, with 31 articles that mentioned adaptation and four stories on adaptation specifically. The Green Party of England and Wales were least likely to mention adaptation with just two articles making reference to it and only one that focused specifically on it.

Results for each organisation studied are presented below. We offer short analyses of each organisation's engagement with adaptation.

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH UK

Friends of The Earth (FoE UK) has been campaigning for environmental protection and awareness internationally, since it was founded in 1969. The organisation describes itself as a movement made up of local groups of volunteers and campaigners around the country and the world, with the same aim to take action for the environment. The goal, explained by Craig Bennett, the Chief Executive of Friends of The Earth, is that ‘by 2030, the next generation will enjoy an environment that’s getting better: a safer climate, flourishing nature and healthy air, water and food’^{vii}.

In order to achieve this goal, FoE UK use campaigning, innovation and networks of people to spread key messages. Much of FoE UK’s strategy and planning relates to global efforts to ‘tackle climate change’, with a focus on mitigation. Despite their role in the Paris Agreement, little can be found about how countries and people will adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change. The same results can be found for the publications, articles and blog posts included under the [‘Latest’](#) section on the Friends of the Earth website:

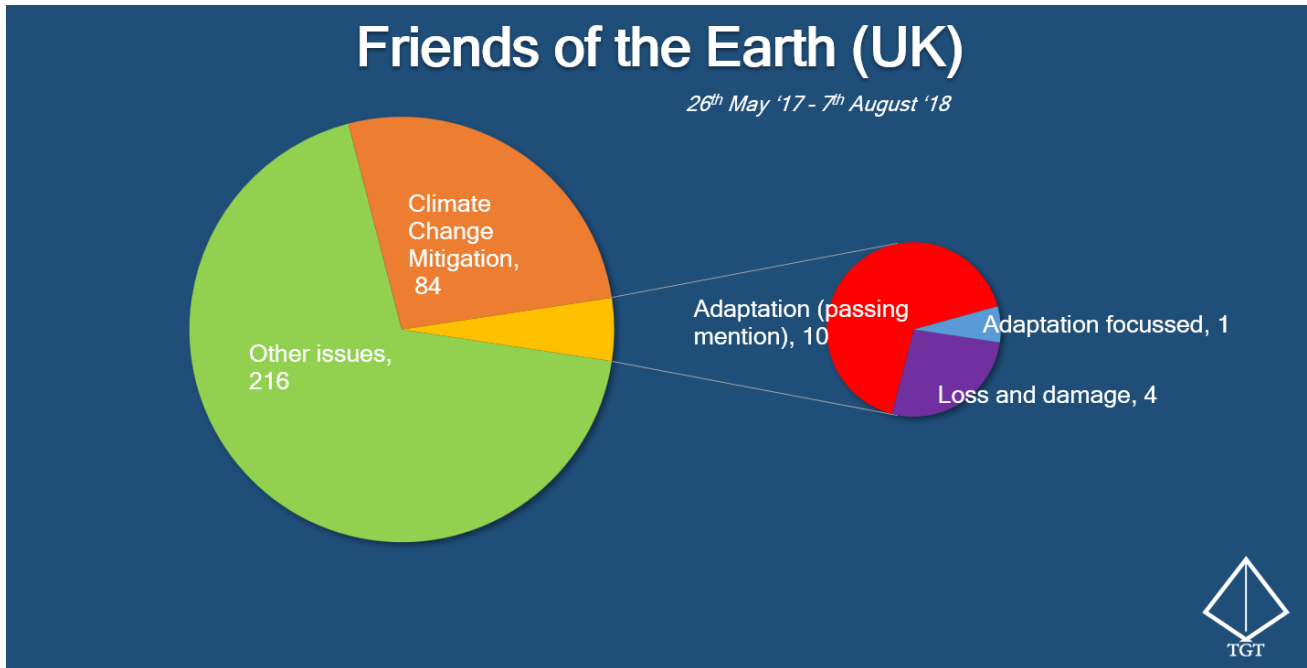
Article category	FoE UK
Other environmental, social or economic issues	216
Climate change (no mention of adaptation or losses/damage)	84
Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)	10
Climate change (focused on adaptation)	1
Climate change (focused on losses and damage)	4

From the 8th of February 2017 to the 8th of August 2018, only 100 out of the total 316 discussed climate change at all. Articles mentioning climate change adaptation in any way made up 5% of the total articles, which is in line with the average across the five organisations.

Interestingly, the number of articles on loss or damage was given a greater weighting in 2017. This could be representative of the fact 2017 was a year for extreme weather events relating to the increase in climate change phenomena.

The majority of articles about climate change were about the Friends of The Earth campaigns to limit fracking and promote renewables, campaigns which aim to help mitigate climate change.

When comparing the number of articles on adaptation across 2017 and 2018, we saw a reduction in adaptation focused articles from one in 2017, to zero in 2018. The number of articles mentioning adaptation at all also reduced from 2017 to 2018, from 6% to 4%.



FoE UK provide a [detailed piece](#) on climate change adaptation. This is the only article on adaptation we were able to find during the study period. Written in November 2017, the article outlines FoE's position on climate change adaptation covering 'facts about adaptation', 'how climate change affects people' and 'ways to adapt to climate change'. Interestingly, the call to action at the foot of this page is to sign an anti-fracking petition. There were no news or blog articles focusing on climate change adaptation during the period studied.

WWF UK

WWF is a leading environmental organisation which has been working towards wildlife conservation and the protection of endangered species since it was founded in 1961. As part of their mission statement, the WWF are ‘pushing for a reduction in carbon emissions that will avoid catastrophic climate change’. WWF have projects on a range of environmental issues, the main mission behind each one is ‘to create a world where people and wildlife can thrive together’^{viii}.

The website clearly shows an understanding that climate change is happening due to human actions, and the organisation appears to have aims to reduce the threat of climate change and ease the pressure of the inevitable impacts. Reducing carbon emissions is one of the ‘six big wins’, an area that they are trying to achieve the greatest impact in throughout 2018. One of the strategies is to ‘reduce UK emissions in line with International targets and with businesses to reduce their impact and emissions’^{ix}, which links back to the Paris Agreement.

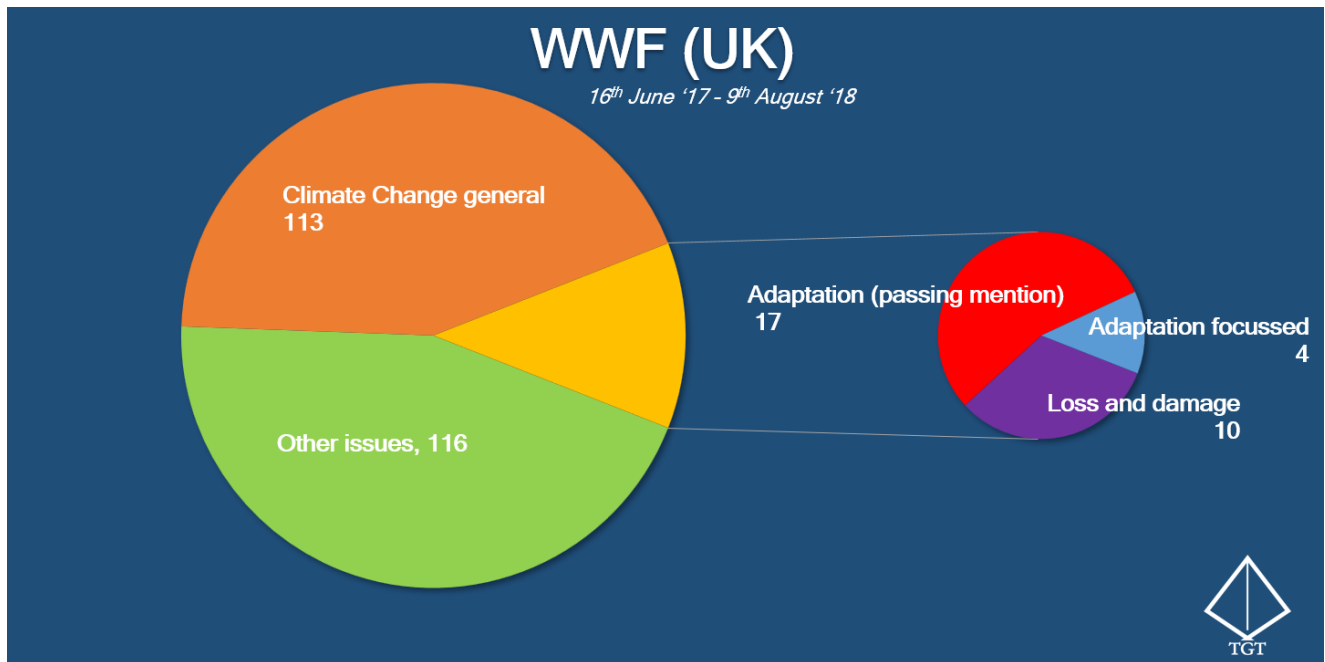
News and blog articles are located on the [WWF UK homepage](#). Over the study period we found the following results:

Article category	WWF UK
Other environmental, social or economic issues	116
Climate change (no mention of adaptation or losses/damage)	113
Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)	17
Climate change (focused on adaptation)	4
Climate change (focused on losses and damage)	10

Across a 14-month period (16 June 2017 - 9 August 2018) there were 142 articles on climate change compared with 116 articles on other matters; WWF UK are the only organization in the study to feature climate change in over 50% of their news articles.

WWF UK also produced the most articles that mention adaptation, with 7% of the articles studied making a passing mention and a further four articles that focused primarily on adaptation.

There was an increase in the passing mention of adaptation from 2017 to 2018; in 2017 the number of articles mentioning adaptation made up 4.3% of the total articles published compared to 9.2% of the total articles published in 2018. Similarly, the number of articles referring to loss and damage as an effect of climate change has increased from zero in 2017 to six in 2018. The number of adaptation focused articles also increased by one from 2017 to 2018.



The most significant [WWF UK article](#) on climate change adaptation focused on a WWF [funded report](#) into the UK's adaptation needs over the medium to long term.

Other adaptation focused articles covered [water management issues in Africa](#); [the impact of climate change on Scotland's golf courses](#) and an article relating to WWF's 2018 report on [Wildlife in a Warming World](#).

GREENPEACE UK

Greenpeace is a non-governmental organization formed in 1971 with a definitively environmental purpose. Their goal is to ‘defend the natural world and promote peace by investigating, exposing and confronting environmental abuse’^x, one of the key aims is to stop climate change.

Greenpeace has a number of climate change campaigns which include preventing investment into non-renewables, preventing fracking, promoting clean and renewable energy.

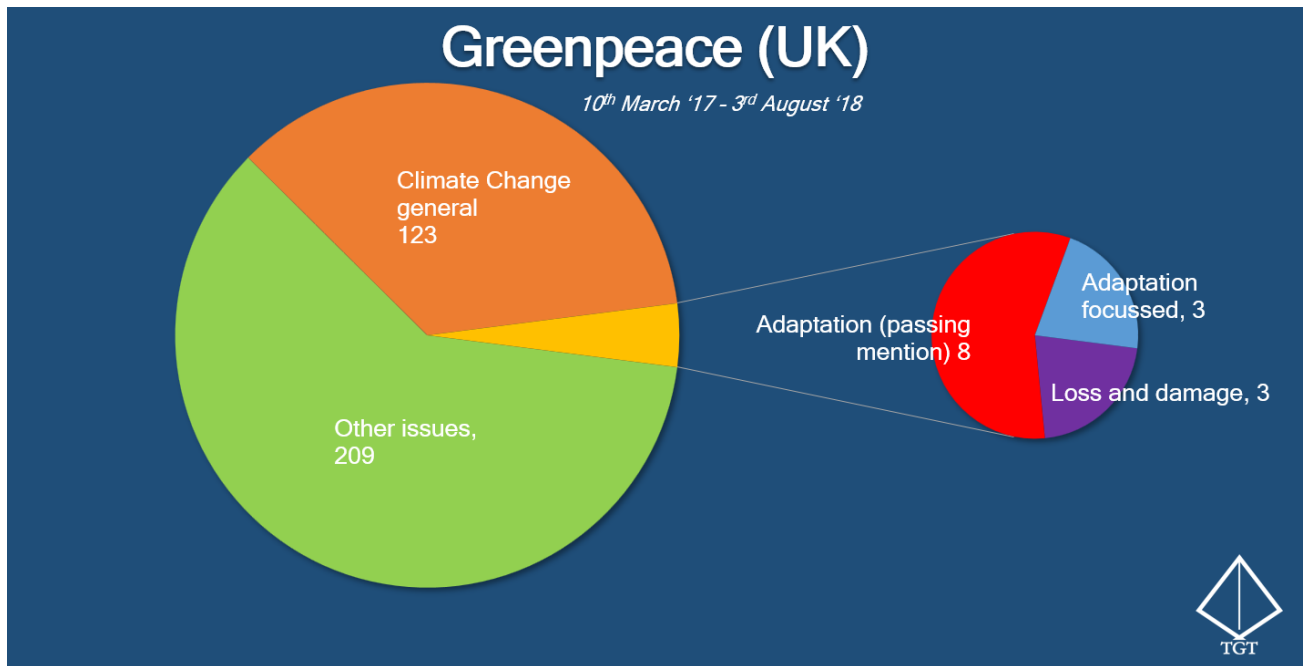
For the purposes of this report, two key sections of Greenpeace’s website were studied, [Greenpeace Blog](#) and [Greenpeace Unearthed](#). These two sections publish articles and blog posts about a range of environmental issues, both internationally and in the UK.

Greenpeace Unearthed sits apart as a standalone website, we therefore present data for it separately here.

Article category	Greenpeace Blog
Other environmental, social or economic issues	147
Climate change (no mention of adaptation or losses/damage)	64
Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)	2
Climate change (focused on adaptation)	1
Climate change (focused on losses and damage)	1

Article category	Greenpeace Unearthed
Other environmental, social or economic issues	62
Climate change (no mention of adaptation or losses/damage)	59
Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)	6
Climate change (focused on adaptation)	2
Climate change (focused on losses and damage)	2

Greenpeace Unearthed has a heavy focus on climate change with over half of all articles covering the issues. However, only eight out of 67 climate change articles made reference to adaptation or losses and damage, with only two focused specifically on adaptation. The central Greenpeace site covers a wider range of environmental issues, climate change makes up less than a third of the total content. Again, adaptation and losses and damage are poorly represented, with only one article focussing specifically on adaptation.



The first article from Greenpeace Unearthed that specifically focuses on adaptation covers the actions being taken to adapt to [water shortages in Jordan](#) and makes links to the neighbouring war in Syria and consequent refugee situation in the region.

Greenpeace Unearthed also covered the role [marine reserves](#) can play in protecting ocean life in the face of climate change.

Lastly, in an article celebrating [International Polar Bear Day](#), a photo essay on the Greenpeace blog highlights how Polar Bears are adapting to the declining sea ice.

RSPB

The RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) is a wildlife charity with a particular focus on nature reserves and wildlife conservation; the organisation stands as the largest nature conservation charity UK-wide. It was founded in 1889 and has since been promoting conservation and the protection of birds and the wider environment. Petitions, campaigns, fundraisers, etc. are all utilised to spread the message of conservation and increase public awareness. The RSPB works alongside the government, such as through the means of the civil service to contribute to conservation policies and environmental legislation.

The RSPB runs climate change campaigns such as the ‘Show the Love’ campaign in February, as well as configuring numerous publications on climate change and their contributions. The RSPB climate change campaign aims to achieve new climate policies within government and to help reserves adapt and cope with the effects of climate change. Some key aspects found on their website include: saving tropical rainforests, the renewable energy campaign and combatting climate change - ‘ensuring our nature reserves are as protected as they can be against the impacts of climate change’.

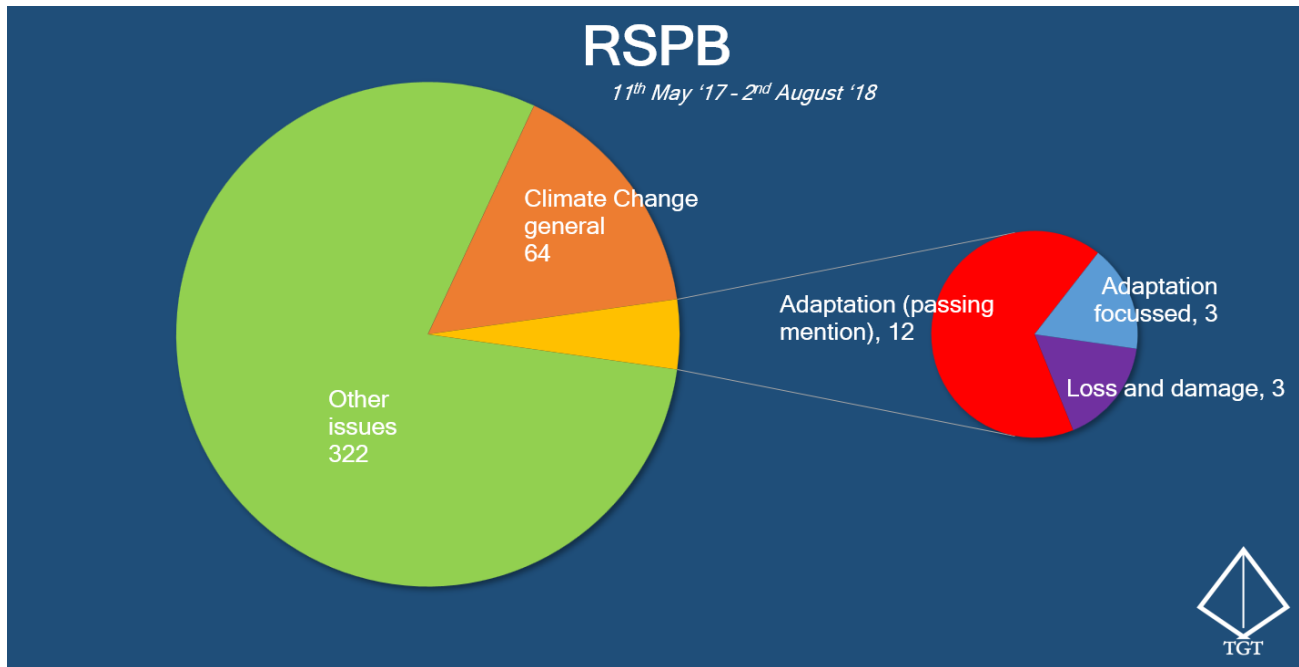
On the RSPB website on the section called ‘Our Work’ there are two tabs, [RSPB News](#) and [‘Our Work’ Blog](#). The RSPB News section publishes new research developments, threats and challenges being faced, events and success stories. The RSPB Blog is composed of community posts with news and views from the RSPB focused on nature, particular species, climate change and more.

Article category	RSPB News
Other environmental, social or economic issues	108
Climate change (no mention of adaptation or losses/damage)	11
Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)	2
Climate change (focused on adaptation)	0
Climate change (focused on losses and damage)	0

Climate Change features in around 10% of articles in the main RSPB news section, with very little focus on adaptation.

Article category	RSPB Blog
Other environmental, social or economic issues	214
Climate change (no mention of adaptation or losses/damage)	53
Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)	12
Climate change (focused on adaptation)	3
Climate change (focused on losses and damage)	3

Climate Change is a more significant focus on the RSPB blog pages. Articles on adaptation are also quite prominent, with three focused on the issue.



One RSPB article highlighted the impact climate change is having on the breeding success of [Sanderlings in Greenland](#). Summer temperatures, changing patterns of snowfall and warmer spring weather are all having an impact and the Sanderlings are trying to adapt. RSPB sum up like this:

What to do? Research is vital, to understand the ecological and biological mechanisms affected by climate change. Only then, might we have a chance of developing adaptation responses and conservation measures that can address the problem.

Other adaptation focused articles covered the UK's [flood and coastal erosion risk management strategies](#) and the water management adaptations being made at [Halvergate Marshes](#) in response to the changing climate.

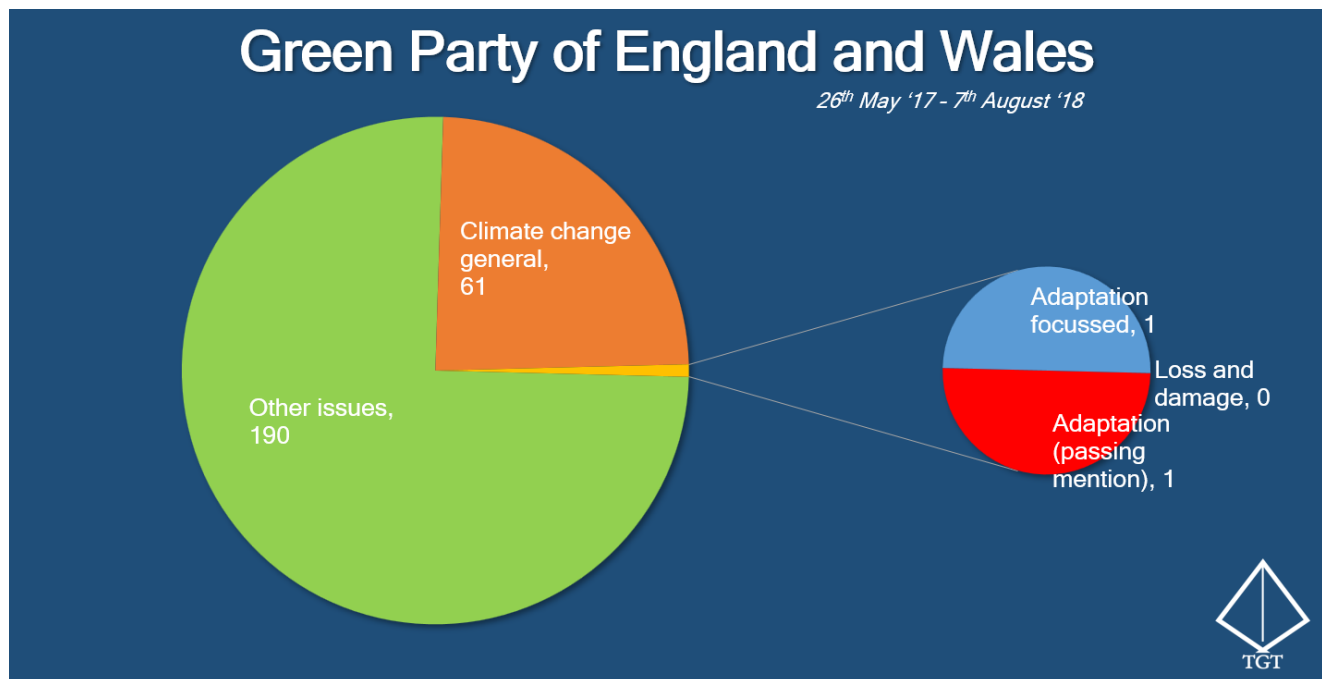
THE GREEN PARTY OF ENGLAND AND WALES

The Green Party is a political party in the UK, led by Siân Berry and Jonathan Bartley. They are a democratic organisation committed to environmental policy and change for the future. As part of the Green Guarantee, The Green Party promises that they 'will always act strongly on climate change and to protect the natural world we love.'^{xi}

The Green Party policy on climate change from Autumn 2017 states that the UK should be at the forefront of acting in the global crisis and in doing so, should 'act as an advocate for the Paris Agreement'^{xii}. With this in mind, we studied the media output from the [News section](#) of the Green Party website to find the following results.

Article category	Green Party
Other environmental, social or economic issues	190
Climate change (no mention of adaptation or losses/damage)	61
Climate change (with passing mention of adaptation)	1
Climate change (focused on adaptation)	1
Climate change (focused on losses and damage)	0

Of the 253 articles published from 26th May 2017 to 7th August 2018, only two articles (0.8%) mention climate adaptation. This is the lowest proportion across the organisations studied.



The one article that focused on climate change adaptation reported on Green Party deputy leader [Amelia Womack's visit](#) to a flood protection project in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

CONCLUSIONS

Out of 1,579 articles studies **only a dozen focused on climate change adaptation**. It is not the intention of this report to speculate on the reasons for such a low figure. We will leave that for others.

Looking at the 12 adaptation focused articles we can see that a wide range of topics both local and global are covered. It is in fact an eclectic mix covering golf courses in Scotland, Sanderling breeding habits in Greenland and the issuing of 'green' fatwa's in Jordan. Adaptation stories *are* out there and our largest environmental organisations *do* cover them.

In reading the numerous articles on climate change across the five organisations it is possible to find opportunities to insert mentions of adaptation priorities. In some instances, this has been done. We counted 51 articles that referenced adaptation, we found at least 50 more that could have mentioned it.

Adaptation is gradually gaining more attention in environment and sustainability circles. Developing countries, like Nepal, are forcing it onto the agenda^{xiii}; climate related disasters are becoming ever more prevalent and damaging; and theses like Professor Jem Bendell's 'Deep Adaptation'^{xiv} are becoming more popular and harder to ignore. At the UNFCCC COP24 in Poland in December 2018 support for climate change adaptation was boosted by the World Bank who, on day one, announced that they would commit US \$10 billion per year from 2021 - 25^{xv}.

2018 also saw the launch of the Global Center on Adaptation, backed by Bill Gates and chaired by Ban Ki-Moon^{xvi}. This momentum is encouraging, but adaptation still remains the poor cousin of mitigation in climate change discourse and action.

Currently, only around US \$25bn (less than 20%) of public finance for climate action is going to climate change adaptation each year. If we look at climate finance as a whole (around \$380bn / year), the percentage of climate finance available for adaptation is approximately 6.5%.

To improve on these statistics, we need more leadership and more advocacy. This means **we need more talk about adaptation**. This report shows that our friends and colleagues across the environmental sector *do* talk about it, it *is* part of the story they tell; we hope they will talk about it some more in 2019.

- ⁱ World Resources Institute (2016) *What does the Paris agreement mean for resilience and adaptation?* Available online at: <https://www.wri.org/blog/2015/12/what-does-paris-agreement-mean-climate-resilience-and-adaptation> [Accessed 18/11/18].
- ⁱⁱ The Guardian (2017) *Donald Trump confirms US will quit Paris climate agreement.* Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/01/donald-trump-confirms-us-will-quit-paris-climate-deal> [Accessed 18/11/18].
- ⁱⁱⁱ Some funding may well also go to research and development of more ambitious and questionable geoengineering projects. For example, spraying sulphate aerosols in the high atmosphere to reflect the sun rays back into space before they have a chance to reach the Earth's surface: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/23/solar-geoengineering-could-be-remarkably-inexpensive-report> [Accessed: 28/11/18]
- ^{iv} Jem Bendell (2018) *Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy.* IFLAS Occasional Paper 2 <http://www.lifeworth.com/deepadaptation.pdf> [Accessed: 28/11/18]
- ^v Friends of the Earth UK; WWF UK; Greenpeace UK; RSPB and The Green Party of England and Wales were the five largest UK environmental organization by Twitter following at the time of commencing the study.
- ^{vi} A 'passing mention' is defined here as brief, less than two sentences, mention of adaptation or losses and damage in an article that is primarily focused on the scale of the climate change problem, on mitigation, or on another environmental or social issue. For example: <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/over-half-chalk-streams-and-quarter-rivers-england-currently-risk-due-poor-water-management> [Accessed: 28/11/18]
- ^{vii} Friends of the Earth (2016) *Our Strategy Towards our 2030 goal.* <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/who-we-are/our-strategy-towards-our-2030-goal> [Accessed: 28/11/18]
- ^{viii} WWF UK (2018) *Who we are* <https://www.wwf.org.uk/who-we-are> [Accessed: 28/11/18]
- ^{ix} WWF UK (2018) *Climate Change* <https://www.wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/area-of-work/climate-change-and-energy> [Accessed: 28/11/18]
- ^x Greenpeace UK (2018) *What we do* <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/what-we-do/> [Accessed: 28/11/18]
- ^{xi} The Green Party of England and Wales (2017) *Our Guarantee To You* <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/green-guarantee/> [Accessed 28/11/18].
- ^{xii} The Green Party of England and Wales (2017) *Policy Green Party - Climate Change* <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/cc.html> [Accessed 28/11/18].
- ^{xiii} The Glacier Trust (2018) *Nepal's objectives at COP24* <http://theglaciertrust.org/blog/2018/11/19/nepals-objectives-at-cop24> [Accessed 13/12/18].
- ^{xiv} Prof. Jem Bendell (2018) *New Paper on Adaptation to Climate Chaos* <http://iflas.blogspot.com/2018/07/new-paper-on-deep-adaptation-to-climate.html?m=1> [Accessed 13/12/18].
- ^{xv} The Glacier Trust (2018) *World Bank gives Adaptation equal emphasis* <http://theglaciertrust.org/blog/2018/12/4/world-bank-gives-adaptation-equal-emphasis> [Accessed 13/12/18].
- ^{xvi} Global Center on Adaptation (2018) *About the Global Center on Adaptation* <https://gca.org/about> [Accessed 13/12/18].