



## Climate and Health: your constituents' concerns Resource Pack 13 March 2024

### Organisers

Chair: *Dr Lesley Morrison* (retired GP): [lesleyjmorrisson3@gmail.com](mailto:lesleyjmorrisson3@gmail.com)

*Quakers in Britain*, a faith group committed to working for equality and peace: [sarahk@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sarahk@quaker.org.uk)

*Medact*, health professionals for a better, fairer, safer world



This event highlighted the symbiotic links between ways of improving individual health and planetary health: what is good for the planet is also good for each of us as individuals.

This brief resource pack offers links to relevant articles and policy suggestions which are intended to help you to respond to your constituents' health and climate concerns. The speakers, whose contact details are listed below, would be happy to meet with you to discuss any topic in greater detail.

**As you read, please consider: what can you, as an MSP, do to promote the vital connection between health policy and climate policy?**

Please take the opportunities you can, for example:

- during the scrutiny of the upcoming [Climate Change Plan](#), seeking to ensure it is ambitious in relation to how health policy can meet Scotland's emissions reduction targets, in line with our legal commitment to Scotland reaching net zero by 2045
- during the scrutiny of the Heat in Buildings Bill, supporting ambitious legislation backed by concrete deliverables to ensure the insulation of our homes and buildings and move to non-polluting heating sources, which will have positive impacts on respiratory health
- supporting the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill ensuring that all policy and delivery is focused on increasing the wellbeing of people living in Scotland, both now and in the future

## Air Pollution and Respiratory Health

*Speaker: Dr Martin Pippard (retired physician and retired Professor of Haematology):*  
[mjpippard@doctors.org.uk](mailto:mjpippard@doctors.org.uk)

- Air pollution from burning fossil fuels is a major environmental threat to health, with children and the economically disadvantaged being particularly at risk.
- Transport and heating for buildings account for over half greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland - accompanying emissions of pro-inflammatory oxides of nitrogen and sulphur, and fine particulate matter, damage lungs and other organs.
- Tackling cold, damp and poorly insulated homes and reducing urban air pollution from petrol and diesel fuelled transport will benefit health as well as mitigating climate heating.
- The opportunity to improve health and economic wellbeing should be an added spur to effective treatment for our addiction to fossil fuels.

### Resources

- [Sustainable health equity: achieving a net-zero UK. Report of UK Health Expert Advisory Group for the UK Committee on Climate Change \(2020\)](#)
  - The UCL Institute of Health Equity (IHE) was commissioned by the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) to develop recommendations that could both improve the nation's health, reduce health inequalities and achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050. Chapters 2 and 3 in particular consider the effects on health of 'Outdoor Air Pollution' and 'Housing and Buildings'.
- British Medical Journal: [Phasing out fossil fuels would save millions of lives worldwide](#). Lehtomaki H, Rao S, Hanninen O. (2023)
- [Impacts of active travel interventions on travel behaviour and health: Results from a five-year longitudinal travel survey in Outer London](#). Aldred R, Goodman A, Woodcock J (2024)

## Food and Farming

*Speaker: Pete Ritchie (CEO Nourish):* [pete@nourishscotland.org.uk](mailto:pete@nourishscotland.org.uk)

- Food links health and climate change and that's why a joined-up policy is needed

### Resources

- UN Environment Programme: [Facts about Nitrogen Pollution](#)
  - Scotland has been leading a major collaborative programme on reducing nitrogen waste in South Asia but we could be doing much more at home
- The Wellcome Trust's [explainer on how climate change affects health](#).
  - The Wellcome Trust have recently funded University of Edinburgh and Nourish to run a Good Food Nation lab for policymakers to link dietary health and climate change
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: [Global roadmap on delivering SDG 2 \(zero hunger\) while staying within 1.5°C threshold](#)

## Eco-anxiety

*Speakers:*

*Isabelle Mack* (*High School student*): contact via *Lesley Morrison*  
[lesleyjmorrisson3@gmail.com](mailto:lesleyjmorrisson3@gmail.com)

- The way to deal with anxiety about the future is to become active in your school and your community

*Dr Bridget Bradley* (*lecturer in social anthropology, University of St Andrews*):  
[bb203@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:bb203@st-andrews.ac.uk)

- Mental health effects of climate change are varied, but in some cases very extreme (suicidal ideation)
- It's not an issue that only affects young people, as Dr Bradley's research was mostly with middle-older aged people
- Community-based action and initiatives can really help, getting constituents involved in projects as a way to build community resilience
- Health and environment are intimately connected

*Resources*

- [How eco-anxiety influences climate activism and everyday life in Britain](#) Bradley, B., Hirose, R., Fitchett, H., Ranuzzi, E. & MacKenzie, G. (2021)
- [Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey](#). Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, R.E., Mayall, E.E., Wray, B., Mellor, C. and van Susteren, L. (2021)
- British Medical Journal: [Balancing climate anxiety with hope: learning from collective climate activism](#). Powell, R.A., and Rao, M. (2023)

## General resources on health, climate, and wellbeing

- [Government Officials' Toolkit produced by the Quaker United Nations Office: Findings from the latest IPCC report](#) (see especially p20):
  - In assessed regions, some mental health challenges are associated with increasing temperatures (high confidence), trauma from extreme events (very high confidence), and loss of livelihoods and culture (high confidence).
  - Hot extremes including heatwaves have intensified in cities (high confidence), where they have also worsened air pollution events (medium confidence) and limited functioning of key infrastructure (high confidence).
  - Many mitigation actions would have benefits for health through lower air pollution, active mobility (e.g., walking, cycling), and shifts to sustainable healthy diets (high confidence).
  - The benefits from air quality improvement include prevention of air pollution-related premature deaths, chronic diseases and damages to ecosystems and crops.
  - Balanced and sustainable healthy diets and reduced food loss and waste present important opportunities for adaptation and mitigation while generating significant co-benefits in terms of biodiversity and human health (high confidence).
  - Combining mitigation with policies to shift development pathways, policies that induce lifestyle or behaviour changes, for example, measures promoting walkable urban areas combined with electrification and renewable energy can create health co-benefits from cleaner air and enhanced active mobility (high confidence).
- UK Health Alliance on Climate Change: [Manifesto for the UK General Election - Five priorities to sustain our health, health and care services, and environment](#)
- British Medical Journal: [Climate friendly public health policies make economic sense](#). Robinson, EJZ (2023)
- Green Alliance [Why we need to talk about health and climate: an essay collection \(2023\)](#)
  - In this collection of essays, Green Alliance has brought together healthcare and climate experts, which sets out the broad interconnection between climate change and public health such as poor diets, racism and a struggling UK health service.
  - The essays promote a range of ideas and practical policies which showcase the need for health and climate change to be addressed jointly, rather than being treated in silos.
- Lancet-commissioned film (15 mins): [The Carbon Cost of Healthcare](#)
- [Lancet Planetary Health](#), free journal dedicated to the effects of climate on health.

## Additional reading on maintaining wellbeing in the climate crisis

[The Future We Choose: The Stubborn Optimist's Guide to the Climate Crisis](#), Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac (2020)

[Hope in the dark](#), Rebecca Solnit (2016)

[Active hope: How to Face the Mess We're in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power](#), Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (2022)