



FACING UP TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Dundee, 14 January 2010

The following points and questionnaire feedback was received from a public debate and discussion at the Steps Theatre, Dundee in connection with the RSE Inquiry into Facing up to Climate Change: the future for Dundee and the East of Scotland. The viewpoints expressed are those of the public that attended and are not those of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Points raised by the Audience

- Policy Planning Statement 25 only requires architects to build for appearance rather than sustainability, functionality or climate change.
- The relative costs of private and public transport are unbalanced. When the bridge tolls were removed it was an opportunity to reduce bus fares to Fife, but this did not happen. More needs to be done to make public transport attractive.
- The climate has always changed, and in addition to carbon dioxide levels, there have been changes to cosmic radiation, volcanic eruptions and cloud cover. The focus on carbon dioxide is misplaced.
- Affordability of energy is an issue. Government should encourage communities to generate their own power, by investing in district heating schemes, and “island” electricity grids that allow electricity to be generated and circulated within a community.
- Science has shown Carbon dioxide to be the driver of climate change. CO₂ levels between periods of glaciations rose to 280 ppm, but levels had now reached 380 ppm. In the first half of the 20th Century temperature followed solar cycles but since 1980's this link was broken.
- In the Ordovician ice age, CO₂ levels were in the 1,000's ppm. Warming results in more CO₂ emissions. The IPCC were instructed to ignore solar emissions and cloud cover in their model predictions.
- It would be expensive to move to a low carbon economy due to the subsidies for renewable energy.
- Heating bills were rising. Old houses without cavity walls or attic space were given no options for insulation through energy company energy efficiency schemes.
- Sceptics didn't believe in climate change but if the Government focused on reducing heating bills, then everyone would be interested. Marketing should focus less on ethical world issues and more on reducing costs.
- Care homes have to keep 15 lights on 24 hours a day due to health and safety. This was surely working against these goals.
- Dundee City Council were rightly encouraging cycling and walking but many cycle lanes only lasted 50m. More needed to be done to encourage people out of their cars to cycle and walk.
- An earlier RSE Inquiry into energy highlighted the need for combined heat and power. However planners were reluctant to install biomass boilers because they couldn't guarantee supplies, and foresters were unwilling to invest until there was a market for biomass.
- Planning processes should treat community owned renewables projects differently to commercial projects, with a quicker planning process.

- During the still weather this winter the amount of electricity generated by wind turbines was likely to be low. The percentage of Scotland's electricity needs during this period being met by renewables should be made public. Base load electricity provision needed to be in place.

Summary of feedback from audience questionnaires

1. Are you, as an individual, taking steps to change your behaviour to respond to climate change? If so, in what ways?

- Widespread decrease in use of car and flights, increased use of public transport, cycling and walking.
- Widespread consideration of energy efficiency at home: switching off appliances and lights, less use of gas and electricity, lowering thermostat, energy saving light bulbs.
- Several examples of insulating lofts and cavity walls, one or two of installing small wind turbine, solar panels, wood-burning stoves, air-to-air heat pump.
- Reusing and recycling.
- Sourcing food locally and in season.
- Local group volunteers promoting waste reduction, resource conservation etc

2. If you answered yes to Q1, what difficulties, if any, have you encountered and what has been the biggest obstacle?

- Lack of good public transport and cycle paths and the cost of public transport are key obstacles for many.
- Lack of clear information on the options for increasing the energy efficiency of a home, particularly with regards to the costs, benefits and reliability of a wide range of options (not just insulation as this is not always possible).
- Costs of making changes and installing equipment, particularly on a small scale. Wide variety of funding and funding bodies are available but these are always changing so it is difficult to keep track.
- Reluctance to change and a lack of government leadership and support at a number of levels, compounded by a feeling of helplessness in the face of the problem.
- Difficult to engage children and demonstrate that their actions now will make a difference.

3. If you are not taking steps to respond to climate change, what is stopping you?

- Those renting their homes are unable to make changes such as insulating walls and lofts.
- Lack of incentives and government grants.
- Lack of research funding for individuals and small groups with innovative ideas.

4. Do you have any comments you would like to add to the debate?

- More information and support (including practical advice and funding for upgrading housing stock etc) for individuals. Easier access to information and support.
- Need for 'envisioning' of decarbonised society, what will it look like in 2020 or 2050 if the targets are met? What transitional steps are needed? Lack of clear guidance – what future is Scotland planning for?
- Legislation for new builds needs to change significantly if to meet 2020 targets.
- The need to control population levels.
- Need more focus on small scale community projects for renewable energy.
- Need to protect Scotland's landscape and biodiversity while developing renewable energy, nuclear should not be ruled out as an option.
- Govt should lead research to come up with credible figures that show the financial cost of lifestyle choices and place a monetary value on our carbon consumption. E.g. leaving a TV on stand-by = 10p per night and an extra £36.50 on energy bills for the year. Similarly £1.00 to watch TV all day but £5 with a plasma screen TV etc.