



Global wildfires

Evidence of man-made global warming?

The recent wildfires across the globe seem to have caused climate change deniers to double down on 'it is not caused by humans' narrative and even provoked suggestions we back away from measures to slow carbon emissions towards 'net zero'. So, are the wildfires caused by man-made carbon dioxide emissions? The short answer is yes.

We know from Earth's past geological history (see Chris Packham's excellent 'Earth' series on BBC) that the Earth has had periods of extreme cold and warming. This is largely linked to the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

In the past, geological and biological processes like vulcanism have pushed the Earth's climate one way or another.

This time, the increase in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is being driven by us burning fossil fuels.

Basic Physics tells us that if more carbon dioxide goes into the atmosphere the Earth gets warmer which is what is happening now despite what anyone might say about local weather variations.

Some confuse weather with climate so a local warming or cooling event (e.g., the 1976 drought in the UK or 1962/3 cold winter) is part of natural climate variation but the overall global trend is undeniably upwards (currently averaging +1.2C above pre-industrial levels and rising). The warming makes extreme weather events more likely and the chances of an extreme weather event like the wildfires this summer would have been close to zero in the past with lower carbon dioxide levels: the wildfires (and other extreme weather events) are down to us and will get worse.

What can/should we do about it?

Some people cope with the prospect of a very uncertain world in the next few decades by choosing to ignore the evidence, cling to denial stories promoted by some parts of the media or, perhaps understandably, think 'what I do as an individual makes no difference, so I'll carry on with my current behaviours'.

Some take non-violent direct action like 'Just Stop Oil'.

What Martlesham Climate Action is trying to do through community-based education and advice is a middle, pragmatic way based on getting people to take personal action to reduce their own carbon footprints. This helps reduce the very real fear that you can feel when you understand what the scientific evidence is telling us and doing something is far better than nothing for your mental health.

As more people act to reduce their own carbon footprints it will make a real difference and once you start, you find you can reduce your footprint in all sorts of ways (have a look at our website for ideas).

Without stronger government incentives, it can be harder to change behaviours and some sacrifices might be needed but ultimately the test I apply is: can you honestly face younger generations in your family and tell them 'I did my best'?