

Chester World Development Forum

Meeting held in The Unity Centre on 19.02.2019

Talk by Catherine Green on “COP” 24 – Conference of Parties held in Katowice, Poland in Dec 2018



Present: Terry Green (Chair), Bernard Payne, Vicki Jenner, Lindsay Cussons (Chester Baha'i Community), Ann McCarthy (CAFOD), John Tacon, Pam Price (Church Action on Poverty), Colin Watson (Chester Sustainability Forum), Peter Benson (Chester and District Friends of the Earth, Frackfree Dee and Transition Chester), Pat Gibbon and Sue Bownas (CAFOD), TJ Walsh (Chester CND), Helen John, Ken Walker, Vin and Eileen Brennan (J and P Group, Ellesmere Port), Linda and Stewart Shuttleworth, Helen Tandy (Chester Friends of the Earth), David and Teresa Irwin, Tom Ormiston and Tony Walsh (Ellesmere Port Justice and Peace Group), Simon Brown (Transition Chester) and Catherine Green (CAFOD)

Terry Green welcomed everyone to the meeting. These included members of different groups in Chester – Chester CAFOD Support Group, Chester Friends of the Earth, Chester Sustainability Forum, Transition Chester and Chester Cathedral - all interested in tackling climate change. CWDF hopes that the meeting will be the start of some collaborative working between these varying groups.

The focus for CWDF's activities/actions this year is climate change so we are very fortunate that one of our members, Catherine Green, had attended the COP 24 as part of the CAFOD delegation. She was able to share with us a very comprehensive report back on the conference and the issues that are of great concern to members of the Forum.

Her presentation was divided into 5 sections:

- **The CAFOD trip to COP 24**
- **Background to Climate Change**
- **COP 24 to Katowice**
- **IPCC SR15**
- **What should/can we do?**

The CAFOD trip to COP 24

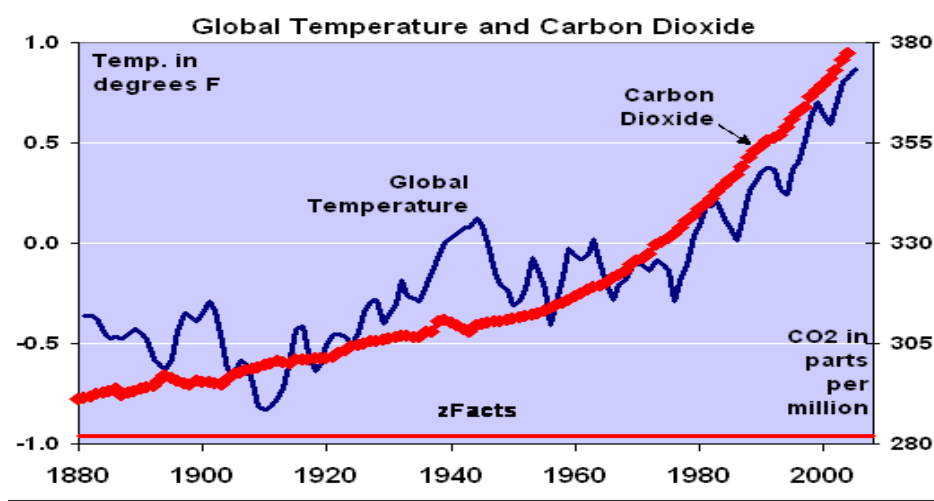
In the first section Catherine explained why CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) was invited to take part in the conference and why the issue of climate change is so important to CAFOD. CAFOD, along with a number of other NGOs, were invited to attend because they are considered to be environmental NGOs. The importance of the issue of climate change is best seen in the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical of 2015 – *Laudato Si'*, *On Care for our Common Home*: “Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day”, and “Developed nations are morally obligated to assist developing nations in combating the climate change crisis. Poor nations are ill-prepared to adapt to the effects of climate change and will bear the brunt of its effects”.

Background to Climate Change

What is climate change?

Greenhouse gases are released into the earth's atmosphere which then traps the sun's heat and warms up the earth, causing sea and air currents to change, icebergs to melt, sea levels to rise, people to suffer and weather patterns to change. According to a recent NASA report the levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere are higher than they have been at any time in the past 400,000 years. During ice ages, CO₂ levels were around 200 parts per million (ppm), and during the warmer interglacial periods, they hovered around 280 ppm. The current level is 400 ppm. There has been an exponential rise in CO₂ levels since the industrial revolution as shown in the diagram below:

Since Industrial Revolution



Human activities have caused **1.1°C** of global warming above pre-industrial levels, It is likely to reach **1.5°C** between 2030 and 2052 (IPCC)



The red line indicates the CO₂ levels and the blue line shows the average global temperature since the end of the 19th century. It is now widely recognised that human activity is the main cause of climate change.

What are the effects of climate change?

In general we see a large increase in large scale singular events and extreme weather events. Over the next 20 years, up to hundreds of millions of people will be at higher risk of drought, floods, extreme heat, hunger and poverty if we don't take further steps to address the causes of climate change

In communities where CAFOD works, many are suffering from more frequent and extreme floods, storms, or droughts, pushing the most vulnerable people further into poverty. And farming families are struggling with more unpredictable seasons, meaning crops fail and livestock die because of a lack of food and water.

COP24 to Katowice

What is COP? At the UN Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was born. The ultimate aim of the UNFCCC is to stabilise greenhouse gases at a level to prevent “dangerous” human interference with the climate, ensure food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner. The 197 countries that have ratified the Convention are called Parties to the Convention. Conference of the Parties (COP) is the decision-making body of the framework.

The COP meets once a year, with those meetings forming the focal point for international climate change negotiations.

When the COP meets, they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions to promote the effective implementation of the Convention.

The ‘COP’ is often used as shorthand for the major annual climate talks held in December or November (e.g. COP24). In fact, many other meetings of Parties take place at the same time and negotiations often take place in different groupings or subsidiary bodies of the convention. For example, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA), where negotiations on the rulebook for Paris Agreement implementation are taking place.

The conference includes side events and exhibitions from other players, e.g. civil society.

They negotiate of 4 main areas: Mitigation, Adaptation, Reporting and Finance

Famous COPs include COP3 in 1997 when the Kyoto Protocol was signed and countries agreed to reduce the onset of global warming by limiting greenhouse gas emissions. This didn't enter into force until 2005. Commitments were only made up to 2012, with an extension to 2020 – and not every country signed up to the protocol. The Kyoto Protocol set a target for 37 industrialised countries to reduce their emissions by an average 5% below 1990 levels, for the period of 2008 to 2012. As part of this group the UK committed to a 12.5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The targets of industrialised countries were met successfully. Overall, the 37 countries reduced global emissions by over 10%. But this was not enough to offset the increasing emissions from other industrialising countries (such as China), meaning total global emissions grew over the period.

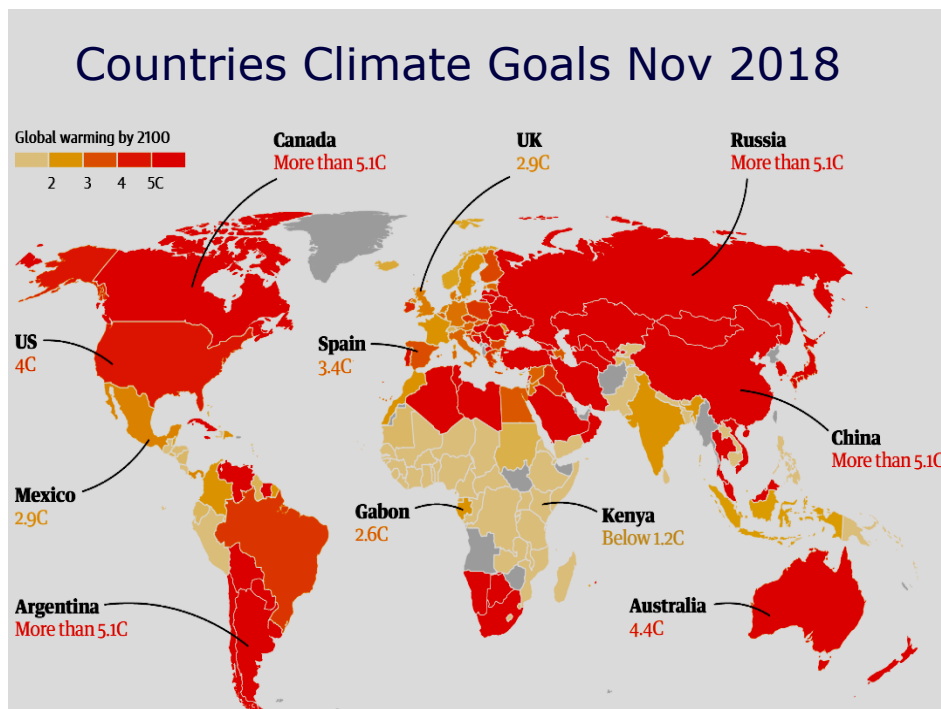
Then in 2009, we had COP15 in Copenhagen. This was supposed to deliver a deal that would look at reducing greenhouse gases after 2020 – essentially what the Paris Agreement would eventually agree - but the talks ended in 'disarray' with no agreement met. This was a big disappointment for the climate movement.

The most far-reaching agreement was made at COP 21 in Dec 2015 – The Paris Agreement – which entered into force on 4 November 2016 (one of the quickest international agreements to come into force).

In the lead-up to Paris, [186 countries responsible for over 90 percent of the world's climate pollution](#) announced specific national reduction plans for climate action after 2020. The central aim was to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change – Adaptation

The Paris Agreement is the most inclusive global agreement on climate change to date... “Paris... set a global goal to which every country has agreed to contribute. While it does not bind any one country to any one solution, it focuses all players on the same challenge.”^[1]



Study from the journal Nature Communications ranking the climate ambitions of all countries and the resulting effect it would have on the world if all countries followed their example on climate policies – in other words, some countries are still pursuing devastating policies (Taken from a Guardian article published on Dec 16th 2018)

Hopes for COP24 in Katowice:

- To define a comprehensive and robust Rulebook to implement the Paris Agreement
- Increased ambition from all countries to revise their 2030 targets by 2020 – NDCs (National Determined Contributions)
- Commitments to enhance climate finance from rich to poor countries for adaptation (dealing with problems) and mitigation (lowering carbon).

There were 20,000 – 30,000 participants, the most famous being Greta Thunberg aged 15 from Sweden and Sir David Attenborough aged 92.

Greta spoke for “Climate Justice Now” saying that politicians only speak of green economic growth and the desire to make money instead of being concerned for the living planet and that fossil fuels need to stay in the ground.

Sir David Attenborough speaking at the opening ceremony said climate change is humanity's greatest threat in thousands of years. It could lead to the collapse of civilisations and the extinction of "much of the natural world".

IPCC SR15

Another controversial star of COP 24 was the IPCC’s (International Panel on Climate Change) report - Global Warming of 1.5 degrees C. This was a special report on “the impacts of global warming of 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty” and was released on 6th Oct 2018.

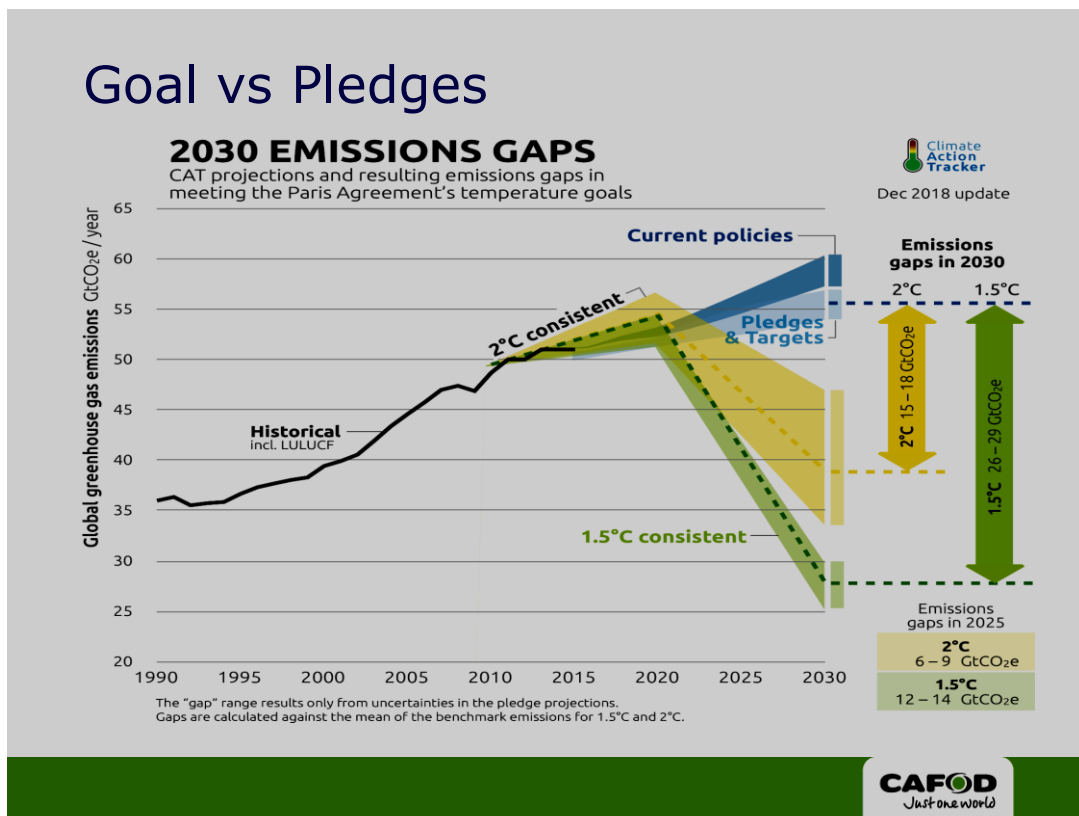
The report was written in response to requests from member countries and UNFCCC as part of the Paris Agreement and was to feed in as a key document to COP 24. It was written by 721 experts from 90 countries.

And it contained a very serious message - namely that under present ambitions, global warming will reach 1.5 degrees C between 2030 and 2052 and will impact significantly on health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth.

Furthermore, limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C is feasible only if carbon emissions are reduced by half by 2030 - only 11 years from now – and reach "net zero" by 2050. The message was loud and clear – the challenge of avoiding climate change requires rapid far-reaching and unprecedented changes in global systems.

Currently, if you added up everyone current pledges to cut emissions, we would still go over 3 degrees warming.

So it is clear we need to **be going further and faster in order to meet our climate change commitments**. Most countries welcomed the report but some of the most powerful countries did not – namely USA, Kuwait, Russia and United Arab Emirates.



The Good Outcomes

- Rulebook is mostly agreed– so Paris Agreement can now be implemented

- Includes Transparency and Reporting – countries agree to report on emissions and progress every two years
- Global Stocktake every 5 years agreed – mitigation, resilience and finance
- Some reconfirmed financial commitments, some new contributions, Germany pledged to double to E1.5bn. Adaptation fund broke annual \$100million. Process to consider finance goals for 2025 and 2030.
- UNSG Summit in Sept 2019 –heads of state invited to come with enhanced ambition
- Civil society very visible

And The Bad

- Ambition – it wasn't there
- 'Nationally Determined Contribution' (NDC) revision in 2020 – it's there, but it's not strongly worded
- Rulebook doesn't include Carbon markets. Brazil – double counting carbon credits
- Lack of solid financial commitments
- Exclusion of reference to human rights and food security

And the ugly truth to face

"Real action to prevent cataclysmic climate change, clearly already underway, will not emerge from the UNFCCC hallways – multilateral efforts have proven to be flawed. Our climate is now dependent on real action at national and subnational levels, with citizens demanding climate justice ..."

Quote from The Green Political Foundation

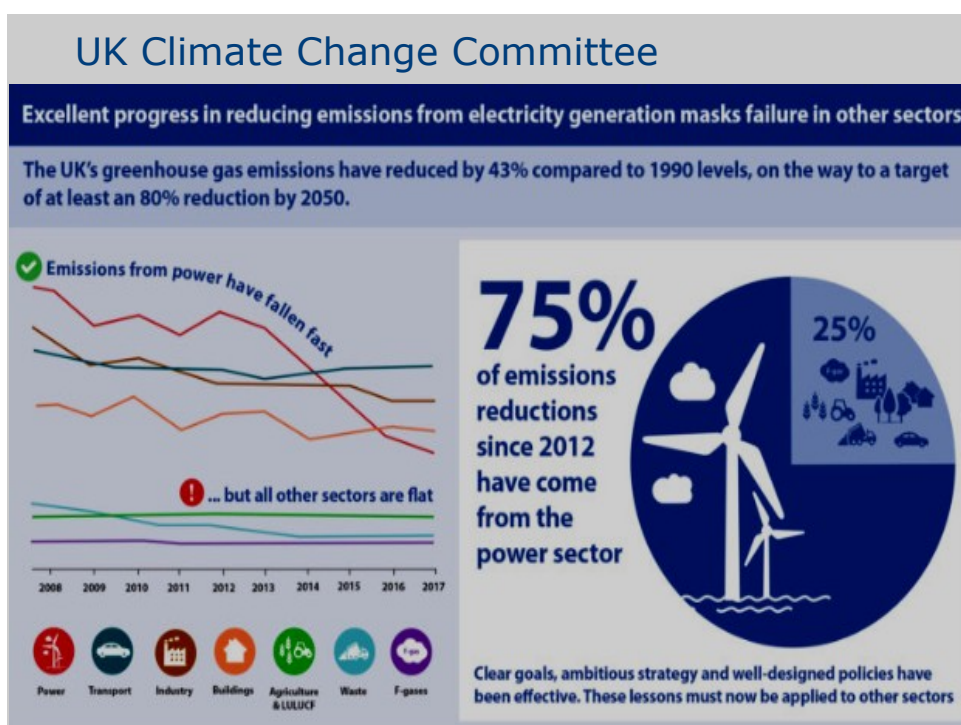
So where are we now and what next?

- At 2°C climate change will be catastrophic
- "A 1.5°C world requires rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society
- The world has 12 years to act to limit temp rise
- The capacity for climate action must be strengthened

Here is the clear message – **Act like there's a crisis**

Some countries are making sweeping changes to combat climate change. E.g.s- In May 2018, Shenzhen in China became the first city to electrify all 16,359 buses; Sweden is aiming for fossil-free streets by 2030 with the government providing tax exemptions for electric and ethanol-powered vehicles; in Feb 2019 the Mardi Gras in Australia banned glitter, balloons and single use plastic water bottles in the parade in an effort to be more environmentally friendly

As for the UK – the diagram below shows where we are at in terms of emissions – i.e. excellent progress in reducing emissions from electricity but other sectors have not followed.



In the 2018 'Progress Report to Parliament', the Independent UK Climate Change Committee sets out four key messages to Government to put emissions reductions on track, based on the lessons of the last decade.

- Support the simple, low-cost options
- Commit to effective regulation and strict enforcement
- End the chopping and changing of policy
- Act now to keep long-term options open

The UK will not meet our future targets unless these are tackled.

What should/can we do?

Civic action is crucial.

In addition to changing our day-to-day habits, exercising our rights as citizens is one of the most significant things one can do to help the planet.

Taking climate change into consideration when you vote is a good start. Here are some other tips:

- Know your facts. Understanding the science of climate change will help you talk to your family, friends and local representatives with about the issue with confidence.
- Find local climate action groups or meet ups in your area. Attending these meetings will help to keep you abreast of way you can help in your community.
- Speak to your local representative. Suggest things your city or town can do to reduce its carbon footprint, like developing a town action plan, improving recycling, and adopting green energy policies.
- Vote on policies that protect the environment. Use your vote to curb climate change.

We can also:

- Review our household energy consumption. Did you know that it is far more energy efficient to stream movies through your smart TV, not your game console. Smart TVs and their plugins use just a few watts to stream movies but if you use your game console, energy use is about 10 times higher, because they aren't optimized to play films?
- Review how you travel. In November 2017 carbon dioxide emissions from transportation surpassed emissions from electricity generation as [the top source of greenhouse gases](#). Why? Electricity generation is shifting away from the use of coal to more renewable sources and natural gas. Going carless for a year could [save about 2.6 tons of carbon dioxide](#), according to 2017 study from researchers at Lund University and the University of British Columbia — that's a little more than a roundtrip transatlantic flight. How can you stop using a car? Try taking a train, bus or better yet, ride a bike.
- Review what you eat particularly by eating less meat. While food systems are complicated, and research is still evolving on what the most environmentally-friendly diet is, experts mostly agree that [cutting down on meat](#), and red meat in particular, is a better choice for the environment. This is because the production of red meat uses a lot of feed, water and land. Cows themselves also give off methane emissions (a harmful greenhouse gas). For that reason, eating a vegan diet is likely to be best for the environment, say experts.
- Review what you buy. According to the World Resources Institute, 20 items of clothing [are manufactured per person, per year](#). This is because of "fast fashion" clothes that are produced quickly, cheaply and unsustainably. As the price of our clothes drops, the environmental (and human) costs increase. Look for a fairtrade, or similar logo. This indicates your clothes were made sustainably. Take a look at the [transparency index](#) from the organization Fashion Revolution.

Following Catherine's very thorough and thought-provoking presentation, the different groups represented were invited to say a few words on their planned actions on climate change.

Helen Tandy spoke for Chester Friends of the Earth:

- 80% of fossil fuels need to stay in the ground
- We need to stop using coal within the next 2 years and those working in the fossil fuel industry need to be supported

- There needs to be compensation for developing countries e.g. India
- CFoE want CWaC to declare a “Climate Emergency”. Talking of making own petition for Chester?
- Considering what we can do as individuals and what we can do in Chester?
- Nationally – attend Climate Coalition rally in London on 26th June

Colin Watson from Chester Sustainability Forum spoke about the I Gas public inquiry which managed to bring the issue of climate change on the table. Prof Kevin Anderson, a real climate change specialist, spoke on the issue as did several members of the public. I Gas want to maximise the cost of the inquiry on the council so that council won't vote against the next application in Ellesmere Port. To look at the documents in detail go to Frackfreedee.uk

Chester Sustainability Forum – inter working is already happening. CSF recently had presentation on biodegradable plastic bottles. Chris Matheson, MP, who is a member of CSF, has been in touch with Pepsi and other companies and they are doing some research. The Forum is also working on a cycleway project and is hoping to make Chester the most sustainable city in the country. Local businesses are coming on board and Chester University is working towards being carbon neutral.

The next step for all of us is how to influence people in the local area