

Influencing UK energy
and climate policy,
experiences from a think
tank

- Chaitanya Kumar

Green Alliance



Green Alliance is an independent think tank and charity focused on ambitious leadership for the environment.

Since 1979, we have been working with the most influential leaders in business, NGOs and politics to accelerate political action and create transformative policy for a green and prosperous UK.



Communicating with brevity and clarity

Community energy 2.0
The future role of local energy ownership in the UK



This slide features a white background with a title and subtitle at the top left. A blue box with the Green Alliance logo is positioned on the right. Below the text is a collage of six images: a solar farm, a wind turbine in a field, a group of people, a wind turbine, a building interior, and solar panels.



Better connected
How the UK can make the most of low cost, low carbon energy from Europe

January 2019

This slide has a dark green background. It features the Green Alliance logo in a blue box at the top right. The main text is centered, with the title in orange and the subtitle in white. The date is at the bottom.

Acting on net zero now



This slide has a white background. It features the Green Alliance logo in a blue box on the right. The title is at the top left. Below the title is a cluster of six circular icons: a yellow circle with solar panels and a wind turbine, a brown circle with a car, a light blue circle with a washing machine, a green circle with wheat stalks, and a yellow circle with a building.

Climate change, as an important policy area is now political mainstream

Lib Dems set out radical agenda for tackling climate emergency

Exclusive: Citizens' assemblies and a Green Investment Bank among key planks of election bid



Labour frontbencher backs radical plan towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2030

Labour also due to unveil new plans to build 37 new offshore wind farms

Lizzy Buchan Political Correspondent | @LizzyBuchan |
Tuesday 24 September 2019 00:18 |



DAILY BRIEFING | September 30, 2019. ☉ 9:30am

Tories target young voters with eco-plans to ensure Britain goes green by 2050

Today's climate and energy headlines:

- Tories target young voters with eco-plans to ensure Britain goes green by 2050
- UK 'needs billions a year' to meet 2050 climate targets
- Outlook improves but offshore wind is not yet subsidy-free
- Hundreds of thousands join Canada climate strikes
- It was a momentous week for climate change – but real progress is yet to come
- State of the Climate in 2018

It's also reflected in the way we talk about it

| Date (online p.. | Category | Newspap.. | Headline | |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| 24/09/2019 | Activism | The Guardian | The Guardian view on the climate youth movement: we have been warned | The idea of climate justice has been around for at least two decades. Initially it was used to describe an approach that placed inequalities between countries at the fron.. |
| | International politics | The Daily Telegraph | The fruits of green innovation must be shared as widely as possible | In theory, all of the 185 countries that have ratified the Paris climate change pact should be prepared to adopt tougher climate targets next year, yet just one thi.. |
| 23/09/2019 | Transport | The Times | The Times view on Heathrow's congestion charge for cars: Hot Air | One of the core commitments made by Heathrow as part of its bid to secure planning permission to build a third runway is that it will ensure its expansion will not .. |
| 22/09/2019 | Activism | The Sunday Times | Greenery is good, but it should not mean penury | It would be easy to regard the global school climate strikes on Friday, the biggest yet, with a claimed 4m in 163 countries taking part, as nothing more th.. |
| | International politics | Financial Times | Leaders have yet to grasp the enormity of the climate task | Leaders regularly make stirring speeches at climate summits. Then, like those who make new year's resolutions but do not stick to them for more than a few days, t.. |
| 21/09/2019 | Activism | The Daily Telegraph | This climate strike is a joke. Childish socialism won't help the environment | The environment needs protecting and the idealism of some of the protesters is admirable. But the climate strike is a joke. Its story is that all the problems in the wo.. |
| | | The Times | The Times view on the global climate strike: No Planet B | Every climate march across the world yesterday had a local flavour... Yet the demonstrators were united by one drive: to do something to halt the quickening m.. |
| 20/09/2019 | Activism | The Independent | Critics may attack Greta Thunberg, but the data and science on climate change s.. | It is unprecedented. One 16-year-old Swedish girl with a vision for a viable planet has inspired a global movement for change. The millions of people, predomin.. |
| | Transport | The Guardian | The Guardian view on transport emissions: the trouble with planes and automobi.. | In terms of their current and historic carbon emissions, and efforts to reduce them, there are huge differences between countries...In the UK, like everywhere else.. |
| 19/09/2019 | Activism | The Daily Mirror | Voice of the Mirror: We should be ashamed of our sick planet legacy | Friday will see hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets across the world to demand action on the climate crisis. This will inevitably cause some disruption but t.. |

But politics has been anything but stable

- We've had over 20 ministers (junior, SoS) responsible for the energy and climate brief in the last decade. That is unsustainable and not suitable for long term policy thinking and development.
- Evidence led policy making is experiencing a bit of crisis in confidence. Some of us have moved towards a more, as I like to say, policy led evidence making while others are too cautious of evidence and therefore too incremental.



Changing narratives on energy and climate policy

Orthodoxy

Economic growth /
Austerity / Green
crap

Nuclear and gas
(and coal) / Big 6
energy market

CCS essential for
heavy industry

Modified orthodoxy

Green growth

Large scale
renewables / GIB
ISAs / Big 60,000

“Resource
productivity”

Alternatives

Helicopter Money/
Green New Deal
(UK) / Degrowth

Decentralised /
Community energy /
public ownership

Circular economy /
access not
ownership

Where are we now with party political views on energy and climate?

- Conservative (tech, fusion, free trade, markets with a bit of regulation)
- Labour (state, state and more state)
- Lib Dems (everything that the NGOs want us to do but will never win a majority)
- Greens (a more acute problem as Lib dems)
- SNP & Plaid (ambitious in their own right, willing to act on evidence but represent fewer emissions and depend on national policy to work)

Couching our message through politics

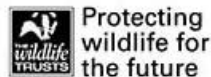
- Language matters.
- We focus on technical solutions with the current government.
- Highlight market opportunities - offshore wind is a great example
- Everybody loves a good jobs story. Local industrial strategy.
- Focusing on *raising the baseline, future proofing and doubling down*.
- Brexit as an opportunity, for eg. in the agriculture sector. Public money for public goods.
- The CCC's recommendations for eg. are a good case study of sound policy recommendations made through political nuance.
- Businesses are coming around to saying we need policy direction and civil servants hear that... but politics if ideologically driven is unhelpful to make sound policy

Building coalitions

- Ministers have immense power to change policy but they respond to pressure
- As a small interest group, we hold little sway and building coalitions becomes critical
- Net zero legislation in the UK is a good example
- Greener UK and Brexit - env bill, agriculture, fisheries, trade and clean air

The coalition

Greener UK is a group of 14 major environmental organisations, with a combined public membership of over 8 million. We are united in the belief that leaving the EU is a pivotal moment to restore and enhance the UK's environment.



Advocacy

- Communicating your ideas, policy recommendations across different possible avenues.
- Reverberating it constantly, making it irresistible.
- Communicating positions and policy ideas to officials, engaging MPs, fostering champions and drumbeat of media.
- Select committees, PMQs, constituent pressure
- Public events - organizing public forums for leaders to make announcements, share progress, communicate government posturing and sometimes take shots at opposition. Green Alliance events are sought after and leaders of all hues have spoken at our events

Escalation and opposition

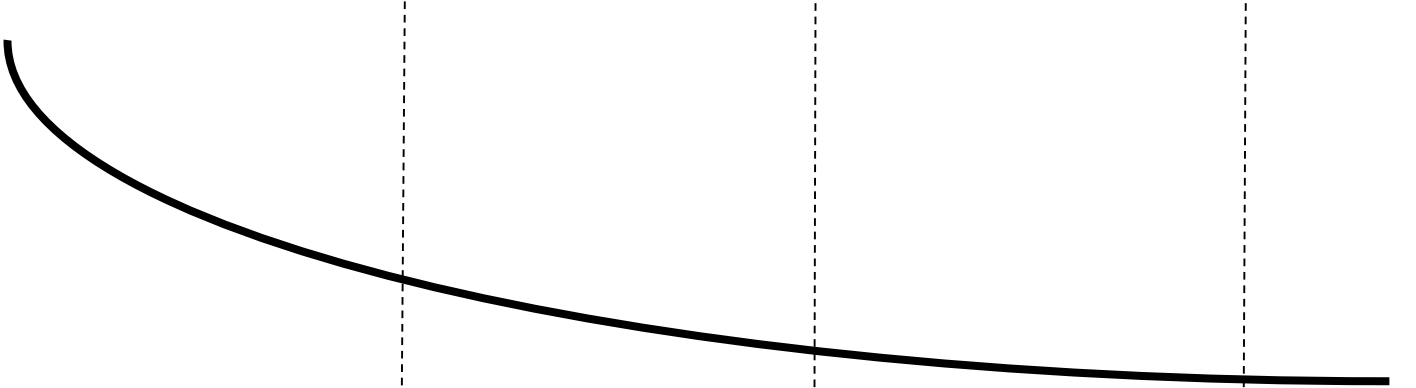
- Need for escalation and opposition when necessary
- Eg. No deal preparations. Compromises on environmental protections are no gos. If our red lines are being crossed, then we need to step up the ante.
- Willingness to make new allies and lose old ones.

**General
Opinion**

**Expert
Opinion**

**Policy
Process**

**Final
Decision**



Education
Framing
Evidence

Expert convening
/ Thought
leadership

Convening /
(policy design)

Advocacy

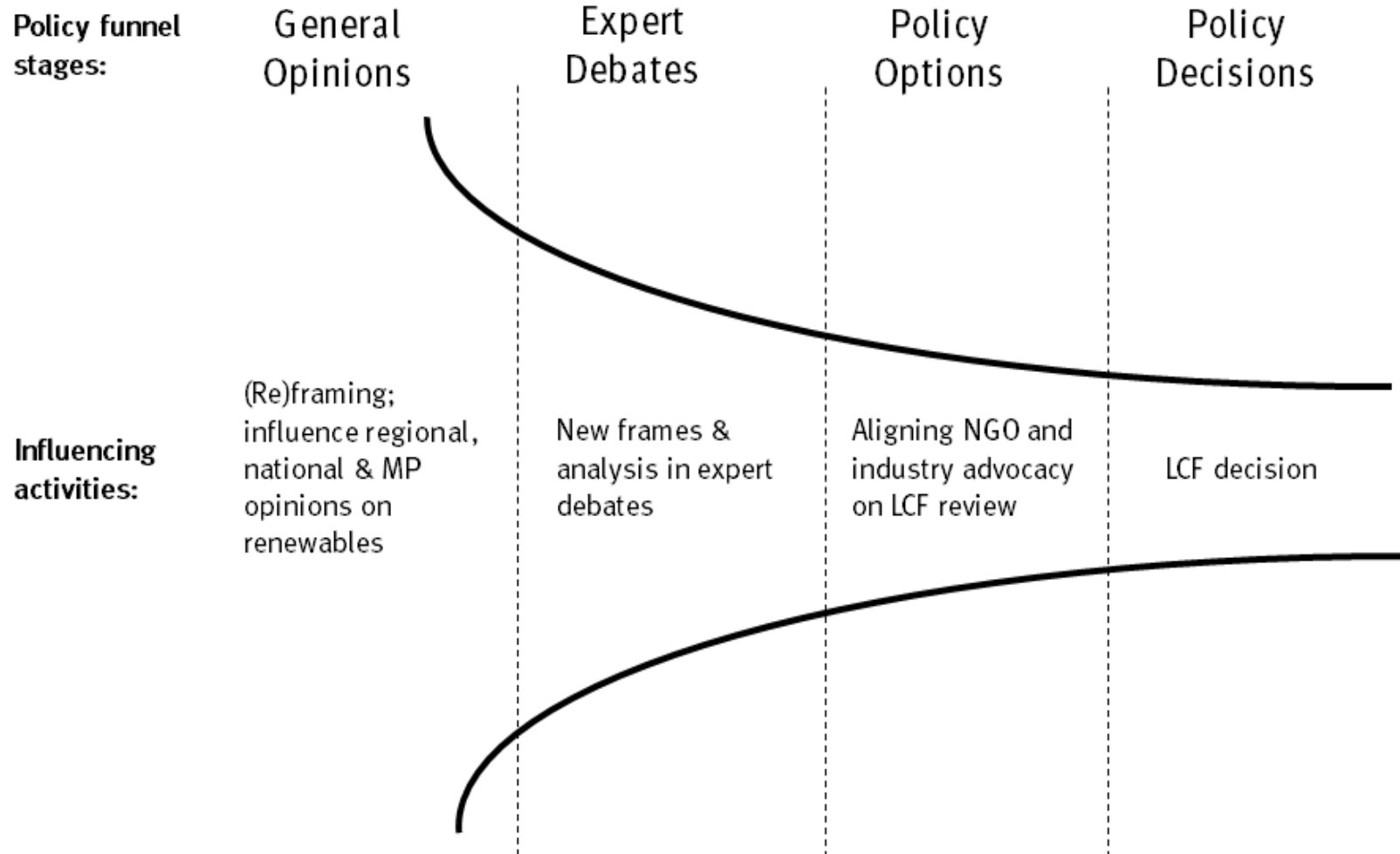
AWARENESS

ALIGNMENT

ALIGNMENT &
ENGAGEMENT

IMPACT

Example: Clean Energy Alliance influencing the Levy Control Framework



Change isn't guaranteed

- Ideology and Onshore wind - ideology and the notion of shire Tories hating wind turbines as a blight on the landscape. A 2015 commitment unnecessarily sustained.
- Lobbying and Energy efficiency - green deal burn, policy put on hiatus. Lobbying led by groups like Persimmon led to a collapse of good standards like zero carbon homes.
- External political pressures and CCS - part of the policy cull in 2015. Another case study of how not to do policy. We are now revisiting it with vigor and making sure CCS is supported.
- Brexit and the threat of unwinding years of progress on other aspects of regulation (like product standards)
- Finance and local authorities – where bottom up ambition remains shackled, unable to fiscally prioritise climate action.
- Projects like HS2, Road building, Heathrow, Fracking, Nuclear, North Sea oil and gas .. Several other issues have become politically toxic and therefore hard to apply simplistic policy analysis.

Contact

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