The Sylvans

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The motion: economic growth is incompatible with solving climate change.

Contents:

Date: 19 January 2026

Transcript:

Chair: Well, welcome to the second half of the debate. I'm going to chair the second debate tonight, and let me go ahead and read the motion for the second debate: economic growth is incompatible with solving climate change. So what I'm going to do, very similar format as the first one, is to invite two people up here, one for the proposition side and the other one for the opposition. Each person will have five minutes to speak on their case, and after that, I will open it up for floor contributions. And again, the floor contribution is three minutes. And here we go. Now I would like to ask who would like to be the proposition or the proposer of this motion. Okay, please come up here and can you state your name?
The proposer: [the proposer].

Chair: And the opposition? Do I have a volunteer? Please come up. Your name, please?
The opposer: [the opposer].

Chair: Okay, all right. Okay, so we have the proposer on the proposition and the opposer on the opposition. And again, I'm going to read the motion. Once again: economic growth is incompatible with solving climate change. So I would like to invite the proposer to open it up. You have five minutes. The proposer.

The proposer (Proposition): Madam Chair, an economy needs energy. Energy that is plentiful and cheap. What we have in this country is not cheap energy. We have the most expensive energy in Europe, and that is not because of the price of gas, which is what the government will tell you. In fact, they're gaslighting. It's because there are so many subsidies for wind power and solar power, green subsidies, which are hidden within the price.

Now, wind farms give you intermittent energy. I have ten solar panels on my house. They give me three times as much energy in the summer as they do in the winter. The winter is when I need it, and they give me nothing at night, which is also when I need it. So wind farms give you

energy at the wrong time, and unless you can store it in massive great batteries, that's not very sensible. Wind farms give you intermittent energy as well. When the wind blows, you get energy; when it doesn't blow, you don't. And sometimes, when the wind blows strongly, you get so much energy that the grid can't handle it. So the operator of the wind farm has to be paid to turn it off. And that's not small beer. That's extremely expensive. It goes into billions of pounds, because the National Grid cannot handle the amount of energy that is sometimes generated. That is because it was designed to take power from certain particular places, like power stations, and distribute it. It was never designed to take power from lots of different locations, and it simply needs to be massively upgraded, which is going to be extremely expensive over time.

So if we want an economy, we need cheap energy. We get that from nuclear power, or come to that, from gas, from oil. We will need all of those in future. But unfortunately, although once upon a time we were leaders in atomic power, we seem to have lost the ability to build anything in this country, never mind a nuclear power station, and we are still dithering on the site of Hinkley C, which is massively over budget and over time.

Now in this country, we have less than 1% of carbon emissions 0.88% to be precise. That is less than South Africa or Australia. You get countries like India, which generate at least 7% of global carbon emissions. They burn a million tonnes of coal per day. They're not going to stop. In fact, if anything, consumption of coal in India is going to go up. The United States, 14% of carbon emissions, and they are wedded to, you know, "drill, baby, drill," things like that, so they are not going to reduce carbon emissions. And China has actually gone up from 30% to 32% carbon emissions.

And so anything that we do in this country is good, you know, it's going to be swallowed up quite easily by those three countries. So it is simply not conducive to anything. I mean, whatever we do in this country to reduce our carbon emissions will have no effect on the climate, no effect at all. We are too small a geographic entity to have any effect, and less than 1% is going to make no effect at all. So what we are doing with this insane drive to Net Zero, with this idiotic man, Ed Miliband, who talks about 1% as though it was a crime against humanity and we must get it down to zero, is utter nonsense. It is destroying our economy. And if we want an economy, then we need cheap energy, and trying to solve climate change ineffectually is not the way to get it. Thank you.

Chair: Now I would like to invite the opposer to oppose the motion.

The opposer (Opposition): Good evening. Thank you, the proposer, for his proposition statement. There are things that I agree with him in his opening statement, but what I would like to sell you tonight on is the idea that solving climate change is a part of future growth, and future growth is a part of solving climate change.

First of all, I wanted to address that, as the proposer mentioned, nuclear energy is definitely a part of this. Nuclear energy is actually very green compared to fossil fuels, and we should be

definitely expanding on it. The fact that we cannot build it really quickly in this country is horrible, and I think it's really amazing technology, and we should continue on that. The fact that it's got really expensive, that price of energy in this country, and that we are subsidising the solar and wind farms, and that they sometimes overproduce, sometimes underproduce and we cannot sort it, is only an indicator that these technologies are still new. There is still a lot to be done, and this is where the growth is part of solving the energy.

The batteries became much cheaper over the years. The solar and wind farms, the operation, the cost of them running, is also getting much lower. I have a comparison that in the last ten years, the price of some types of batteries went from $450 to $60 per storage of energy. This means that in the close future, we will be able to actually store it and then use it when we actually need it.

Yes, I agree that demand for energy is not going anywhere. We need to use it. I think arguments that we somehow can survive without growth, I think, is not viable. We use it for heating and lighting the rooms. We keep the hospitals running. We use it for travel. We use it even for scary things such as AI. But like, in the end, also using AI for a lot of things is good, right? Google DeepMind has been used in the UK to make NHS cheaper. It was used to develop the proteins which are going to help us with a lot of diseases. I think, obviously, the demand is only going to grow. It's just we have an amazing amount of energy around us, in wind, in the sun in the sky. We should be using that to foster our growth. And that growth in response will only help us to solve our climate change.

Moreover, I want to add that there is a lot of economic research on the fact that if we do not address climate change, we will see in the next ten or twenty years a decrease to our GDP. Even little things such as maintaining infrastructure are projected to increase costs by 15 20% for each two degrees of average temperature increase. The labour force will be more likely to get diseases because our bodies are used to a specific temperature. Agriculture, each increase by one degree over 30 degrees is decreasing the production of wheat by 10%, of corn by 7%. Obviously, maybe the UK will not feel this immediately, because, well, the UK is a developed country, the UK can pay a bit more. But all these things are only going to contribute to the instability in the world, which will make general unstable things usually cost. When you have wars, when you have famines, this all costs us, to the world, and addressing climate change is a key part of fostering growth and keeping growth alive.

And this is, yeah, I think my point tonight is that those two things come together and we should keep growing. If we want to grow, we should develop technologies. We should produce more solar farms, more wind farms, more nuclear and that growth in itself will help us solve climate change.

Chair: Thank you, the opposer. Now I'm going to open up to floor contributions. Wow, looks like it's already... Okay, I'm going to start with this gentleman right here.

The speaker: My name is [the speaker]. Now I was a member of CND at the time when you could buy a "Nuclear Power? No Thanks" bag in any language you could think of. How many of you remember those days? Well, I would say now that I possibly agree with the opposition that nuclear power is quite greener than some of the things. Also, though, he said that wind and solar aren't available at the right time. You can't get too much of it. But of course, it's better than coal, or when you hear about fracking. Now, I think nuclear power does have a place.
I was also... this is medium wave radio before satellite television... and with my linguistics, French and Dutch, and I can get to those clubs better on the train than by flying, and the green lobby says "it's flying now," which is good. And when I was married, I was actually taken to try to see the Great Wall. But when the Romans... what did they do? Said to the man called Hadrian famous she didn't want to see that. I would prefer to go there. Thank you.

Chair: Okay, stand please.

Speaker 15: I studied economics at Oxford for my undergraduate degree. I guess that would be worth establishing some economic literacy because I know the speaker especially likes economic literacy in this august hall. I feel like in the introductory speeches, we didn't really touch on economic growth exactly, and didn't define it exactly, and I think that is actually important to tether the motion to the reality of what we're talking about.

So just for clarity, I think economic growth is standardly defined by economists as boosting GDP Gross Domestic Product which is a combination of consumption, investment, government spending and net exports. Okay, it's also real GDP that we want to focus on. So that means accounting for inflation, so not just inflating away... inflating up our activity, which is what a lot of economists increasingly think central banks are doing, inflating away through vast money printing. So we've got to talk about real economic growth.

And then we've also got to talk about, I think, economic growth per capita. Because if our country just gets bigger because we have more immigration, say, or have more people, that doesn't really feel like growth to me, in the same way. I think we're talking about innovation, which is what they talked about. So we've also got to think about what type of growth we've having, because growth is just how much money is spent in transactions in this country. Growth doesn't necessarily mean building massive skyscrapers and building big industrial plants. Indeed, our country has declined in its industrial activity, its big polluters. So growth could mean switching to a more service sector economy like we work in now, where there's less direct pollution. Or we mean growth at the global scale, wherein, of course, this production still needs to happen. Environmental standards are low in places like Indonesia, Thailand, China, wherever they happen. So it's worth just, I think, us having some clarity if we're to be satisfied with the motion.

And then one other thing I want to talk about is another angle, which I think is interesting to this. I'm a pro-environmentalist. I think we need to capture and address the externalities that exist in our societies that devastate the environment. I get sad when I see skinny polar bears. I think that's a valid emotion. But we should also notice that economic growth has allowed for

populations to be able to care about this stuff. It's like a Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs type thing. When a country's GDP per capita is low, five to ten thousand dollars or less, they're too poor, frankly, to be worried about abstract issues like the environment. They focus on their survival. It's wealthier countries that can focus on this. So in a sense, yes, growth can be good because it can make us want to address climate change in the first place. Green Energy, I leave that with you.

Speaker: So thanks for bringing it back. I think for me, that's part of the argument here. So just a little bit of a tiny history lesson, because I was interested. GDP actually became a measure in the 1930s because countries realised they didn't know how to measure how big the economies were. So who decided that that was the right measure of success, and is it still actually relevant?

So let's look at who actually benefits from significant economic growth. We have 8 billion people in the world. Do you know how many own half the wealth of all of us? 60,000 people. So who benefits from economic growth? Because when we are buying stuff, not reusing, not thinking about our contribution to the issues that we cause to the planet... because it's not sustainable. We are reaching ecological ceilings that we cannot reverse because we do not think about the consequences of consumerism.

So I personally believe we need to demote economic growth sorry to all the capitalists because I do not think it is sustainable for humanity to continue at the rate that we are. We need a new economic system. And there's many really intelligent people working on this problem. Follow Kate Raworth, Doughnut Economics, because if you do not look after the planet you live in, what's the point of growing it? So personally, I think we should rethink how we look at what is important with economic growth. Is it excessive economic growth? Is it carrying on? What is wrong with stable or no economic growth in some societies where it's not necessary? Why have we decided that is the most important measure, and we are putting our own planet at risk as a result of that?

So for me, with the motion thinking about economic growth and climate change, it definitely has an impact, because nobody is really acting. Everyone's still buying Amazon, fast fashion, replacing stuff. We do care about these issues, I agree, but the reality is, do we do enough for it? And does our government do enough for it? I don't think so. I only recently learned that one of the biggest points of pollution you know, these are conceptual things that we don't get to challenge government comments on are wood burners. Does anyone know that? I didn't know that it actually causes more pollution than cars. So why are we not taking steps to look after the planet we live in at the expense of excessive economic growth that benefits less than 0.1% of the global world? Sorry, I disagree.

Chair: Anybody else? I see another hand. The speaker, please.

The speaker: Good evening. Do you agree with dumping toxic waste? Chemical companies dumping toxic waste into our rivers and turning frogs into Godzillas? Isn't that what the

proposition are arguing? That chemical companies contribute to economic growth, and it's okay dumping toxic waste into our environment and killing our environment? Isn't that what the argument is? Do you believe in the destruction of the Amazon? Isn't that what Brazil is saying: for economic growth, we need to chop it all down. Justify it. When we say economic growth, we're not just talking about the UK. We're talking about India, right? We're talking about the globe polluting, you know, the environment for economic growth.
Interjection: Do batteries grow on trees?

The speaker: That's too complicated for me. We'll discuss that afterwards. So, you know, if we take this path of dumping toxic waste into the rivers and tearing down the Amazon for productive growth, warming up the Earth, who suffers? We just had a debate about us fighting the good fight in Greenland, right, because we're the good guys. Who suffers? Well, we know the Global South suffers. Also, we have ULEZ here, right? And one of the reasons for ULEZ was because of the pollution in the environment. It causes sickness. It causes us, you know, to be ill. So I know we don't care about everybody else or anybody else, our own domestic growth, but it actually causes us to also be ill.

Interjection: What do you think of the main strength... there's the main strength of economic growth in allowing us to address these problems. Like it led to us instantiating ULEZ, for example.

The speaker: Yeah, that's, that's a boom. Yeah, no, these are interesting arguments. I've got three minutes. Yes. And also, I mean, with AI, we need compute power that is beyond our capability, data centres that are beyond our capability, energy that's beyond our capability. Can we even keep up with, you know, the sort of economic growth that is being considered? So actually, I agree with the last speaker that we probably... I know that goes against all our instincts, but we probably need a new model that, you know, certainly doesn't involve harming our environment. Thank you.

Chair: Anybody else? I see... Let me get... Yeah. Can you restate your name?

The speaker: [the speaker]. So there is this... we're talking economics. And I come from this very mathematical end of economic stuff. And we've got this power law, Pareto distribution, which says you have a very few billionaires, a fair number of millionaires, hundred-millionaires, multi-millionaires and then a few more millionaires and then so on. And it's a very... either you call it very long tail, or very sharp. So we have very few people who own an awful lot, and then a fair number who own most, and then and so on. And it goes down. And it's a very alarming curve. Very steep, very alarming.

And it is basically caused by the fact that the more you have, the more you have. The more you have, the more you get. So when you get over the first million, it is the hardest, but so... the more you... if your first billion is the hardest billion. And then after that, suddenly you can double it really quickly. And then your first 10 billion is the hardest 10 billion, then you double it really quickly. And it's caused apart, among other things, by the fact that you can invest in all sorts of

things very cheaply. Some of them aren't going to work. A fair number aren't going to work, but a few will work, and that will really increase your value.

That, from an economic point of view, is what I would like to change. And one way you can change it is, for example, what Finland does is try to remove the risk. So you make sure that everyone has a certain amount of money, enough to cover the rent and food, and then they have enough to take risks, and they can try out their ideas. And if some of those ideas come through, then they can earn a bit. And if they own a bit, they can earn a bit more. Everyone can do it. And it's a real equaliser. Rather than this, "you can't do that because your risk on your pyramid of needs... it just says, I can't. I'm going to starve if I try this." There, for me, is a solution. I really haven't addressed the question, but I believe, sorry, but I believe it's possible if we just do what Finland does.

The speaker: Good afternoon. Okay, so I think it's important to get back to the topic of this debate, which I think roughly is: economic growth is incompatible with climate change. And there were two ways you can take that. Either you can take the "Yes, it is incompatible, so let's have degrowth so we protect the climate," which a few of our speakers have made, or you can take what the proposer has made and says, "Yes, it is compatible, and screw it. I don't really care about the polar bears. Drill, baby, drill." I'm going to argue why both of those are wrong and the opposition is correct.

Now, the chains of logic within the proposition argument, I believe, are thus: economic growth, as defined by standards, is essentially the creation of more stuff. It's producing more. Producing more takes resources. Resources are finite. Extraction of those resources harms the planet. Using those resources, especially fossil fuels, leads to climate change. Therefore, more production worsens climate change, therefore they're incompatible. This is wrong, because economic growth is not necessarily just more stuff, more extraction, because we create new stuff.

London had a really big problem at the turn of the 20th century in that its transport system was based on horse and carriages. As population grew, more horses. We need more hay and oh my God, there's so much horse poo everywhere. This can't be sustainable. Now, the reason that you don't step outside and it's full of horse poo on the road is that, rather than just having more horses, we innovated. We now have trains, underground, buses, bicycles and cars, which transport us far more efficiently without the horse poo. To just debunk and bump the head on the degrowth argument: you can make this argument any time in history. Why would you not have degrowth at the turn of the 19th century or turn of the 20th century? You would not have... you would have cholera. You wouldn't have washing machines. I'd rather live now with mRNA vaccines, with dentistry, where lives are far better and longer and healthier than in the turn of the 20th century. Thank you.

So I think the degrowth argument is a no-goer. Secondly, climate change is a real problem, but we can solve it with economic growth, because we have new ideas to create new things. Now, instead of horse-drawn carriages, we have cars. You know, they have a problem. We can solve

that with trains and E-vehicles which run on electricity, which once we plug to a grid powered by solar panels, wind and nuclear technology, there are no emissions. The proposer said at one point, "Ah, well, what if the sun doesn't shine? I think you have to need a battery." Yes, of course you need a battery. That is the solution you have. You have a battery charging in the day, and then it runs in the night. We are building those batteries. We can innovate to manage these problems. We are on the cusp of fusing technology, the power of the sun in our hands. We will be the new Prometheus, if we can track it. We only do that if we have the resources to invest to think of new solutions to solve our way out of this problem. We need to drive, not burn or cower in fear of our own power. Thank you very much.

Chair: Anybody else? I see a hand back there? There's somebody in the back behind the speaker. Okay, please.

Speaker: So in South Wales, in a small village called Rassau, if you look very closely, there is a shed, and in that shed there is something called a synchronous condenser. How many of you have heard of a synchronous condenser before? No. I won't bore you with the details, but essentially, this is a very interesting technology which manages the grid. Now there is this new market, which is a relatively new market beginning in the UK, and that's grid stability. Now it is very competitive to join this market. You have companies like Quinbrook, Siemens and Welsh Power group who want to get into this market because it is making them millions.

Now it is very binary to see it as one thing. So you have fossil fuels on one hand and renewables on the other, like the sun and the... however, with a synchronous condenser, it manages the inertia in the grid, which then allows previously there would be fossil fuels but now allows for more energy to be used. So actually, this idea that you have renewable energy being wasted because it's just producing so much and the grid can't consume it... there is this technology developing, and it is actually very competitive to get involved in it. So I submit that economic growth is compatible with climate change, because it's already happening even in small towns like ours.

The speaker: I've been more about climate change. You could have been more about economics, if you had a bit of both, which I think is great. I do want to bring up, you know, a dichotomy that we're seeing here. Economists would say, and particularly liberal economists would say, the market will find a solution to climate change. So that's one side. On the other hand, no one said it, but we're talking about the frog in the pot of boiling water, right? So economics will solve the problem, but if it goes too far, and there are all these tipping points, and suddenly the frog thinks it can jump out, but suddenly, nope, we can't. We're dead. So which one is it?

Now, I'm a little bit more on the side that there are some market solutions, like we just heard about managing power and all the technology that we're going to apply. AI will solve everything, whatever we might find, batteries that grow on trees... trees can be used for batteries somehow, I'm sure another speaker... So I do think that. And I also want to come back to the proposer,

because the proposer's got the last word here, and he and I have sparred about solar panels before, and EVs. So I want to bring this back up because it's very relevant.

The UK economy is in a dire state. One of the key components is investment, and that's where we are weakest. There is no investment in this economy. It's way under-invested. We've been coasting on infrastructure from Victorian Empire times. It's just, it's dreadful. I won't go into that more than just to state that as a fact. What we need is investment. We need investment and make investments that have really strong returns. In order to do that, one area you can have is when you have a natural resource bounty. We have copious amounts of wind, and we need power. We've got expensive electricity, partly because gas is running out, and yes, we are investing in renewables, but also because of the Russia Ukraine war as well, which has come at a bad time. We've got to forget that. But that's going to go away, hopefully eventually. Investing in wind power here is a better return than any other country investing in it, because we've got amazing wind capability. Now the proposer talks about his solar panels. He put them on what, 7, 8, 6, 10 years ago? He was way ahead of his time. Of course, solar panels have come down in cost by what, 75% since then, and he always moans that it's a 14 year payback period. No, no, no, no, you're missing the point. If you put those in now, even in the UK that has shit sun for half the year, there's a good payback period. It's cheap to put in solar now. We shouldn't be investing in solar. We should be investing in wind, nuclear and a little bit of gas to top it up on cloudy still days. We can invest and that will make our economy stronger.

EVs. China is investing in... in China, the biggest polluter... are massively investing in EVs and renewable power. They're still burning coal, but that's eventually going to shift. India is a poor country. Eventually it will make sense for them to invest in this as well. The US, even though Trump is against it, the economics are so strong that the US is investing in solar and wind. So I think the market... we're probably going to get a bad syndrome as a frog, and I'm hoping that we're going to be able to jump down. We're going to get singed. We're going to make it.

Chair: That gentleman back there.

Speaker: I will argue that it is possible that you can have both economic and also protect the environment, because as long as enough people are prepared to sacrifice or prepare to do something, and with the right policy from the government or from the society... For example, take this plastic bottle. Because for those companies providing this kind of water, they are not responsible for it. Take back the bottle of water consumers consume... consumption of the water. If the government implements a policy so that the company offering this kind of water needs to take back the plastic water [bottle], actually, it will reduce the waste and also environmental damage a lot. But if the right policy is possible... of course you may need to pay more money to buy a bottle of water. But actually, if you reduce the waste and also the damage to the environment...

And other things I would like to talk about is the transport system. If enough people are prepared to give up the car and maybe use public transport, actually, it will reduce the waste and also protect the environment a lot. Because economic growth is just an accounting entry. It

doesn't matter how you spend the money. Actually, you can spend the money on public transport or you can spend the money on your private car, so it will not affect anything if enough people spend money using the public transport. But if enough people can prepare to sacrifice something, then it is possible that you can have economic growth, and also you can protect the environment, because I'm saying that economic growth is just an accounting entry. So it's possible. Can you do this kind of thing and do that kind of thing, but the number will not change. That is my surprise now.

Chair: Like to call on the speaker, please.

The speaker: Well, I want to thank everybody for the contributions, Chair, and the proposers and the opposer with a very interesting technical debate, but I want to put perhaps a spanner in the works. There's probably enough hot air in the Houses of Parliament to actually provide the energy, and enough wind at the London School of Economics for me. And there we have it, the myth, the myth of the economist. They're like fairy tales, soap operas. They peddle their views as if they're truths. And of course, you can back it up with statistics and all this sort of stuff. But the truth of the matter is that we've got to decide what kind of society and world we want. This is not an economic argument. It's a political one. It's about values. What kind of society do we want to create?

We've had debates about war and poverty, and that's the consequence of this constant hunger for growth. We don't feed people, or we don't feed a percentage of the world. The amount of homeless people on the streets of London and elsewhere... The amount of people who are displaced is something like 300 million, and yet, half of the world isn't occupied. So like I say, it's about what values. We often talk about the 2% of the wealthiest in this country. It looks like one of them is going to get a payout from the Daily Mail. I hope it won't affect our funding for Sylvans. They are connected, aren't they? No, okay, I thought they were. Okay.
So there's going to be a revolution. It is not a revolution of statistics. It's about hearts and minds. It's about the people taking control. So it's about values. It's a political one. It's even a theological one, something that I know something about. It's a psychological one. We've got to equip ourselves not to always go after our desires, but go after our needs and the needs of other people. Climate change is probably a reality, whether it's developmentally evolutionary or whether it's been brought upon because of our behaviour, but the baseline is: what are our values? What kind of world, what kind of society are we trying to create? We need world cooperation because immigration, poverty and everything else, the ills of our society... war... are a world issue, and thinking small doesn't help us solve climate change.

Speaker: Hi. So, some great ideas coming out on both sides. Actually, I think an earlier speaker made some great points about, you know, why do we use GDP as a measure of being successful, really? And, you know, I was nodding away. I thought, yeah, this is great. And I see happiness indexes coming from Scandinavian countries and they measure success in a different way, perhaps, than we do. Although GDP... but this argument also, this discussion, is really about climate change versus growth and Gross Domestic Product.

And I think we can look at things... We think, okay, here in the UK, what is the solution? We can be anti Ed Miliband for adding costs onto our fuel bills, which he does surreptitiously. And then we can complain about the Chinese spending a lot of time and a lot of money trying to grow their economy using old fashioned fuel, but at the same time also investing enormously in electric vehicles and what have you. And India, obviously, India's got billions of people, and those people are poor, and those people need to be dragged out of poverty. And those people need to... for that reason, those people need to use old fashioned fuels.

What do we say? Do we say, okay, you can't? We can't drag those people out because us in the West... on the final time here, and as an earlier speaker was talking about earlier, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we might well be in the West up at self actualisation, but meanwhile, probably, I don't know, I'm guessing probably 70, 80% of the world population don't even have warmth and food. But we're saying, "Hey, all of a sudden, we're gonna start worrying about climate change." Climate change is happening. You need to be mad if you do not believe that it is the case. The problem, I think, that as a society we have, is that we have people across the planet who are at different stages, so their motivations are different, their needs are different. Some people think, "Hey, yeah, I'm going to focus on climate change," but other people just think, "I need food tomorrow morning," and if you need food tomorrow morning, you'll vote for whoever is going to make that a likely situation. Thank you.

Chair: Okay, anybody else? Do I see a hand? No. All right, I think it's getting late, so I'm going to ask the opposition to close first and then followed by the proposition. So please, the opposer, you have three minutes.

The opposer (Closing): Good evening again, everyone. Thank you very much for the opinions. I think there seemed to be a very clear, to some extent, divide between whether we need to sacrifice growth for the environment, whether we need to sacrifice the environment for growth or whether we can do both. And once again, I'll be selling you on this middle ground of: we can actually do this.

First of all, obviously I do, and it seems like everyone believes, that we need to solve the issue of the environment from the moral perspective. I think it's a clear issue. We all like trees. We all like nature. I think it's just important for us and for our kids to keep this. It's on the global stage, and even on the UK stage. You can think that it is an issue of some less developed countries which are going to run into the food issues. But even things like the Gulf Stream are going to be affected by climate change. If the temperature rises too much, the Gulf Stream will slow down, and the UK will actually get into a really cold period. I mean, it probably won't affect the next 20 years, but it definitely would affect our kids.

But then from also an economic perspective, as I mentioned, because of the changes that climate change can do to the economy, to the stuff we do, labour productivity, to infrastructure... that is a massive cost which we cannot even yet estimate, and it has non linear effects. We really need to remember them.

Then, on the other hand, I think we really need to defend growth. I think the world has grown in the last 100 years a lot. Economically wise, you can use different measures, GDP, I don't know. There are a lot of measures that exist there. The world has grown according to all of them. And what's important thing is that quality of life has grown, the average life expectation has grown, the availability of basic needs has grown throughout the world. And this is an incredible thing. And growth is part of it. Whether you want to qualify by GDP or by happiness or by some other measures, it has grown, and it's a good thing for the world. If you compare, for example, the GDP values and the happiness numbers, there is a strong correlation there, and it's just because economic activity translates into the prosperity of the people.

But once again, growth... I'm saying that growth is important, the environment is important, and I think they can coexist. As people pointed out, there is a lot of innovation happening right now. There are new solutions coming in, and that innovation is both the answer to the growth and to the climate change. And that's the idea that I want to sell you tonight. Believe in innovation, believe that growth can be an answer to climate change, and that climate change is part of our future growth. Thank you.

Chair: Now I would like to invite the proposition, the proposer, to have his closing arguments. The proposer.

The proposer (Closing): Did I hear, Madam Chair, did I hear right just then, that the opposition actually said that in order to solve climate change, we need economic growth? Is that what he said? Yes, fine. We're obsessed, you know, with this idea of solving climate change. We think we can solve climate change. We can't. Climate change is happening, whether we like it or not. The seas are warming, whether we like it or not. If we want to do anything, we must adapt to what is happening. We're not going to solve climate change as though we can sort of produce something out of a hat and solve it. Economic growth isn't going to do that. It might help in ways to ameliorate it, to make it more palatable, certainly, but we're not going to solve it. So I think the whole idea is misconceived.

If we go down the road of stable or no economic growth, frankly, I think that is a ridiculous idea. Because what will happen is that we all get... because there is an increase in population. I mean, we're all told how many more people are coming to this country. We have immigration. We have a growing population. If we have no economic growth, or stable economic growth, we all get poorer. So we all feel more miserable. Is that the answer? Feeling more miserable? Is that what you want?

Interjection: So any more miserable than I am?

The proposer: Well, I'm not sure about whether I'm miserable or not, to be honest. But getting... one measure of GDP is whether life feels better for you, whether you feel that life is improving. I mean, everybody, all of you, are working towards that end. Otherwise, what's the point? I mean, you go to work, you want life to feel better. You want to have a better house, you want to have a better car, you want to eat better food, you want to go out more. You want life to be better.

Otherwise, what is the point of all the striving that you do? And that is the thing. Degrowth... GDP... What is your GDP? Per capita. Growth per capita. That is what we all strive for, and whether you like it or not, if we don't get that, then you feel more miserable.

Now, my friend over there, he always gets the wrong end of the stick. My point about solar panels was that they produce energy at the wrong time. They produce it in the summer, but not in the winter so much. They produce it when it's light, but not when it's dark. And this point about wind farms, well, frankly, the auctions have been cancelled for wind farms because the operators couldn't make a profit. So he's actually talking nonsense as usual. So, Madam Chair, we cannot solve climate change. It's not a proposition. And we do need economic growth, per capita economic growth, because that is what we're all striving for. Otherwise, we just feel more miserable.

Chair: Okay, thanks.

Interjection: How do you measure... how do you measure misery? Is there a misery index?

Chair: Anyway, that's after the debate now. Thank you all for your contributions, and especially propositions and the oppositions. Thank you for their really informative debates. So now it's time for us to vote on the motion, and I'm going to read it one more time: Economic growth is incompatible with solving climate change. Those who are for the motion, for the proposition, please raise your hand and so let me count. I got four... Okay, five. Okay. There's two back here. There's two. Okay, all right, thank you. Against the motion. I got eleven. The speaker, have you... okay? You? I got eleven, okay. And abstention? Do I see a hand like that? No, okay, so one abstention. So what I have is five for the motion, eleven against the motion and abstention one. So the motion is defeated. So congratulations.

Analysis of the outcome powered by AI

Analysis of the debate: "Economic growth is incompatible with solving climate change"

The motion "Economic growth is incompatible with solving climate change" did not carry. The debate resulted in a victory for the Opposition, driven primarily by a rejection of the "degrowth" narrative and an embrace of technological innovation as the bridge between economic prosperity and environmental stability.

The Opposition's strategy: Innovation and symbiosis

The Opposition successfully argued that economic growth is not the enemy of the climate but the engine required to fix it. By framing the issue through the lens of innovation, the Opposer contended that the very technologies needed to decarbonise—such as advanced batteries,

nuclear power and grid infrastructure—require substantial capital and economic activity to develop. They utilised data regarding the plummeting costs of energy storage to counter the Proposition's claims about the intermittency of renewables. Furthermore, the Opposition effectively wielded the "cost of inaction" argument, suggesting that failing to address climate change would itself destroy GDP through infrastructure damage and health crises, thereby making climate mitigation a prerequisite for long-term economic stability.

The Proposition's shortcomings: Fatalism and utility

The Proposition relied heavily on a pragmatic but ultimately pessimistic worldview. Their argument rested on three pillars: the intermittency of renewables, the futility of UK action given the emissions of China and India and the necessity of cheap fossil fuels to maintain living standards. However, the Proposition's closing speech likely sealed their defeat. By pivoting to the assertion that climate change "cannot be solved" and that humanity must simply adapt, they shifted the debate from a discussion on economic compatibility to one of existential resignation. The audience appeared unwilling to accept that the only path to economic comfort involved abandoning the fight against climate change.

The role of the floor

Audience contributions significantly bolstered the Opposition's case. While some speakers supported the motion by highlighting wealth inequality and the ecological damage of consumerism, the most resonant interventions favored market-based solutions.

- **Historical Context:** One speaker used the transition from horse-drawn transport to automobiles to illustrate how economic growth solves environmental hazards (manure) through innovation rather than regression.
- **Technical Rebuttal:** Another attendee provided specific industry examples of "synchronous condensers," directly countering the Proposition's technical argument that renewable energy destabilises the grid.
- **Maslow's Hierarchy:** Several speakers noted that wealthier nations are better positioned to care for the environment, reinforcing the idea that economic contraction would hinder, not help, green initiatives.

Summary

The debate was decided by a preference for optimistic pragmatism over fatalistic realism. The room acknowledged the environmental costs of past economic models but ultimately concluded that future growth, driven by green investment and technological advancement, remains the only viable tool for addressing the climate crisis without sacrificing human development.