

A climate emergency requires action to tackle it and no...

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The UK government joined those of Wales and Scotland in announcing a climate emergency yesterday. I could suggest that's better late than never, but however appropriate that might be it would be churlish of me: politicians always follow, and this time too late.

Of course, they might not have followed at all without Extinction Rebellion. The power of peaceful direct-action campaigning can now be considered proven. Expect a lot more of it.

I wish I could be so sure that anything else can be anticipated. It cannot be. Although the only logical reason for declaring an emergency is to provide the stimulus for the exceptional behaviour required in response to it, yesterday's announcement revealed no sense of urgency amongst either Conservative or Labour politicians.

The third runway at Heathrow was not cancelled.

Nor was fracking.

The decision to allow a new colliery in Cumbria was not over-turned.

North Sea oil is not staying underwater.

Subsidies to carbon based fuels were not withdrawn.

There was no plan for a Green New Deal.

There were just some lukewarm words.

It was if this emergency was akin to that announced when a household runs out of biscuits, but everyone is told that it's OK, because there's cake instead. Panic does not prevail. Tea is still taken. Life carries on pretty much as already planned. And the supposed crisis is forgotten.

Except this crisis is not going away. This one is for real. And this one really does demand action. And that nothing goes on as previously.

Over the last ten years I have written quite a lot on how to change the UK economy in a practical way to deal with this issue. From cancelling HS2 and substituting local transport schemes. To building zero carbon housing where it is needed. And converting every building to an insulated power station. To investing in flood protection. And the technology to make tidal power a viable source of energy. And the alternative forms of transport we will need, which might look nothing like existing cars. The list goes on: the opportunities are enormous.

And the funding for them is also available if any government is willing to believe in its own power to effect change.

But it appears our government and official opposition still lack that belief.

In which case campaigning has to go in, in all its various forms, to persuade them that their words should have some meaning attached to them. Before it is too late.