
Committees

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Call for Evidence

Risks and opportunities to the sustainability of data centres in the UK

Will data centres power the UK's economic growth? Perhaps. But what kind of implications will they have for energy and the environment? How will they impact the already tortuous queues for grid connections and the Government's plans to bring down energy bills? And what impact will their energy consumption and water usage have on the decarbonisation efforts and viability of other sectors?

This inquiry will take a detailed look at the consequences of data centres for the local environment, including their water and energy use, and how the Government is taking account of their impact as they prepare plans for the next Carbon Budget.

The Committee invites written submissions addressing any or all of the issues raised in the following terms of reference, to be received through the Committee's inquiry portal (found by clicking 'start' at the bottom of this page) by 5.00pm on Monday 6 April 2026.

Terms of Reference

1. What current and future factors and trends are driving demand for data centres and what opportunities and challenges do they pose for the UK?
2. What are the environmental impacts of different types of data centre currently having in the UK and what are the future impacts likely to be?
 1. *What are the potential short, medium and long-term projections of these impacts?*
3. What impact are data centres having on climate change and the Government's Net Zero targets and how will this change in the short, medium and long term in the UK?
4. To what extent will Artificial Intelligence (AI) accelerate the need for data centres and is this being adequately taken account of by the Government and relevant bodies, such as the Climate Change Committee and the Office for Environmental Protection, in terms of nature, the environment and climate change?
5. To what extent do existing policies, such as the Environmental Improvement Plan and the Planning and Infrastructure Act and associated policies, take account of the potential impact of data centres, particularly in terms of water use, nature and the environment?
 1. *How should the impact of data centres be factored into future policies, such as the Land Use Framework, regional planning, housebuilding and reform of the water sector?*
 2. *How important is the location of data centres and what factors should be considered for optimum siting of them?*
6. Has the Climate Change Committee adequately taken account of the impact of data centres, especially in its advice on the Seventh Carbon Budget?
7. What existing and emerging technologies can be used to minimise the environmental and climate change impact of data centres?
 1. *How mature are these technologies and are they ready to be rolled out at the scale and pace required to match the potential expansion of data centres?*
 2. *What specific role can renewable energy play in reducing the carbon footprint of data centres?*
8. What opportunities do data centres offer in helping to power and heat local communities and amenities and what will be required to deliver benefits?
9. Are there beneficial or precautionary lessons to learn from the impact of data centres outside the UK?
10. To what extent will the resource demands of data centres impact on other sectors with regard to competition for resources and decarbonisation?

