



I recycle, isn't that enough?

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Recycling is important and something every single one of us should do (see the question on plastic pollution to learn more about the issue of plastic). But the reality is, that even if every plastic bottle, every tin can and every cardboard box was recycled, we would still be heading towards climate catastrophe.

As individuals or more specifically 'consumers' there is only so much we can do. This is not to say that we should not make behaviour changes – we all need to recycle, reduce our meat consumption, avoid single use plastics and walk/ cycle wherever possible, as well as many other actions – but we need to understand that this alone will not solve anything. Where individuals can enact the most powerful change, is not through acts of consumption, but through building social power which can be leveraged to bring about more systemic changes.

This can be illustrated with the example of wanting to reduce local air pollution. As an individual you can buy a bike and cycle or walk more, which will help reduce your impact on local air pollution. However, by joining or starting a campaign to reduce local road traffic and build the infrastructure that will make active forms of transport easier and safer, you will have a much more significant impact. This is just one example, you could join a local energy cooperative (e.g., [Bristol Energy Cooperative](#)), a car club, repair group, or tenants' organisations. You can speak up about the climate crisis at parent teacher association meeting or at your place of work. You could even join political parties, or environmental activist groups (e.g., Extinction Rebellion, City to Sea or Friends of the Earth).

If this is not something you are comfortable doing, then you can get involved and make a difference by other means. One of the best ways is to get informed about the climate and ecological crisis. With a 24-hour news cycle, the climate crises can often get forgotten – the [media is still failing](#) us when it comes to reporting on the climate crisis. But learning about the climate crisis on its own will not do much good, the key here is that you need to talk about it. Talk to friends, family, colleagues, even strangers – talk to anyone and everyone who will listen. The more it becomes an issue, the more pressure governments will feel to act.

Another thing you can do is vote for the climate. The main parties have very different opinions and strategies for how we can reduce emissions, some better some worse. It is vital that during elections we learn about the different parties' commitments and use this information to guide how we vote – at all scales, local and national. There is often a wealth of resources available to help you compare the environmental credentials of the different parties. For example during the 2019 election, carbon brief [published a guide](#) highlighting the climate commitments of each party, whilst [Greenpeace](#) and [Friends of the Earth](#) also

released league tables for each party. Climate change will not be your only issue of concern but should factor into your choice.