

The light in the dark: climate change positives

So much climate change news is hard to read these days, and it seems as time goes by a bleaker and bleaker future is predicted. As a result, it only seems right to highlight the positives, the achievements and the plans for the future that will save our planet for our generation and those to come.

Why there is hope:

Politics brings hope, business brings hope and ideas bring hope. Political leaders are promising bolder commitments, solutions are everywhere and for the first time, investment in renewable energy will exceed that in fossil fuels. The truth is, we already have the knowledge and technology needed to deal with the rapidly increasing population, to provide clean energy for all and to begin to reverse climate change. As well as this, perhaps just as importantly, the public's collective desire for action and change has swelled to a level never seen before. Just last September around 6 million people worldwide went on climate strike, a remarkable Swedish schoolgirl has more influence over political environmental decisions than most world leaders, and in a global pandemic, young people continued to strike and social distance. If there is ever a time for hope, it's now!

What has already been achieved?

At the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, 77 countries pledged to cut their greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by the year 2050, and China plans to do the same by 2060! Naturally there is a difference between a pledge and real action, and happily more and more of this is occurring. In the first three months of 2020, renewable energy made up 47% of the UK's electricity generation thanks to the increasing use of solar panels and wind farms. In France, renewable energy contributed to 33% of all energy consumption and 42% of Germany's. Technology also plays an important role in reversing and reducing climate change. From plastic eating enzymes, to lab-grown meat, to carbon capture and storage, new technologies are being developed and rolled out every day.

It is clear that the world is beginning to wake up to the true threat that climate change poses, and increasing numbers of countries are establishing policies and signing up to pledges that will bring radical action. The future is not certain, but climate change is not undefeatable. By working swiftly and hand in hand, we can overcome it.

What are the plans for the future?

With the next climate change conference, aka COP26, taking place in Glasgow in November, all eyes will be on our world leaders to take the next big steps for the future. It is the occasion at which all nations involved will be expected to commit to more ambitious climate change action, as happens every five years. Check out the Climate Action Tracker with the link at the bottom to see which countries are sticking to their promises to remain compatible with the 1.5C warming target of the Paris Climate Agreement (hint: only one country is on track to meet the goal). While the EU's action is currently insufficient, perhaps the climate conference will provide an opportunity for further action. It's targets include a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030, as well as a binding target for 32% of electricity to come from renewable sources by the same year.

Recently, some of the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases seem to have had a change of heart! For example, Russia is moving to regulate its emissions and impose a carbon tax for the first time, and China has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2060. As all of these actions from countries all over the world begin to add up, and developing nations are given opportunities to advance sustainably, global warming will start to reduce and preserve our planet for the future.

<https://climateactiontracker.org/>