

Carbon emissions fall in UK for sixth consecutive year



Carbon dioxide emissions in the UK fell for the sixth consecutive year in 2018, driven by falling coal usage in power generation, according to a new report. Last year, emissions were the lowest on record since 1888, apart from during years affected by major industrial action by workers, including 1893 and the 1926 general strike, said Carbon Brief, a climate research and news website. Emissions dropped 1.5 per cent in 2018 compared to 2017, added Carbon Brief, noting that the sustained period of reductions started in 2013.

“This is the longest stretch of consecutive years with falling emissions,” said Simon Evans, author of the report at Carbon Brief, which based its findings on government data. However, the decline in emissions in 2018 was the smallest fall across the six-year period, raising concerns that the recent run of reductions could be coming to an end. “The UK’s emissions reductions are being flattered by reductions in the use of coal, but other sectors aren’t going in the same direction,” said Mr Evans, noting that oil and gas usage were largely

unchanged last year. Carbon emissions were about 361m tonnes in 2018, a reduction of 39 per cent from 1990 levels. The UK is working towards a target of an 80 per cent reduction on 1990 levels by 2050.

As part of its efforts to cut emissions, Britain is aiming to phase out all coal-fired power stations by 2025. Coal accounted for less than 5 per cent of UK power generation last year, down from more than 40 per cent in 2012. Electricity coming from renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, rose to a record high of 33 per cent in 2018. Power generation from fossil fuels fell to a record low of 46 per cent. Much of the UK's reductions in carbon emissions have come from the power sector, but groups such as the Committee on Climate Change, a government advisory body, have urged more action to promote clean energy in transport and heating. "The closure of coal is within sight and that has been hugely successful for the UK," said Chris Stark, chief executive of the committee.

"What that means is that we're not going to see the same falls [in carbon emissions] in the future unless policies are extended to other sectors." He added: "We're on a good path now, and we need the government to use the policies they have in place to substantially increase the amount of renewables we have producing energy."