

Johnson's COP 26

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My Green New Deal colleague, Colin Hines, is rarely knocked down for long. We may not have a terribly green-friendly government but next November Glasgow hosts the international COP 26 climate summit. This is one of the big COP events (this year's in Madrid was not). As a result there will be considerable pressure on the UK, as host, to deliver and Johnson will need to decide what will give him greatest glory. Colin is not short of ideas in this blog, reposted with his permission, from [the Green Alliance website](#):

The environment movement needs to learn two lessons from the election result. First, that despite all the coverage of climate events and growing public clamour for something drastic to be done about it, 12 December was definitely not a 'climate election'. Rather, it was a return to two party politics fought around the issues of Brexit and Jeremy Corbyn's competence. Second, it is now clear that no ambitious political demands, like those called for at the climate talks in Madrid, will have any chance of success unless they are seen to be positive for the interests of the majority in rich countries.

For the COP26 meeting, to be held in Glasgow next November, the message is clear. Climate talks are unlikely to succeed if the discussions concentrate solely on what could be perceived as a rather preachy global justice narrative that the rich world must atone for its historical carbon sins by drastically curbing present lifestyles. Of course, this is a valid analysis, but it is unlikely to result in a shift in the attitude of politicians in more affluent countries, unless measures taken to tackle climate change are clearly seen to benefit the majority of the population in these countries.

Given the UK's new political reality, a crucial factor in terms of advancing the environmental agenda is to ensure that any proposed green programme will be seen to benefit, and hence gain political support from, the new Conservative constituencies in the Midlands and the North.

Luckily there is an issue that chimes with the new Conservative government's desire, as [expressed](#) by Boris Johnson outside number 10, to improve conditions for the

majority in left behind areas using infrastructure spending, whilst also tackling climate change.

Funding energy efficiency needs to become a central climate policy

This approach is one of making the UK's 30 million homes and other buildings energy efficient, whilst shifting energy supply to renewables. Indeed, the fact is that the most effective thing every household can do to help tackle the climate emergency is to reduce the carbon emissions from where they live. The crucial steps are to insulate buildings, provide as much of the energy used in them as possible from renewables, especially solar photovoltaics, shift from gas boilers to, for example, heat pumps, and improve the energy efficiency of the lighting and devices they use. That would make a huge difference to carbon emissions, reducing them by up to 40 per cent and, as a result, help to ensure people's children and grandchildren have a future that is less threatened by unstable global weather patterns and the adverse effects these cause. On a personal level, occupants of these buildings would save money and make their dwellings more comfortable, not to mention the positive effects on the local economy, in terms of new jobs, business and investment opportunities.

The government's present 2050 date for achieving net zero emissions patently lacks the urgency required and for that reason the Green New Deal group has proposed a ***'30 by 30' initiative to ensure that all our buildings are made energy efficient by 2030*** However, regardless of the end date, the clear imperative is for energy efficiency to stop being the Cinderella of energy policy and instead move to centre stage, since it benefits the majority in rich countries and can play a huge role in ensuring they dramatically curb their emissions.

To make all the UK's 30 million buildings energy tight will mean investing tens of billions annually over the coming years. This could be relatively easily achieved if the chancellor in next February's budget were to tweak existing tax rules to enable savers to 'save for the planet'.

At present, more than 80 per cent of UK personal wealth is invested in tax incentivised assets. For example, if the rules on ISAs were changed such that the £70 billion paid into ISAs each year were invested in green bonds, at a guaranteed interest rate of say 1.85 per cent (the current average cost of UK government borrowing). This huge sum could be directed to fund a national energy efficiency programme. Simple [changes to pension rules](#) could provide any additional funding required.

The secret to success at Glasgow 2020

Improving living conditions by making all homes and buildings energy efficient and, in the process, eventually reducing the UK's carbon emissions by up to 40 per cent, should be the target that Boris Johnson trumpets at the Glasgow climate talks as the host country's major contribution to addressing the climate emergency. Were the prime minister to convince our EU friends to ***commit to the same target for the continent's 300 million buildings, then Glasgow's success should be assured.***