

Political responses to climate change

Introduction

This presentation introduces some of the background information needed by students before they can embark on either the activity called 'International decision making' or the activity called 'Debating the response'.

The presentation

You can use the presentation to introduce key terms and ideas, then ask students to study the related section of the textbook and answer the questions.

Answers to the questions in the textbook are provided in the textbook part of the A2 section of the Nuffield 'Science in Society' web site.

Slide 2: The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol is discussed on page 131 of the A2 textbook. Question 72 is related to this passage of text.

The official Kyoto Protocol web site is at:
http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php

For Q & A about the Kyoto Protocol see:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4269921.stm>

Slide 3: Stern Review

Economic aspects of the debate about climate change are increasingly important. There is brief reference to the review on pages 129-130 of the A2 textbook. See also questions 70 and 71.

For the Stern Review including a short Executive Summary, see:
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview_index.htm

For the Stern Review at a glance see:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6098362.stm>

Slide 4: Cost-benefit analysis

Students are not expected to go into the detailed technicalities of cost-benefit analysis but they should appreciate why it can be a difficult exercise to carry out and why the conclusions can be controversial. The Stern Review, for example, has been criticised for adopting a discount rate that gives big weight to benefits that will not be realised until far into the future.

How Science Works

Hb Decision makers aim to make evidence based decisions, taking into account factors that include: technical feasibility, benefits expected, economic cost, risks to human health and wellbeing, risks to the environment. Cost-benefit analysis is the process of estimating the size of the costs and the value of the benefits as a way of determining the best policy option. A cost-benefit analysis should consider which individuals or groups receive the benefits, and which suffer (or pay) the costs.

Hd Some decisions about science and technology may need to comply with national and international agreements, legislation and agreed principles such as sustainable development.

He In practice much of the evidence available to decision makers is often uncertain. It is not possible to make accurate predictions about the future. The system may be too complex; some issues may not yet be well understood.

Hf Decision makers are influenced by the mass media, by special interest groups and by public opinion as well as by expert evidence. Decisions about science and technology may be influenced by decision makers' prior beliefs or vested interests, which can affect their interpretation and evaluation of the evidence.

For background information about cost benefit analysis see:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/cba.htm>

Slide 5: EU policy

For background information about EU approaches to climate change see:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/home_en.htm

Slide 6: Emissions trading

DEFRA provides information about UK and EU emission trading schemes on its web site:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/trading/index.htm>

Slide 7: UK government policies

For background information about UK approaches to climate change see:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/>

Slide 8: The 2009 Copenhagen conference

The summary in this slide comes from this Guardian web page:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/may/01/q-and-a-copenhagen-summit>

This slide will need updating or replacing once the conference has taken place.

The official web site for the conference is at:

<http://en.cop15.dk>

There is a climate quiz on the web site which students can use to test their knowledge of the issues. Participants have to register and log-on to try the quiz but this is free.

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