

OPINION

Climate Action

Harborough Climate Action

COP – facing up to the climate crisis?

The end of this month will see the 28th COP meeting – the annual meeting at which representatives of governments gather to review progress in dealing with the climate crisis.

This year, in an apparent recognition of the urgency of our situation, one of the main priorities for discussion is how to speed up the move to clean energy and 'slash' greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions before 2030.

The need to reduce our use of fossil fuels as fast as possible has long been clear. We know that burning coal, oil and gas is the main cause of the GHG emissions which are raising the global average temperature and causing the climate crisis. We also know that if we are to

prevent the crisis getting out of control we must keep the rise in average global temperature to no more than 1.5C above the pre-industrial level. To do that, worldwide GHG emissions must be cut to a quarter of their 2019 level by 2040.

However, the amount of GHGs being sent into the atmosphere continues to rise. Even if countries live up to the promises they have already made, the reduction in emissions by 2030 will only be a sixth of what is needed. Currently, the average global temperature rise is 1.1C, and this year the average world temperature has risen beyond the 1.5C barrier on 38 days. As things stand, we are on track for an increase in average global temperatures of 2 to 3C.



This will take us into an area of much higher risk as the forces driving climate change begin to interact more strongly. Profound changes are already occurring more quickly than was predicted a few years ago. The Greenland Ice Sheet is melting 100 times faster than previously calculated and the Western Antarctic Ice Sheet may already have begun an irreversible process of long-term collapse.

Delegates at last year's COP 27

Sea levels are already predicted to rise by 30cm on average by 2050, with grave consequences for coastal communities – including major cities. That's within most of our lifetimes.

We can still avoid the worst outcomes of the crisis but we must act much more urgently than we have so far, otherwise the problems will just get harder to deal with as the vicious cycle continues.

That is why it is the decisions made at COP28 are so important. As individuals we can do what we can within our means, but if we are going to slash GHG emissions by 2030, much stronger action by governments to encourage and support businesses and families to cut their emissions is essential. That is why it is so

disappointing that the UK government has said it will license new exploration for oil and gas in the North Sea and the Labour Party has weakened its proposals for tackling the crisis. Instead of leading the way, we are giving other countries an excuse to limit their actions when the COP28 negotiations begin.

We must demand that our politicians recognize the severity of the problems we face and act with sufficient urgency to address them fairly, so that those most able to bear the costs of change do so and those who have least are helped most. Write to your councillors and write to our MP and demand that they protect our futures and those of our children and grandchildren.