

I would like to speak today in support of the much-needed Carbon Tax motion.

Man-made climate change is intensifying at an alarming rate, and while many of us are desperately aware of the need for urgent action to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the world's largest polluters continue to operate with few restrictions.

In recent years, rather than intervening against the biggest emitters, the emphasis for preventing climate meltdown has been on the individual. We should fly less, we should eat less meat, reduce, reuse, recycle. Undoubtedly, individual sacrifices we continue to make have great value, but where are the movements to stop the world's worst polluters?

It is acknowledged beyond doubt that fossil fuels are driving climate change, and so seemingly, the solution is simple. We must stop using fossil fuels. We must transition to a greener society. Since 1988, three quarters of global emissions have been produced by just 100 companies. It is these companies that need to act, and we must push them in the right direction.

Between 2018 and 2020, BP and Shell, two British companies which together produce more than 1.7 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases a year avoided paying a single penny in corporation tax on oil & gas from the North Sea. Meanwhile, they claimed tax reliefs of almost £400 million and paid their shareholders more than £44 billion in dividends. There is currently zero incentive for these companies to leave gas and oil in the ground, where it belongs.

It's estimated that the UK alone will be responsible for approximately 800 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions in 2021. We need a mechanism to reduce emissions quickly, and effectively. A comprehensive carbon tax would be the lever to finally drive the change we need. A carbon tax would target *all* polluters, particularly energy and oil companies. It would render coal, oil and gas financially unviable as affordable renewable energies rise to take their place.

A carbon tax that applies to all fossil fuel emissions could comfortably finance a dividend that would prevent the poorer members of society being hit with higher costs. It could be used to help society transition to a carbon free future and to help the UK become a genuinely equal society. A carbon tax is a win-win for both climate and social justice.

There are no technical or economic barriers stopping us acting against climate, just a lack of political will. In 2019, the Bath & Northeast Somerset Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to make the area carbon neutral by 2030. This cannot be empty political rhetoric. We have run out of time. The time to act is now; the time for a carbon tax is now.