

“Most climate change related actions advocated by Government are either window dressing or money making, or both,” was the view of almost 70 per cent of respondents to an environmental attitude survey by the Deming Forum.

The majority of respondents also stated that, whilst they cared about climate change, they were not convinced that society as a whole was tackling the challenge in the right way. There appear to be so many unforeseen consequences and so much conflicting information that it is impossible to make balanced judgements on the subject.

Other key findings included:

- A general commitment to green issues, with over 75% prepared to make sacrifices to reduce their ‘carbon footprint’, balanced by:
- A statement of scepticism by the majority that anything they do as individuals will make a genuine difference to global warming
- Doubts that all recycling initiatives really do influence the reduction of carbon emissions (some schemes appear to have a net cost in energy and carbon)
- A common belief (circa 65%) that the global warming debate involves more ‘hype’ than science
- Widespread concern that many of today’s Green political initiatives may lead to tomorrow’s catastrophes – with the knock-on effect of bio-fuel production being food shortages and soaring prices for millions being the prime example given
- A general perception by respondents that we are not sufficiently well informed by politicians or the media to make wise choices for our households or businesses.

The Deming Forum, who commissioned the survey, is an educational organisation that promotes ‘joined-up’ or ‘systems’ thinking for business, public services, communities and the environment. This practical philosophy was developed by business systems guru W.E.Deming and is credited with being the cornerstone of Japan’s regeneration after World War II. The Deming Forum believes that it provides the disciplines necessary for governments, organisations and individuals to evaluate all aspects of their impact on climate change and to identify appropriate actions and initiatives that will have a beneficial long-term impact.

“We give Government the benefit of the doubt that it does its best to respond to the concerns of society and the perceived needs for action to protect the world, but it appears to have the same sketchy information as the rest of us,” says Hazel Cannon, the Forum’s Co-Founder and Director.

“The Government would benefit from applying *systems thinking*, which is a discipline that looks at the bigger picture and takes into account all the interactions affecting a given situation. One of these, of course, is *psychology* and the way that scientists, the media, the general public and politicians respond to complex issues such as climate change.”

In concert with systems thinking, Deming advocated the necessity of understanding the importance of *variation* in mathematics based research and its application to models of the future. He recognised that many research findings confused random fluctuations in measurement with trends, and vice versa, thus providing ambiguous or misleading conclusions. All of these disciplines should, believe the Forum, be applied as much to climate change as to any other branch of learning. A more rigorous approach to climate change theory will mean fewer knee jerk reactions, more considered regulation and ultimately more sustainable outcomes.

As Hazel Cannon says, “If there are doubts about the efficacy of our current actions, the response should not be to do nothing. We should use a better method, and the good news is that we already have one available.”