

Environmental Awareness

In our last meeting before the summer break, we took on the vexed question of climate change denial – refusal to take seriously the now overwhelming evidence that our planet is being warmed by man-made carbon dioxide emissions. It seemed strange to us that despite increasing evidence of warming, from droughts, heat waves and winter storms, climate change denial shows no signs of going away.

Why are people not taking the evidence seriously? In some cases, it's quite understandable. Many people are facing so many current problems that they have little time or energy to think about problems that may not directly affect them for years. But in other cases, it seems more sinister. Some groups are actively disputing the fact that our planet is warming up, or claiming that it has nothing to do with fossil fuels.

For many years, oil and gas companies have been putting out misleading messages about the causes of climate change. It's easy to see why – admitting their role in causing global warming would seriously dent their profits. Some social media influencers have found that denying climate change can be a very profitable activity – both in terms of gaining large numbers of followers, and in some cases, earning actual cash. Perhaps more surprisingly, some politicians have sought to deny the reality of climate change, presumably because they think that telling voters there's nothing to worry about will gain them short-term electoral advantage.

How can we combat the false information coming from some politicians and media influencers, and make sure the real facts get heard? It's not an easy question. Confrontation is not the answer – no-one likes to be told they're wrong. Diehard deniers are impossible to convince anyway. But most people are open to a reasoned discussion, and are happy to listen to people with first-hand experience of the problems climate change can bring. A good example to follow would be the Kendal citizens' jury, which provided the opportunity for ordinary people with a variety of views and backgrounds to discuss climate change, and what individuals and their local authority should be doing about it.

Our group's meetings resume in September. If you'd like to know more about us, please email me at johnpleakins@gmail.com.

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