

## Frustrated climate activists resort to civil disobedience in London



*Stefan Rousseau/PA Wire/PA Images*

By Michael Le Page

Is this the start of a massive campaign of civil disobedience around the world? The hundreds of protestors of all ages who illegally blocked the busy road outside the UK's parliament this morning think so.

The idea behind the [Extinction Rebellion movement](#) is that governments around the world are failing to do enough to prevent extreme climate change and the ongoing mass extinction. The only choice left, they say, is to rebel.

"The situation is dire, and there are very few governments that are prepared to act," one of the protestors, Annie Randall, told *New Scientist*. "We are really fed up."

At least nine people were arrested during today's protests, according to those at the scene. More were forcibly removed from the road by police without being arrested. The Extinction Rebellion says it has hundreds of supporters willing to risk arrest.

Last week, 100 academics [signed a letter to \*The Guardian\*](#), saying they believe it is their moral duty to “bypass the government’s inaction and flagrant dereliction of duty, and to rebel to defend life itself.” However, it appears that no academics were arrested today.

“What we need are scientists to get arrested,” says Gail Bradbrook, one of the movement’s organisers. “Don’t leave it to us.”

## Climate targets

There is no doubt at all that the basic premise of the Extinction Rebellion – that governments are not doing enough to limit climate change – is correct. Greenhouse gas emissions need to fall extremely fast if we are to have any chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C, a UN climate report [warned earlier this month](#). Instead, they are still rising and look set to keep rising.

On paper, the UK is doing more than most countries. Its official emissions figures have fallen sharply in recently years. But its advisory body on climate, the Committee on Climate Change, has repeatedly warned that the country is [not on track to meet its long-term targets](#).

Randall points to the government’s support for fracking as evidence that it is [not serious about meeting its climate targets](#). The Committee on Climate Change has said fracking is [incompatible with the UK’s climate targets](#) unless certain conditions are met, and those conditions are not being met.

What’s more, if you look at the actual emissions the UK is responsible for, rather than just the emissions from its territory, [there’s been hardly any decline in recent decades](#), according to a recent tweet from Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. In other words, the UK’s apparent success in cutting emissions is mostly a result of the decline of its manufacturing industries.

The protestors today heralded their London demonstration as a success, saying that movements are springing up elsewhere, including in Melbourne, Australia, and in Seattle and Los Angeles in the US.

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