The present carbon emission problem:

In a letter to Nature earlier this year, two academics from UCL summarised the challenge facing humanity as follows:

"*Policy makers have generally agreed that the average global temperature rise caused by greenhouse gas emissions should not exceed 2°C above the average global temperature of pre-industrial times. It has been estimated that to have at least a 50 per cent chance of keeping warming below 2 °C throughout the twenty-first century, the cumulative carbon emissions between 2011 and 2050 need to be limited to around 1100 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide (Gt CO2).*"[1]

Put another way, to have a chance of hitting the 2°C target, average emissions up to 2050 need to be no more than 28 Gt a year on average. The International Energy Agency estimate that current emissions are around 32 Gt a year, with two-thirds being emitted by the top ten countries (China and the US emitting around one-third).[2] While emissions stabilised in 2014, it is quite possible that the emissions trend will continue to rise as countries in many parts of the world continue to industrialise (e.g. China has pledged that emissions will peak by 2030), although this will be offset by increases in efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources.

A further challenge identified by McGlade and Ekins is that the projected greenhouse gas emissions from extraction of the present estimates of global fossil fuel reserves would be around three times higher than the 1100 Gt target. The value of these unburned reserves is factored into the share prices of major hydrocarbon producers, which in turn form a significant part of the portfolio of many pension funds.

Recently it was revealed that Shell does not believe that governments will be able to achieve a 2' target and that increases of 4' or 6' are possible. Unilever chief executive Paul Polman said that governments must set clear CO2 targets to force low-carbon innovation. But how would *we* implement a solution in time? Arguably the whole economic system, based as it is largely on energy production and extraction of fossil fuel to maintain it, needs to be re-examined. And this raises fundamental questions about our political and societal systems, motivations and structures. There is no "us and them" only "us".

[1] "The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2 °C" Christophe McGlade1, & Paul Ekins, Nature January 2015

[2] http://www.iea.org/newsroomandevents/news/2015/march/global-energy-related-emissions-of-carbon-dioxide-stalled-in-2014.html

The process today:

Participants in the multi-party dialogue will be allocated to a group (randomly) at the start of the day and asked to participate in the discussions throughout the day from the perspective of that group. The challenge for each group will be to begin to identify the most effective way for it to address the challenge set out above, given its own situation. The further challenge for each group is to achieve this in a way which will work for other groups so that there is a real prospect of meaningful global action. This should inform what a country like Scotland might do looking ahead.

Groups may include:

- Developed countries – large scale per capita emitters and producers (>10 t per capita e.g. US, Australia)
- Developed countries – medium scale per capita emitters and consumers (5-10 t, e.g. most of the EU)
- Developed countries – medium scale emitters and producers (e.g. Scotland & Norway)
- Developing countries – large scale emitters (e.g. China & India)
- Developing countries most at risk from the potential impact of climate change (eg Ethiopia, Pacific Islands)
- Major hydrocarbon producing companies
- Major pension funds
- Global environmental NGOs
- Global youth parliaments

Some Questions

Who are *we*?

What are our real objectives?

What really concerns us?

What don't we understand?

Where is the common ground with others?

What really worries them?

What do they need to hear from us?

What happens if we don't address the issues?

What do we now need to do/say to others?

How should we present ourselves to others?

Why does any of this matter?