On Thursday, October 20, 2022, the IHSS Climate Emergency Working Group and the Centre for Globalisation Research at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) hosted the event “Communicating the Climate Emergency: From Knowledge to Action”. The panel included Professor Sam Fankhauser (University of Oxford), Dr Candice Howarth (London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE)), Dr Alyssa Gilbert (Imperial College London), Leo Hickman (Carbon Brief), and Dr Natalia Efremova (QMUL and Deep Planet). The discussion focused on the obstacles and opportunities of communicating the climate emergency to policymakers, the general public, and local communities.

In her opening remarks, [Dr Tibisay Morgandi](https://www.qmul.ac.uk/law/people/academic-staff/items/tmorgandi.html), Chair of QMUL’s IHSS Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG), explained the mandate of the working group, namely fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange between schools within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), and organising a range of public engagement initiatives. She then explained that this was the fourth public event organised by the group contributing to the public debate on the climate emergency and that this event focused on suggesting ways to move from knowledge to action. She also mentioned that she is leading the development of a series of podcasts based on these events, which will enable the CEWG, the IHSS, and the HSS Faculty at Queen Mary to become part of a broader conversation on the climate emergency with stakeholders, including NGOs and local communities.

[Dr Caterina Gennaioli](https://www.qmul.ac.uk/busman/staff/academic/profiles/gennaiolic.html), Director of the Centre for Globalisation Research and Member of the CEWG, explained the motivation behind the event. She explained that the discussions within the CEWG revealed that the biggest challenge faced by researchers working on climate change is to find ways to communicate their scientific knowledge effectively to decision-makers, the industry and the public more generally. She emphasised that this is crucial to ensure governments, private actors, and society adopt appropriate policies and behaviours to reach the net zero goal. She added that this event brought together top experts on bridging the gap between academics and decision-makers.

[Professor Sam Fankhauser](https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/person/professor-sam-fankhauser) spoke about how to communicate the issue of climate change to policymakers or enterprises. He emphasized the importance of being rational and evidence-based when discussing the topic but also acknowledged the need to address emotions on both sides of the argument. He also shared examples of messages that resonate well with policymakers, such as emphasizing the knowledge and actions available to address specific problems, showcasing successful policies from other countries, or highlighting the effectiveness of climate change legislation.

[Dr Candice Howarth](https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/profile/candice-howarth/) discussed her work on translating evidence into decision-making in relation to climate change. She highlighted the importance of understanding climate change perceptions in order to develop effective communication approaches and explained that information and evidence alone might not be enough to change behaviour. She also discussed the concept of co-production, bringing together multiple stakeholders with different perceptions, interests, and priorities to develop unified solutions to the climate problem. As part of PCAN activities, Dr Howarth described the idea of climate commissions, city-wide partnerships bringing together local actors from the public, private and civic sectors and working as independent voices to help galvanize climate action.

[Dr Alyssa Gilbert](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/people/a.gilbert) discussed her role and the importance of translating scientific knowledge and expertise into a language that can be understood by people outside of academia. She highlighted the various ways research can have an impact on climate change, such as through direct applications and improving the basic understanding of all stakeholders. She also emphasized the importance of planning, carefully choosing the best ways to reach different audiences, and working with stakeholders who can be change-makers. As an example of the impact of this approach, Dr Gilbert described her significant work on the ban on single-use plastics in the UK and Europe. She also encouraged the audience to think about how they can use their own knowledge and communication skills to make an impact on climate change.

[Dr Natalia Efremova](https://www.qmul.ac.uk/busman/staff/academic/profiles/efremova.html) discussed the challenges of communicating climate change solutions to farmers and other stakeholders in the agriculture industry. She explained that her company, Deep Planet, works in four research fields, namely precision agriculture, water scarcity, forest preservation, and climate change mitigation. She provided examples of case studies, such as working with wine growers to predict yields, monitoring deforestation for an essential oil company, and regenerative grazing for a conservancy in Kenya. Dr Efremova emphasized the importance of using complex methods and satellite imagery, combined with AI and machine learning tools, to provide solutions to growers and farmers across the globe. She also highlighted the importance of building trust with farmers by providing them with verified data and predictions.

The last speaker, [Leo Hickman](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/leohickman), discussed his experience as a journalist at the Guardian, reporting on climate change for over 20 years. He reflected on how climate science first made it to the front page of UK national newspapers in 1990 with the publication of the first IPCC report and its political response. He also described the emergence of climate scepticism in the media and the use of false balance in articles, where the views of a small group of sceptics are given equal weight to the overwhelming consensus of scientists. He discussed the work of Carbon Brief, a specialist website, focusing on clear, data-driven articles and graphics and using different communication styles to reach different audiences and improve the understanding of climate change.

During the Q&A session, the speakers discussed their optimistic and pessimistic scenarios for the world in 10 years. They noted that solutions to climate change, such as renewable energy and electric cars, will become the norm. They stressed the importance of society becoming more conscious and self-regulating in its actions to reduce the negative impact on the planet. They also expressed concerns about the acceleration of the climate crisis and the need for more progress in reducing emissions. They discussed the difficulty of using a culture war to divide people on environmental issues and the role of trusted authority figures in communicating the urgency of climate change. They also touched on the importance of communicating uncertainty in climate science to the public and decision-makers and the need for a strategic approach when communicating about climate change.