



**PROCEDURE D'ADMISSION  
EN PREMIERE ANNEE,  
FILIERE FRANCO-BRITANNIQUE**

**EPREUVE D'ANGLAIS**

**JEUDI 24 AVRIL 2014**

**11h30 à 13h00**

**(1 heure 30 - coefficient 3)**

Sujet :

Ce sujet est composé de 5 pages.

Il est demandé aux candidats de répondre directement sur leur copie en indiquant clairement les numéros des exercices.

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# Whither the weather?

**Knee-deep in floodwater, Britain's politicians rekindle an argument about global warming**

The Economist, Feb 22nd 2014



1. EVEN as brown Thames water slopped around the sitting rooms of southern England this week, ruining treasured sideboards and carpets, a political shower began. It concerned the only question many British politicians could think of to justify their rush, in shiny new wellies, to the floodwater: whether global warming had caused the disaster and where they stood on this in relation to their rivals.
2. Diffidently, David Cameron, the prime minister, said he “suspected” there could be a link—which suggested more than the difficulty of pinning bad weather on climatic change. His Conservative Party is as sceptical about the anthropogenic cause of warming as it is about its leader; indeed, the two are connected. Mr Cameron once sought, mostly unsuccessfully, to soften his party’s image with a green embrace; “Vote blue, go green”, was his slogan. But that now strikes many as ridiculous. The Tory environment minister in charge of Britain’s flood defences, Owen Paterson, is a climate-change sceptic. The energy minister managing Britain’s switch to low-carbon generation,

Michael Fallon, calls global warming a “theology”. Mr Cameron, who has made no speech on the environment since 2010, reportedly urged his staff to cut the “green crap”—that is, subsidies for renewables and energy efficiency—from household bills. “Vote blue, get real”, a sniggering minister told Bagehot. “Green is so last year’s colour.”

3. It was this, your columnist suggests, that Ed Miliband had in mind when he attributed the floods to global warming more emphatically than any serious scientist would. “If you keep on throwing the dice and you keep getting sixes, the dice are loaded,” said the Labour Party leader and former climate-change secretary—though Britain’s recent weather has been rather mixed.

4. This is dismal. It illustrates not only the breakdown of what was once a consensus on the need to address global warming, but also how that fracture lies mainly between left and right. Mr Cameron once promised to ease this tension. In opposition, he helped pass an ambitious environmental law, the 2008 Climate Change Act, under which Britain undertook deeper cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions than the rest of Europe. In government, some hoped he would not merely maintain that statist approach, but improve on it, by stressing markets, innovation and communities. Mr Cameron has done nothing of the sort: his silence seems to reflect a failure even to think about the issue. This is not only bad for the environment, but also for the Tories.

5. The obvious reason for Mr Cameron switching off his green conscience is the downturn, which made environmental commitments seem unaffordable to many. They may be right; the 2008 act’s main decree, that by 2050 Britain must cut its greenhouse-gas emissions by 80%, looks unbearable with current technology. It is, similarly, fair for a government defined by austerity to try to remove any extraneous green costs to consumers. But there aren’t many; Mr Cameron’s campaign to cut the crap has reaped a promise to cut around £50 (\$83) from a household energy bill of £1,300 and shift it to general taxation. That is not something many voters will notice, unlike the reputation for green-bashing Mr Cameron has earned. Most Britons think the only thing green about Mr Cameron is his wellies. That is a poor return on his past effort and, it is possible to hope, continuing interest in the environment.

6. The downturn should have spurred Mr Cameron not so much to retrench as rethink. And Tory greens, an embattled minority, have some useful proposals on how. He should begin, Geoff Lean writes in a forthcoming collection of essays (“Responsibility and Resilience: What the Environment Means to Conservatives”), by reclaiming natural political turf. The intellectual framework for environmental stewardship was established in the 18th century by Edmund Burke, a conservative philosopher. More recent Tories have

been responsible for much of the regulatory framework; Margaret Thatcher took an early lead on climate change.

7. To put himself in that lineage, Mr Cameron needs above all to make green policies cheaper. Michael Liebreich, a green-energy entrepreneur and possible Tory candidate for mayor of London, suggests he should start by scrapping much of the existing subsidy regime and fight for a more integrated and competitive European energy market. By lowering the cost of energy, this would make it easier to tax pollution, and therefore easier for renewables to compete. “When it comes to energy, the right has to regain its reforming **mojo**,” he writes.

8. Appealing to a more traditional Toryism, the philosopher Roger Scruton meanwhile advocates unleashing the potential of local civic organisations—analogueous to Burke’s “small battalions”—to organise environmental defences, including flood barriers. It is hard to see how such an approach could cut industrial emissions. But it might at least build stronger support for doing so than exists in Britain currently.

## Unleash the small battalions

9. Mr Cameron should view this as a postdiluvian opportunity. Still 15 months from Britain’s next election, his government appears to be running out of ideas. Rethinking environment policy would be a big one, of global importance. The younger voters Tories covet would be especially impressed. They are also the group most likely to be turned off by the prickly and diminished idea of Britain with which Conservative climate change sceptics—a group almost synonymous with hardline Eurosceptics—are associated.

10. Mr Cameron’s neglect of what was once his defining issue has contributed to that diminution. On a recent trip to China, his vast trade delegation included representatives from English football and brewing. But China’s rulers said that, being more interested in climate change, they would prefer to meet British **smart-grid**, systems integration and green-finance experts. The prime minister had unaccountably brought few with him.

## Glossary

**Wellies** (paragraph 1): abbreviation for **wellington boots**, waterproof rubber boots that usually reach the knees

**Mojo** (paragraph 7): magic power (especially US)

**Smart grid** (paragraph 10): an electricity network based on digital technology, supposed to “manage electricity demand in a sustainable, reliable and economic manner”.

**I. Find words or phrases (groups of words) in the text matching the following definitions (in order of [first] appearance). 2 points**

1. A piece of dining-room furniture with cupboards and drawers
2. To assign the blame or responsibility (for something)
3. Influenced by the impact of humans on nature
4. Depressing, discouraging, extremely disappointing
5. The fall in economic activity; the economic crisis
6. To incite to make a greater effort, to encourage
7. To abandon, to discard
8. To displease; to alienate; to cause (someone) to lose interest or enthusiasm

**II. Global comprehension. 6 points**

**Use your own words as much as possible (with reference to the relevant paragraph numbers)**

1. How has David Cameron's position on climate change (and other environmental issues) evolved over the last few years?
2. What can account for this evolution, according to this article?
3. What is the journalist's view on this evolution and what does he recommend? What arguments does he give?

**III. Detailed comprehension. 2 points**

Use the illustration and the text to explain what the phrase "political shower" (paragraph 1) refers to.

**IV. Essay. 10 points**

**Recommended length: 300-400 words**

Is the fight against climate change compatible with robust economic growth?