**Report and statement on how Disabled people will be the most affected global community in the advent of continued climate change from Disability Rights UK global disability coalition.**

**“Disabled people are expert adapters – we spend our lives figuring out how to live and thrive in a world which was not designed for us. If anyone is well-placed to figure out what a climate-friendly future where we also get to thrive looks like, it's us, disabled people.” *Áine Kelly-Costello blind and chronically ill storyteller, and campaigner for disability and climate justice.***

**“Greta Thunberg is an Autistic woman who shows how Disabled people can be great climate change leaders. In Greta’s words, our impairments allow us to ‘think outside the box’**. *Bristol Disability Equality Forum.*

Some estimate suggests 200 million people will be climate refugees by 2050. According to the [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability), 15% of the global population has an intellectual or physical disability, so 30 million of those climate refugees will require different kinds of support as the climate worsens. That is a great number of people who will feel the effects of global warming harder than anyone else and who currently have no visible input in the discussions on the subject.

Disabled people across the world are at extreme risk in a humanitarian emergency.

If you locate one of the few places disabled people are mentioned at all in the 3675 pages of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [report](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/), the world's most authoritative panel on climate change, the mention will be fleeting, and usually hiding in the middle of a list of so-called “vulnerable groups” This is not acceptable and is largely offensive to over one billion people.

**Disabled people are currently excluded from discussions and solutions around climate change, meaning the impact of any legislation on those who are disabled is overlooked. This is referred to as “Eco-ableism”.**

**Eco-Ableism** occurs when nondisabled environmental activists and Governments fail to recognize the barriers we face and develop climate actions that are ableist and then proceed to demonize those who continue to use less eco-friendly options. For instance, the banning of cars from city centres without acknowledging the fact that many Disabled people must travel by car as they have mobility issues or because public transport is inaccessible and of course the use of plastic straws which led to Disabled people being demonised over their reliance on them.

**“Eco-ableism” can end when the decision makers work with community representatives and allow them an input on every area of climate responses and decision making, allow them to join the conversations and self-represent.**

**Climate change is threatening the existence of the Disabled community more than any other. We are concerned about global warming and a lack of self-representation for the following reasons:**

1. **Disaster Planning**

In the event of evacuation from extreme weather, which will increase in severity and frequency due to the climate crisis, Disabled people are often unable to evacuate their homes and reach safety, leading to the loss of many lives. [Disabled people are twice as likely as any other group to die in disasters](https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/during-disaster-displacement-people-with-disabilities-are-too-often-forgotten).

Disabled people are used to a constant lack of access and homes that are not built for our needs. In the event of evacuation from scenarios that range from fires and floods Disabled people have been unable to evacuate homes and there have been tragedies on a global scale. Disabled people every day face these structural barriers, inaccessible infrastructure, inaccessible transport, inaccessible pavements, and driving bans in many city centres, all these barriers already in place make evacuation planning for our community virtually impossible. A case for example was Hurricane Katrina. This was found to have disproportionately impacted 155,000 people with disabilities ranging from visual and physical impairments to learning disabilities as evacuation from homes was compromised by unsuitable housing access. There was also of course, the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire where due to bad access and lack of evacuation plans, 40%**of Disabled residents died.**

Research indicates that such planning, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts often overlook the needs and perspectives of people with disabilities. Many disabilities will require a different level of support in terms of access to food, shelter, and transportation.

1. **Pandemic planning/ Health**

The COVID-19 pandemic was a catastrophe for Disabled people, and it showed how pandemics can rip through a community. [Two of out every three victims of Covid-19 had a disability,](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbydisabilitystatusenglandandwales/2marchto14july2020) a simply staggering fact.

History shows that illnesses both old and new strike individuals living with a Disability harder than anyone else due to weakened immune systems, a lack of personal assistance in daily life, some cases because of medical discrimination as well as most Health services being criminally underfunded. As climate change begins to take effect, the truth is Covid-19 will be the first of many more Pandemics to sweep across the Globe, hence the reason for this being one of the prime areas of concern. The reasons for future, regular pandemics are because of the loss of habitable land being destroyed by flood, fire, or extreme heat. This scenario means bringing animals that transmit disease into closer proximity with humans, infections jumping from species to species at a faster rate, helping create new virus strains that are harder to kill. For instance, rising temperatures enable mosquitoes, ticks, and other disease-carrying insects to proliferate, adapt to different seasons and invade new territories.

Rising temperatures, especially heatwaves are also a major cause for concern to Disabled people. For instance, visually impaired people who would normally use guide dogs to get around are suddenly unable to do so. Pavements become too hot for guide dogs to walk upon restricting navigation and movement. Another unfortunate victim of heatwaves are people with Multiple Sclerosis, of which there are 130,000 in the UK. Since this condition prevents messages from the brain and spinal cord from reaching other parts of the body, the MS Society has reported that people have experienced fatigue, muscle spasms, and changes to vision as heat increases.

1. **Current** **exclusive environmental solutions**

We are seeing massive changes to the way we live. 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 of charging points. Cars are being banned from certain streets, to minimise air pollution, resulting in some city centres becoming no-go areas for some Disabled people, and additional fuel costs for longer journeys. Charging points are being built over Disabled parking bays. Household boilers are also set to change, again with issues of affordability and accessibility. The removal of plastic straws to other options which do not consider a proportion of the Disabled communities’ dependency upon them. If all plastic straws ended up in the ocean each year, they would account for**0.03% of the plastics that enter the ocean annually,** 20% to 30% comes from marine sources such as fishing nets, lines, ropes, and abandoned vessels.

1. **Exclusion from climate financing**

Organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) have a crucial role to play in all aspects of climate response planning, implementation, and evaluation. They need to be funded to do that work. Climate mitigation and adaptation financing must both mainstream the inclusion of disabled people as well as ensure targeted funding is available. It is critical that capacity-building for disabled people and their representative organisations for both disaster preparedness and inputting into climate adaptation measures is available and designed in conjunction with OPDs. In addition, loss and damage discussions and pledges must recognise the impact of both economic and noneconomic losses on disabled people, from loss of livelihood to worsened health and mobility, and starkest of all loss of life.

**To end decades of exclusion from the climate conversation we, as a collective of global and informed Disabled climate activists propose that:**

1. The community must be involved in all debates and possible solutions. Representatives from the global Disabled community must be at the table when environmental solutions are being developed and implemented, otherwise there is a real danger of societal barriers to our inclusion increasing rather than reducing.
2. It is essential that environmental solutions are designed to be accessible for us all.
3. All future global political and climate events are designed to be accessible to the highest degree, considering all aspects of disability including sign language interpreters, wheelchair access, and options to join the debates virtually as prior events were found to be exclusive not inclusive.
4. Sustainable goals need comprehensive inclusive environmental planning.

**A mantra of the disabled community is "*Nothing about us without us."* So, it is vital to remember that this world-wide work must be a partnership, whatever it looks like.**