

Q and A

MP: The government's current plans on climate change, to become carbon neutral by 2050, are ambitious enough to stop the climate crisis.

You: The government's own Committee on Climate Change recently found these steps to be inadequate for tackling climate change. A 4 degrees rise in temperature, rather than a 1.5 degrees rise has been predicted, which would be devastating.

MP: Next year, the government's 10-Point Plan will put £1 billion into insulating homes and buildings to make them more eco-friendly.

You: To bring all housing up to scratch and combat fuel poverty we need a 10-year programme, with much greater investment.

MP: The government is planning to create 600,000 heat pumps a year by 2028.

You: We need to fit at least 10 million heat pumps by 2030 to prevent climate disaster.

MP: The government has promised to quadruple offshore wind power.

You: The government has failed to address that onshore wind and solar power is being held back by a planning regime biased against it.

MP: The government is investing an extra £200 million in carbon capture projects.

You: Great, but this should not be used to supplement continuous use of fossil fuels. Even if we could capture all the carbon dioxide at the point of use (which we cannot at the moment), fossil fuel extraction still releases lots of greenhouse gases. The government needs to address this.

MP: The government is promoting more active travel, with an investment of £5 billion over 5 years.

You: Brilliant, but we are still far behind countries like the Netherlands and Denmark, and our current plans do not put enough money in. We should be spending £2 billion a year on cycling alone, and not relying on electric cars which still clog up our towns and create some carbon pollution through electricity.

MP: There are considerable benefits to the UK economy from coal and there is potential for the creation of many high-skilled jobs.

You: Science and the government's own plans show that such things can be done with renewable energies like wind and solar too. Jobs and climate can go hand in hand, if the government wants them to.

MP: The government is investing in other forms of clean energy, like hydrogen and nuclear.

You: But the government has not addressed whether hydrogen production will be produced from natural gas or not. The government's commitment to invest £525 million in nuclear energy is both expensive and dangerous, compared to renewable energy, hydrogen, and batteries. Furthermore, the government has recently allowed a new coal plant to be built in Cumbria, which seriously undermines their commitment to clean energy.

MP: That coal plant in Cumbria reduces the amount of carbon in terms of taking coal to the steelworks.

You: But should our steelworks still be reliant on coal? The Executive Director for Economy and Infrastructure has said that "This would be expected to remain the case until more environmentally friendly methods of steel manufacture and transportation are developed to be commercially viable." That suggests that, rather than building a new coal plant, we should be developing more environmentally friendly methods of steel manufacture and transportation that are commercially viable, rather than opening a new plant to deal with short-term costs. This is sort of thinking is meant to be at the heart of current government policy regarding climate change.

MP: The coal plant in Cumbria was a local decision. The Housing Secretary may 'call-in' planning applications but only in situations where the application conflicts with national policy in significant ways.

You: Does this suggest that the government's plans to spearhead a green economy are not significant enough for national action? That is not the attitude I would expect from the government regarding this crisis, especially as you have already declared a climate emergency.

MP: The government has plans to support greener energy usage in the maritime and aviation industries.

You: This does nothing to deal with frequent fliers, who will need to be dealt with to meet the government's own carbon reduction goals.

MP: The government plans to plant 30,000 hectares of trees every year.

You: This is half of the trees is needed.

MP: The CEE Bill is unrealistic in its goals.

You: The bill's goals are 100% realistic, and have been largely approved by the scientific community. There is the potential for a wartime level of mobilisation, certainly possible if governments around the world act now.

MP: The CEE Bill will be disruptive to the economy and society.

You: The disruption faced by human society from climate change is far above any short-term disruption from adopting the goals in this bill. Hurricanes, flooding, refugee crises, these are all

issues which are already being felt by the impact of climate change and this will get much worse if the goals of the CEE Bill are not carried out now.

MP: The CEE Bill threatens the economy, putting dozens of people who work in the energy sector out of a job.

You: Saving our planet could easily go in hand with getting people back to work by creating new jobs in the 'clean' sectors. Also, the economy will not matter so much if everyone on planet earth is dead.

MP: The idea of a Citizen's Assembly is unnecessary and does not work.

You: The climate crisis will affect ordinary people so ordinary people deserve to have a say. Ordinary people can have a say on the right way forward via an advisory Citizens' Assembly. A recent Climate Change Commission video presentation accompanying the release of the Sixth Carbon Budget Report (which can be found online) has argued that such a move would give the public a chance to express their views after being provided with sound information not available from other sources. This is nothing radical. Citizen's Assemblies are a tried and tested means for governments around the world to hear the public consensus on certain controversial matters. They have already been used in the UK to decide on issues within the NHS, and in France a citizen's assembly on climate change recently published its first formal report to great public approval. It was also used to help resolve the question of abortion legality in the Republic of Ireland. The public is clearly lacking confidence in the government's actions on climate change, and consulting the people on this matter in an impartial way will resolve this.
