



# Climate Action Programme for UK Parliament

- I. Participants**
- II. A novel understanding of the causes of inaction**
- III. Our aims**
- IV. Evaluation and feedback**
- V. What's next?**
- VI. Find out more**

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In March 2021, the UCL Climate Action Unit delivered its first programme on climate action for Members of Parliament and the House of Lords. The programme was developed to engage participants in meaningful dialogue and explore new opportunities to bring action on climate change into their roles. Over the course of five sessions, the Climate Action Unit led a series of activities to examine how people respond to the complex nature of climate change.

# Participants

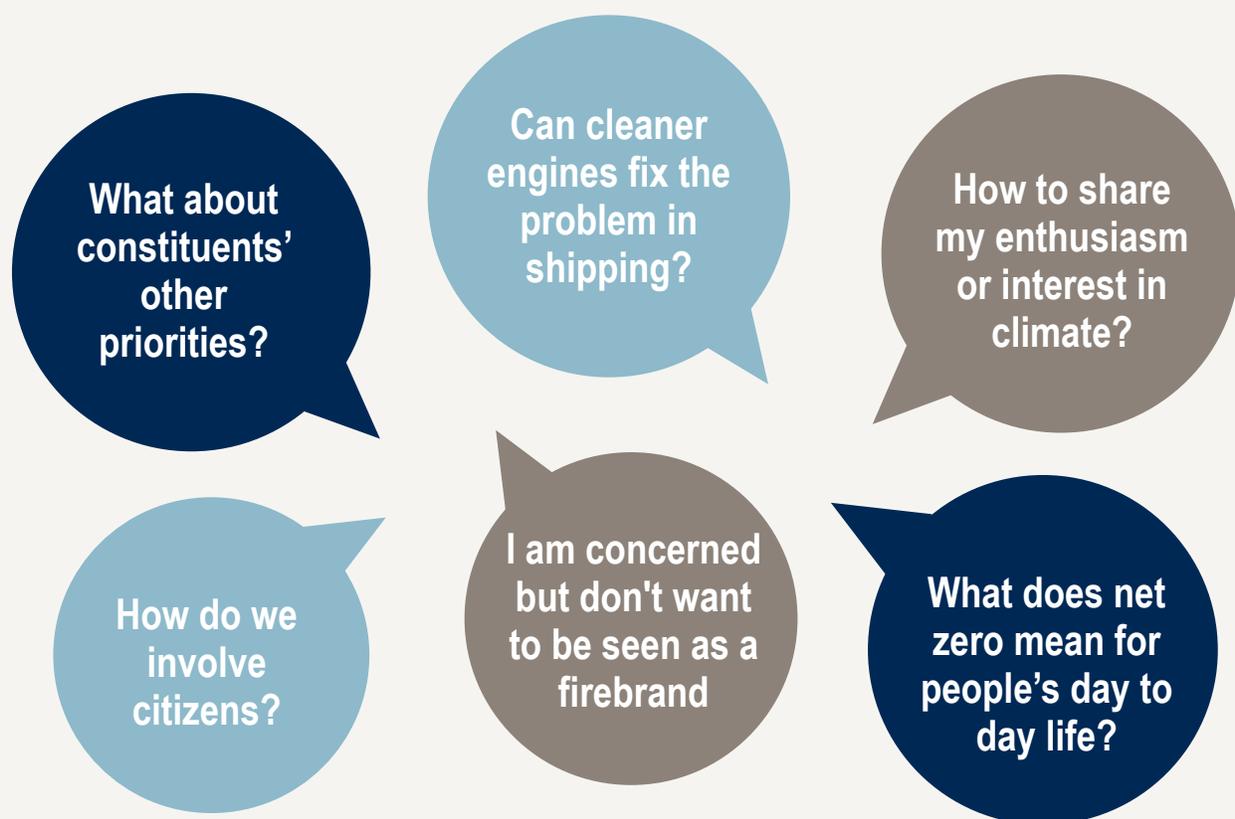
The participants included representatives from the Conservative, Labour and Scottish National Parties as well as crossbench peers. They spanned the UK from North to South and from rural to inner city.

The participants differed in the extent to which climate change was already part of their role. Some were deeply engaged in environmental committees and keen to accelerate progress. Some were grappling with the question of how to engage

constituents who regard climate change as low-priority. Others were concerned about the challenges that climate change poses to specific sectors of the economy and society.

The group expressed a diverse set of personal responses to climate change, and faced a wide range of challenges when trying to bring climate action into their parliamentary roles.

**Figure 1: What are your challenges around taking action?**



# A novel understanding of the causes of inaction

The programme focuses on the 'people factors' which can get in the way of delivering climate action across society: some people experience a lack of 'knowing how to act'; some might be confused or feel indifferent; while others strongly disagree with each other about which actions are meaningful and which are not. Using insights from neuroscience and psychology, the CAU team helped participants to analyse their real-life challenges and explore (see Figure 1):

1. How people can become divided about what actions are meaningful; and how to avoid this (Pyramid of polarisation)
2. How to connect to people's intuitive thinking and lived experience on climate change (Speak to the elephant)
3. Why scare stories often fail to drive action (Fear won't do it)
4. How the act of 'doing' leads people to become more engaged in the climate issue (Actions drive beliefs)
5. Why the language we use to talk about climate change can get in the way (Beware of Ginger-the-dog)
6. Why we find it hard to debate climate facts without 'judging' the other person (All factual debates are social)
7. How an individual's values affect what kinds of messages and actions resonate with them (Values = what resonates)

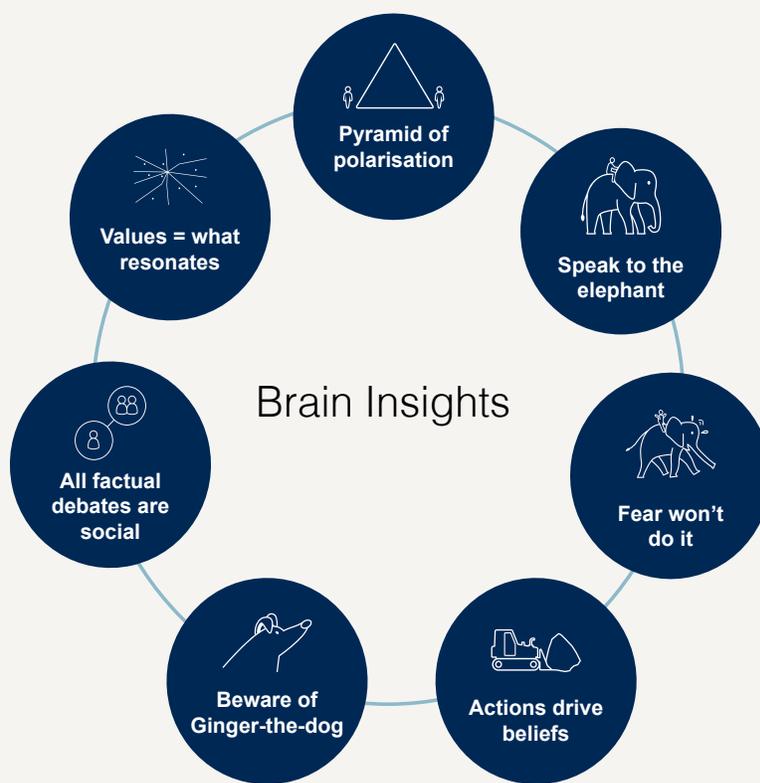


Figure 2: The Climate Action Unit's 'Seven Insights for Climate Action'

# Our aims

The overarching goal of the programme was to increase participants' agency for climate action - the sense of knowing how to bring action on climate change into their professional role and context. We did this by:

- Exploring common human barriers to effective climate action
- Enabling cross-party, cross-house collaboration
- Creating opportunities to share and listen to alternative perspectives
- Helping participants to progress their own climate action plans

## Evaluation and feedback

All participants remained with the programme for the full five sessions and worked around complicated and unpredictable parliamentary schedules to engage. They rated their experience on the programme as excellent or very good. The content material was highly valued. Crucially, all respondents said they felt able to apply what they had learned in their roles, and many were already doing so by the end of the programme.

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**This was an excellent course and we were very privileged to have so much ‘fire power’ directed our way. I very much appreciated the initiative towards Parliamentarians and enjoyed it.”**

The programme provided an opportunity to talk about climate change in an open and engaging way.

“

**I can't quite believe we managed to have so much fun, despite the seriousness of the subject.”**

It created the space for cross-party and cross-sector conversations which is not readily available in their professional context where – as one participant expressed - “there are entrenched positions and a lack of understanding of different points of view.”

“

**I learned so much, and really valued the opportunity to take a few steps back to consider the thought processes and instincts which underpin so much of our communication in relation to the most urgent question of climate change.”**

# What's next?

Following the programme, the Climate Action Unit is supporting several of the participants to work through particular challenges in more detail. We will help troubleshoot and support participants' interventions on food sustainability, low traffic neighbourhoods and engagement with constituents.

## Find out more

This programme was delivered by expert facilitators Andrew Jackson and Dr Lucy Hubble-Rose, with neuroscience & psychology input from Dr Kris De Meyer and climate science input from Prof Chris Rapley. The programme was coordinated by Freya Roberts.

The Climate Action Unit aims to transform how society acts on climate change. Find out more about our current projects on [our website](#). Want to work with us? Contact [climateactionunit@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:climateactionunit@ucl.ac.uk)



**Prof Chris Rapley CBE**

Professor of Climate Science at University College London. Former Director of the Science Museum and the British Antarctic Survey.



**Dr Kris De Meyer**

Neuroscientist & Science Communicator at King's College London. Honorary Senior Research Fellow at University College London



**Dr Lucy Hubble-Rose**

Climate Change Engagement Specialist and Expert Facilitator for the UCL Climate Action Unit



**Andrew Jackson**

Learning and Development Specialist, Management Consultant and UCL Climate Action Unit Associate



**Freya Roberts**

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