

Hi

Just to let you know that I have booked the **Bath Brewhouse for six talks on Thursday evenings, starting May 9<sup>th</sup>**. Details and booking links to follow.

**Next Tuesday's talk at the Kensington Arms on Stanley Road, Redland, will be on UK energy, emissions and targets.** A booking link to this and other Redland talks is at the bottom of this email.

I will be giving an **update on climate change at Chippenham Town Hall, 7pm on 18<sup>th</sup> March** and will be part of a panel discussion on the [future of UK energy 6pm-9pm on Thurs 21<sup>st</sup> March](#), hosted by Future Economy Network.

And here's some news. [I am attaching a Word copy that may be easier for you to read.](#)

1. I eat my words – **Scottish Power goes 100% renewable**
2. The **first 'sector deal' for renewables** – good, but not enough
3. Gas is not 'clean' – the courts agree
4. **Europe's biomass demand is causing biodiversity collapse**
5. Tell the Euro bank to invest in renewables... and let's give HSBC a shove
6. **Ammonia pollution is killing some of our most efficient carbon sequestration**
7. **Soy – Brazil's cerrado is being devastated**
8. Organic UK-grown quinoa – an alternative to rice and all-round super-food!
9. **Bad news from Antarctica but some hope on the 'methane bomb'**
10. China's plastic demand slows just as supply of petrochemical plants surges

1. The day after sending out my last email I had to eat my words.... I gave this [link](#) so that you could see where your electricity supplier gets its power and I derided the Big 6's slow movement to renewables. But the very next day [Scottish Power announced a £6 billion investment programme](#), most of which is going into renewables, storage and grid connections. The company has **sold all its gas assets (and 66% of its**

electricity was coming from gas, so that's a big change). It's committed to 100% wind energy.

Why is this happening? Well, one reason is that **Scottish Power is owned by Spanish utility Iberdrola**, and they are part of [Spain's big plans for 74% renewables by 2030 and 100% by 2050](#). It seems that the UK will benefit from Spain's green 'push'. (The details of their ambitious plans are worth reading - a low-interest 'green bond' to raise €53 bn for a **national plan to combat climate change**, money that will be saved by cutting fossil fuel imports...)

2. Meanwhile, our government has announced a welcome, but not enough, [first 'sector deal' for renewables](#) (having had several for oil and gas in the past). They will give strong support to ensure that **30% of our electricity will come from off-shore wind by 2030**. The problem is that the other two other major planks of our energy policy, **new gas and new nuclear**, are faltering badly.

The government is in a quandry... Claire Perry, Minister at the Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, has stated that **she still does not believe 100% renewable power is possible – but we are running out of alternatives**. The gas industry doesn't want to build, and nuclear is obscenely expensive - and both take years of planning... With the prospect of an energy short-fall in the mid-2020s, as our existing nuclear and coal go off-line, [BEIS has just launched an enquiry](#) into how we can incentivise more low carbon generation. To add to the government's woes, our subsidies for existing coal, gas and nuclear plants ([the 'capacity market'](#)) [have been stopped by a European court decision](#) which may bring some existing plants to an end sooner than anticipated... **We need more solar, more on-shore wind, more tidal and more demand management, all of which can be turned around much faster than any major thermal plant...**

3. A further blow for government policy is this week's [court ruling that the government must consider the science, including climate change, when](#)

[determining its fracking policy](#). The judge found that the **government had failed** to do so, and also that **gas should not be considered a 'low carbon' fuel**. (Gas was only ever lower in carbon than coal *at the power station* – but this always **ignored the fugitive methane emissions** involved in sourcing and transporting gas.) It really looks as if **fracking may be over in the UK** – and if so, it will be down to the hard work, vigilance and personal sacrifices of an awful lot of campaigners.

4. One alternative our government, and most European governments, have been backing is biomass from woodland. The trouble is that this demand is causing [widespread deforestation across the continent](#), threatening ancient woodland and increasing biodiversity collapse. Given the many recent reports on the losses of insects and other animals that support us, you may want to take a look at [Biofuel Watch's website](#). Five European countries, including Ireland, are now [challenging the inclusion of biomass in the EU's Renewable Energy Directive](#).

Of course, our switch from plastic bags to paper will also be increasing the pressure on our woodland. There are [no easy answers](#) ... Paper bags even require more energy in production... I was given some of [these cotton bags for Xmas](#) – but you do have to use them a lot to justify their footprint. When it comes to loo roll, do look for recycled paper – but [according to the Ecologist, cutting our use is still best...](#) In Mike Berners-Lee's book, *How Bad Are Bananas?*, I read that **the average American uses 70 sheets of loo paper per day....!!!** I guess we need to think about all those unnecessary paper napkins too....

5. The **European Investment Bank, the biggest lender in the world, is still – shockingly – lending to fossil fuel industries**. For a short period, they are **consulting with the public** on their investment plans and [350.Org has launched a petition](#) calling on the EIB, a public bank, to switch from fossil fuel lending to renewables and clean tech. **Please sign and share.**

**HSBC is another bank under fire**. Although the bank has committed to divesting from most coal around the world, it is **continuing to fund new coal plants in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia up until 2023**.

Investors such as Schroders and Hermes, [coordinated by Share Action](#), [are now demanding that HSBC completely stop](#) their finance and general advisory work. **If you bank with HSBC, please write and give them your views. The Triodos is a very good alternative....**

6. If you're still thinking about whether to cut your **meat/dairy consumption**, or whether to switch to '[Pasture for Life](#)', last week's [Costing the Earth](#) gives a good explanation of our **ammonia pollution problem – and how this is feeding into climate change**. First, our ammonia fertiliser production uses gas (methane) as a feedstock, requires **1% of the world's energy**, and releases the carbon molecule from the methane (CH<sub>4</sub>). Much of that fertiliser is used to feed **protein-rich cereal to our livestock (half our agricultural land in the UK) which then excretes the excess ammonia in its urine**. In our intensive indoor farming (though not when cows are permanently outside) the urine is mixed with the dung to form slurry, which farmers generally spray onto land fairly indiscriminately. The same is true of ammonia fertiliser that is sprayed onto the crops we eat.

**Ammonia in the air can blow hundreds of miles, mixing with particulates on the way**, and is now recognised as a major reason why we will breach our air quality targets. In addition, it appears that this is **killing off some of our most efficient natural carbon sequestration – the sphagnum moss in our peat bogs, an important carbon removal mechanism in the UK and Ireland**.

Having looked at the Pasture for Life website, it seems [Bristol has one good source of organic, PFL, local meat](#), though there are several others just a little further. [Options for dairy](#) are more limited.

7. **Activists have been pushing Brazil to stop its deforestation** – and its devastation of the '[cerrado](#)', the [wooded grassland](#), which is more than 20% of Brazil's land area and being cut at a faster rate than the rainforest. An area the **size of Wales has been converted into soy production over the last 11 years – most of this for animal feed**. The big traders have been forced to sign up to **transparency and monitoring**

**measures starting in June**, and one (Dreyfuss) has agreed not to source from newly deforested land.

The **UK is Brazil's 5<sup>th</sup> biggest importer of soy from the cerrado.**

Companies such as Tesco's, M&S, Nando's and Walmart are now calling for a moratorium. Again, this is an **encouraging sign of where campaigning has taken us – all those petitions are not in vain!** – but there is still a long way to go... For those who are drinking non-dairy milk, have you tried [UK-grown, organic hemp milk](#), available at the Better Food Company and other outlets?

8. While on a food theme, I was interested to see that you can now buy [UK-grown organic quinoa](#) – a good substitute for rice and pasta and all-round super-food, apparently. Since we need to think seriously about **food miles and cutting agro-chemical use**, this seems to be an interesting option.
  
9. Although there is **so much good change happening, it's not fast enough** and, as the scientists keep telling us, **winning slowly is the same as failing...** Over the last few months there have been several bits of bad news from Antarctica – satellites reveal that some parts of [Western Antarctica have lost a metre's depth of ice in just two years](#). Apparently, that's **200 billion tonnes of ice per year, which is adding to sea level rise (now a global average of around 3mm per year)**. Attention is focused on Thwaites Glacier, where most of the melting has occurred in the last three years, which is [ice above rock below sea-level](#) and therefore very susceptible to warming oceans. According to [this report](#), if it melts completely, **it will add 65cm to our sea level.**

There has been more focus recently on the **possibility of a 'methane bomb' from the permafrost or from the hydrates**, the deposits in low lying waters around our continents. The concern is that **one massive loss could catapult us into runaway climate change**. I'm not a scientist and it seems this science is still evolving. But [here is one scientist](#) who thinks

that, although all methane losses are disastrous, the prospect of one mighty explosion is unlikely. **(See the Dr Carolyn Ruppel interviews.)**

10. In a recent email I mentioned that the **growth in demand for plastic is noticeably slowing. China, of course, is key** here and an FT article last week confirmed that their decreased demand is now pushing plastic prices down. This is very definitely **bad news for the oil and gas industry** as, over the last five years, they have massively increased their investments into petrochemicals, spurred on by cheap gas prices in the US.

**All those chemical plants are just coming on line, and more expected over the next few years.** This is **another good example of how changes in consumer demand are making it much more difficult for the industry to sign off any major investments.** It is no longer clear whether the profits will be there when the investment is ready, or for how long. That makes life very difficult when you are investing billions of dollars of share and bond-holder money...

11. Also in a recent email I mentioned the need for local green / sustainability groups across Bristol. Several groups from across the West have sent me information on what their groups do – please find attached to this email. If you've got ideas on what to do in your area but don't know where to start, please do get in touch.

All good wishes. **As ever, if you would like to come off this mailing list, just let me know.**

Nikki

[Redland booking links](#)

UK Energy, Emissions and Targets - 12th March, 7.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/uk-energy-emissions-and-targets-tickets-56209483077>

Is Nuclear the Answer?

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/is-nuclear-the-answer-tickets-56209928409>

Land Use and Climate Change

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/land-use-and-climate-change-tickets-56210396810>

The Way Forward

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-way-forward-tickets-56210857187>

Discussion: Does individual or local action on climate change matter?

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/discussion-does-individual-or-local-action-on-climate-change-matter-tickets-56211593389>