

Tax to Save The Environment - and the risk that we will...

Published: January 13, 2026, 2:59 pm

I am bemused by the reaction to my suggestion that we might [tax to save the environment](#).

I think the need to tackle climate change is apparent by now.

But what amazes me is the lack of willing to accept that this might need taxes to change the way we organise our society.

As I argued in my book *The Joy of Tax*, tax is the strongest tool we have to shape the society that we live in. I believe that is true. In which case tax has to be used to shape the new world we have no choice but live in if we are to survive.

But there is a marked reluctance, even amongst commentators on this blog who tend to be open to new ideas, to think that this might be the case.

I cannot help but say that's depressing. It appears to be part of the whole paralysis that is afflicting us now. We know what we do not like - including tax. But we have no idea what we are willing to do to effect change.

We see this in politics. For example, Labour has no idea what to do on Brexit, and is fence-sitting as a result. The impartial are not enamoured as a consequence.

The Tories are torn asunder by differences on the same issue and are crippled as a result, and are haemorrhaging support.

The SNP can't decide on its intentions for a future Scottish currency, and are effectively postponing any decision, even though it is vital to their plans for independence.

All three major UK parties are then incapacitated by chronic indecision on key issues.

And in amongst this incapacity we need to address climate change: the biggest issue of our time. And the idea that we might use tax to change behaviour to assist the fundamental change that it demands of us and our society is apparently too much to

ask.

In the circumstances the chance that we will face a massive climate catastrophe does appear to be quite extraordinarily high.