



The Climate Coalition organised a virtual event this year, with training sessions on Zoom to prepare for the main focus - lobbying our MPs via a Zoom meeting.

The three “Asks” were:

1. Unleash investment in cleaner greener homes, public spaces and transport by creating green jobs eg. increase funding for home insulation to make all homes energy efficient by 2030, and invest in better provision for walking/cycling, plus bring forward the phaseout of new petrol and diesel cars to 2030 (currently 2050).
2. Put nature on the path to recovery eg. maintain in law the UK’s environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards by putting sustainability at the heart of future trade policy.
3. Support the most vulnerable abroad eg. end all UK public finance for fossil fuels overseas, shifting instead to renewable energy access for poor communities

I signed up for Hope For The Future’s hour and a half training on how to work positively with your MP, which had lots of useful tips. I then emailed James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) but unfortunately, despite two emails and a phone call to his office he declined the invitation due to ‘parliamentary duties’.

However, via The Climate Coalition Facebook group for the East of England I ‘met’ many other activists, including WI members, though no-one from the South Suffolk constituency. Other people had more success than me and had very positive Zoom meetings with their MP.

This year the mass lobby was held online via an all-day ‘Main Stage’ event, with speakers such as Chris Packham, and a

stimulating debate hosted by Clive Anderson with three MPs - Caroline Lucas (Green), Alexander Stafford (Con) and Matthew Pennycook (Lab).

All three MPs agreed that we need to invest in the Green economy for a post COVID-19 recovery and Alex, one of the new 'northern' Conservative MPs was enthusiastic about creating jobs through new technology to become world leaders, particularly as we are hosting the COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow next year. However, as Caroline pointed out, the Government need to set an enabling framework for businesses to feel it's safe to invest, as currently they keep 'moving the goalposts' on subsidies. When asked 'What can we, as individuals, do to help make a Green recovery a reality?' Matthew felt it's crucial that we sustain focus on Green issues and hold our own MPs to account.

So you asked if any of the discussions could be moved forward in Suffolk West.

Suffolk (County Council) Climate Change Partnership published The Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan Technical Report in May this year. The report suggests two priority areas for the focus of local action:

- Improve the thermal efficiency of housing stock and decarbonise the supply of heat.
- Encourage greater take up of public transport and active travel (walking and cycling) and a massive roll-out of zero emission vehicles.

The government are bringing in grants to improve insulation and for installation of heat pumps to replace gas/oil heating. I think encouraging our members to do a carbon footprint audit might get them thinking about how to make positive green changes when the opportunity comes up.

For example, if we were going to replace our old cooker I would definitely buy electric, despite having cooked on gas all my life, because we need to start phasing out the old fossil fuel appliances.

Unfortunately, even with a government grant, we can't afford to replace our gas boiler so it's a dilemma!

Regarding travel, the rural nature of our county means there's a heavy reliance on private cars, which are mostly petrol or diesel. However, even a radical increase in use of public transport (not likely with COVID-19 fears, plus we've had cuts to bus services in many areas) and even with more 'active' travel this would not solve the problem of car emissions. Cycling and walking can only be a replacement for short haul car journeys, which is still worth promoting in terms of reduced air pollution and improved health benefits.

And although buying an electric car may be beyond the reach of many, it's still worth promoting as an option to consider when it's time to replace a car. The range of new electric cars is improving and at last the government are beginning to address the problem of lack of infrastructure re charging points for electric vehicles; in my local paper, the Suffolk Free Press, I read that Babergh & Mid-Suffolk District Councils have successfully bid for £800,000 in match-funding from the government's Getting Building Fund, to support the installation of multifunctional solar carports in key market towns.