

“Shouldn’t you study and become a climate scientist rather than play truant?”

With only [11 years](#) left to prevent irreversible damage due to climate change, action is needed now, regardless of whether we are old enough to train to be a climate scientist. Whilst climate scientists are in high demand and continue to bring hope through discoveries and solutions which can help both humankind and the environment, we are all qualified to demand change from the government. Climate scientists can present the facts and offer solutions but the decision to implement these solutions and listen to the facts is ultimately made by those in power, and by lobbying politicians, as the climate strikers have done so effectively, the urgency to act upon the facts is increased.

RESPONSE: “The science has been done. We know how to prevent a climate catastrophe. The issue now is making our government act on the science, and, through our strikes, this is what we are doing.”

“Protesting is pointless as the government are too preoccupied with Brexit to take any notice.”

It is true that our government’s preoccupation with an introspective issue based entirely upon human constructs is an obstacle and even a distraction from the larger and global issue of the climate crisis, however, in May 2019, [27% of Britons](#) ranked the environment as one of the three most important issues facing the country, an increase from 11% on the same date in 2018. The growing awareness of our impact upon the planet cannot be denied- it is evident in the opinion polls, the news coverage, the surge of climate documentaries- and extends far beyond the UK borders. Brexit- despite how we may sometimes feel- is impermanent and negotiable, the climate crisis is not.

RESPONSE: “Climate change is the greatest crisis we have faced. Protest has long been the most effective method of forcing change. Through protest, we will force government action.”

“Why should the UK change when other countries are more culpable?”

The UK has the [48th highest](#) carbon dioxide emissions per capita in the world, higher than those of countries with similarly sized economies such as France and India. Moreover, because of our unique and lasting contribution to climate change since the Industrial Revolution, the UK must compensate for emissions spanning many years. As a developed and affluent country, we are better disposed to make changes to aid the environment, whilst also being one of the countries least affected by climate change at present, while poorer countries in the Global South are already suffering. Beyond this, since all countries share the same planet, any effort against climate change will require every country to participate; it is simply the most culpable who will have the biggest changes to make.

RESPONSE: “The guilt of countries like China and the US should not be our excuse. We must promote international action, yes, but this change begins within our country. As a developed and affluent nation, our actions can and must set a global example.”

“The green agenda is radical and unrealistic; it couldn’t be implemented.”

Criticism of the Green New Deal and the green agenda as a whole tend to pertain almost exclusively to economic scepticism- can we afford it? The costs of inaction will put our civilisation at risk; either we can spend more to adjust our way of life to make it compatible with the planet’s survival, or we can wait until the climate crisis dictates the collapse of society and with it, money. Already almost [2% of US GDP](#) is lost in weather-related disasters; it is easier to implement changes more slowly over a longer period of time, but there if we resist there will come a time where change is forced upon us.

RESPONSE: “The focus of the ‘green agenda’ is to prevent the exploitation of fossil fuels, cut emissions, and fund green technologies. Yes, it will involve change, but if we do not implement this agenda, then ultimately, change will be forced upon us as climate-related extreme weather events destroy our society and economy. It is not a threat to our society; it is our last hope to save it.”

“A group of children skipping school won’t change the way the world works.”

In the absence of governmental action and more realistic regulations, school children around the world are using the only power they have to express their distress at how the climate crisis is progressing. Despite being unable to vote and having little economic power, it is the younger generation who will inherit a planet which has been knowingly abused by older generations; our survival and that of coming generations will depend upon our ability to repair and limit the damage to our planet. Rather than wait to inherit this dystopian future, young climate strikers are showing enthusiasm to change our course. Through global recognition and changing opinions, it is clear that the millions of climate strikers in [over 120 countries](#) are already challenging the status quo, and the movement is just getting started.

RESPONSE: “We, millions of strikers in over 120 countries, have missed a week of school to make our voices heard in a society where the young are ignored. We have succeeded in making Britain declare a climate emergency, and we have forced the climate crisis to the front of people’s minds. But, no, the voices of children are not enough; we need your support too. This is why Greta Thunberg has called for a general strike on September 20th.”

“The government are already making changes, and change takes time.”

Theresa May’s parting gift of a pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions to [net zero](#) by 2050 (complete with a get-out clause enabling the UK to abandon the target in five years) cannot disguise her government’s lack of commitment to the environment. From supporting fracking to blocking onshore wind farms, the government have repeatedly made choices which increase pollution whilst setting increasingly

ambitious and increasingly distant targets; accordingly, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) has [criticised the government](#) on several occasions for not doing enough to remain on track to meet targets. The change is not expected to be instant, but lasting change will require a comprehensive strategy without concessions for oil magnates of airline companies.

RESPONSE: “The changes they are making are not enough. If we are to prevent the climate crisis from becoming irreversible, we need net zero emissions by 2025. The government can achieve this; they are simply choosing not to.”

“If you really cared about the environment you wouldn’t have driven here to strike/be eating animal products/ buy new clothes...”

Whilst many climate strikers make personal choices which minimise their impact upon the environment, they also acknowledge that the choices of each individual have a very limited impact upon a planet upon which 7.7 billion people live. Some lifestyle changes are easy to adopt, others are harder, hence many people do not make these choices without encouragement and education. To prevent irreversible damage due to climate change, change is needed from all corners of society and, for this to happen, the government must lead from the top. Only the government can increase taxes on industries which cause the most pollution, only the government can provide incentives to businesses and consumers to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions. By striking, we unite and collectively express our desire for change through a medium which is more difficult for the government to ignore. An individual choosing to go vegan or waste-free will not communicate this sense of urgency.

RESPONSE: “Unfortunately, individual changes make next to no impact when 100 businesses cause 71% of global emissions. If we want change, we must hold these main perpetrators to account through active protest. Cycling and buying second-hand, whilst positive, will not affect this change and will not stop the climate crisis.”

“There wouldn’t be so many strikers if this event took place at the weekend.”

Although school strikers are frequently involved in weekend protests and will often continue to strike during the school holidays, by striking on a Friday, strikers sacrifice a day of school because disobedience receives more attention from the media and in politics. Despite attempts to typecast school strikers as truants, they are in fact the students who have taken time to listen during science lessons and have understood the gravity of our ecological predicament; for these students, missing a day of school is a sacrifice rather than a bonus. The movement demands that we are not ignored, so by making a sacrifice, we are demonstrating our commitment to the cause in the only way we can.

RESPONSE: “Missing school is not a bonus for us; it is a sacrifice. And it is by this sacrifice, by forfeiting our education, that we can actually make the public take notice of us. As children, refusing to go to school is the greatest action we can take and therefore the best way to make our voices heard.”