

Why have the Tories given up on climate change?

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Climate change is the biggest challenge we have. It's bigger than. Any war we've ever fought. It's bigger than any political crisis we've ever had. That's because it's existential. Now, the Tories are in denial about it and are withdrawing their support from government policy on the issue. Why? What are they playing at?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7h5g-flQcU?si=zEvzfni7wmvFpn3Z>

This is the transcript:

Where did the climate consensus go?

Climate change is the biggest crisis that we face.

It is bigger than any war we've ever fought.

It's bigger than any political crisis that we've had.

This is existential.

We know that COP29 has not really delivered for the developed countries of the world.

We know that the UK government is not doing enough to deal with the problem in the UK and that puts it amongst most of the governments in the world.

We need to keep temperature change to 1.5 degrees and the likelihood that we will is now very low and diminishing rapidly. We are, therefore, facing a potential calamity as the rate of climate change increases, and the degree - the literal degree - by which temperature will rise on average is growing towards two per cent and maybe well

beyond.

You would have thought that this would be the point at which a political consensus would emerge in the UK and even be reinforced, but that is not the case. What seems very obvious is that Kemi Badenoch is, as the new leader of the Tories, wanting to deny that climate change is an issue, and is most certainly seeking to oppose anything that Labour is doing on it - inadequate as what Labour is doing is.

In other words, the climate consensus that we had in the UK, which was rather surprisingly created by Theresa May, when she put a net zero obligation into UK law at the end of her premiership, is breaking down. And it's breaking down deliberately.

It's not breaking down because there is no longer a consensus around climate change. In a sense, that's history. 95 per cent of people probably now accept that climate change is human-made and that we have the responsibility for addressing it. Certainly, climate science is settled, for all practical purposes, on that simple, straightforward fact. But politically, Kemi Badenoch is in denial of that science.

And she's in denial of that public opinion as well. That public opinion is particularly, of course, shared by younger people, and maybe not by those to whom she is seeking to appeal, the average over 70-year-old Tory voter and Tory party member. But, amongst everybody else, the concern is rising. So why is she in denial about climate change?

I wish I could answer that because I genuinely don't know.

I don't know why anybody is in denial about climate change when it is so very glaringly obviously happening.

The fact that we get flooding on a scale that we have not had not only in decades but for very much longer than that. is a very clear indication that something quite extraordinary is going on inside the world's environment.

Just the fact that we are seeing changing weather patterns, not just in the UK, but around the world, is further clear evidence of that.

That the severity of storms is growing is further evidence.

And the fact that, of course, there is a drought in much of the Middle East, and water is drying up, quite literally, is yet more evidence.

But the likes of Kemi Badenoch say this doesn't matter - we can transition to live with these arrangements. It is of no consequence that water levels are going to rise. We can manage that or whatever it might be and GDP will be very little affected. So, what are we worrying about?

This is all based upon some economics done a while ago by a chap called Nordhaus,

who won a Nobel Prize for claiming that, actually, the consequences of climate change weren't that significant when it came to GDP and, therefore, we really didn't need to worry. And as Steve Keen and very many others have shown, the work that Nordhaus did was absolutely and utterly wrong because he assumed that we could survive extreme climate change without any consequence for the quality of human life whatsoever, which is complete nonsense.

But the Tories are in denial about this. I genuinely worry about this fact because, for me, climate change has always, since I was really quite young - I think I was 13 when I first became aware of the issue, and we're therefore talking about 1971, for me - climate change has always been a matter of major concern.

The fact that we might destroy our chance to live on this planet was something that I worried about as a teenager, and I worry about just as much now.

Most of the young people I know also worry about it quite reasonably because the damage that my generation has caused will have consequences for them and will have to be dealt with by them if life on earth is to continue in the way that they would quite reasonably desire.

Now, that continuation is possible, but not without planning. And this is where the Tory position is something that I find so difficult to explain. If it is possible to manage climate change, and the science suggests that it still is, and that we could still end up with outcomes that are acceptable, why do the Tories not want to ignore that?

Is it that they want to condemn us to a future that is so unpalatable that none of us want to think about it?

Or is it that they are just plain straightforwardly ignorant about the possibility because they believe that everything comes down to the present and how much we can earn in it?

I come down to the unfortunate conclusion that they just think everything is about the present and making money.

They're wrong. It isn't. And the climate change consensus that we had, imperfect as it was, is something that has to be restored.

If Kemi Badenoch does not do that, I think her time as Tory leader is going to be limited. She has to understand that the people of this country are worried about climate change, and if she doesn't, she'll have to go.