

# Zero Carbon Harrogate at COP26

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A daily report from Zero Carbon Harrogate supporter Philip Purkis in Glasgow.

## Monday 8 November

Just arrived in Glasgow. All a bit bewildering! But the train ride over Settle Carlisle line was great. The Beacon of Hope welcomed me at Central Station, a large wooden man sculpture.

High security means lots of barriers and closures but I'm determined to find my way around even if I have to resort to my Zero Carbon Harrogate press card! I'm currently exploring the Innovation Zone at Pacific Quay. Next stop the Green Zone.



## Tuesday 9 November

An electric bus conveyed me from Paisley today. I feel I know my way around now and on arriving at Govan Road I helped two ladies find the Green Zone exhibition (the only official venue that admits members of the public). They were from a Swedish retailer that has achieved net-zero and were delegates, so allowed into the Blue Zone where all the negotiation is going on. They were disappointed to have missed Barack Obama who also arrived the day before. They didn't expect to meet Greta but were clearly proud of what she has achieved.



The Imax cinema was showing a stunning National Geographic film of an expedition to Everest to place the highest ever weather stations (above 8000 metres), take ice cores from high glaciers and sediment cores from a lake near base camp. Tom Matthews a British academic and expedition member attended the film and took part in a Q&A with the Glasgow audience and internationally online. Early results can be found on the National Geographic website and also live data on weather on the mountain. The rate of ice loss from the "Himalayan Water Tower" is much higher than expected, some of it thought to be due to

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solar heating and sublimation. Hundreds of millions of people depend on the meltwater from the Himalayas and this is threatened by climate change.

I left the Q&A worried by what I had heard. Elsewhere on the Pacific Quay exhibitions I found a broad range of commercial and voluntary groups promoting their services - a no-dig agricultural consultancy based in Harrogate, offshoots of investment companies which assess ESG quality of companies and funds, heating boiler makers promoting hydrogen (without expressing any concern about its source), UPS parcel delivery by a narrow electric assist four-wheel van classed as a bicycle and able to use cycle lanes, and JCB with their hydrogen powered internal combustion engine driven back hoe digger. Hydrogen is burnt in the cylinders at a 100:1 dilution to promote cool combustion and reduce NOX. Finally, I asked the people on the Australian Wildlife Conservancy if they often found themselves apologising for their government. I'm sure it was an unfair question but felt compelled to ask it.

## Wednesday 10 November

This morning I used a train line to the city centre that was originally a canal, converted in the 1880's. My destination was the splendid Corinthian Club where a finance company was hosting a lavish event for companies, banks, & investors to discuss the finer points of stranded/impaired assets, carbon trading and outdated business models.



We were warned gravely to consider freeriding negative externalities. The speaker, an advisor to the Bank of England, picked up a glass tumbler to illustrate the risks of not building in external environmental costs of production. As carbon taxes are introduced the true cost must include not just the raw material and energy (glass & gas), but also the wider carbon impact cost. Companies that neglect to start doing this now will fail.

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There were cautions about the overuse of carbon credits, as a fig leaf for continued dependence on fossil fuels. One opinion was that their use should be limited to a 5% offset.

Returning to the Green Zone I attended an event sponsored by National Grid which showcased the opinions of young people. A panel of four people aged around 10 to 18 talked to experts and voiced their concerns, facilitated by Robert Llewellyn (of “Fully Charged” the e-car show on YouTube). During the live panel discussion protesters arrived and unfurled a banner condemning National Grid for promoting fossil fuels and particularly fracked gas in the USA.

The evening event had four activists talk passionately about inequality, oppression and white privilege as a background to climate change. One academic described climate change as wicked and unfair in the way it affects poorer countries.

Finally, prize winners for the “Climate Challenge Cup” were announced. Project finalists included future food, regenerative farming, greenway trails, resilience, digesters/composting, hidden environmental histories, concrete recycling, and heat equity in bus shelters. These were all from the USA and UK. One winner was Concrete4change, a UK project to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> production in cement manufacture by recycling old crushed concrete.

That ends my three days at COP26. I return to Harrogate with a lot to think about.

Philip Purkis