

Transcript: Introduction

Professor Mike Berners-Lee - Lancaster University

From the National Emergency Briefing on 27th Nov 2025 at Westminster Central Hall. Full talks can be found at <https://www.nebriefing.org/>.

Thank you Chris.

So, as we've just heard, the information that we're going to be looking at is extremely serious, urgent, and it affects us all here in the UK. That is why we are calling this a National Emergency Briefing.

Today is about facing an escalating poly crisis instead of pretending that it isn't happening. And we're not doing that to be depressing. Quite the opposite. In the words of James Baldwin, human rights campaigner... "Nothing can be changed until it is faced".

And we need that change now.

Sometimes I've wondered why I keep going, pushing on this agenda, and sometimes I've despaired at where things are heading. And there's some difficult news in here. And we're going to face it together, and we're in it for the long haul.

The situation is not yet hopeless, but we do have our backs right up against the wall. As we've just heard, it's not surprising that the climate is coming to bite us after 30 COPs have failed to even reduce the rate at which we're putting fossil fuel emissions into the atmosphere.

It's still going up year on year - it hasn't even begun to come down.

And now, after COP30, attended by 1,600 fossil fuel lobbyists, the words fossil fuel have been taken out of the final text. Our response couldn't be more inadequate.

There's everything to play for, but we have to wake up.

So this event is about resetting the national conversation, especially in the face of growing misinformation. And you've been invited here because you carry influence, whether that be in politics, in media, in business, whether you're a community leader or a faith leader, or in some other capacity... between us all together, along with the follow up events

after this briefing, we have what it takes to create the societal tipping point that we so badly need to unlock full scale action for the first time.

In fact, you have already shown courage and leadership just being here today.

Thanks especially to the many, many MPs who've come here today and chosen to prioritise this.

Okay, so today we're going to look at what's going on, at what needs to happen and what we can do from right now together to get things properly moving. In a moment, we're going to hear concise evidence about different aspects of the challenge we face.

We're going to hear up to date evidence from some of the UK's, and even some of the world's, top experts on these subjects. And we're going to join it all up together, because the challenges — and if we're smart, the opportunities — that we face are systemic.

So it doesn't work to put them in silos. Everything that we will hear today is connected to everything else.

By the way, you don't need to worry about taking notes. There'll be transcripts, there'll be notes, there'll be videos, and in due course, there'll be a film to reference after this event. So just concentrate on taking it all in. After the presentations, there'll be a short time for questions, and if you want to submit one, you can do so using the QR code on your seat.

And after that, for those who can stay, there'll be a great opportunity to network.

The flow just broadly is we're going to start with where we are now. We're going to hear on the nature crisis, the climate crisis, extreme weather and then tipping points. And then we'll move on to the societal impacts that are not fully appreciated here in the UK, on our food system, on our health, and on our national security.

And then we'll look at the implications, the threats and opportunities for the economy, and we'll look at what the energy transition looks like.

So without further ado, let me introduce you to Professor Natalie Seddon, who's going to tell us about the nature crisis.