Last week, I posted about the British government's climate policy. In sharp contrast with their American counterparts, British conservatives remain firmly behind the Paris Agreement and supportive of cap-and-trade. In another respect, though, there's more similarity: in both countries, subnational governments play a key role in climate policy. Here's what's happening across Great Britain.

Regional governments.

Although ultimate power remains in the national Parliament, the national government has devolved certain powers to regional governments in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Wales seems content to more or less follow the national standards, but there have been significant developments in the other two.

***Scotland*.** Scotland set a 2020 goal of 100% renewable energy electricity generation

In 2020, they just missed this goal, at 97.4% renewable energy generation (62% coming from onshore wind) A climate plan adopted in 2018 sets a binding target of net-zero emissions by 2045.

This covers electricity, heating, transportation, etc., and is separate from their 2020 goal which centered just on electricity. There is an interim target of 75% reduction of 1990 levels by 2030

However, Scotland has not quite met these aggressive targets. The last coal plant in Scotland closed in 2016.

Northern Ireland. Northern Irish Assembly has passed a bill to set a net-zero for energy-related carbon emissions by 2050. The bill is still awaiting what's called Royal Assent but nothing I've seen suggests that's more than a formality. The bill requires a 46% reduction of methane (aimed at agriculture) by 2050 as well. The government also released an "Energy Strategy Action Plan in 2022. The plan aims for a 56% reduction of energy-related emissions by 2030, and a 100% reduction of energy-related emissions by 2050. At least 70% of electricity must come from renewables in 2030.

Cities

London Almost one out of every seven Britons lives in London, and the city accounts for over a fifth of British GDP. In 2019, the city declared a climate emergency. In 2022, the city released the first draft of its Climate Emergency Action Plan. The plan serets interim emissions targets: 55% below 2005 levels by 2030; 65% below by 2035; and 75% below by 2040, toward the ultimate goal of net-zero by 2050. The plan contained a big call call to reduce vehicle usage: “By 2030 it outlines a goal of making sure that the majority of Londoners live within walking distance to their daily needs and that they reduce the number of in-town automobile trips by 30 to 50 per cent from 2019.” The mayor has also announced plans to improve energy efficiency, with“£51m as part of a “retrofit revolution” to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the city.”

Other UK Cities. London has not been alone in taking action. Here’s a quick rundown on what’s happening elsewhere.

- *Edinburgh.* Committed to net-zero by 2030
- *Newcastle.* 2030 net-zero plan
- *Greater Manchester*. 2038 net-zero target.
- *Nottingham.* Carbon neutrality by 2028. This builds on extensive earlier emission reductions.
- *Leicester.* Carbon neutrality for city and counsel by 2030
- *Bristol.* Net-zero city-region goal by 2030

The activity taking place at the regional and urban levels in the UK resembles that in the U.S., even despite the very different legal frameworks of the two countries. Indeed, this kind of subnational action is an international phenomenon, as I discussed in a recent article with Shiyuan Jing and Yuichiro Tsuji. Even in countries where the national government has adopted serious climate policies, the regional and local actions remain important. They forget pathways for their national governments, and their initiatives provide encouragement to their counterparts around the world. In particular, these British jurisdictions should help stimulate American cities and starts to redouble their own efforts.