

# CAMBRIDGE

# SU'S

# MANIFESTO FOR A FOSSIL FREE UNIVERSITY



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# INTRODUCTION



Photo Credit: Cambridge Climate Justice

The University of Cambridge has taken some positive steps towards tackling the climate emergency in recent years.

“ IN SHORT, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY DOES NOT HAVE AN EQUAL SHARE OF THE REMAINING ‘CARBON BUDGET’. ITS EMISSIONS TARGETS MUST REFLECT THIS. ”

The decision to **divest** the University’s endowment fund from fossil fuels in particular was a landmark victory for student and community campaigners.

However, **students have long understood** that the University’s entanglements with fossil fuels, the fossil fuel industry and its major financiers extend far beyond its investment portfolio.

Even as it works to exit fossil fuel investments by 2030, our University continues to routinely **accept millions in research funding** from the very same fossil fuel giants who are driving the climate emergency.

Through endowed positions such as the **Shell Professorship of Chemical Engineering**, the **Schlumberger Professorship of Complex Physical Systems**, industry sponsored prizes such as the **ExxonMobil Prize** and **BP Chemistry Prizes** and research centers like the **BP Institute**, our University invites dirty fossil fuel industry influence into its core academic activities and lends legitimacy to the industry’s efforts to greenwash its appalling environmental record.



Unsurprisingly, much of this fossil-fuel industry sponsored research directly supports further fossil fuel extraction efforts.

This is often true even for research which claims to be 'sustainable'. Indeed, fossil fuel industry sponsored research at Cambridge is particularly focused on areas like Carbon Capture and Storage, which is overwhelmingly used to **facilitate even greater oil extraction** and substantiate fossil fuel companies' bogus net zero claims.

This research focus is no surprise for an industry whose record makes clear they are more interested in greenwashing destructive fossil fuel extraction than they are in ending it.

Our careers service also continues to actively promote jobs in these industries, providing fossil fuel companies a steady stream of new talent.

This diverts skilled individuals away from industries which are seriously dedicated to developing transition solutions. Instead, our University actively steers new generations of students into companies which are destroying their future.

Our Colleges overwhelmingly **continue to bank with Barclays, Europe's top fossil fuel funder.**

When it comes to the University's own carbon footprint, not only are its current emissions elimination targets set distant decades into the future, they don't even cover huge portions of the University's emissions.

In short, our University is doing nowhere near enough to tackle the climate crisis. In fact, many of its current activities and policies actively work against a just transition away from fossil fuels.

As an extraordinarily wealthy institution in one of the world's super-emitting nations, this represents a stunning betrayal of its responsibilities at this time of existential crisis.



# PUTTING JUSTICE AT THE HEART OF OUR UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY.

Climate justice involves understanding that the climate crisis rebounds along existing structures of injustice, including lines of race, class, disability, gender and class.

We know that rising temperatures, crop failure, biodiversity destruction, extreme weather and other impacts of climate breakdown are already **disproportionately devastating** formerly colonised communities of colour in the Global South, with women in these communities **impacted most severely**.

Many of these worst-affected communities are former British colonies, communities whose increased vulnerability to climate impacts derives in large part from the enduring economic harms of colonialism.

These same Global South communities are responsible for **just 8% of excess carbon dioxide** emissions.

Demands for climate action at the University of Cambridge must therefore take account of the following context >

- Wealthier, Global North countries like the UK have **far greater historic and per capita emissions**, as well as a **greater financial capacity** to transition away from fossil fuels more rapidly. We know, for example, that in 2 days the average British citizen is responsible for more CO2 emissions than someone in the Democratic Republic of Congo would produce in a year. Despite representing just 0.87% of the total world population, our dirty industrial revolution and high-emission lifestyles mean that the UK is **the world's 8th highest historic emitter**, responsible for **5% of historic greenhouse gas emissions (1750-2019)**.
- The UK is also the world's **5th richest country**, having amassed its wealth in large part through fossil-fuel based industrial development.
- Extraordinarily wealthy institutions like the collegiate University of Cambridge, which has **the largest combined endowment** of any UK or European University, have an even greater additional responsibility to act rapidly to address the climate crisis. Indeed, excluding Oxford, Cambridge's endowment is **more than 12 times larger** than the next richest UK University.
- Much of our University's wealth derives directly from decades of fossil fuel investments, as well as **the profits of enslavement and colonialism**. This imposes a clear moral responsibility on the University to use its resources to make a rapid transition away from fossil fuels and mitigate the impacts of the climate emergency on frontline communities.
- The University's own Divestment Report **notes** the "particular responsibility of the UK - and Cambridge as one of its pre-eminent institutions for centuries - for disproportionate historical and current emissions (Friedlingstein et al. 2019; Peters et al. 2011) and therefore disproportionate consumption of the carbon budget since pre-industrial times (Morrow 2016)".



# THE WAY FORWARD

TO IGNORE THEM AND DISREGARD THE HUGE DISPARITIES BETWEEN THE GLOBAL NORTH AND SOUTH AND OUR UNIVERSITY'S POSITION OF EXTREME PRIVILEGE WHEN FORMULATING OUR RESPONSE TO THIS EMERGENCY IS TO ENACT YET ANOTHER WAVE OF NEOCOLONIAL INJUSTICE ON THESE COMMUNITIES. ”

## IT IS TIME TO ACT ON THESE REALITIES.

Cambridge has spent far too long failing to act on its responsibilities to frontline communities, failing to adhere to the timelines demanded by the world's top scientists and failing to protect its students' futures.

Now, more than ever, our University must face up to and dismantle its complicity with the drivers of climate breakdown and move towards a bold, reparative and justice-based approach to tackling the climate emergency.

This manifesto lays out a set of core demands to do just that.

Students, staff and community activists came together to win divestment.

Now, it is time to rise up again to kick fossil fuels out of Cambridge for good.



# CORE DEMANDS



## FOSSIL FREE ESTATE

The University, its subsidiaries and its Colleges must commit to reaching **net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030** at the latest, with substantial emissions cuts each year.



## FOSSIL FREE CAMPUS

The University and its Colleges must immediately commit to:

- Halting all new research, sponsorship and funding partnerships, projects and engagements with the fossil fuel industry
- **Ending all pre-existing relationships** at the earliest possible opportunity
- **Establishing and beginning to fundraise for a dedicated Sustainable Research Fund to replace fossil fuel industry funding.**
- **A ban on research which helps to facilitate further fossil fuel extraction.**
- Instructing the careers service should to **halt all promotional activities** in relation to the fossil fuel and extractive mining industries to students. extractive mining industries.



## FOSSIL FREE FINANCES

The University and its Colleges must immediately and publicly **end relationships with banks which finance fossil fuel projects** and instead place their capital in the hands of best-in-class financial institutions which are not funding the climate crisis.

# FOSSIL

# FREE

# ESTATE



# NET ZERO EMISSIONS BY

# 2030

## THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE AND ITS COLLEGES MUST COMMIT TO REACHING NET ZERO OVERALL EMISSIONS BY 2030.

This would include reaching absolute zero emissions wherever this is technologically possible, with differentiated targets for the different emissions scopes.

The target for scope three emissions would therefore be net zero emissions, making the overall target for the University a target of net zero by 2030.

- For scope 1 and 2 emissions, the University should commit to reaching absolute zero emissions by 2030. This requires eliminating all emissions at source and instituting zero carbon alternatives.
- For scope 3 emissions, the University should commit to reaching absolute zero emissions wherever this is technologically possible. In the case of essential University flights and procurement activities where all alternatives have been exhausted, gold-standard offsetting should be used as an absolute last resort.

Photo Credit: Cambridge Climate Justice



# BACKGROUND

## THE WORLD'S SCIENTISTS ARE CLEAR...

...to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of global heating and setting off runaway, irreversible climate breakdown, overall global emissions need to halve by 2030 and reach zero by 2050.

However, this is an **average global target**. It does not account for the fact that certain nations and institutions have emitted far more than others.

Nor does it acknowledge that institutions like Cambridge University have far greater capacity to make a rapid transition away from fossil fuels than others.

In fact, if the UK was to do its fair share in terms of emissions reduction based on historic emissions, analysis by leading environmental organizations including Friends of the Earth lays out that it must reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 200% by 2030.

And yet, the University is currently only **committed** to reaching absolute zero emissions by 2048, with an 'ambition to be ten years ahead' of this target.

Even this vague and distant target **applies only to scope 1 and 2 emissions** (relating to direct combustion on site, e.g. gas boilers, and indirectly purchased emissions, principally electricity).

This does not cover the very significant proportion of the University's emissions produced through its commercial procurement activities, as well as student and staff flights (scope 3 emissions).

❗ IN SHORT, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY DOES NOT HAVE AN EQUAL SHARE OF THE REMAINING 'CARBON BUDGET'. ITS EMISSIONS TARGETS MUST REFLECT THIS. ❗

Photo Credit: Cambridge Climate Justice



These targets also lag behind those of several of the University's Colleges, as well as many far less wealthy UK Universities.

Within Cambridge, both Jesus College and Hughes Hall have committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2030. For Jesus College, this covers scopes 1 and 2 emissions.

For Hughes Hall, the target is **comprehensive** across all emissions scopes.

Within the higher education sector more broadly, **several comparable Russell Group Universities have committed to reaching net zero emissions for all three emissions scopes by 2030**, or very nearly thereafter. In some cases, Universities have committed to much earlier targets.

- In 2018, King's College London committed to reaching zero carbon status across all emissions grades by 2025.
- Last year, the University of Oxford committed to reaching net zero emissions and net biodiversity gain by 2035.
- The University of Glasgow in 2020 committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2030. Their full plan involves a comprehensive degasification programme as well as a commitment to some (UK-based) offsetting where there is no practical route to emissions elimination, particularly for scope 3 emissions.



Cambridge is **the wealthiest University in Europe**. It claims to be world-leading in its response to the climate emergency. It is home to an enormous number of experts in the technical science of decarbonisation.

A target of reaching net zero emissions by 2030 at the latest is not just morally imperative, it is also absolutely possible.

There is no doubt that this will be a major change programme in our University. It will require significant investment and involve some temporary disruption. But it is now clear that the only solutions big enough to stand a chance of averting the worst effects of the climate crisis are those of an equally unprecedented scale.

The timelines remaining to us also mean that short-term disruption is now inevitable. This may not have been the case if the University had listened to students who have been campaigning for this target for several years.

Disruption is also inevitable when making such a major transition. Acting now does not prevent this disruption, but it crucially does avoid further worsening the climate crisis.

What is clear is that the alternative, failing to do everything possible to avert climate disaster, comes at an infinitely higher price to us all.

A background image showing a protest or demonstration. Several people are visible, some holding signs. The image is overlaid with three large orange horizontal bars containing the text 'FOSSIL FREE CAMPUS'.

**FOSSIL**

**FREE**

**CAMPUS**

BRIDGE  
NI

BP

# KICKING FOSSIL FUELS OFF CAMPUS

## CORE DEMAND: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND ITS COLLEGES MUST CUT ALL REMAINING RESEARCH, SPONSORSHIP AND FUNDING TIES WITH THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY.

Cambridge SU calls on the University of Cambridge and its Colleges to:

- **End all existing research partnerships, contracts, collaborations and engagements of any kind with the fossil fuel industry** until they commit to halting all new fossil fuel development, exploration and infrastructure projects and winding down existing projects in line with a 1.5 degree pathway. This would include ending all sponsored branding, events and other collaborations with the fossil fuel industry.
- Immediately commit to **no new research partnerships, contracts or collaborations of any kind with the fossil fuel industry**, until these companies commit to halting all new fossil fuel development and shutting down existing projects.
- Immediately commit to **no longer supporting research activities directly related to, or which facilitate, the extraction of fossil fuels.**
- **Immediately establish and begin to fundraise for a dedicated Sustainable Research Fund.** This would involve instructing CUDAR, the University's fundraising department, to focus some of its resources towards matching funding for crucial transition-related research. This would provide a long-term solution for funding current and future research projects which would previously have relied on fossil fuel industry financing.
- **Instruct the Careers Service to stop promoting the fossil fuel and mining industries to students**, as they already do with tobacco companies.
- Review all engagements and collaborations with extractive mining companies on the basis of **their severe environmental and social impact.**



Photo Credit: Cambridge Climate Justice

With its divestment decision, Cambridge University finally conceded that it was morally unacceptable to profit off of investments in the industry most directly responsible for driving the climate emergency.

Fossil fuel companies' extensive record of climate denialism and misinformation, lobbying against the most basic environmental measures and continued investment in new fossil fuel infrastructure was clearly anathema to what the University **described** as "a pressing environmental and moral need for action" on the climate emergency. Indeed, we know that just 20 fossil fuel companies are **responsible for a third of all global emissions**.

Even despite urgent warnings from top scientists and energy organisations that **all new fossil fuel projects must cease immediately to preserve a habitable planet** and that existing projects must be wound down, these same companies continue to invest heavily in new fossil fuel exploration decades into the future.

These lock in emissions the world simply cannot afford. Meanwhile, fossil fuel companies desperately try to brand themselves as essential partners in the green transition, despite investing **less than 1%** of their overall capital spend on renewables.

There can be no ambiguity: the fossil fuel industry is driving the climate crisis.

And yet, despite accepting that these companies represent unacceptable investments, our University continues to maintain high-profile, public partnerships with the very same companies, accepting millions each year in new research funding from the industry.

Whilst it exits all investments in Shell, the University's Shell Professorship of Chemical Engineering remains not just a clear logical contradiction, but an ongoing insult to the families of those **killed by Shell's activities in the Niger Delta**, not to mention the millions facing fatal climate impacts because of Shell's continued extraction of fossil fuels. CASP, a research group within the University's Earth Sciences Department, brands itself as "independent" and dedicated to sustainable research, **whilst working on multiple fossil fuel exploration projects** and partnering with fossil fuel industry sponsors.

Even when these companies sponsor 'sustainability' research, ongoing partnerships between the likes of Shell and one of the world's most respected Universities allow these companies to claim that they are aligned with world-leading scientific institutions and thus a positive partner in world-class sustainable research efforts.

This is a dangerous lie, but one which is bolstered significantly through association with Cambridge's esteemed reputation for scientific excellence.



The power of the Universities like Cambridge to provide legitimacy to these companies was made clear in the University's **Divestment Report** and was a key driver behind its decision to exit fossil fuel investments.

This principle clearly also extends to who the University deems to be acceptable research partners.

As such, the same cultural power that was brought so effectively to bear through divestment is systematically lending legitimacy to the fossil fuel industry's dangerous greenwashing efforts, helping to preserve their social licence to operate.

We must not underestimate how valuable it is for these companies to be able to report to policymakers, shareholders and the media that they are working with an institution as respected for scientific excellence as Cambridge on 'transition solutions', even when these 'solutions' are often used by these companies to **facilitate** the further extraction of fossil fuels.

When governments consistently fail to act, any institution with a platform as influential as Cambridge has an additional duty to use that platform to demand bolder action and call out worst-offenders.

Not to do so is to be deeply and unforgivably complicit in the unfolding climate emergency.

“ THE SAME CULTURAL POWER THAT WAS BROUGHT SO EFFECTIVELY TO BEAR THROUGH DIVESTMENT IS SYSTEMATICALLY LENDING LEGITIMACY TO THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY'S DANGEROUS GREENWASHING EFFORTS, HELPING TO PRESERVE THEIR SOCIAL LICENCE TO OPERATE. ”

# BUILDING AN ALTERNATIVE

As such an extraordinarily wealthy institution, with well-established and extensive fundraising capabilities, there is no reason to rely on fossil fuel industry funding for our research.

We can and must provide our talented researchers with alternative funding streams so that our sustainable research efforts do not rely on the whims of the fossil fuel industry and their relentless extraction agenda, with the University even **openly admitting** that the BP institute's research will directly aid the corporation's extraction of fossil fuels.

Our talented scientists must no longer be forced to choose between greenwashing the engines of climate breakdown and conducting crucial transition research.

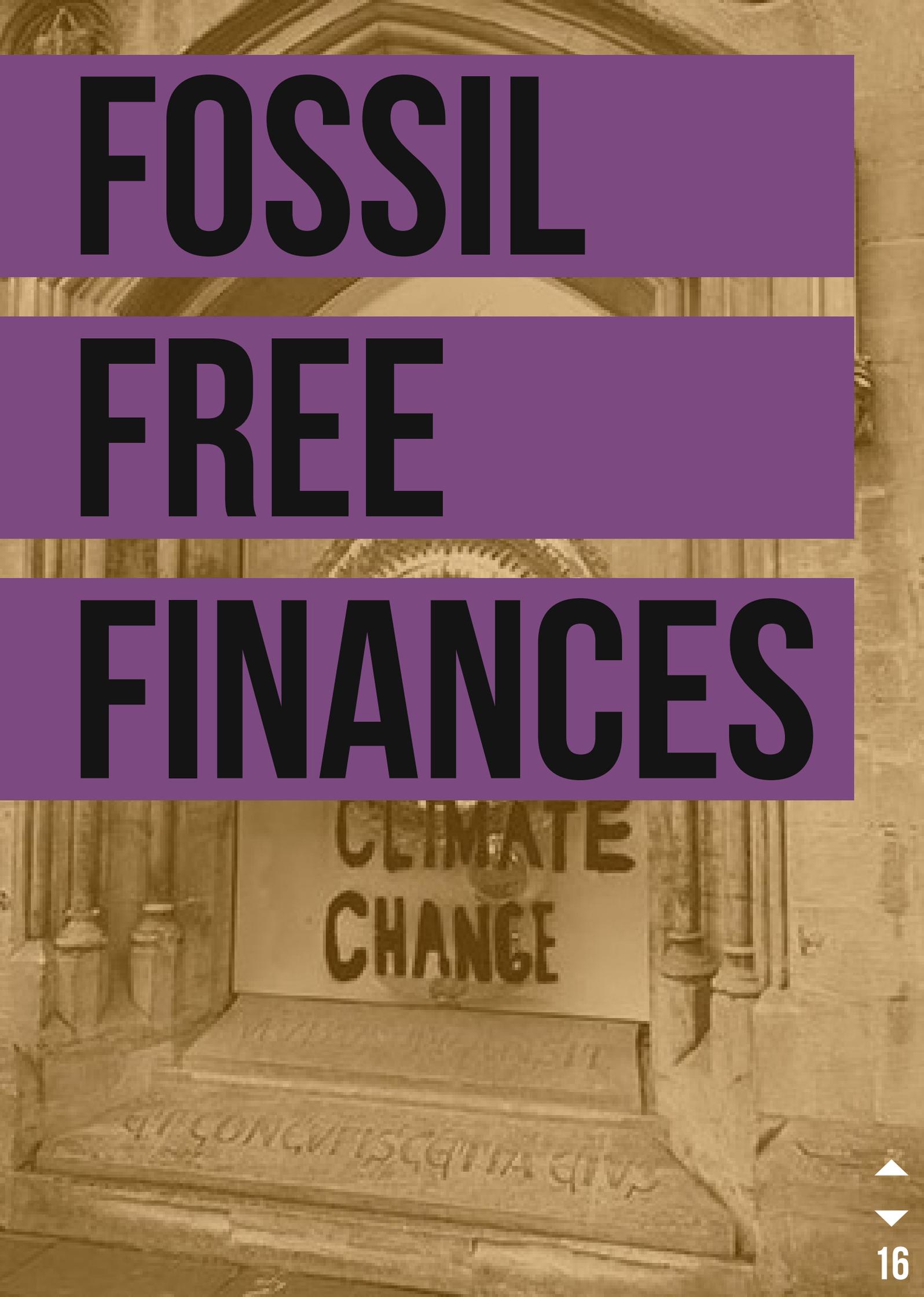
These demands build on the inspiring work of Cambridge Climate Justice (formerly Cambridge Zero Carbon Society) and their *Dismantling the Fossil Fuel University* report.

This exposed the shocking extent of our University's entanglements with the fossil fuel industry. It made clear that divestment was just one crucial step in a broader project of kicking fossil fuel companies out of our University.

Now, we need to finish the job. That means demanding the University urgently cuts **all** ties with the fossil fuel industry.



Photo Credit: Cambridge Climate Justice

A photograph of a stone archway with a plaque that reads "CLIMATE CHANGE" and "CONSTITUTIONAL". The archway is made of light-colored stone and has a decorative keystone. The plaque is mounted on the wall below the arch. The text "CLIMATE CHANGE" is in large, bold, capital letters. Below it, the word "CONSTITUTIONAL" is visible, though partially obscured and less legible. The background is a warm, golden-brown color.

**FOSSIL**

**FREE**

**FINANCES**



# CUTTING TIES WITH TOP FOSSIL FUEL FINANCERS



**CORE DEMAND: THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE AND ITS COLLEGES MUST CUT ALL TIES WITH TOP FOSSIL FUEL FINANCERS.**

The Collegiate University must:

- Commit to a public review of its major banking relationships. Within this review, the Collegiate University should identify where it has major banking relationships with banks which provide financing to companies that are building new fossil fuel infrastructure and/or exploring for new fossil fuel reserves.
- Where this is the case, the University must immediately **end these relationships** and move to best-in-class financial institutions which do not fund these companies and make robust efforts to pressure these institutions to align themselves entirely with a 1.5 degree pathway.

Whilst the fossil fuel industry is the obvious and most direct proponent of climate breakdown, its destructive activities rely on **billions each year** in financing from the banking sector. Indeed, the University's divestment **report** described banks as "the source of a majority of new finance for fossil fuels".

There is clearly no way to tackle the climate crisis without urgently addressing the banking sector's **continued** financing of the fossil fuel industry.

Within the environmental movement, attention is therefore **turning increasingly** to this **sector**.

As with divestment, the evidence clearly suggests that 'exclusion' of industry worst-actors (i.e. publicly ending relationships with them) is by far the most effective form of action for an institution like Cambridge to take in relation to banking relationships.

We know already that **a majority of Colleges bank with Barclays**, Europe's top fossil fuel funder.

We don't yet know every banking relationship within the University. Once again, we cannot afford silence on this issue. The Collegiate University must immediately end any relationships it has with fossil-fuel funding banks.

