

Climate Change

Climate change is a major threat to our planet - and urgent action is needed. Liberal Democrats will press other nations to ratify the Kyoto Protocol - and lead by example by ensuring that Britain achieves its targets well before the deadline. We will tackle traffic pollution by getting more people onto public transport. We will ensure that much more of the UK's electricity comes from safe and renewable sources.

"Greenpeace is right behind Mr Kennedy's campaign to take climate change to the polls next year, it's the biggest issue we face. All politicians and the media must give this issue the attention it deserves."

Greenpeace Executive Director Stephen Tindall, Greenpeace Press Release, in response to speech by Charles Kennedy on the Environment on 17th November 2004

Tony Blair is "all talk and no action ... Blair thinks he can get away with boosting his green credentials by making a big speech every year on climate change ... It's always about the grand scenario and when it comes to putting his own house in order it is always business as usual."

Charles Secrett, former head of Friends of the Earth, now head of ACT, a sustainable development campaign group, quoted in The Independent, 19th November 2004

Scientists believe carbon dioxide - released through industry, agriculture and the burning of fossil fuels - is exacerbating natural climate change.

Responding to questions from Charles Kennedy in Parliament, Tony Blair has admitted that the Government is missing its own targets on cutting greenhouse gases (although it is on target to meet the weaker Kyoto targets). It will miss its target of reducing 1990 carbon dioxide emission levels by 20% by 2010.

Since Labour came to power under Tony Blair in 1997:

Overall consumption of energy in Britain has gone **up** nearly 7%

Carbon dioxide emissions are **up** by 2.1%

Carbon dioxide emissions from Power Stations are **up** by 9%

Road traffic, which they pledge to cut, has gone **up** by nearly 8%

The Conservative record on the environment is equally poor. Between 1979 and 1997 carbon dioxide emissions from transport rose by 50 per cent and deadly particulates by 25 per cent. Analysis by Friends of the Earth of the General Election Manifestos in 2001 revealed the Conservative party's "woeful" environmental policy as they were awarded the lowest score of all the main political parties - just 6.5 out of 50 compared to the Lib Dems' 37.5. Charles Secrett, then director of Friends of the Earth, described the Tory manifesto as "remarkable for being perhaps the least green produced by a major UK party in living memory."

Tackling Global Climate Change

Liberal Democrats will:

Place Britain at the forefront of climate change negotiations, pressing other nations to ratify and implement the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Ensure that Britain achieves its own target well before the deadline, and establishes a new target of a 20% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2010, setting an example to the world. Our long-term target is for a 60% reduction by 2050.

Promote a new Europe-South initiative for a long-term global framework to cap CO2 emissions through contraction of greenhouse gases emissions to the level needed to stabilise the climate, and convergence to equal emission quotas, with common institutions to ensure and support compliance under democratic control ('contraction and convergence').

Reducing the Demand for Energy

Half the energy currently used in the UK is wasted, and could be saved by using it more efficiently, in homes, businesses and transport. Mandatory standards and labels for buildings, machinery, vehicles and appliances will encourage householders and businesses to cut energy use.

We will:

Encourage Combined Heat and Power schemes to reduce the energy wasted in power generation, and set a target for 30% of electricity used in the public sector to be generated from Combined Heat and Power by 2015.

Make building regulations tougher. We would cut fuel bills and reduce pollution by requiring all new housing to meet improved energy and water efficiency standards through the use of environmentally friendly building materials and techniques.

Giving Incentives To Reduce Carbon Emissions

We will:

Make urgent preparations for participation by UK firms in the European Union Emissions Trading scheme which will become mandatory by 2008, particularly by drawing up a fair National Allocation Plan which will achieve real emission reductions,

Promote more efficient technologies and industries and maintain British industries' competitiveness. The Government's Climate Change Levy is overcomplicated and bureaucratic. We will reform the Climate Change Levy into a Carbon Tax payable by all energy users not involved in the Emissions Trading Scheme, to be set at the same overall level as the CCL.

Reform Planning

We will:

Ensure that local authority development plans incorporate targets for CO2 emission reductions to encourage the development of renewable energy facilities and account for the climate change consequences of their policies, including transport.

Transport and the Environment

We will:

Reward motorists who drive less-polluting vehicles by reducing car tax (Vehicle Excise Duty) on more environmentally friendly cars and motorcycles, abolishing it altogether for the greenest vehicles, funding this by increasing the amount of VED charged on the most polluting vehicles, such as 4x4s.

Introduce a more environmentally effective system of taxation for air travel. We would scrap all airport departure taxes paid by passengers - which simply raise money for the Treasury and do not encourage more sustainable aviation and replace this with a duty to be paid by airlines for each commercial aircraft - passenger and freight (which currently pay nothing under the current system) - taking off from a British airport. (The new duty would be set to raise the same amount of money as the old).