

Mankind must go green or die, says Prince Charles

Environmental damage left unchecked would be 'suicide on a grand scale', Prince warns

Jonathan Brown



The Prince of Wales smells waste chocolate used in an anaerobic digester during a visit to Dorset this week

Related The Prince of Wales has warned that mankind is on the brink of "committing suicide on a grand scale" unless urgent progress is made in tackling green issues such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, intensive farming and resource depletion.

Adopting uncharacteristically apocalyptic language, the Prince said the world was heading towards a "terrifying point of no return" and that future generations faced an "unimaginable future" on a toxic planet. In a pre-recorded speech broadcast in acceptance of an lifetime environmental achievement award, the Prince said green views that had once seen him written off as a "crank" were now backed by hard evidence. He told the gala ceremony for the 7th International Green Awards at Battersea Power Station in London that fossil fuels and supplies of fresh water were under pressure while the stability of weather patterns was threatened and "vast amounts of CO₂" were still pumped into the atmosphere. "Humanity and the Earth will soon begin to suffer some very grim consequences," he said.

"It's therefore an act of suicide on a grand scale to ride so roughshod over those checks and balances and flout nature's necessary limits as blatantly as we do.

"The longer we go on ignoring what is already happening and denying what will happen in the future, the more profoundly we condemn our grandchildren and their children to an unbearably toxic and unstable existence. We simply have to turn the tide."

The Prince has been criticised throughout his life for getting involved in public affairs, writing to ministers and airing his views on contentious subjects ranging from architecture to alternative medicine. His most controversial intervention came in 2010 when a £3bn scheme to redevelop the Chelsea Royal Barracks was dropped after the Prince lobbied the Prime Minister of Qatar over the sustainability of the project describing it as a "gigantic experiment with the very soul of our city". The Prince said that the lifetime achievement award was an acknowledgement for what he described as his "rather inadequate efforts" to create change.

"All those years ago when I began to see that this could be so, I found myself labelled with every term that describes a crank," he said.

"I don't actually recommend it as a pastime but, extraordinary as it may seem, nowadays ... that intuitive feeling has been backed up by a mass of scientific evidence in every possible field confirming that our predominant approach is having a very adverse effect on nature."

However Dr Benny Peiser, director of Lord Lawson's Global Warming Policy Foundation, said the Prince's views were still out of step with mainstream thinking.

"He is really a good representative of the environmental movement as such and it is not a personal issue," he said. But he added that the "extreme alarm and extreme concern" was "over the top and not helpful to the debate".

"It doesn't convince any governments or any ministers and in the end it is over the top and won't be heard."