

Derry City and Strabane District Council pledge to Share the Road to Zero

Derry City and Strabane District Council is joining a growing list of organisations who are committing to road safety by pledging to 'Share the Road to Zero' and they are encouraging others to do the same.

Comber Greenway Widening Scheme

The next phase of the proposed upgrade works along the Comber Greenway will commence on Monday 22 January 2024. This scheme starts approximately 180 metres north-west of its junction with the Ballyrainey Road, and will extend approximately 1.4 kilometres south east until the termination of the Comber Greenway at the Belfast Road junction.

Further financial support for flooded businesses announced

Details of further financial support for businesses severely affected by the flooding in late October and November have been announced by the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Update on agency cost reduction drive

Northern Ireland's health service is continuing its push to reduce agency staff costs.

We can't afford more climate failures

Vital though they are, climate change conferences rarely deliver. Regrettably, Dubai's COP28 was another disappointing summit. Despite hype that the agreement saw "the beginning of the end for fossil fuels", the actual text was undermined with loopholes and flawed by the absence of timescales.

This sad reality was only confirmed by the most independent of judges – the markets. The share prices of the oil and gas majors didn't move.

And as emissions continue to rise and as the world continues to heat up, we just can't afford more such failures.

If the world is going to take action and make the agreements so desperately needed, then the next two years will be critical – and three things need to happen.

First, **we need to see nations deliver on their existing promises fast** – including the UK, where, like too many other countries, we are not on course to meet our own "nationally determined" target.

Second, **we need a huge international political effort** between now and Brazil's COP30 in 2025, to remove the remaining barriers to a dramatic shift in global direction.

Third, **we need politics and technology to deliver** the combination of leadership and confidence that made the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 possible – the last COP that really did move the dial.

So how can the UK help make the difference in each of these three tests? And how can we Liberal Democrats work to make sure the UK steps up?



Domestically, we need to expose the climate hypocrisy of the Conservatives – and make sure the next Parliament votes for a radical step change in the UK's own climate action.

I'm sure I'm not alone in getting fed up of the Conservatives taking credit for the successes of the Liberal Democrats in Government, when **we nearly quadrupled the UK's renewable electricity, made the UK the world leader in offshore wind and embedded the policies that have seen the UK's emissions fall and coal power decline to near zero.** Given they fought us every step of the way, the Conservatives' hypocrisy is breathtaking – especially as they now use our success as an excuse for their inaction today.

Liberal Democrat climate policies like accelerating renewable power rapidly and increasing energy efficiency investments dramatically are essential if the UK is to deliver on our climate promises to future generations, cut energy bills and make the UK more energy independent. In contrast, at the next election, the Conservatives' willingness to speed up oil and gas extraction, enable a new coalmine to open and oppose solar and wind investments will enable us to make this case – we are the party of the future, they are the party of the past.



The second set of necessary actions need the UK to **embrace an internationalist approach** that's totally alien to the current Government. From working closely with European allies to reaching out to geopolitical adversaries, the UK must rediscover past active climate diplomacy that saw us influence capitals from Warsaw to Washington, and Beijing to Abuja. When I had the privilege of leading the UK delegation to 3 COPs and shaping both the British and European preparations for the critical COP21, the unreported work of my team of brilliant officials and the Foreign Office's outstanding diplomats was in my view essential to the successes achieved in Paris in 2015.

The climate diplomacy needed at this moment differs from that in one crucial aspect – the extremely challenging and urgent task of convincing middle and low income countries with fossil fuel resources that if they give up the future oil and gas revenues they currently hope will speed up their development, they can still enjoy a path to prosperity. We have to convince the political leaderships from Nigeria to Uganda, from Cameroon to Colombia that climate action can be *in* their national interest and that further fossil fuel extraction will be *against* their national interest.

Liberal internationalists must take on board Anatol Lieven's important insights in "*Climate change and the nation state*", that wishful thinking that political elites around the world will somehow embrace altruistic global action because we ask them to, is dangerously naïve. A better response must see western democracies putting their own house in order and offering the generous support for development the UK used to do. Without such realism, future COPs are bound to fail again. To date, only the Liberal Democrats are offering any credible policies to make a renewal of Britain's global climate leadership possible for the run-up to Brazil's COP30.



The final requirement for success in the battle to stop global warming – the right combination of political leadership and technological confidence – is sadly not in the gift of any UK Government or Parliament, though an appreciation of its significance might still shape constructive actions.

Paris COP21 was partly successful because President Obama's diplomacy and the EU's unexpectedly strong climate ambition helped encourage China and India to move further than anyone had predicted. Combined with breakthroughs on the economics of solar power which gave countries confidence the transition would be more affordable, there was a happy moment where the politics and economics aligned.

Since then the politics have deteriorated significantly. **The threat of a second Trump Presidency and the relative success of authoritarian regimes have further undermined the ability of western liberal democracies credibly to persuade, incentivise and cajole the rest of the world into action.**

The march of **technology remains the brightest hope**. Policies that invest in the additional technologies we will need from clean flight to nature-based solutions, that share the know-how and support the deployment of game-changers like solar power and that switch the investments from dirty energy to clean may yet overcome the multiple barriers of vested interests of nations and corporates.

Ultimately, to make those policies happen however, we need politicians who genuinely care – ready to put in the graft and capable of taking the political initiative. No-one can possibly still believe the UK's Conservatives are up to this. I am completely convinced the Liberal Democrats

are.

Ed Davey is the Leader of the Liberal Democrats. He was Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, 2012-2015, and led the UK delegation to three UN Climate Change Conferences.

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