

# Climate Policy Dashboard Launch – Getting our house in order ahead of COP26

Event Write-Up

## Event Summary

The All-Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group (APPCCG), launched the newly-developed Climate Policy Dashboard at an event on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021. This Dashboard, developed by Policy Connect on behalf of the APPCCG, tracks the Government's progress in introducing policy to ensure the UK meets our future climate targets. The event was chaired by **Tom Heap**, Rural Affairs Correspondent at the BBC, and featured speakers **Caroline Lucas MP**, **Alexander Stafford MP**, **Daisy Cooper MP** and **Alan Whitehead MP**.

## Dashboard Launch

Neil Grant, COP26 Research Fellow at Policy Connect and PhD candidate at the Grantham Institute, Imperial College London, launched the Climate Policy Dashboard. He noted that the motivation for the Dashboard came from the delivery gap between the UK's current climate targets and the level of policy that we have in place to achieve these targets. Tracking Government progress in designing and implementing climate policy is therefore crucial, particularly in the run-up to COP26.

The Dashboard is **objective, multi-level, constructive** and **transparent**. The Dashboard uses around 100 independent policy recommendations from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to define good-practice in climate policy. Providing an in-depth analysis of each individual policy recommendation and aggregating this to provide an overall progress score for each sector, the Dashboard gives a multi-level perspective on policy development. The Dashboard provides constructive criticism and recommendations to the Government on how best to improve climate policy and, by publishing all workings and methodology, is a transparent assessment of progress.

Currently the Dashboard tracks progress in six sectors of the economy, which combined represented more than 90% of UK emissions in 2019. Government policy is most highly ranked in the power sector, which receives a 6/10 progress score, while the Government receives a score of 2/10, or critically insufficient, for its development of climate policy in the waste sector.

Neil provided an overview of some of the key findings of the Dashboard, which are summarised below:

### Manufacturing and construction

Progress in developing climate policy for manufacturing and construction is rated insufficient/on the way, with a score of 4/10. While the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy sets expectations around the pace and nature of industrial decarbonisation, it lacks detailed delivery plans in key areas such as funding for electrification and the rollout of hydrogen infrastructure, and is not supported by any new funding. Key actions on the road to world-leading industrial policy include expanding available funding and accelerating delivery timelines, providing policy to decarbonise off-road mobile machinery and drive hydrogen infrastructure rollout, and reforming climate change levies to reflect the carbon content of fuels appropriately.

### Agriculture and land use

Current policy to reduce emissions from agriculture and land use is not sufficient to get the UK on track with our climate targets, with a ranking of 4/10. The Agriculture Bill, legislated in 2020, contains positive elements such as the Environmental Land Management scheme and the Agricultural Transition Plan, but further progress is needed on protecting and restoring peatland, tree-planting and dietary change. *Policy Connect will provide an update very soon to the Dashboard, reflecting announcements made on the 18<sup>th</sup> May including the England [Tree](#) and [Peat](#) Action Plans.*

### Buildings

The Heat and Buildings Strategy, which sets out the Government's policy approach to reducing emissions from buildings, has yet to be released. It is essential that this strategy is released as soon as possible, and that it provides a clear direction for the sector, with ambitious targets on phasing out fossil fuels and improving energy efficiency, financial support for low-carbon technologies and fuels, and building the skills in the sector to deliver on the ground. The scrapping of the Green Homes Grant has damaged industry and consumer confidence and new and ambitious policy in this area is urgently needed.

## Waste

The Government's progress in supporting the waste sector to decarbonise is currently the worst performing on the Climate Policy Dashboard, ranked as critically insufficient with a score of 2/10. Of ten policy recommendations for the sector that have been assessed, none have been met in full, with four partially met, and six not met at all. To get waste sector policy on track to deliver net zero, it is essential that a range of key documents are released pre-COP26, and that they provide sufficient delivery mechanisms to get the UK on track to decarbonise the sector. These policy documents include the Environment Bill and Part 2 of the National Food Strategy and White Paper.

## Transport

In the transport sector, a range of key policy documents have yet to be released, including the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and the Rail/Aviation Decarbonisation Strategies. With international aviation and shipping included in the Sixth Carbon Budget, action to reduce emissions from aviation are a critical component of policy development. It is essential that the Transport Decarbonisation Plan is released prior to COP26, and that it contains the necessary ambition to put the sector on track for the UK's climate targets

## Power

Climate policy is strongest in the power sector, which receives a ranking of 6/10 on the Dashboard. The Government should build on their success in power sector decarbonisation by committing to phase-out unabated gas generation by 2035 at the latest and providing a detailed pathway to achieve this goal before COP26. The successful development of policy in the power sector must now be replicated across the board, to get our house in order before COP26.

Neil emphasised that **the Dashboard will be updated as the Government releases new policies** and the CCC provides new recommendations, and will continue to track Government progress in introducing policy to get the UK on track to meet its climate targets.

All speakers agreed that the Dashboard was an excellent tool that would help parliamentarians, campaigners and the wider public support and scrutinise the Government in developing climate policy. Tom Heap summarised the Dashboard as **"easy to use and available to all, providing excellent analysis on UK climate policy."**

## Panel Discussion

After the launch of the Climate Policy Dashboard, Tom Heap chaired a discussion between the four MPs, integrating questions from the audience. Some of the topics covered included:

### Government success and key actions needed

Panellists highlighted recent policy developments which they were particularly pleased with, such as including international aviation and shipping in the Sixth Carbon Budget, and the progress made in decarbonising the power sector, including the commitment to install 40GW of offshore wind by 2030. MPs were in agreement with the Dashboard that the power sector is where the Government has best developed climate policy.

At the same time, all MPs highlighted the need for the Government to go further in policy development, with a particular desire to see the Heat and Buildings Strategy, Hydrogen Strategy and the England Tree Strategy introduced rapidly and with sufficient ambition. Caroline Lucas and Alan Whitehead stressed the need to move beyond setting targets or communicating aspirations, but instead to focus on detailed delivery mechanisms which will see low-carbon infrastructure deployed at scale in the near-term. Alan Whitehead was concerned with recent policy developments such as the Ten Point Plan and Energy White Paper which he felt lacked sufficient detail or focus on delivery.

### **The need for cross-Governmental and cross-societal engagement**

There was widespread agreement on the need for the whole of Government, not just BEIS or DEFRA, to be on board with the net zero policy agenda if we are to make sufficient progress.

While some participants felt that the whole of Government had grasped the scale and the urgency of the climate crisis, others wanted to see more action from the Treasury in particular. Alexander Stafford argued that the Treasury is fully behind the net zero policy agenda, and that it was unfair to judge the Treasury on its actions in the past year, in which the priority was safeguarding the economy during the Covid-19 pandemic. He highlighted important signs of progress from the Treasury such as the introduction of green bonds in the latest budget.

MPs also discussed the public's willingness to engage with climate action. All MPs agreed on the need to maintain public support for climate action, if policy is to be successful. The Climate Assembly was used as an example of how, when the public are given sufficient information and time to deliberate, a strong mandate for ambitious climate action emerges. Some policy recommendations from the Climate Assembly, including a frequent flyers tax, were discussed at length by the MPs. Caroline Lucas and Daisy Cooper emphasised the importance of educating the public so that they have the necessary information to make low-carbon decisions and support low-carbon policies. They argued that current growth in high-carbon behaviours such as SUV sales could and should be counteracted by a public information campaign and actions from the Advertising Standards Authority to ensure that the public has appropriate information about low-carbon choices and policies.

A similar discussion occurred around the role of business. All MPs agreed that, as with the general public, it was essential to bring business along on the transition to net zero, and that this should be a consideration in designing and implementing climate policy. However, there was disagreement on exactly how this should influence policy. Alexander Stafford argued that the need to bring business along was a partial justification for the Government's current approach to policy development, with an emphasis on steady policy development informed by multiple consultations with the relevant sectors. However, other MPs suggested that business actually wants greater ambition from policy frameworks, and the needs of the business community should serve as a spur to accelerate the policy development process.

### **The Hydrogen Strategy**

Tom Heap asked Alexander Stafford to further explain his perspective on the role of hydrogen in reducing emissions. Alexander emphasised that green hydrogen (produced from renewable electricity) was the clear end-goal for any hydrogen strategy, but that in the near-term blue hydrogen (produced by natural gas, with the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted during hydrogen production captured and stored underground) could help create a hydrogen market as a bridging technology (over the next 5-10 years).

Alan Whitehead provided some further remarks – agreeing with Alexander that both blue and green hydrogen could play a role in the road to net-zero, but noting that recent government funding for hydrogen production was via the natural gas based route, and unless the accompanying carbon capture infrastructure was deployed very soon, the UK would end up producing 'grey' hydrogen, in which the CO<sub>2</sub> is not captured, and the emissions savings are zero. Alan argued that the UK should ensure this does not happen by prioritising CCS deployment to capture carbon emissions from any hydrogen produced via natural gas, and accelerating green hydrogen deployment, developing more Gigafactories to produce electrolyzers as already exists in the Midlands.

Caroline Lucas also suggested that we should think carefully about the appropriate use of hydrogen in the economy – arguing that hydrogen should be prioritised for sectors which are hard to decarbonise in other ways, such as steel and cement, while other sectors such as buildings could be dealt with predominantly by clean electricity and energy efficiency.

### **Tree planting and nature-based solutions**

Tom Heap asked Daisy Cooper to provide further detail on what she would like to see in the England Tree Strategy. Daisy argued that tree planting and peatland restoration would benefit from a strategic focus, much like the UK's current planning system, in which national targets are disaggregated to the local level and councils are required to build the requisite homes within certain policy parameters. Daisy argued for a zoned approach that requires local authorities to drive peatland restoration and tree planting, and also better integrates nature-based solutions into the existing planning system.

All the MPs agreed on the importance, and wider benefits of, nature-based solutions. Alan Whitehead highlighted that it is important not only to plant trees, but steward them and ensure their continued growth. He noted that the UK has some of the lowest tree coverage in all Europe, at around 13%. He argued that we should help return our forest coverage to around 20%, which would require approximately 2.4 billion new trees to be planted. Alan agreed with Daisy on the need for local authorities to be heavily involved in this process, to ensure that trees are planted in the right places and that there is long-term stewardship of these trees to ensure their long-term carbon benefit.

### **The buildings sector**

Tom Heap asked panellists for their perspectives on the construction of new homes, a priority area for the Government in the new parliamentary session. Daisy Cooper argued that it was essential to build more climate-ready and low-carbon homes, and that local councils should have power and resources devolved to them to enable this, again highlighting the role of local authorities in implementing climate policy.

Alan Whitehead noted that some of the best carbon savings have been made by regulating the building and maintenance of homes, such as the move from old boilers towards efficient condensing boilers. Alan argued that early regulation can shape the market direction and achieve significant gains in both carbon savings and quality of life. Daisy Cooper agreed – highlighting the benefits of well-insulated and well-built homes for occupant wellbeing.

### **Transport**

The session closed with a discussion of the Government's progress in introducing climate policy in the transport sector. Caroline Lucas called for the £27 billion road-building scheme to be scrapped. She also requested more policy detail on how we might drive a reduction in car usage and greater use of affordable, accessible public transport systems.

Alan Whitehead noted the need for joined up thinking around policies to encourage walking and cycling, with need for collaboration and coordination between central and local government. Both Alan Whitehead and Caroline Lucas agreed on the need for further action on public transport and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, so that people can make low-carbon transport decisions easily.

Take a look at the [Climate Policy Dashboard](#), and to learn more about the [APPCCG](#) and their work in the run-up to COP26.