



Climate
Majority
Project

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ACTION FOR THE MAJORITY

*Steps to Mainstream
Climate Mobilisation*

Written by

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Signs of a self-destructing system are a fact of contemporary life. And the good news?

The good news is that most people now recognise this – even if they do so quietly. Humanity's survival may well depend on whether this silent majority can become a self-aware and self-preserving political force. This essay considers pragmatic steps that can aid the rise of such a mainstream movement to protect the future in Britain and the wider world.



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Introduction

Signs that the system we live in is self-destructing are a fact of contemporary life, with perhaps the clearest being climate breakdown. The good news is that most people now recognise this – even if they do so quietly. Humanity’s survival may well depend on whether this silent majority can become a self-aware and self-preserving political force. This essay considers pragmatic steps that climate-concerned people can take to aid the rise of a mainstream movement that can respond to climate change and wider civilisational crises.

Such a majority must be able to derive motivation from crisis rather than being emotionally overwhelmed. While this collective mentality has eluded us for thirty years, we can speed its rise via actions that attain three goals. First, we must expand people’s sense that change is possible by achieving meaningful goals and raising awareness of the amount of people who see the need for change. Second, we must build the emotional support needed for fuller engagement with our distressing situation. Third, we can deepen the majority’s sense of what is at stake, especially if the first two conditions are in place. By identifying actions that work towards these goals we can, cumulatively, greatly accelerate the rise of the needed movement.

This essay argues for environmentally minded actions that are real steps towards such a mobilisation. It details campaigns working towards these steps and reports that provide a rationale for them. The Climate Majority Project (CMP) fosters pragmatic conversations about climate response that work alongside efforts for economic fairness and security. We hope this feels refreshing and enlivening and that others feel inspired to paint a fuller picture of mainstream mobilisation and a sane transformation of our social system.

We are working to break a pattern noted by Roberto Unger. Visions of social change tend to be of two kinds: either exciting revolutionary ambitions which are not backed by a credible plan, or practical, doable but uninspiring incremental changes. What is really needed are achievable steps that get us to a fundamentally different and better situation than we are in now. We are not laying out a plan for global decarbonisation here, much less the eradication of all poverty. Rather, we’re outlining key actions and perspectives that can bring the majority that wants change to a new level of self-awareness and power. Then, plans for ambitious solutions might stop feeling like utopian fantasies.



Raising the profile in the face of threat

The main areas of action in brief

The first action we propose, in the face of increasing threats, is to raise the profile of climate adaptation: minimising damage, protecting the vulnerable, and building resilience. Community adaptation efforts can create climate action on a wider level than has ever been managed before. On a community level, people can be part of something large enough to change their future while surrounded by emotional support. If done right, we argue, these local efforts strengthen climate concern everywhere and make the concerns of the majority visible. Efforts to increase local resilience will almost certainly become more prominent because of the rising visibility of climate breakdown, global conflict and instability. Whether such adaptation aligns with decarbonisation is a burning question. We have mounted a campaign called SAFER, or Strategic Adaptation for Emergency Resilience, to push Britain down the wiser path at this new fork in the road.

Terms of note

SAFER

Calling it Strategic Adaptation for Emergency Resilience, the Climate Majority Project launched SAFER to make adapting to climate impacts a national priority. Meanwhile, adapting locally can build support for deeper action to stop emissions at the source.

decarbonisation

Reducing heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions with the aim of preventing further global overheating. Sometimes described as climate mitigation – though technically, mitigation is a broader category than decarbonisation.

The second form of action is serious, emotionally aware climate education. Young people are the most concerned and affected by climate breakdown. They and their teachers feel that increased climate education is a social responsibility. Our classrooms are the best places to create environments that include the missing ingredients of climate action, namely emotional support and a sense of being part of something large enough to make a difference. Such environments would deepen the concern and awareness of millions of people every year, changing the national conversation and empowering the next generation vastly more than any previous one.

Third, we need actions that activate the majority's awareness of itself as a majority. An example is the CMP's effort to increase public awareness of the **majority of businesspeople who see that far-reaching changes in the law are required** in order to decarbonise. Acting alone, most businesses cannot both fully decarbonise and remain profitable. However, they can lobby for laws that free them up to pursue responsible business and to adapt to baked-in climate chaos (while decarbonising as much as they can under current laws). Businesspeople raising their voice in this way could signal a new era in which a majority sees itself as threatened by a self-terminating economic system, and then acts.

Such campaigns could raise awareness among the majorities worldwide who hold politically important opinions, many of which appear unusual because they are not widely expressed through behaviour or public speech. Public discourse does not reflect the depth of concern about climate and economic unfairness. Nor does it reflect that most people find culture to be too consumerist and polarised while they see collapse as possible in their lifetime. Campaigns that break the silence of majorities are among the most effective in history. Early trade union organising, the end to US prohibition, and #MeToo are all examples that could be followed regarding climate change.

Before discussing these actions in detail, let's take a closer look at why the majority is not becoming motivated and therefore mobilised.

The two missing dimension of climate motivation and mobilisation

A simple framework grounded in psychological research and common sense can explain why mobilisation for deep societal change has failed and how we can remedy this failure.

Motivation to take part in collective action is highest for any individual when four conditions (or dimensions) are present:

1. **Truth and knowledge:** the need for action is clearly understood
2. **Action:** a clear, doable way of playing one's part in a response presents itself
3. **Collective efficacy:** the belief is held that one's actions can be part of something large enough to matter, and
4. **Emotional stability:** the emotional support required for taking action is in place.

If any of these is absent or weak, the motivation to act will be low. Unfortunately, collective efficacy is largely absent for climate action or economic system change. Because we are trying to tackle a civilisational threat this lack of confidence in collective efforts is not just demotivating but emotionally overwhelming. Denial, depression, anxiety and fear are a natural outcome. Thus emotional stability is also lacking, but this is seldom taken into account in the planning of climate actions. Thus two of the four dimensions of mobilisation are generally missing. This makes action feel uninspiring and the truth too hard to tell completely.

History offers us powerful lessons. In times of shared danger, when threats were clear but our capacity to respond was in question, most successful leaders knew the importance of morale and psychological strength. Churchill's wartime speeches and Roosevelt's fireside chats rallied whole nations through periods of huge overwhelm and uncertainty. Populations felt part of something, and the ugly truth was embraced. It's telling that our inner challenge has been mostly omitted from the discussion, despite being emphasised during past mobilisations, wars and trade union actions. This shows that we know we have a problem and are avoiding it at the same time.

Why massive increases in motivation are possible

The way the four dimensions of motivation interact is a lot like the three dimensions of a water heater, namely length, width, and height: if any of them is missing or too small, the container holds very little water. You also can't heat much water without time (which could be considered a fourth dimension).

Both an individual's motivation and society's mobilisation can be considered as the volume of a similar box whose dimensions were described above. None of the four dimensions are completely missing, but two of them, emotional support and a sense of collective endeavour, are critically low. There's good news, however: by boosting the weakest dimensions of this box we can unlock the greatest gains.

Those of us who are, individually, already motivated can create the right environment for others' knowledge to grow into motivation, speeding society-wide mobilisation. This involves a radical re-prioritisation of the two weakest dimensions.

A historical change

When human-induced climate breakdown was first understood, political leaders faced a dilemma: an effective collective response required economic transformation beyond what was politically conceivable. Confronted by entrenched growth imperatives and organised resistance from fossil fuel interests, they did what institutions often do when direct action seems impossible: they managed perception.

Over time, governments, media and even science communicators adopted a pattern of reassurance, emphasising gradual progress and technological optimism. The messaging aimed to preserve motivation and social stability within the limits of what could be agreed, and in doing so it avoided the full truth. The result was a narrative calibrated to be politically tolerable rather than existentially adequate: morale was maintained and mobilisation undermined.

The bloodless term 'climate change' is an example of messaging that hides the threat. Discussions around climate breakdown subtly avoid dwelling on worst-case scenarios and the full extent of the required changes. Unwarranted optimism about technology's ability to solve the problem muddies the waters. Avoidance, as ever, makes things worse. By now, many of us can clearly see that our social response isn't working, and we are quietly anxious. The attempt to build the appearance that we are marshalling a sufficient social response has left us out of touch with the facts and in denial about the need for inner work. A forthcoming CMP report examines how the four dimensions help us understand, and change, the history of climate action.

The purpose of this essay is to outline actions that can change strategy and build our sense of being part of a collective response while widening our access to emotional support. This will allow us to engage more fully with the truth and to deepen our concern without being overwhelmed. This work is the next essential step towards building a mainstream movement to protect our future.

Community and national adaptation

The first area of climate mobilisation that we focus on is strategic adaptation. Adaptation means addressing concrete threats like food shortages, and includes increasing community cohesion, improving housing stocks, and preparing for floods and fires. Local adaptation immediately makes people feel part of something large enough to make a difference, and it creates emotionally supportive groups at the community level. A nationwide spread of local action would create national awareness and support.

AMOC

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation is weakening, and its role in regulating the Earth's temperature as the the action of ocean currents keeps regions cooler or warmer is at risk.

Adaptation to climate breakdown is now necessary because society has taken a wrong path at a past fork in the road: failing to decarbonise in response to scientific warnings. The rise of global temperatures is now above the 1.5°C level, meaning science predicts that new levels of climate chaos will arrive soon. The tangible consequences that are coming will motivate people to adapt in a way that scientific warnings have not.

Our choices about *how* we approach adaptation represent a new fork in the road: if we take another wrong turn, adaptation will be approached as a replacement for decarbonisation, and this could set climate action back massively. On the other hand, adaptation action could provide crucial ingredients that have been missing from climate mobilisation – *if* done right. We must make sure that adaptation is seen as the strategic partner of decarbonisation rather than its replacement.

By *strategic adaptation*, we mean an approach that targets causes rather than just the effects of damage, and one that works over the long term. Strategic adaptation builds the physical and social resilience of communities. The strategic adaptation perspective understands that adaptation is attractive because it allows people to actually improve outcomes at a local level. In contrast, nobody can drop their personal emissions enough to change their community's future.

Widespread adaptation action would build efficacy by helping the majority see, concretely, how many other people are deeply concerned about climate breakdown. Motivation to decarbonise will be bolstered.

No amount of adaptation can offset the worst effects of climate, such as a [hothouse Earth](#) state or the [breakdown of the Atlantic currents](#) that warm Britain (AMOC). An understanding will crystallise for communities facing the facts, namely that local adaptation makes them safer, but not safe. The climate-concerned, as they adapt, will necessarily push for adaptation to be approached honestly and strategically rather than used as an excuse not to decarbonise. Powerful, vicious interests will try to steer us towards the latter approach.

We cannot let those who denied the crisis shape the story of how we protect ourselves from it. Fossil fuel companies and their allies say that adaptation will allow us to continue with business as usual and will simply offset their products' harmful effects. By ignoring adaptation we allow these interests to define a vital issue. At the same time we will lose the trust of the public by ignoring the risks to them. It's time for those communities already taking adaptation measures across the UK to become the voices defining adaptation, and indeed, the new public face of climate action.

Many effective adaptation efforts are led by people who grasp this bigger picture. Without support, however, the adaptation agenda risks getting hijacked by calls (for example, by Reform UK's deputy leader Richard Tice) for shallow efforts such as concrete floodwalls and similar short-term non-solutions.

We must promote the leadership of communities and organisations across the UK who are providing examples of how we can make our future safer. The Climate Majority Project is amplifying their lessons for other



communities and the nation. Together we aim to pressure the government to adopt a truly serious national climate resilience plan to take the place of its National Adaptation Programme, which was criticised by the government's own Adaptation Committee as 'inadequate', with progress 'either too slow, stalled, or heading in the wrong direction'.¹

Taking adaptation seriously is also essential for climate justice. The need for adaptation in the Global South can never be discussed seriously while we pretend that all consequences are avoidable. Facing that need while simultaneously decarbonising to avoid worse risks is the only route that makes sense across the globe. There is an overwhelming moral responsibility for those countries which are disproportionately responsible for past emissions to provide the resources to help others adapt to their effects. (See our recent [report](#) for details on our strategic adaptation campaign, [SAFER](#).)

Climate courage in schools

The most concerned element of the climate majority, young people, spend most of their time in school. With support, classrooms could be truly four-dimensional environments, allowing for both the necessary learning and a sense of collective efficacy while the students are emotionally supported. Unfortunately, this is generally not the case, with teachers themselves calling for more climate education and with surveys showing that only 23 per cent of students feel prepared.

¹ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-adapting-to-climate-change-2025/>

Thorough climate education is emotionally challenging and politically charged. Yet it remains essential and is demanded by the people whose opinions matter most. A full 70 per cent of students want more climate education, and young people report feelings of anxiety, powerlessness, and disconnection together with a desire for more support. Interviews with teachers reveal a lack of time and resources for the engagement this calls for, but agreement is high that the subject requires more emphasis. Four in five believe climate change is the biggest challenge facing young people. Parents report that their children raise climate issues more than any other social concern, and 72 per cent support stronger climate teaching.

Avoiding discussion of climate breakdown doesn't protect young people; it increases isolation and confusion. Such distress isn't pathological; it's a rational response to an unfolding crisis. These views are backed by bodies of scientists (across all subjects, not just ecology) asserting that climate is among the greatest threats young people face.²

There is a lot at stake. It is a test of whether we live up to our high-minded words about our responsibility to children. Schools exist to help students, as the UK's Department for Education puts it, 'adapt and thrive in the world and workplace of the future'. If we take the word *adapt* seriously, we must equip students with the practical, emotional, and cognitive skills and knowledge needed to face climate chaos and not seek to shield them from it. Nevertheless, most students will not get a chance to deeply consider the implications of climate breakdown in class. The government often cites a lack of resources, but with 700,000 students leaving school every year, that position amounts to a moral failure. If we can't find funding to help young people engage with the defining issue of their future, how can we expect them to believe society is taking the crisis seriously?

² See the British Science Association's [endorsement of better science education](#) and statements from the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#) and the [Bulletin of Atomic Scientists](#).



Photo by [Sara Cottle](#) on Unsplash

With widespread pressure from environmental groups and society at large, there is a real chance to transform climate education. What we need is a scientifically sound and innovative proposal that draws the support of grassroots activists and reaches the general population.

That is why CMP's Climate Courage Schools campaign has partnered with organised groups of students, teachers, and psychologists (see our [website](#) for a list of partners) to advocate for the government to live up to its stated responsibilities by adopting a serious climate education policy, one that includes emotional support and opportunities for meaningful action, including adaptation. Success in the classroom could point the way for society at large. Plenty of innovative schools and teachers, with minimal official support, have provided [stirring examples](#) that can be learned from. Likewise, some university lecturers have spent decades honing inspiring methods of climate education.

Here are CMP's four ambitious goals with this campaign, which incorporate insights from the four-dimensional framework and adaptation.

1

Promote emotionally literate climate education.

Every teacher, whatever their subject, should have training to address climate reality with confidence and care.

2

Require school leaders to prioritise this learning.

And thereby make students feel part of a larger effort.

3

Support schools to become community hubs for hands-on adaptation and well-being projects.

4

Facilitate the building of national networks of champions.

This is to connect schools, share learning, and scale successful approaches to well-being and resilience.

Activating the majority

Many of history's most effective campaigns made a majority of people, who held a certain belief, aware that they *actually were* in the majority. Across Britain and much of the world, a majority are not just deeply concerned about climate breakdown, they also quietly hold views that imply radical change: they distrust those in power, they feel culture is overly consumerist, and they think society could collapse within their lifetime.³ These taboo opinions have gradually become mainstream while being said only softly in public conversations. History shows that when silent majorities find their voice—as with #MeToo, Occupy Wall Street, the turn against communism

³ https://www.jean-jaures.org/wp-content/uploads/drupal_fjj/redac/commun/productions/2020/1002/enquete_collapse.pdf

is Eastern Europe, or even current waves of populism – the shift can be decisive.

We need campaigns that break silences. One example is [the 89 Percent Project](#), a global journalistic effort to make climate-concerned people aware that they are a majority. The CMP's forthcoming report 'Mobilising Majorities' points out opportunities for campaigns that spread awareness of the widespread nature of all of the concerns mentioned above.

Importantly, many powerful people who understand that business as usual is not working form part of the majority. An environmentally induced collapse hits everyone in the medium and long term. Protecting the most vulnerable is imperative, and while businesspeople who have great resources and power *may* be somewhat insulated, corrective action is ultimately in their best interest. Those who feel safe, however, should keep in mind [researchers' conclusion](#) that those who perform the basic functions of society are best equipped in collapse.⁴ Few of us are in that category. (See our [Substack](#) for more here.)

Mobilising business

The majority of businesspeople do not subscribe to the extreme idea that the profit motive alone will fix climate change. Instead, anonymous surveys show that they agree that decarbonisation will require governments to enact new laws. But businesspeople are not making determined efforts to lobby for these laws. If even a substantial minority of businesspeople expressed the majority opinion loudly, it would change the complexion of climate action. Business has a credible voice on economic matters, which would clash with the rhetoric of Trump and Farage while coming across as common sense.

What we really need is a transition lobby, which is the name of a growing network of business leaders and companies ready to name the truth and take courageous and strategic steps towards economic redesign. We recognise this is not a small ask. That's why a core part of this group's activities is to create safe spaces for people within the business world to speak freely, to hear each other, and to explore what is possible.

This effort can start with sectors already living with the consequences. Insurance underwriters and pension analysts spend their days interpreting spreadsheets that increasingly point to uninsurability and shrinking long-term returns. Recent moves by some industry leaders show a growing seriousness about climate action. Such voices, not the fossil fuel lobby, should represent 'business opinion on climate' in the media.

Internal conversations about adaptation – how to future-proof business, in other words – can begin because they support core interests such as protecting shareholder value and the continuity of operations. And they often open the door to wider conversations about the requisite macroeconomic changes.

⁴ Luke Kemp author of *Goliath's Curse*, a history of collapse, remarks that 'today, most of us are specialised, and we're dependent upon global infrastructure. If that falls away, we too will fall.'

At present, business communication rarely acknowledges the full extent of our challenge openly. Business leaders may sign open letters supporting 'carbon pricing', yet they rarely specify what price must be charged for a tonne of emissions. (Is it £10 per tonne or £300?) As such, public discussion of climate creates a safer-feeling alternate reality, one that is just close enough to reality to be credible and just far enough from reality to feel manageable. Such avoidance isn't tolerated within financial forecasting. Investors expect numbers to reflect real risk and reality. By speaking with the same rigour on climate breakdown, businesspeople could change public perception, government policy, and the terms of debate.

Politics: can we actually get laws passed?

The efforts outlined above suggest political goals that the climate-concerned majority can stand firmly behind. With enthusiastic grassroots



backing adaptation and education, measures can gain legislative support, and help build support for future environmental action. In fact, adopting these measures would serve the interests of the sitting Labour government. The case can be made that climate preparedness is a key element of national security on which Reform has shown great weakness.

These issues are especially likely to be adopted because of their appeal to 'centrist' swing voters. Issues that appeal to voters who are firmly in the grasp of one party are often neglected, while issues that appeal to voters who are liable to switch support are paid close attention. Vocal support of

these issues by the rising Greens, who present a credible threat of stealing voters, would bring national attention and likely force action.

If politicians *cannot* address these issues there is cause to question their seriousness about environmental change. After all these initiatives could be popular now and increase environmental concern later. Any politician who stands to benefit from increased environmental concern should thus support them. Any politician who does not fit this description has no right to expect support from environmentalists. If this logic is laid out vocally by environmentally concerned people, it could induce Labour to make real changes before the next election. It could be an opportunity for Labour to show vision or for Greens to pressure Labour, or both.

The world stage

Averting the worst outcomes of climate breakdown remains a challenge that no country can navigate alone. As public engagement deepens, so too will the majority's ability to demand that the UK government acts boldly and wisely in global forums. An inspiring vision of how to succeed at the widest scale can fuel the courageous action necessary here and now. The government's clean energy push is a start, but Britain can use its strengths in innovation and media savvy to greater effect globally.

The UK's global visibility means that it can do a lot to spread messages of adaptation, honesty, and education. By providing the world with visible images of Britons battening down the hatches in unison, the UK could change the international conversation about adaptation. Such scenes would encourage others who are already having similar thoughts (as Mamdani's recent election has caused shockwaves). Serious Europe-wide adaptation programmes are a very real near-term possibility. International adaptation can make the worldwide majority aware of itself.

This brings up a dreaded question: what about China and India? In fact, the populations of the whole world, including India and China, are held back from acting by doubts about whether they can achieve change rather than by a lack of concern. Global surveys find that 97 per cent of Chinese respondents and 81 per cent of Indian respondents think their government should do more to fight the climate crisis.⁵ Everywhere these numbers coexist with the sense that there is no global movement. Humans worldwide are willing to make changes if everybody else plays their part. Outwards it may sometimes seem that nobody is that bothered. Visible adaptation will break this illusion and show that, really, nearly everybody has been quietly overwhelmed. Britain can light a spark.

This also means supporting poorer countries who are vulnerable to climate chaos while being the least responsible for it. It means encouraging other rich countries to do the same. For example, Bangladesh, which Britain formerly colonised, is imperilled by sea level rise and gravely requires expanded aid. While honouring its climate debts through speech and action, the UK sets a real example. Everybody must play their part, but as the

5 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-024-01925-3>

birthplace of the industrial revolution, and with our historic legacy of high emission, Britain's role must be larger than others', and the world knows it.

Britain has an outsized global voice through the influence of its media and institutions. With this power comes responsibility to challenge institutional silence about the depth of the climate crisis and the failure of climate action. An example of what needs saying is that international climate action has become stuck. As mentioned, official rhetoric has tried to keep the population motivated but not overwhelmed by creating the appearance of a sufficient collective response. International diplomatic processes like COP, though, have never had the **power to succeed**. Experts consider it unlikely that their on-paper pledges have had a great effect on emissions. Rather, the will to change an economic system must be built at the grassroots, before top-down negotiations can bear fruit.

We are not suggesting that the prime minister will actually say all of this out loud any time soon. Rather, we are suggesting that a mainstream British climate movement could convince our government to say it. The response internationally, if we manage to speak clearly, would likely be *Thank god, somebody (who has a platform) said it*. An increasingly open conversation on these subjects would follow. This would be a great step towards the political awakening of the worldwide majority that lives inside a deteriorating system.

Conclusion

The turning point in our struggle against breakdown of our climate, culture and communities will come when the silent majority who sees these trends becomes a self-aware political force. There is no neat roadmap, but climate-concerned people can take key steps towards adaptation, emotionally aware education, and open communication about the breadth and depth of our concerns. Prioritising these ambitious but achievable acts would mobilise many who do not fit the usual activist profile, bringing them into the fold to enhance our collective sense of power and support. Environmental actions can amplify, rather than compete with, the upsurge in organisation around economic fairness. A movement driven by such concerns would allow millions to accept realities without being overwhelmed. We hope, above all, that these proposals ignite serious conversations about how the majority that wants a different future can become a historical force rather than just a statistical reality.

Contact us at connect@climatemajorityproject.com.

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“A big reason governments haven’t yet acted properly is because the people they represent haven’t yet stood up together and demanded it.”