



LowCVP's Andy Eastlake

Paris agreement a clear signpost to a low carbon future

The historic agreement achieved at the end of last year in Paris at COP21 sent the clearest possible signal that we're heading for a low carbon, fossil-free future. Nearly 200 world governments – including all the world's leading countries – agreed a deal to cap global warming at 'well below' two degrees above pre-industrial levels. (In a more powerful outcome than had been expected by many, the final text referred to the aim of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees.)

The deal was hailed by some as 'the beginning of the end for fossil fuel industries'. With the agreement signed by all the world's leading countries and trading blocs, COP21 sent a direct signal to the markets about the need to urgently invest in the technologies, products and processes that will deliver a low carbon future.

Oliver Letwin, the UK's Cabinet Office Minister for Government Policy, clearly took this message on-board. At a recent hearing by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) into air quality, he described the move to low and zero-emission vehicles as 'a colossal opportunity for Britain to play a leading part in an industrial revolution'.

Letwin was invited to speak to the committee as a result of his recent appointment to be chair of a new inter-departmental ministerial 'Committee on Clean Growth'. The group was set up late last year to discuss issues relating to air quality and decarbonisation where these require attention across several government departments. The establishment of the committee was partly a response to the VW emissions scandal and rising concerns about the health-damaging effects of air pollution in several of Britain's cities.

The outcome of Paris was obviously encouraging for those of us working to deliver a low carbon future. It's important to remember, though, that road transport is also the largest contributor to local pollution and that while many of the policies designed to deliver lower carbon also deliver lower emissions of all sorts, we need to make sure that this is always the case.

That's why the LowCVP is partnering with the Clean Air Alliance and other organisations concerned with air pollution to work out the areas we agree upon and where there may be tensions. We're kicking-off the initiative with a Parliamentary event in early March and look forward to further constructive collaboration thereafter.

Paris sent a very clear message about the need for us to move fast to tackle the vital, long-term challenge of climate change, but we must also make sure we don't take our eyes off more immediate, related issues along the way.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.lowcvp.org.uk

LowCVP on Twitter: @theLowCVP and @aeastlake