



7 October 2010

Majority of public expects energy shortages by 2030

Half of respondents pessimistic about quality of life in UK in next 20 years

Research published today by sustainability consultancy AEA shows that 67% of Britons think there are likely to be energy shortages between now and 2030, despite believing there will be significant improvements to household energy efficiency over the same period. The research also paints a gloomy picture of the future in general, with half of people surveyed saying they were pessimistic that the UK will be a better place to live in 20 years.

The findings, taken from a study by Populus of 2,000 British residents, also show that 69% of people surveyed believe that the government should lead the drive to make the way the country operates less damaging to the environment – with only 36% believing this should be up to individuals. The concept of the Big Society has some way to go – only 26% thought that local communities should lead the drive.

With the Party Conference season drawing to a close, the research provides plenty of food for thought for both local and national policymakers. 87% of people think the UK's population is already unsustainable or will be in 50 years' time.

Gwen Ventris, Chief Operating Officer at AEA, said:

“It is perhaps inevitable that people are feeling so gloomy about the future given the current economic climate. However, our research shows the public is clearly looking to government, both local and national, for leadership on issues around environment and sustainability. Policymakers need to learn from best practice in sustainability, especially the many businesses in the private sector that have turned environmental challenges into opportunities, rather than seeing them as a threat.”

The survey also showed that:

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people believe that by 2030 technology will have improved but that consumption will also increase, causing energy shortages and more pollution. 67% of people think we'll suffer from energy shortages and only 38% think pollution will be much reduced
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2% of people think it unlikely that fewer people will travel by car in 20 years time, and 74% think that road tolls will be common by 2030.
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2% of people say they are aware of initiatives to help the environment. Older people and those from higher social grades are much more likely to say that they are aware of initiatives.
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9% of people think that the government should lead the drive to make how the country operates less damaging to the environment, against 36% individuals, 32% businesses and 26% local communities
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7% of people think the UK's population is already unsustainable or will be in 50 years' time, either because there are already too many people living in the UK (49%), or because there will be in 50 years if growth continues at its present rate (38%). Only 6% of people thought there would not be too many people in 50 years time.
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over half of respondents (52%) feel that the government should intervene in population growth, for example, by introducing immigration caps, while 40%

thought it should be a combination of government action and individual action, such as having smaller families.

Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. For more details please go to www.populus.co.uk.

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About AEA

AEA is a leading energy, environment and information management consultancy. The company operates in the UK, Europe, the US and China advising the UK Government, the EU and major private sector organisations in energy and climate change, air and water quality, risk management, resources and waste, sustainable transport and knowledge transfer.

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