the new politics
of climate change

why we are failing and how
we will succeed

green
alliance...

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by Stephen Hale

The Baring Foundation

about the author

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about Green Alliance

Green Alliance is one of the UK's most influential environmental organisations. Its aim is to make environmental solutions a priority in British politics.

Green Alliance works closely with many of the UK's leading environmental organisations, and with others in the third sector. We are currently working with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations to pilot new ways to engage new voluntary sector groups on climate change, and with Help the Aged on older people and the environment. More initiatives of this kind are planned. We have also established the Greenwave programme to provide a forum for third sector discussions on how to accelerate political action on climate change. See www.green-wave.co.uk.

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1 beyond the blame game

'If we are to achieve results never before accomplished, we must expect to employ methods never before attempted.'
Francis Bacon, philosopher, 1561 – 1626

Soon after I left my role as an adviser to the UK government, I was interrupted whilst speaking publicly on the need for new climate change policies. "If you advocated these things in government for four years", he said, "how come none of them happened?" It is a question that deserves a substantive answer.

I have made the case for action on climate change in government, the voluntary sector and in business over the past ten years. It has been a fascinating but often dispiriting experience. We must do far better in the next ten years.

Time is not on our side. Climate change poses a profound threat to the well-being of our planet and of humankind. If we fail to act in the next decade, it will have catastrophic economic and social consequences. These were most recently summarised in the 2007 fourth assessment report of the inter-governmental panel on climate change (IPCC), and will be all too familiar to most readers.[1]

"in the eyes of many, climate change is still characterised as a second tier 'environmental' issue"

Despite a sometimes bewildering array of policies and initiatives, the global response to the scientific evidence so far has been wholly inadequate. Global emissions rose by 25 per cent between 1990 and 2004. The rate of increase has been even higher in some developed countries.[2] Even in countries such as the UK where there is relatively high awareness of what is at stake, progress has been limited. UK greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 16.4 per cent between 1990 and 2007, according to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) calculations.[3] But when aviation and shipping are taken into account, along with other consumption related emissions, these calculations reveal a 19 per cent increase in emissions.[4]

There has been a welcome increase in public and political concern in many countries, since Tony Blair made climate change a central focus of the G8 meeting in 2005. But in the eyes of many people and their governments, climate change is still characterised as a second tier 'environmental' issue, of far less concern that core economic, social and security priorities. This view is profoundly mistaken.

There is currently very little prospect of action at the necessary scale and speed. The IPCC found that we need to stabilise greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere at 350-450 parts per million to give ourselves a high probability of limiting average global temperature rise to 2–2.4 degrees. This will require global emissions to peak by 2015.[5] To achieve this, we will need to make emissions cuts in the UK and other developed countries of 25–40 per cent by 2020. The national average of 4.25 tonnes of carbon emissions per person will have to fall to 3.19–2.55 tonnes per person by 2020, and to as little as 0.85 tonnes per person by 2050.[6] Yet the most recent IPCC projections predict an increase in global emissions of 25–90 per cent between 2000 and 2030.[7]

So it's high time that we got serious about understanding why we are failing, and how we can succeed.

Now, more than ever, we need new approaches that will succeed. The growing momentum of recent years halted in 2008. Climate change slipped down the political agenda, pushed back above all by the

recession that began in the US and has spread to the UK and to many other countries. Politicians are increasingly preoccupied with improving public confidence and economic performance in the short-term, as their electorates begin to feel the considerable squeeze of the credit crunch, rising resource prices, and the resulting economic recession.

That response, if sustained, will be wholly self-defeating. Our failure to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels has made a significant contribution to our current economic difficulties. There is no long-term route out of recession unless we build a low-carbon economy.

The current debate on why we are failing is essentially about allocating blame. Pressure groups blame politicians for not providing leadership and failing to introduce the policies needed to reduce emissions. Politicians justify their inaction by citing the lack of public support for those policies. In the margins of this often bitter exchange, most businesses quietly bemoan the inadequacy of both to justify their timidity.

This debate exposes two very different views of where responsibility lies for action on climate change. The first places responsibility firmly with our political leaders. It has much to commend it. The power to avert runaway climate change is held first and foremost by governments. This is a collective problem that will only be solved with decisive action by states, of which the Stern review on the economics of climate change is the definitive statement thus far.[8] Only governments have the power to tax, regulate and incentivise businesses and individuals to act.

This is a view to which I have long subscribed. I have not changed my mind. Politicians have considerably more power than they choose to acknowledge. But, as outlined in chapter two, I know from my own experience that there are deep structural reasons why governments do not deliver.

The alternative view is that individuals are primarily responsible for climate change. Many, though not all of us, have considerable freedom and power to reduce our carbon footprint. Some of this is easy to do.

But the scale of emissions cuts required means that other actions will involve significant lifestyle changes. Political action to promote them will be unsustainable if we are not ready to embrace them, at least in democratic societies. So climate change is very much an issue of personal responsibility too.

But it is high time we moved beyond this blame game. Political and public action are deeply interconnected. Just as governments influence personal action, there are also many ways in which the public exerts influence over political action. The most critical role for individuals is not their behavioural choices, but their ability to influence governments through political mobilisation, public attitudes and behaviour. We cannot transform energy markets or our transport infrastructure. But we can persuade our leaders to do so, and shift social attitudes and behaviours so that their actions are supported and sustainable.

This is not something individuals can do alone. It is something that we can all do together. People are neither willing nor able to take decisive action alone on an issue of this scale and complexity. But they will very often do so if they have opportunities to act in concert with others. We need to create many more opportunities for people to do so.

To achieve this, we must establish a widespread understanding of the connections between climate change and issues of poverty, housing, health, security and well-being that are of concern to so many. Climate change currently looks likely to roll back the progress that has been made in all these areas. It is profoundly in the interests of those concerned with these issues to offer their particular contributions to the struggle against climate change. This is not just an environmental issue. Yet the environmental community has, until recently, been responsible for almost all of the effort to raise awareness and influence governments on climate change.

> "the most critical role for individuals is their ability to influence governments through political mobilisation"

We will only succeed if we establish awareness throughout the voluntary sector of the links between climate change and a myriad of social and economic issues. We must mobilise the full power and influence of those outside government to drive political action and public behaviour. The rapid growth of action by faith and development groups, trade unions, and community initiatives, such as transition towns, are evidence that this is beginning to happen. But far more is needed.

The third sector holds the key to this. It spans community groups, national and international membership organisations, volunteers, trade unions, faith communities, social enterprises and co-operatives.

The surge of leadership we need to create a new politics of climate change can only come from here. These groups provide opportunities for individuals to act at community, regional, national and international level. They can create the demand for political action, and ensure that this is supported and reinforced by social change. The third sector has a historic opportunity, and responsibility, to mobilise on climate change.

This pamphlet outlines a new model of third sector leadership, and four areas in which third sector action could persuade our politicians to take action on the scale we need. It sketches a pathway to a low-carbon society. We urgently need one.

2 why don't governments deliver?

Why have governments been so slow to act on climate change? Privately, politicians cite limited public support as the primary reason for their cautious approach. There is something in this, as we explore in chapter three.

But politicians can and do seek to lead public opinion as well as follow it. Margaret Thatcher's privatisation programme, George Bush's war in Iraq, and Gordon Brown quadrupling UK spending on international development by 2010[9] are familiar examples of this. In each case, determined political leadership profoundly changed the course of events, for better or worse.

Our political leaders have not taken dramatic action of this kind on climate change. Their timidity has deep-rooted causes. This chapter outlines five systemic reasons why political leadership has so rarely been forthcoming on climate change.

"Pollute now: others pay later"

Imagine a world in which those who cause climate change suffered the consequences. Imagine how we and our leaders would behave if the families and countries emitting most greenhouse gases suffered and often died from droughts, food shortages, flooding and other extreme weather events.

The incentive to avert climate change in that world would be powerful, immediate and direct, and the zero carbon economy would be a virtually unremarked reality. But it is not part of the world we live in today, because these devastating effects will be experienced by people in the future and often in other parts of the world.

The very nature of climate change makes it a particularly difficult problem for politicians and the public to address. The costs and benefits of climate change are unfairly distributed, both in time and between countries.

The clash of timescales is only too evident. The climate cycle includes a 30–40 year time-lag between our emissions today and their negative impacts. The electoral cycle in almost all developed countries is four to five years, and the gap between one election and preparations for the next grows ever shorter. Political strategy and action is shaped by short horizons, and is a powerful disincentive to long-term strategy and leadership. Expensive and disruptive investments now are vital, but no politician will be able to point to practical results in their own term of office. The result is an abundance of long-term targets, without the policies to deliver them.

The boundary issue is equally serious. Climate change is a global problem with highly unequal geographical impacts that bear no relation to our political boundaries. Indeed, the impacts of climate change will be worst in places already associated in the public mind with instability, poverty and natural disasters.

> "political strategy and action is shaped by short horizons, and is a powerful disincentive to long-term strategy and leadership"

This separation between the polluter and those who suffer from that pollution makes it far easier for those who benefit from the status quo, and have a strong vested interest in an ineffective response, to slow our collective response. These characteristics are more easily addressed in times of plenty, but make action less likely in times of economic difficulty, like the recession we are now entering.

Our democratic culture inhibits political leadership

Politicians can only lead us successfully if we are inclined to follow them. Democracies dramatically improve the prospects for progressive leadership. But the current relationships between politicians and their electorates makes leadership much more difficult than it has been in the past.

We have become highly suspicious of our politicians, and inclined to distrust their motives. Professionals, religious leaders, business leaders and 'ordinary people' are all more trusted sources of information and advice. Only journalists now have (marginally) lower levels of public trust.[10] There are some good reasons for distrusting the political class. But we have moved from a healthy scepticism to an atmosphere of cynicism and distrust that inhibits political action.

This is a constraint on leadership in all areas. But climate change is particularly difficult, because of the unequal distribution of costs and benefits already described. The public are suspicious of many climate-related policy initiatives, seeing them as driven by dubious motives.[11] The public's instinctive reaction is often one of opposition, as evidenced by the huge response to a petition against the prospect of road-user charging, posted by a member of the public on the government's e-petition website.[12]

Geoff Mulgan has highlighted four conditions needed for societies to benefit from a positive use of political power over a sustained period; an active civil society; a favourable world order; ethical leaders; and a culture of learning within government.[13]

There are exceptions to this. Political leadership on the environment has, on occasion, been shown by leaders in relatively weak positions. The high point of US presidential leadership on the environment was by President Nixon in 1969-70, at a time when he was under immense pressure on other fronts and a strong environmental programme provided some much-needed legitimacy for his presidency.[14] The tragedy of war in Iraq probably contributed to Tony Blair's decision to make climate change and development his twin priorities for the G8 in

2005, which triggered a new urgency in global political debate on climate change.

Limited power of national governments

The constraints on the actions of national governments, and the growing power of transnational businesses, are a well-rehearsed feature of the global economy. This shift has been underway for several decades, though there is intense dispute over the extent of this and whether it has been imposed or fostered by governments who favoured smaller states. These constraints are nevertheless real, and an important factor in explaining the timid response by governments to climate change.

They arise in two main ways. First, global businesses have the power to cut the lifelines of national politics and society: jobs and taxes. Although there are remarkably few proven cases of companies relocating in response to new regulation, the perceived threat of this action and the desire to attract potential new investors, encourages states to develop policy frameworks attractive to international investors.

The second over-riding constraint on national government is the threat of losing the confidence of international markets. In both the short and long-term, a loss of market confidence in even a major economy can have crippling economic consequences. Countries in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere have discovered this to their cost. Market confidence is also critical to larger developed economies, as the US, UK and many other countries have rediscovered recently.

These factors make governments more wary of new taxes and regulations, two critical policy tools for tackling climate change. Individual states cannot fully counter these trends. But they can regain much of their power and freedom of movement through well-designed strategies.

One way in which they already do so is to develop goals and policies in co-operation with other member states. The European Union (EU) is by far the most successful example of this strategy, and has made it possible to raise standards across the EU in the environment and in

other fields. It has enabled improvements in air, water and beach quality and a shift in waste management practices away from landfill.

On climate change, the EU has taken action in transport, energy and housing. But there is a long way to go. The EU currently has no strategy to reach the target of minus 25–40 per cent emissions by 2020 to which it is rhetorically committed, and which it champions internationally. One reason for this is the widespread perception that further European action will be economically damaging in the absence of significant shifts by other countries, evidence that even regional action is constrained by the global economy.

Ideological handcuffs

The fourth reason is, uniquely, self-imposed. It arises from the increasingly widespread ideological hostility in mainstream politics to increased state intervention in business (and to some extent also individual behaviour). Tackling the climate imperative will require more active government, not less. All parties wishing to tackle climate change effectively will need to reconcile their ideological instincts with the need for decisive state intervention to reshape markets to deliver environmental outcomes.

This reluctance to intervene has grown steadily in recent years, driven by a shift towards a model of the 'enabling' state on both the left and right of the political spectrum. It reduces the willingness of governments to use their powers to drive change in relation to many social goals.

In relation to climate change, this is particularly important when it comes to regulation. Its role in climate change policy is consistently underplayed, whilst the contribution of emissions trading is frequently over-stated. Emissions trading is an important market instrument. But it will not drive investment decisions at the speed needed.[15] But assiduous lobbying has served to distort this picture in recent years.

This has led to the creation of institutional barriers to limit and indeed to reverse the flow of new regulation. These have been introduced at the national level in the UK and elsewhere, but most alarmingly also at the European level where regulation can overcome many of the constraints discussed above.

The result has been some bizarrely inadequate policy initiatives. The European voluntary agreement on emissions from vehicles is a classic case in point. It contained no effective incentives for a powerful and competitive industrial sector, and its spectacular failure was predicted by anyone without a strong vested interest or an ideological antipathy to regulation. An enforceable EU mechanism is now finally being developed, despite sustained attempts to weaken the final agreement. It is one example of the powerful tensions within President Barrosso's European Commission between their concern for climate change, and their reluctance to use regulation to tackle it.

This is not simply an issue of left or right. Both have been consistently reluctant to introduce regulatory measures that would be socially beneficial and cost-effective. But there are specific challenges unique to left and right. In the UK, New Labour has been consistently sympathetic to aggressive lobbying by the CBI and others. The issues for the right are more profound and wide-ranging, given their traditional scepticism of state action.

There have been some welcome recent developments in the debate on regulation. An increasing number of corporate voices are speaking up for it, including a range of international businesses making these arguments through the Aldersgate group and, to a lesser extent, through the Corporate Leaders Group.[16]

> "tackling the climate imperative will require more active government, not less"

But the economic downturn is in many ways a threat to those supportive of greater regulation to tackle climate change. The painful lessons being learnt by many economies about the inadequacy of their financial regulation look certain to lead to tighter regulatory oversight

of that sector. But it is by no means certain that this lesson will be applied elsewhere. The economic downturn may well open the door in many areas to lobbyists seeking to minimise the burdens on business arising from both existing and potential new regulations.

Weak global and national institutions and processes

Finally, we have a design problem. Neither our global diplomatic structures nor our domestic political processes are adequate to the task of designing and implementing an effective response to climate change.

We have no precedent or similar process on which to draw. The international community has never agreed and implemented pre-emptive action on the scale demanded by climate change. Climate change demands a transformation in the energy systems that are the engine of the global economy and the fuel for the world's most powerful economies. Our diplomatic processes and institutions are not designed to bear this responsibility. The UN negotiating process that eventually yielded the Kyoto Protocol currently lacks the power to deliver a new agreement of the scale needed. UN meetings are attended by environment ministers who often have very little power in their own governments and no mandate to agree on the changes needed.

"neither our global diplomatic structures nor our domestic political processes are adequate to the task of designing and implementing an effective response to climate change"

The absence of effective structures makes it infinitely more difficult to overcome the global logjam that has long characterised climate change politics. The global response to climate change should be agreed through the United Nations. But we need fora and processes that are far more dynamic and fit for purpose than those of the UN framework convention on climate change (UNFCCC). We also need much stronger institutions, to oversee the implementation of an agreement that must reorient global investment flows.

These problems are mirrored at national level. Climate change demands a long-term and co-ordinated response, across the boundaries of government and between different sectors in society. Yet recognition of the problem leads to a highly complex set of scenarios and choices. There are many routes to a low-carbon economy, all of which are politically problematic. How should the state, business and individual share their responsibilities? What should the balance of effort be between energy, transport, and housing? Should industrial sectors exposed to international competition do less? Should we allocate our limited carbon budget to aviation, if we cannot find ways to fly without emitting carbon?

For all the declarations from politicians of the need for 'big conversations' and national debates, we have no effective means to address and resolve these questions. We will need new mechanisms to make these and other choices.

Conclusion

These five constraints make it all too clear why governments have struggled to respond effectively to the threat of climate change, even before the role of public attitudes and action are considered. They have deep roots in our political systems, and in the nature of climate change itself.

They are also symptomatic of a wider malaise. The growth of the global economy has not been matched by structures or power relations that enable democratic control over global issues. As a result, we struggle to contain a variety of other pressing global problems, including global poverty and deforestation.

Public debate on government action to tackle climate change focuses on the competing claims of the political parties. All parties claim, of course, that their values and ideology are best placed to deliver. But the constraints explored in this chapter apply in almost equal measure to parties of left and right. This will not be easily resolved by governments of whatever colour.

3 the prospects for change

Politicians, businesses and the public each look to one another for the leadership needed to break out of the current impasse in our collective response to climate change. The dysfunctional inter-relationships between these three groups are summarised below.

figure 1: "I will, once you have"[17]
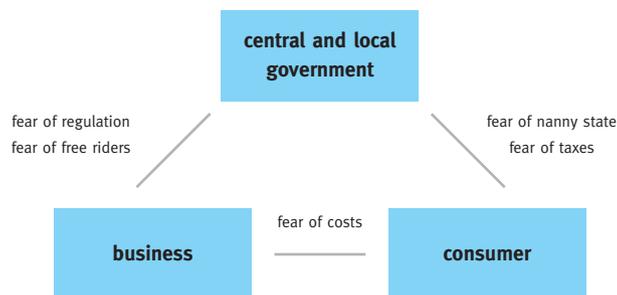
This chapter considers where the leadership needed to break this catch-22 is likely to come from, and the current prospects for change.

The scale of the obstacles to political action identified in chapter two make it highly unlikely that a dramatic shift in the approach of government will be led, unprompted, by the current generation of political leaders.

So could the key protagonists be persuaded to move together? David Miliband and Ed Mayo have both made the case for an environmental contract between government and society, in which an explicit commitment is made by both parties to act.[18] There has been no attempt yet to develop an overall contract of this kind.

The 'We will if you will' initiative is the most significant attempt yet to do so in a particular area. It is intriguing and ground-breaking in its aims to secure mutually reinforcing action by government, businesses and voluntary sector groups. Green Alliance is an active partner in the work, and we are hopeful that it will succeed in shifting the actions of all three players on the policies and behaviours on which it is focused.

But the difficult relationship between our political leaders and citizens outlined in chapter two makes it hard to imagine that a wide-ranging agreement to act could be either negotiated or delivered in the medium to long term.

Business breakthrough?

Committed leadership from the private sector could break the current impasse. Businesses are a critical source of non-state power and influence, as highlighted in chapter two. Leadership by a significant breakaway group of corporate leaders could have a dramatic effect on the politics of climate change, and secure the policies needed to incentivise low-carbon investments in energy, transport and elsewhere.

The global business community has until quite recently been overwhelmingly oppositionalist on climate change. For over a decade, the Global Climate Coalition opposed governmental action on climate change, and claimed to represent six million companies. BP was first to publicly break ranks with the coalition in 1997.[19]

Ten years on, the situation is very different. The private sector now overwhelmingly accepts the science and urgency of climate change. But it has been primarily pressure from below that has driven this repositioning, and created new market opportunities to respond to public concern about climate change.

Critically, businesses continue to play a primarily defensive role in government action. They approach government policy overwhelmingly from the perspective of short-term self-interest, not the longer-term public interest. There would be many winners from a low-carbon global economy, and all businesses with long-term investment cycles have a powerful interest in a successful transition.[20] But it is those who might lose out in the short-term that remain the dominant voices in the political process. A large and powerful set of companies benefit from the status quo, and have a vested interest in slowing change.

There are some signs of change in this position. The investment and insurance industries have been prominent in this shift. The Corporate Leaders Group in the UK have been an influential advocate of progressive policy positions, and a range of business coalitions supported specific government action at the most recent global climate change talks.[21]

However, these statements rarely have significant direct impacts on the businesses involved. The call in 2006 by the Corporate Leaders group for an ambitious cap in phase two of the emissions trading scheme, for instance, did not contain a single company covered by the scheme.[22]

There are exceptions to this. Green Alliance works with a number of such companies. But consistent support for government intervention by companies or trade associations is still rare, at both the national and international level. This is particularly disappointing in Europe, where there is far less risk of the potential competitive effects that loom so large in discussions at national level.

"a large and powerful set of companies benefit from the status quo, and have a vested interest in slowing change"

Businesses respond above all to market signals. Further shifts in public attitudes are needed to create new market pressures and opportunities for corporate action. The business community has historically always been a passive recipient or an active opponent of progressive social change. Climate change appears to be no different.

Public leadership?

The one remaining hope then, appears to be public concern and action. The importance of individual behaviour is a major theme of the public debate on climate change. But this is just one element of the ability of individuals to influence action on climate change. The public will is expressed in three ways; through behaviour, attitudes and political mobilisation. The remainder of this chapter assesses how close we are to driving change through public concern and action.

Behaviour: what do we do?

The carbon footprint of each of us depends primarily on the homes we live in, our travel, the food we eat and the holidays we take.[23] There is no need here to provide a detailed analysis of public behaviour. But the headlines are important.

The vast majority of us claim pro-environmental behaviour when asked. Defra's annual survey of public attitudes includes consistently high claimed behaviours, in particular on recycling, food waste and energy efficiency. But the prevalence of these behaviours is much less widespread in practice.[24] The same is true of purchasing. Household expenditure on ethical goods and services has almost doubled in the past five years. On average, every household in the UK spent £664 in line with their ethical values in 2006. However, whilst the overall ethical market in the UK is now worth £32.3 billion a year, it is still a small proportion of total annual household consumer spend of more than £600 billion.[25]

There is a core group of concerned citizens, for whom climate change and other 'environmental' concerns are a significant influence on their political preferences and personal behaviour. This group has grown steadily over time. But even among this group, there are some deep contradictions in behaviour. Many opt for totemic but easy 'climate friendly' options, whilst refusing to confront our most damaging preferences and behaviours. The most environmentally committed one

per cent of the UK population, as defined by their behaviour, fly more on average than the other 99 per cent.[26]

Why is public action so limited? Individuals do not respond 'rationally' to the price signals and information they receive. Our consistent failure to take up cost-effective energy efficiency measures in our homes is a classic example of this.

Limited public concern is one factor. But the link between attitudes and behaviour is in truth a weak one.[27] There are many more deep-rooted constraints on individual behaviour. The critical issue here is the collective nature of our behaviour. Individuals are reluctant to act alone, and only too aware that their individual actions will make a minimal impact on large and complex problems. Our actions are deeply embedded in the wider environment, and in the habits and culture and social norms of those around us. They are determined by factors including the search for status, emotions, habits and dominant cultural and social norms. If we are to change, we will do so together.

Attitudes: what do we think?

There is remarkably little comparable global evidence on public attitudes to climate change. Recent Globescan surveys provide the most useful data on recent trends, and make encouraging reading. They show consistently high public concern across all countries, rising slowly in recent years. The number of people describing climate change as "very serious" rose from 49 to 61 per cent in 2003 to 2006. These figures were consistently high across countries. By 2006, 90 per cent or more of those questioned in 19 out of 30 countries agreed that climate change was "serious".[28]

There is apparently strong support for action by government too. Sixty five per cent of people polled globally in 2007 agreed that it is "necessary to take major steps very soon". Interestingly, Britain and Germany, the two countries perceived to be most active in pushing for international action recorded relatively low scores by comparison to others, at 8th and 16th highest respectively.[29] But other UK polling confirms that the public support more action by government to tackle climate change, at least in principle.[30]

However, the picture is much less rosy when the discussion becomes more specific. Public support can only be meaningfully assessed in relation to specific policy options, and here there is far less support. The UK is typical. There is much less overt support for legislation such as environmental taxes, with suspicion of how the money will be used and the motive for action.[31] There is also strong resistance to a range of specific policies, such as the prospect of road-user charging.[32]

Some of this can be overcome by careful policy design and communication. But we will need far greater public support for specific actions if our leaders are to spend, tax and regulate our economies onto a low-carbon path. As on behaviour, people are more likely to change attitudes if they see others around them doing so. We need new approaches that trigger collective shifts in public consciousness and support for action.

What do we ask politicians to do?

Political mobilisation is the most critical of the three dimensions of individual action. The emergence of climate change as a national and international issue is in large part the result of the determination and skill of environmental campaigners. Their efforts have yielded many successes. But there is not yet the sustained pressure on politicians, of the scale and breadth needed, in any country. In many European countries, public pressure to tackle climate change is minimal.

> "we need new approaches that trigger collective shifts in public consciousness and support for action"

The UK has one of the more active and visible movements on climate change, with organised NGOs and grassroots movements. The recent Friends of the Earth campaign for the climate change bill in the UK was the largest public mobilisation in recent times. Almost 130,000 people asked their MP to support the bill.[33] However they were expressing support for a framework, rather than specific actions by government.

Even in the UK, public mobilisation on climate change remains the preserve of a small group, characterised primarily by their concern for the environment. Critically, the past three years have seen the first significant mobilisation of 'non-environmental' publics. These include community protests at the proposed sites of new runways, campaigns by development groups including Christian Aid, Oxfam and the World Development Movement, the involvement of some trade unions, and a burst of activity at community level with the emergence of grassroots movements such as carbon rationing action groups and transition towns.[34]

There is however no global movement pushing for action on this most pressing of global issues. There are two emerging international campaigns, in addition to the established international environmental groups. The first is led by Al Gore, and has no real roots in civil society.[35] The second is the global campaigning website Avaaz, www.avaaz.org, which has grown at incredible speed since it was established. Four hundred thousand people participated in their e-petitions during the UN negotiations on climate change in December 2007.[36] The case for a global movement on climate change is considered in chapter five.

Conclusion

The impasse between government, business and individuals must, somehow, be broken. Governments and businesses are very unlikely to make the difference, given the constraints of the democratic and market frameworks in which they operate. There is considerably more room for action than our political leaders acknowledge. But we are currently a long way from driving this change through public concern and action.

If we are to do so, we must understand the kind of public intervention that will make a difference.

"the critical issue is not simply our behaviour, but the impact of our activism, behaviour and attitudes on political action"

There is a growing tendency to portray climate change as an issue of personal responsibility. This is consistent with a wider trend. A focus on the power and responsibility of individuals for tackling social problems has been perhaps the most prominent theme in intellectual and political thinking on both left and right in recent years.[37] It has been applied to deep-rooted social problems from health and obesity to poverty and unemployment, and now to climate change.[38]

But this is not simply about our behaviour. While individual action does matter, there are significant limits on our ability to determine our personal carbon footprint. It is governments that determine the carbon intensity of the energy we use in our homes, the price and availability of different modes of transport and the relative price and carbon intensity of the goods and services that we buy. If the British government permits a new generation of unabated coal-fired power plants, it will be impossible to secure a low-carbon energy future through individual commitment to renewable energy. If the British government does not regulate the carbon intensity of new products, consumers will not be able to make choices that reduce their personal footprints.

So the critical issue is not simply our behaviour, but the impact of our activism, behaviour and attitudes on political action. The political effect of this action depends not simply on the numbers of people involved, but on who these people are and their political influence. In the UK, the attitudes of floating voters in marginal constituencies are of greatest concern to the parties.

The type of individual action that will lead to political action varies from issue to issue. In cases such as aviation, our behaviour is itself politically significant. If we fly less, we weaken the case for new runways. In other cases, our attitudes are critical. The recent rise in oil and energy prices could create a backlash against environmental policies that push up prices in the short-term. On issues such as the threat of unabated coal-fired power, the scale and breadth of public mobilisation will be critical.

It is time to identify new approaches that will persuade our leaders to take the action that we so urgently need.

4 third sector leadership: the key to success

"It's amazing what you can accomplish, if you don't care who gets the credit."

Harry Truman[39]

The level of demand for political action will be the critical factor in determining whether we can avert catastrophic climate change. We must persuade our leaders to act, and also ensure that the social foundations are in place to sustain that action.

Chapter three demonstrated that individuals are not currently consistently willing and/or able to take personal action, in either their behaviour or support for political action.

However, there is extensive evidence that they are willing to do so when they are part of a physical or virtual community or network that allows them to take action with others. Tim Jackson is worth quoting, from his work on motivating sustainable consumption:

"A key lesson from this review is the importance of community-based social change. Individual behaviours are shaped and constrained by social norms and expectations. Negotiating change is best pursued at the level of groups and communities. Social support is particularly vital in breaking habits and in devising new social norms."[40]

There is considerable real world evidence of this. Global Action Plan have accumulated a large evidence base from their eco-teams and related initiatives.[41] The success of the transition towns movement, which uses a social-psychological model of change through mutually supportive groups and networks, is further proof.[42] A variety of polling evidence points to a similar conclusion, as captured in recent publications by both Ipsos-Mori and the Henley Centre.[43]

This is a critically important insight. Individual action on the scale necessary will only emerge through collective decisions in the networks and communities with which people have strong personal affiliations, and which can give them both the motive and opportunity to act.

We have failed to fully utilise this critical insight in much of the work carried out by both government and the third sector to encourage behaviour change and political action. This evidence is increasingly recognised, perhaps most notably in *I will if you will*, the sustainable consumption round table report commissioned by Defra.[44] But we have too often sought to influence individual action without fostering the networks that will enable a collective shift in attitude or action.

We will only succeed in this if we tap into a broad range of motives for action. The environment has been the motivating concern for much public action on climate change to date. But this is not just an environmental issue. To succeed, we must establish a widespread understanding of the connections between climate change and issues of poverty, housing, health, security and well-being that are of concern to so many.

The prospect of lasting progress in these and many other areas depends to a great extent on whether and how we tackle climate change. It is profoundly in the interests of those concerned with these issues to offer their particular contributions to the struggle against climate change.

The particular connections between climate change and the concerns of different groups in the third sector are considered in chapter five. These apply to the interests of many national voluntary organisations, local community groups, trade unions and co-operatives and faith communities. They could become a powerful motivation for action.

The third sector is the most widely used term that includes all these groups.[45] The diversity and scale of the sector is breathtaking, with a total income of £108.9 billion in 2005-06.[46]

This chapter therefore considers the scale and nature of current approaches to climate change in the third sector, and the appropriate model for future activity. The third sector holds the key to mobilising public concern, behaviour and political mobilisation, and to success in the struggle against climate change. It can, and in some instances already does, provide the inspiration and opportunity for collective action at all levels, within and across a myriad of different public interests.

Today's model: environmental advocacy

Third sector activity on climate change has, until very recently, been overwhelmingly undertaken by environmental groups.[47]

The modern environmental movement has many achievements to be proud of. In just forty years it has grown with astonishing speed and achieved remarkable shifts in public awareness and action by governments and businesses on a host of issues.[48]

"the third sector holds the key to mobilising public concern, behaviour and political mobilisation, and to success in the struggle against climate change"

But, most importantly, it has played an influential role in making climate change a first order issue of public and political concern. At the international level, the activities of environmental groups were a critical influence during negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol. Here in the UK, it has been critical in raising public awareness and concern, and in stimulating a host of specific governmental actions, from the climate change bill to the renewable energy obligation. The list is too long to recite here.

However, the approach that has secured these initial successes is no longer fit for the challenges we face. It contains the two primary causes of our current failure.

First, our past successes have often been achieved by using arguments that appeal primarily to our core environmental audiences. This has shifted considerably in recent years, and there is a much stronger focus on the economic and social benefits of the low-carbon economy. We urgently need to accelerate this shift, and to employ new arguments that emphasise the breadth of issues impacted by climate change and build much broader coalitions of support.

My own experience in government brought home the importance of this. I was frequently on the receiving end of lobbying by environmental groups with which I sympathised greatly, but where I knew that there was far greater power being brought to bear in the opposite direction, and that the desired action was also counter to the prevailing ideological view in government. The decision in 2005 not to tax the energy companies for their windfall gains in the emissions trading scheme (which Labour came to regret in 2008) was a classic example of this. A low-level and narrowly based campaign was bound to fail in the face of such obstacles.

Second, our successes to date have been achieved by focusing overwhelmingly on influencing government. We have primarily mobilised (environmental) opinion and activists to persuade governments to act without building the public support and social foundations that are needed to succeed in the long term. Our advocacy objectives in international aviation and domestic transport, for instance, would both be far more achievable if they were supported by physical and virtual communities practising low-carbon lifestyles, trading domestic carbon quotas and spreading awareness of the benefits of energy efficient houses and holidays in the UK. The organic movement, by contrast, is more influential as a result of the existence of their committed and active supporter base, as represented by the Soil Association.

The advocacy model has delivered some important victories. But the struggle to secure change in many areas is evidence that it will not get us where we need to go. Indeed, even where our advocacy has secured agreements to act by governments at global and national level, these pledges have in many cases not been followed through successfully in programmes that delivered emissions reductions.

Yet this model of change remains dominant in the voluntary sector and among both environmental groups and the philanthropic community. A classic and highly influential example of this is *Design to win*, the

report that is shaping much U.S and European philanthropic activity on climate change.[49] *Design to win* takes a narrow sectoral and technological perspective on climate change, and neglects the critical issues of power and public commitment that will determine the outcome of the struggle to avert catastrophic climate change.

So we urgently need to develop new approaches to influencing change. The table below sets out a (necessarily simplified) description of the third sector's current work on climate change, and the potential characteristics of a new approach that could succeed.

table 1: present and potential future characteristics of third sector action on climate change

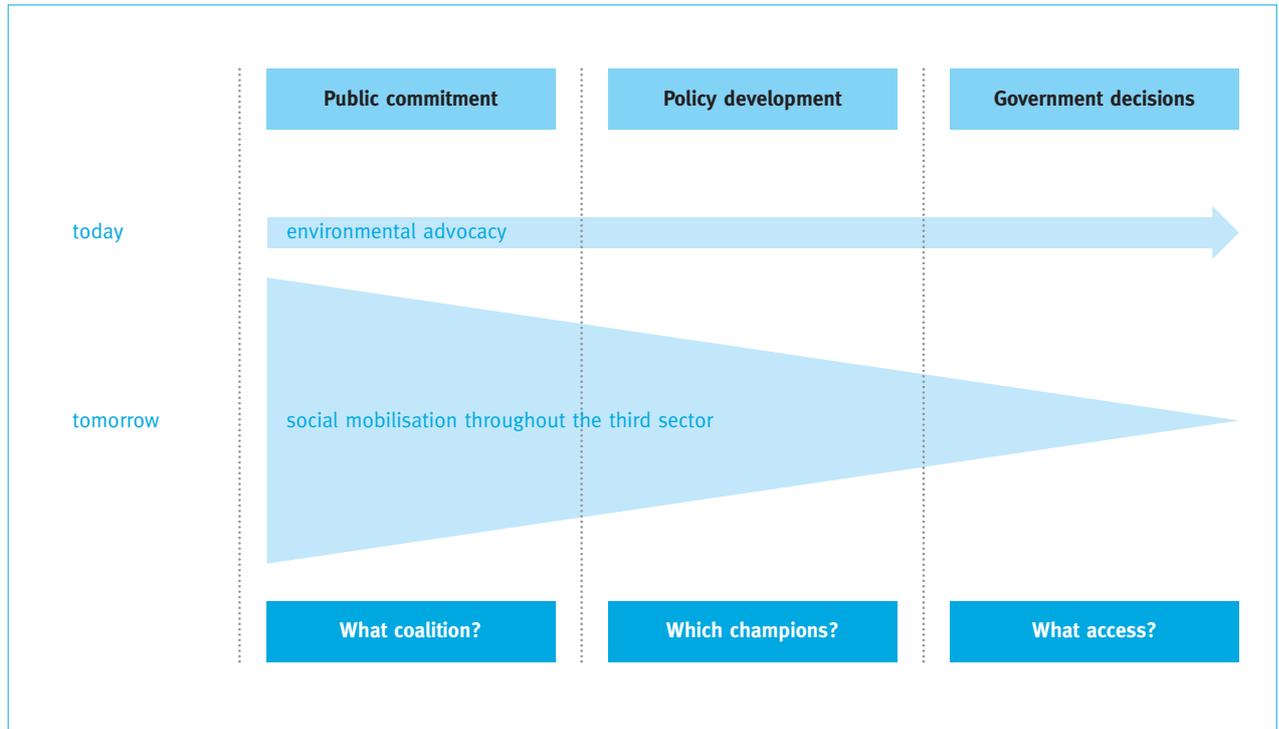| Characteristics	Today's third sector action	Tomorrow
What motivates those active on climate change?	Overwhelmingly environmental, with some activity motivated by concern for poverty in developing countries	Global poverty, domestic poverty, security, prosperity and employment, well-being, health, human rights and environment
What is their focus?	Overwhelmingly focused on securing action by individual national governments	Consistent demands for action made to many national governments, and networks used to spread individual commitment and lifestyle change
Who do they mobilise?	Overwhelmingly groups and individuals concerned for the environment, and much more recently those concerned with poverty in developing countries	Communities: of places, faiths and interests
What alliances?	Emerging alliance between environmental and developmental concerns	Multiple alliances established across the third sector
What level of organisation?	Primarily national	Global, national, local
Resulting mobilisation	low	high

Tomorrow's model: social mobilisation

Chapter five outlines the four primary types of third sector activity that will succeed in tackling climate change. Two features of this activity deserve elaboration now.

First, the new model sees leadership and action driven by a wide variety of motives. A wide variety of groups show leadership and action as a result. Climate change is no longer characterised as an environmental issue. It is understood as a multi-faceted problem that affects us all.

Some engage because they see the potential impact on their own particular concerns. The threat that climate change poses to the prospects for international development is now well understood.[50] But it is also an issue of poverty and prosperity: runaway climate change would be deeply damaging to our economies, and to the poorest in developed economies too.[51] It is also a security issue, and a refugee issue, since runaway climate change would lead to conflict over resources and the mass movement of people escaping its worst effects.[52] Finally, it is an inter-generational issue, since younger generations have

figure 2: third sector activity on climate change

	Public commitment	Policy development	Government decisions
today	environmental advocacy →		
tomorrow	social mobilisation throughout the third sector		
	What coalition?	Which champions?	What access?

a powerful interest in averting dangerous climate change. There is strong evidence for some of these connections. But others are asserted rather than proven, and we must build the evidence base for action.

Other parts of the third sector embrace climate change, not because of the long-term threat, but because of the short-term benefits that it offers them. Some will join because they embrace local food, holidays at home and other lifestyle and associational benefits of climate change action. Others will be attracted by the potential benefits of climate change policy (new jobs, for instance), or the avoidance of risks associated with current approaches.

This is already beginning to happen. New grassroots initiatives, notably the transition towns movement are now established in the UK and rapidly internationalising.[53] The increasing activity among development groups has already been noted. But there are other examples. The Co-operative Bank and more recently others in the co-operative movement have taken up the struggle. Trade unions such as UNISON and Prospect have done likewise. There are a variety of individual faith-based initiatives, and an emerging multi-faith international network on climate change and sustainable living being co-ordinated by the Alliance for Religion and Conservation. We now need to dramatically accelerate these trends.

Second, the new model for third sector action has a much broader focus for activity. Rather than focus primarily on direct advocacy to governments, we need to mobilise action networks that influence individual and community behaviour, and build the social foundations for success.

This is not about abandoning our focus on government. They remain our primary concern. But, recognising the many obstacles to government action and the socially embedded nature of much individual behaviour, we will influence government indirectly, by building the foundations for political action, and making the actions we seek from government more politically viable and indeed attractive. The critical importance of deepening public support for action has been highlighted by Tony Juniper, director of Friends of the Earth until mid

2008, "Our movement has to galvanise public demand for something different. More than any other issue, we need the public to want change."[54]

Conclusion

Politicians of both left and right frequently call publicly and privately for more political space for action, and 'a Make Poverty History' on climate change.[55] But the Make Poverty History model is not the right one for climate change. That campaign, though it involved phenomenally large numbers of people, was short-lived and wholly focused on advocacy. It secured considerable success at the Gleneagles Summit.[56] But almost all states have since reneged on the commitments made there.[57]

Climate change requires sustained political mobilisation, to secure the lasting action we need. It is also much more diffuse and socially embedded problem than international development. A commitment to action on climate change may mean changing your choice of transport, holidays, shopping and the way you run your home too. We will need both a much higher degree of political mobilisation and a greater degree of personal action in order to succeed.

This chapter has outlined a new model for third sector action on climate change. A tremendous surge of mobilisation is necessary and possible. It is now time to sketch out what this mobilisation would look like in practice.

5 four dimensions of third sector leadership

This chapter outlines four potential dimensions of third sector leadership on climate change, among voluntary and community sector groups, the trade union and co-operative movements. There is already some activity in each of these four areas. But far more is urgently needed. A movement of this size and diversity could trigger the necessary step change in the action of national governments.

National leadership and action by the third sector

The first dimension will be the commitment and leadership of a wide range of national third sector organisations. We need to secure the commitment of groups with very different concerns and constituencies, and persuade them to use their power with politicians and their supporters to good effect. We will do so not by highlighting the urgency of climate change for society as a whole, but by demonstrating that their particular short and longer-term interests are well served by taking a lead on climate change.

A detailed mapping of the third sector organisations that could be engaged on climate change, and the social and political effect of involving them, is urgently required. Green Alliance has undertaken some initial work on this, which has confirmed that there are committed groups taking initiatives in many areas.

"we need to secure the commitment of groups with very different concerns and constituencies by demonstrating that their particular interests are well served by taking a lead on climate change"

There are perhaps three main types of groups that could be consistently and successfully engaged:

- The first could include organisations with an international outlook, whose concerns are directly and profoundly affected by climate change. Many development organisations have taken up the cause since the publication of the *Up in Smoke* report.[58] Many other groups in this sector could also commit to lead on climate change, including those specifically concerned with international peace, security and human rights. National refugee groups and those representing specific diasporas could also speak out, recognising that they can do most to help their countries of origin by securing action now. A number of these groups have already begun to do so.

- The second could include those motivated by a concern for vulnerable groups and communities in the UK, and the recognition that the direct environmental and indirect economic impacts of climate change profoundly affect their interests. There are many dimensions to this, and a variety of initiatives are already underway. Some poverty groups are already active. More could act out of concern that the poorest will suffer most from climate change, as recent analysis commissioned by Oxfam has confirmed.[59] Some health organisations have already spoken out on the impact that climate change could have on health and well-being.[60] There is also tremendous potential for youth organisations to lead, given that the young have most to gain from action now on climate change.

- The third could include organisations which, although less directly affected, see potential benefits for their particular interests from action on climate change. Housing organisations could contribute, for instance, if they saw energy efficient low-carbon housing as cheaper to build and maintain in an era of high oil prices. Trade

unions could accelerate their action on climate change, in recognition of the employment opportunities arising from the low-carbon economy.

The leadership and commitment of these groups would play a crucial role in reframing climate change in the public mind, and create a host of opportunities to shift behaviour and, crucially, to build broader and deeper support for political action.

There have already been attempts to bring this about, of course. The cross-sectoral Every Action Counts initiative has offered a variety of support and guidance to voluntary sector groups and community organisations on climate change and other environmental issues over the past two years.[61] Development, environmental and others groups have come together to create Stop Climate Chaos.[62] The Real World initiative of 1997 and 2001 sought to create a single coalition for progressive change on the environment and other issues.[63]

But these initiatives have had limited impact, above all because many have tended to offer a single story and campaigning proposition to potential recruits. Real World assembled an impressive coalition of NGO voices and published two manifestos. But it had a uniform offer and no local expression to sustain momentum.

There has been too little done to encourage organisations to interpret climate change in terms that work for them, and to find their own expression of interest and means of influence. Our success will come as a result of the diversity of our actions, not from a single all-embracing initiative. Environmental audits have been the entry point for some. But we need to go further, drawing on the deeper connections between climate change and the primary interests of many groups.

This could be about to emerge. Recent developments among both funders and third sector organisations could establish a far more diverse and deep-rooted commitment to climate change. The Baring Foundation has recently awarded four grants to different consortia to work with five to eight non-environmental groups on the implications of climate change for their interests. The Carnegie UK foundation recently published a guide for charitable trusts on climate change and social justice.[64] A round-table of groups concerned with social justice and climate change will publish a report in early 2009. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is waking up to climate change, and could play an important role in building the capacity and skills of the sector to lead in this area. The Charity Commission has recently published helpful guidance.[65]

We urgently need to turn these and other initiatives into new sources of advocacy and influence, by demonstrating the synergies between climate change and other agendas and enabling different groups to identify their particular means of exerting influence. Charitable funders in the trusts sector and in government can both play important roles in enabling this to happen. Sectoral bodies such as NCVO and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) also have a role to play.

Community, local and regional leadership

There is a growing trend for independent action on climate change at the sub-national level, from the transition town movement to a diverse set of initiatives by local government. They are evidence of the potential for community, local and regional action. There is potential for far more leadership and creativity at these levels. This is the second vital dimension of third sector activity, with an essential role to play in establishing the conditions for national action and leadership.

The potential for community leadership is perhaps the most exciting, yet the least explored and supported. There has been some work in this area. Defra has supported a variety of local community activity, and commissioned a useful review of the evidence base.[66] WWF recently published an important study of a three year pilot project that they have undertaken in four communities, and Every Action Counts has facilitated

"success will come as a result of the diversity of our actions, not from a single all-embracing initiative"

community action.[67] But some of the most exciting community initiatives, such as transition towns, have emerged without any support or encouragement at national level or from local government. Rather, they have set the pace in localities.

Both government and national third sector organisations urgently need to offer far greater support and encouragement to communities that want to take action. Congregational networks such as schools, nurseries, residents and tenants associations, churches, mosques, temples, amenity groups and sports clubs could all provide vital local leadership and action on climate change.

There has been more focus on the potential for action within the formal structures of local, regional and city government. This has been encouraged by government, and by the national representatives of local government.[68] Far more is possible. These tiers of government have tremendous potential to act as catalysts for action at the community and national levels. They do not face the same resistance from entrenched vested interests and many have clear and pressing local reasons to act, in coastal cities, water-stressed regions and other areas experiencing particular climate impacts.

Consistent leadership at local and regional level would have a real impact on national politics. Former London Mayor Ken Livingstone's introduction of the congestion charge is a much cited example. But he set a much wider and influential leadership agenda on climate change. His pledge to reduce emissions by 30 per cent by 2025 or by 60 per cent, if national government took the action needed to achieve a higher target, was a model of how sub-national action can be both radical and a source of pressure on national government.[69]

"a mass movement of people living the low-carbon lifestyle is another dimension of political leadership we need from outside government"

This kind of leadership can cross borders. The C40 cities climate leadership group have already begun to internationalise leadership at this level. It began with 18 cities in 2005 pledging to co-operate, in particular through procurement, to accelerate the uptake of climate-friendly technologies, and has since merged with a similar initiative established by the US Clinton foundation.[70]

Community, local, regional and city leadership can deepen public commitment to action, showcase the potential for new and innovative policy and delivery of low-carbon solutions, and deliver significant actual emissions reductions. Each of these will play an important part in securing the national leadership we need.

Living differently and demanding more

A mass movement of people living the low-carbon lifestyle is another dimension of the leadership we need from outside government. The scale of individual action on climate change as expressed through behaviour and purchasing continues to increase.[71] But it remains relatively small in absolute terms, as summarised in chapter two.

The emergence of a far larger and more committed movement of people living low-carbon lifestyles is critical to securing the political action we need. Millions of people, demonstrating through personal choices that a low-carbon lifestyle is more fulfilling and rewarding, would exert tremendous influence on other members of the public, the private sector, and thus on the political process.

There has been a tendency in some quarters to see encouraging behavioural change as an alternative to political action, rather than a means to securing it. In some areas, such as energy policy, the primary effect on politics may be indirect. A dramatic increase in community energy generation would make an important contribution to increasing awareness and commitment to action, for instance.

In other areas, such as car clubs, a major increase in collective action would directly encourage governments to act where they have so far been reluctant to do so. In aviation, a dramatic surge in public

commitment to cut back on flying would affect both the economic case for new runways and political attitudes towards expansion.

Chapter three demonstrated that there is already considerable activity of this kind. The third sector has a vital role in the strengthening of this movement. Some of the solutions will be led by the private sector. But the third sector is in a strong position to use both national networks, such as faith groups, voluntary groups and trade unions, and local networks to encourage behaviour change and to offer new alternatives that people will find attractive.

New constituencies could be energised to take personal action. Two seem particularly promising: faith communities, which are deeply embedded and able to make influential appeals for action based on values and empathy with others; and schools, which are potential hubs for local action and influencing parents. In both cases, individual households could catalyse wider behavioural change.

Given the current economic downturn, some of the most exciting possibilities for community action are in areas like energy efficiency and car sharing that respond to the financial pressures people are facing. One over-arching initiative that could bring together these and other low-carbon options would be a personal carbon trading scheme, in which individuals made voluntary but binding commitment to limit their carbon emissions. Over time this could grow into a national movement of people committed to living successfully and happily within a diminishing carbon allowance, and have a huge impact on wider public attitudes and behaviour.

Some of the most politically significant lifestyle shifts in recent years have been led by individuals in the public eye, such as Jamie Oliver on school dinners and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall on animal welfare, raising awareness and shifting attitudes very rapidly. But leadership at community level is even more important than national leadership if change is to be sustained. We need to nurture and support a new generation of community leaders.

This dimension of third sector action focuses on behaviour, rather than political mobilisation. But over time we need to find new ways to connect the personal and political, encouraging people to recognise the political dimension of their lifestyle choices and the need to engage in the political process. We can start by making the connection ourselves, and recognising the political significance of behavioural change.

The downturn is an opportunity to secure a rapid and lasting shift in public action. The growth of home-grown food, car clubs and domestic tourism over the past year suggests that the impending recession is a strong inducement to low-carbon choices. We need to embed these choices and lifestyles, and to establish a mass movement that is living differently and demanding more.

Mobilisation across borders

Strong third sector networks at the regional and global level will be the fourth and final feature of third sector leadership. We can and must build broader and deeper support for action at the national level. But national mobilisation alone will not overcome the constraints on action by individual states highlighted in chapter two. We will only do so by building international alliances outside government that work together to press for national action. Voluntary groups, sub-national tiers of government, communities, trade unions and other groups will all be part of successful international mobilisation.

"the downturn is an opportunity to secure a rapid and lasting shift in public action"

There is already considerable collaboration between trade unions, cities and some other groups at international level. Community initiatives like transition towns and advocacy movements such as Avaaz have all internationalised over the past two years.[72] But these networks can and must be much better connected and aligned. This is needed in two areas.

First, faith groups, communities, local governments, workers and others need to come together physically and virtually to agree new commitments and approaches to change behaviour and secure political mobilisation. Faith groups are a potentially immensely powerful source of commitment and action on behaviour change. Local governments could collaborate far more systematically on procurement and other issues. Local communities could become part of global networks committed to action, giving citizens in different countries a sense of a global movement for change (as Local Agenda 21 did for some in the 1990s).

The second element of this would be an over-arching global network that focuses on influencing political action, linking and mobilising a wide cross-section of public opinion in each of the key countries. The prospects for national action at the necessary scale will be much diminished if we fail to do so, for the reasons given in chapter two.

Various objections have been raised to this. It has been criticised as potentially expensive, bureaucratic, a threat to the brands of existing organisations, and a distraction from national campaigns. These objections are essentially tactical rather than strategic. The prospects for a global deal would be dramatically enhanced by a movement that was able to frame and lead international public debate on the need for action and agreement between individual states. Such a movement would play a vital role in shifting the debate on national interests, and breaking the disastrous stand-off that has characterised international climate change negotiations for so long.

"the third sector holds the key to unlocking the commitment and action of politicians and public alike"

This kind of co-operation is also needed regionally, to build support for common policy responses that will increase the ambition and drive down costs for individual countries. It is particularly important that European civil society finds its voice. Europe has been the critical progressive player to date in the global debate on climate change. But the political commitment to European action is highly varied and fragile. The EU must put its political weight and financial muscle behind delivering the objectives that it champions internationally. A strong civil society movement would significantly improve the prospects for this. The growing commitment and action by trade unions and development organisations at European level is evidence that a broad-based European movement for change could now emerge.

We need to work together across national borders to secure action by national politicians, and to accelerate shifts in behaviour and action. These two causes will attract different groups and take different forms. But we should look for opportunities to link them, in the minds of politicians and public. A peoples' movement for the ratification of a new global agreement could be one way to bring the two elements together.

Conclusion

The third sector holds the key to unlocking the commitment and action of politicians and public alike. This chapter has outlined the four major elements of the third sector leadership that could transform the politics of climate change.

I do not under estimate the scale of this challenge. It will require a vast investment of leadership, imagination and money to make this a reality. We need to develop a far clearer understanding both of the changes we need, and how they will be stimulated. We need to build our capacity and acquire new skills to achieve these goals, and establish new relationships and alliances across our traditional sectoral boundaries and across borders. But there is no other pathway to success. The third sector can and must rise to this.

6 the new politics of climate change

The war against climate change will have to be won at many levels: politics, power, economics, behavioural psychology and ideology. But the key battleground is the political arena. If we succeed on that terrain, success in other fields will follow. The policies, technologies and behaviours that we need to deploy are in almost all cases already known. We will make them a reality if we create a new politics of climate change that persuades politicians to act. I have focused on the UK experience. But the need for an explicitly political analysis of how we can succeed on climate change is common to all countries.

Politicians have much more power to act than they acknowledge. We must do our utmost to persuade them to use it. The scale of public support for action will determine whether they use their power to full effect. Climate change is no different in this respect to other progressive causes of historic importance. The vision and determination of leaders from outside the established structures of power and wealth was the driving force behind other successes, from the spread of gender equality back to universal suffrage. The nature of public mobilisation is utterly different today, but the scale of public pressure for action can once more be the driving force of change.

In the UK, the third sector holds the key to creating a new politics of climate change. The environmental community has been the dominant actor within the sector to date. But this is not simply an environmental issue. We must now unleash the full power of the sector.

We must both mobilise support for political action on a far broader scale, and create the social foundations for success by embedding low-carbon lifestyles in our communities and networks. This pamphlet has outlined four features of the third sector action that could deliver a new politics of climate change.

Are there any other pathways to a low-carbon world? Some have argued that dramatic climatic events could trigger a dramatic shift in attitudes and action. But we cannot wait for a catastrophe to befall us. If it does, the result could well be a defensive attempt to insulate affected countries against the ravages of climate change rather than a global co-operative effort to prevent it.

The need for new approaches is more pressing now than ever. The impending recession is certain to reduce public and political attention to climate change. The credit crunch is already diminishing the issue in the public mind, affecting the availability of capital for low-carbon development, and reducing the prospects for a successful global agreement on climate change.[73] We will only secure a sustainable low-carbon economic recovery if we can mobilise sufficient public support for political action and enthusiasm for low-carbon lifestyle choices.

The continuing trend towards less interventionist government and transferring responsibilities to individuals and communities makes new approaches even more imperative. This trend is apparent across the political spectrum.

> "politicians have much more power to act than they acknowledge. We must do our utmost to persuade them to use it"

The increasing reluctance of governments to intervene is a threat that we can counter. There is also an opportunity within this trend. Governments can play an important part in enabling social action, and realising the power of the third sector. Existing government initiatives on behaviour change such as Act on CO2 urgently need to be rethought to focus on collective rather than individual action, and new

programmes established to do this. The Office of the Third Sector, the new Department for Energy and Climate Change and Defra could all make important contributions to this.

There is still time to make all this happen. The current global negotiations on climate change are due to conclude in Copenhagen at the end of 2009. Our leaders will want those talks to succeed. We will all be doing our utmost to secure that. But it is even more important that we are able to persuade them to meet the commitments they make there.

This pamphlet offers one pathway to success. I hope that the ideas within it will be challenged and improved. It's high time we confronted the root causes of our failure, and mapped out a pathway to success.

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35. The Alliance for Climate Protection, founded by Al Gore, launched the three-year, $300 million 'We Campaign' to raise public awareness of climate change. www.wecansolveit.org

36. AVAAZ was founded in January 2007. It now has 3.2 million members in every nation in the world. www.avaaz.org

37. There are many influential exponents of this thesis on both left and right. For Labour, the most prominent exponent has been Matthew Taylor's work on pro-social behaviour. Matthew is former head of the Number 10 policy unit and now chief executive of the Royal Society of Arts. On the right, Compassionate Conservatism by Policy Exchange Senior Fellow Jesse Norman is a classic example of this thinking. The writing of these individuals and others has been reflected in speeches by ministers and shadow spokespersons on both sides of the House of Commons, and in formal statements of government and party policy.

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"This pamphlet is timely and important, for several reasons. Firstly, it faces up to the blunt truth that we are failing to stop catastrophic climate change, and a change of tack is needed. States remain myopic and ill-aligned as we hurtle toward the 2009 deadline for the global warming negotiations; the corporate sector will never lead the way; and behaviour change alone is desperately inadequate.

But there's hope here too: there are many more reasons to build a low-carbon future than commonly advocated - it is simply essential for the future health of our economies and societies. As Hale argues, a much wider coalition of support could be mobilised for this vision than for one which focuses solely on the environment, and it's something Avaaz and other groups have begun to attempt. The task has barely begun of building a global, networked, pluralistic and coordinated movement with the power to win. Stephen makes a compelling case that the change we need depends first and foremost on social forces and networks, not least because our governments need to be moved by us. It's time to get on with it – together."

Paul Hilder
campaign director of Avaaz.org and co-founder of openDemocracy

"As I write this, less than 48 hours have passed since Barack Obama's historic win in the United States. Politics matters. With a 'rainbow' coalition and sustained grass-roots effort amazing things can be achieved. Stephen's pamphlet challenges us to work on climate change in a similar way. All of us, change-makers and funders of change, need to heed this call. The hour is late and the road is steep."

Jon Cracknell
Environmental Funders Network

"Climate change poses an unprecedented challenge, but so far our society's response has been utterly inadequate. As Hale argues, we need different methods of mobilisation and far more effort to secure cultural as well as policy change if we are to overcome the present paralysis. So far, we have not shifted the general trajectory of society. Hale's pamphlet will provoke a debate on our strategy, and how we can master the full suite of influences we need to get us on the right path.

Even if we did all of this, however, then we must face the awesome task of gaining international buy in for action. Can we find a way in the UK to break not only deadlock here, but also to inspire a wider global community?"

Tony Juniper
former director of Friends of the Earth

"Hale makes a compelling case for the leadership role that the voluntary and community sector can play on climate change. NCVO is waking up to this challenge, and to the vital role that all voluntary and community organisations have in addressing this challenge. Climate change affects us all; and we all have a part to play in preventing it. Much can be achieved by people working together to make a difference in their own lives and their communities, as well as through political action. And that is what the voluntary and community sector does best: our sector is a catalyst for collective action, bringing people together to build a better world.

We must harness our potential to tackle climate change and build sustainability, thus unlocking the political commitment needed to address climate change. NCVO intends to work with other civil society organisations to find solutions that build community resilience and sustainability.

Richard Williams
director of enterprise, National Council for Voluntary Organisations