

Just Transition Wakefield Press Statement

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE - Government 10 Point Plan for the Climate

The news and social media have been full of reaction to Boris Johnson's 10 Point Plan to tackle climate change. Just Transition Wakefield has released the following statement about the government plan.

Boris Johnson's plan to tackle the climate crisis is too little, too late.

In itself, it is not a plan to start to tackle the urgency or immediacy of the climate emergency that we are facing, but a wish list of future technologies. Even within this wish list there are low carbon technologies. We are very clear that the time for low carbon technologies to act as a bridge to a zero carbon world was 30 years ago. There is no scientific justification for supporting anything other than genuinely zero carbon technologies. On this basis, we say "no new nuclear".

The Prime Minister raises hope for hydrogen as part of the solution, but is deliberately unclear about the source of this hydrogen. This sounds like a green light for continued fossil fuel dependency.

The PM's plan talks about new housing being free from gas boilers from 2023, which is to be welcomed. But it says too little about how to retrofit the existing building stock to allow everyone to live in warm, healthy, zero carbon homes.

Climate scientists are already raising the alarm that so-called "climate tipping points" have been reached decades earlier than predicted. Most recently, we have read reports that frozen methane deposits in the arctic sea floor are now melting, releasing vast quantities of methane into the sea, which will add to the mass of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, further accelerating runaway global heating. Boris Johnson's plan does not demonstrate the urgency, the need for immediate action, or actions at the scale required to tackle what is now an actual crisis.

The PM talks about 250,000 climate jobs, in comparison to the researched and existing million climate jobs plan supported by trade unions, politicians and green groups. This plan lacks ambition.

Equally, the 10 point plan does not even begin to talk about adaptation and climate resilience. Changing weather will have increasingly frequent visible effects – flooding, heatwaves, crop reductions. We have to ask what action the government proposes to prepare the nation for the changes that are already locked in through past inaction?

Spokesperson Stuart Boothman said "Yes, a weak plan is a better starting point than no plan at all, but still totally inadequate to respond to the seriousness of the situation. If central government will support local authorities to implement their own plans, we have the chance to make real progress through working locally."

Stuart explained “Wakefield, like other West Yorkshire local authorities, has a local plan to decarbonise by 2030. We all need the ability to act on and develop these local plans. There is still a deafening silence from central government on this.”

Stuart finished by saying “Some might say that we are the ‘usual suspects’ who would criticise. However, our response aligns with those from climate scientists. Time is too short to play party politics – we just need clear action.”

Ends

Notes to the Editor

1. Just Transition Wakefield is a collaborative group pushing for a Just Transition to a zero carbon economy across the Wakefield District.
2. Just Transition Wakefield started as a collaboration between Wakefield and District Trades Union Council and Wakefield Friends of the Earth, but membership includes a wide range of civic groups and individuals who all understand the need for urgent action on the climate crisis.
3. Kevin Anderson, a leading professor of energy and climate change, released the following statement on Twitter this morning (therefore in the public domain):

Five years on from the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement, and the UK Government's ten-point plan amounts to little more than a rhetorical flourish for which future generations will pay dearly. In the absence of a coordinated, quantitatively robust and timely strategy, its piecemeal proposals are very much part of the problem and not a thought through solution.

Certainly the increase in wind power is to be welcomed, but the planned 40GW by 2030 is equivalent to around 7% of the UK's current energy demand. Nuclear is another low carbon option, currently providing a little over 3% of the nation's energy consumption, yet the Government's proposal sees this barely increasing over the coming decade or so. There are warm words on hydrogen, with just a single town using it for heating by 2030. As for the UK's more than 25 million homes, the plan offers just pennies to retrofit these, scarcely scratching the huge scale of the challenge of making UK homes low carbon and climate resilient.

In reality the plan is simply a future technology wish list, with a dominant focus on energy supply. It fails to recognise the carbon budget imperative, that requires deep reductions year on year from now. There is no reference to tailoring policies towards the relatively few high emitters responsible for the lion's share of carbon emissions. Nor does it include a rapid phase out plan for the UK's own fossil fuel industry, or even a pledge for the Government to stop investing UK tax payers money in fossil fuel projects abroad.

4. Stuart can be contacted via email at sboothman@posteo.net, or by phone on 07736 718108