



Zemo Partnership's Andy Eastlake It's a fair COP, now are you sitting comfortably?

Are you sitting comfortably after last week's epochal COP summit in Glasgow? If so, then maybe our targets aren't ambitious enough!

The UK Government affirmed its earlier proposal that all new heavy goods vehicles in the UK will be zero emission by 2040. Combined with the 2030/5 phase-out of petrol and diesel cars and vans which was announced earlier, (and expected consultations on other categories too) means the end to sales in the UK of any road vehicles with harmful tailpipe emissions in the next two decades. A transformational period for the way we move around is truly upon us.

I'm aware that for many stakeholders, these targets represent a real challenge and certainly don't feel 'comfortable'. But the purpose of long-term targets – particularly in the context of this unprecedented global emergency – shouldn't be comfortable but must test the limits of what's practically possible and achievable.

Ambitious targets must feel uncomfortable now if we're to drive innovation, keep up the pressure and momentum for change. Look, after all, at how we were able to innovate and roll-out Covid vaccines at an unprecedentedly rapid rate in response to the global pandemic emergency.

It's right and proper to know what you're doing tomorrow and to feel 'comfortable' about it, but if you're clear today about what you'll be doing in 15 years' time then you probably aren't trying hard enough!

When Zemo Partnership (as LowCVP) started working in 2002 we didn't know what a ULEV was; no electric vehicles were available and hybrids were identified as the pathway to fuel cell vehicles, seen as the most practical zero emission solution. (See the 'Powering Future Vehicles Strategy', published that year - including a foreword from a very youthful-looking Tony Blair!)

Around that time, we set ten and twenty-year targets that, plainly, we didn't know how we would meet. But we had commitments from government and the support of industry to collaborate and work to get us there.

In terms of COP26, there was disappointment in some areas, of course, that several targets and commitments were watered-down or weakened at the eleventh-hour. But in other areas like zero emission vehicles, COP will help to facilitate the tension needed to agree medium and long-term targets that are not 'comfortable' but do require accelerated innovation and heightened ambition. To create this tension, we need the activists outside COP's Blue Zone with megaphones, just as we need industry involved and engaged, and pressured to find new ways make accelerated progress.

With the road transport targets now clearly in place, the real work begins now to establish the staging posts and actions needed to deliver on the ambition, to do everything we can today without stifling innovation and while being prepared to go as far and as fast as possible as we focus on what this is all about; cutting greenhouse emissions today, tomorrow and all the way to 2050.

Good COP? Bad COP? Find out what leading representatives of Zemo and our partners think at our on-line event on 23 November (Members only).

Visit: https://www.zemo.org.uk/news-events/events,zemo-webinar-good-cop-bad-cop-what-does-cop26-mean-for-us_3921.htm

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