



THE PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY BRIEFING

After attending 'The People's Emergency Briefing' screening at Holbrook village hall on the 26th June 2026, I will start this summary of the briefing with a positive message. 'There is clear evidence that urgent action will strengthen our economy, resilience and quality of life.'

The briefing didn't shy away from presenting the very disturbing facts about climate change and biodiversity loss (the loss of vital parts of the incredible diversity of our natural world). Instead the briefing presented both the '*stick*' and the '*carrot*'. The painful problems with climate change and nature loss (the stick), which must move us to act, and the positive rewards in our future (the carrot), if we address these problems now.

Weather

Weather is the day to day conditions in a certain location. So having very cold weather for a few days doesn't disprove the fact that globally the climate is warming (climate is not the same as weather, please see below). 'Greenhouse' gases including CO₂ trap more of the sun's warmth in our atmosphere. Warmer air holds more moisture, so our weather in the UK will become on average warmer and wetter in the winter, and hotter and drier in the summer. It also makes extreme weather events increasingly more likely, such as storms, extreme rainfall events and longer lasting extreme heat waves.

We can make our communities more resilient by ensuring newly built infrastructure and housing is designed to withstand these changes in our weather patterns. We need to upgrade flood defences, drainage, and early warning systems. We need to retrofit older homes and other infrastructure, to better withstand extremes of heat and cold. In towns and cities we need to plant more trees, create rain gardens, and retain our parks, to cool and protect from surface water flooding.

Climate

Climate is the long-term conditions of a large region, over decades or even centuries. Humanity has flourished in an era of relatively stable climate, and CO₂ levels. Since the 1850's though, CO₂ has rapidly increased in our atmosphere, from 280 parts per million (ppm) to 424 ppm. The burning of fossil fuels has created this rapid increase in CO₂, and caused global temperatures to rise by +1.5 degrees centigrade on average. This seems like a very small increase, but globally it has a dramatic effect on our climate. It isn't just part of a natural cycle. It's unprecedented in its fast speed, and cause. Yearly there are differences, with some slightly cooler or hotter years, due to some natural cycles such as El Nino and La Nina, but our longer term climate warming is in no doubt.

To combat this we do need to move to zero carbon solutions, which don't add CO₂ to our atmosphere. So we need more solar, wind and wave power, to generate our electricity. We need to improve and increase our public transport, active transport

(walking, cycling and wheeling), and electric vehicles, and we need deep cuts in our current use of aviation.

Nature

Degrading our natural environment increases the risks to our own health posed by flooding, wildfires, heatwaves and food insecurity. The UK is in the bottom 10% of countries globally for biodiversity. In the UK 1 in 6 of our wildlife species is now at risk of extinction. Much of our rivers have been polluted, soils degraded and our vital pollinator species have been reduced by habitat decline and pesticide use.

If we encourage nature restoration and protection we can build more resilience, create jobs, and increase wellbeing and prosperity for our communities. We need to treat our nature as vital infrastructure, and fund it as such. We need to stop financing activities which pollute and destroy our environment, and recognise that our communities and our economy are embedded in our natural environment.

Tipping points

Slowly lean back on a chair and you'll reach a point where you suddenly accelerate and fall to the floor. This is a 'tipping point'. Complex systems maintain our climate, and these systems contain tipping points. For example, the destruction of the Amazon rainforest could reach a tipping point where there won't be enough forest left to create enough of its own rainfall. Reducing the forest's resilience to climate change, causing increased forest die back. Sea ice and glaciers are melting at an unprecedented rate and this could reach tipping points which speed up increases in sea level rise. In England and Wales 5 million properties are already at risk of flooding from rivers, surface waters and the sea. Changes in ocean currents, such as currents in the Atlantic could reach tipping points causing dramatic changes in UK weather patterns, with very cold winters, and extreme heat waves in the summer.

By acting now to reduce CO2 emissions, and protect and restore our natural environment, we could create positive tipping points. This could help accelerate us out of the worst impacts of climate change, reduce the risks of food insecurity for us, and save some of our vital nature, reducing the risks of ecosystem collapse (for example, reducing the loss of insect populations, reduces the loss of birds which feed on insects, and reduces the loss of mammals which feed on birds).

Food security

Increasing climate change increases the risk of crop failure. Droughts, heat stress, extreme heavy rainfall events and flooding can all destroy crops, or reduce yields. Sea level rise and nature loss will also negatively impact on global food production. In the UK we import 40% - 50% of our food. Extreme weather events increase food prices and reduce food availability. Animal agriculture takes up 85% of total agricultural land in the UK.

We need to address these risks in our UK agricultural policies, improve our food systems and reduce our food waste. Reducing our animal agriculture, and increasing our intake of plant based foods, would reduce agriculture greenhouse gas emissions by up to 60% and greatly reduce the amount of land used. So we could grow more of our own food and be less reliant on food imports. We need to promote sustainable agriculture practices, and projects which combine agriculture and sustainable energy.

Health

Climate change increases health risks directly and indirectly. In the UK these health risks include: injury from extreme weather events, heat related illness (particularly in individuals with pre-existing health conditions), increase in respiratory illness, and increase in the risk of mosquito and tick borne diseases and communicable diseases. In the UK, the heatwaves in May and June this year caused an additional 2,700 deaths.

Increasing public transport and EV's could help reduce particulate pollution, and reduce the risks from respiratory illnesses. Increasing active transport such as walking and cycling increases health. Reducing meat intake, and increasing plant based foods can reduce cancer, obesity, strokes, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. This could save the UK £126 billion a year.

National security

Climate change reduces food security and increases food prices, here and in other countries around the world which impacts negatively on societies. Increasing civil unrest and migration, as people try to escape countries impacted more severely by climate change. Melting Arctic ice has increased tensions over shipping routes, and sea level rise could reduce land and increase tensions in the future.

The Ministry of Defence and NATO are taking these risks very seriously, and researching how countries can cope with natural disasters, military crises and other crises, and how to develop energy self sufficiency for our military. Acting now will improve our resilience. Transitioning to sustainable energy and storage in a decentralised grid now, will reduce our dependence on buying oil and gas, and make our grid less vulnerable to damage.

Economics

UK market rules aren't helping us transition towards a sustainable future. Companies who do nothing about their carbon emissions aren't penalised. Companies who declare their CO2 emissions and invest in becoming more sustainable experience higher costs and a temporary reduction in their financial performance. Some companies, particularly fossil fuels companies, put profit first and only consider the future of planet and people to work out 'greenwashing' marketing strategies (how they can convince the public that they're 'green' when in reality they're doing as little as they possibly can to transition to a sustainable future). Using some of their enormous profits to pay lobbyists, the media and politicians to represent their interests and slow transition.

Researchers at Oxford University say more North sea oil and gas drilling will not reduce our household energy bills. Their research shows that maximising North sea oil and gas would save households £16 per year, but boosting renewables would save households £441 per year. We need to change standards, taxes, subsidies and procurement to promote and reward businesses genuinely working towards reducing their CO2 emissions, restoring soils and nature, and/or reducing pollution and waste. As Deborah Meaden says; "Delays never pay." Recent inflation would have been much lower if we'd transitioned to sustainable power generation before Russia invaded Ukraine. Especially as food prices are linked to oil prices via fertilizer manufacture.

Energy transition

In recent years rapid rises in our energy bills, inflation and the cost of living have often been caused by rises in fossil fuel prices. After Russia invaded Ukraine the UK

government spent £64 billion helping households and businesses to cope with the energy price rises. Meanwhile fossil fuel companies reported billions in profits. In the UK 80% of households use gas to heat their homes.

Prices for wind and solar energy, and prices for battery storage have dropped dramatically in the last ten years. Sun and wind are free forever, so won't be subject to the same price increase risks as fossil fuels. Electric vehicles are far more efficient than fossil fuel powered vehicles, and we need to incentivise their use. We need to upgrade our electricity grid and reformulate energy bills to reflect lower sustainable energy prices, not inflated gas prices. We must support workers and businesses to re-train, adapt and transition to new sustainable energy jobs. Researchers at Oxford University found that a fast transition was actually the cheapest option, when compared with a slow energy transition or no energy transition.

This is just a summary; if you didn't attend this screening, there will be other opportunities to attend other screening events, hopefully in Holbrook and other local locations (<https://www.nebriefing.org/aims>).

It's so important to hear/see this evidence, and to discuss it in our communities.

To protect and improve our lives now, and for future generations, we need to respect and value our amazing natural environment and the climate. We don't want future generations to look back on us and say we did 'too little, too late', just to increase the wealth of companies and individuals invested in fossil fuels.