

Hello

Just to let you know that the Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Energy Group will be hosting a screening of **'Merchants of Doubt' at 7pm, Weds 12<sup>th</sup> June**, at the Kensington Arms, Stanley Road, BS6. All are welcome. This is a really important and well-made documentary, **investigating how our corporates have funded and manipulated the debate on climate change.**

The Climate Coalition is hosting [a major rally in London on 26<sup>th</sup> June.](#)

And here's some news which I hope you find useful and interesting.

- 1. Government plans to increase VAT on solar, wind, heat pumps & insulation - and keep it down for coal and gas!**
2. Current progress on renewables only gets us **60% to Paris pledges**
- 3. Government under pressure to issue a Green Bond**
- 4. Less than 20% investors think oil will be good in five years time...**
5. MPs urge more support for tidal stream
- 6. Generous subsidies for diesel buses continue**
- 7. EU says tax aviation fuel – it won't hurt employment**
8. Drought, fires and biodiversity loss – **eat more organic**
- 9. Monsanto – Round Up resistance and some big court bills**
- 10. New evidence on how plastics contribute to climate change**
11. Some Bristol news and events

1. How can this be? Please don't fall off your chair... The government is planning to [increase VAT on solar, wind, heat pumps and insulation, from 5% to 20% this October.](#) At the same time, they intend to [keep VAT down for coal and gas....](#)

This is just as the UK starts to face up to its **looming mid-'20s short-fall in electricity production** (because of cancelled contracts at two new nuclear plants). And there's the climate change and biodiversity crises... Renewables are quicker and cheaper than gas or nuclear, but our government – and no doubt the **Shell, BP and EDF lobbyists and staff who work inside our civil service** – would like to keep the unlevel

playing field tipped in their favour for longer. **If, like me, your head is banging against the wall over this latest proposal, feel free to print off/copy the attached letter and send it to your MP.**

2. It's not just our country that is slackening off on support for renewable investment. The International Energy Agency (IEA) calculates that the [world needs to add around 300 GW of renewable capacity per year to meet its \(inadequate\) Paris goals](#) – but in the last two years we have stalled at **just 180 GW**. This is despite the plummeting costs. Shockingly, according to the FT, investment in coal had its first up-tick since 2012 and the **amount invested in oil and gas exploration still continues to exceed – by far – that spent on renewables (\$477 billion/year to \$304 bn)**. The Chief Exec of the IEA states: **'..the appetite to push low carbon investments and policies is slowly fading'**. He blames governments. My head is in my hands...

3. What about in the UK? Despite a raft of proposals from our Committee on Climate Change in response to the 1.5 degree report, Secretary of State Greg Clark has said **he will *not* immediately accept these recommendations but will respond in 'due course'...**

The government is now under some cross-party pressure to issue a **'green sovereign bond'** – ie low cost borrowing from the private sector specifically for clean tech initiatives. **Poland, France, Belgium and Ireland have already done this, and Germany and the Netherlands are set to follow.** It seems like a 'no brainer', given the National Infrastructure Committee, the Stern Report, and others, concluding that fewer energy imports will save us billions... We have to ask serious questions about why our government is so reluctant....

Is the private sector ready to invest? Yes. A recent survey of [European fund managers indicates that only 18% \(!\) think oil will be a good investment in five years' time..](#) The private sector (our pensions, insurance companies, savings etc) is desperately in need of green/clean alternatives to invest in – and there's nothing more secure than government bonds...

4. That begs the question of why oil and gas exploration investment continues at all? A recent Global Witness report demonstrated that [if we could stop the \\$5 trillion expected to be invested in exploration and production up to 2030, we could cancel the 12% growth in output and come in somewhere near our 1.5 degree goal...](#) This is critical... As a recent UN report indicated, [50% of our greenhouse gases come from resource extraction....](#)

**So can we just cancel all future exploration?** The first problem is that most oil (approx. 85%) comes from national oil companies, such as Saudi Aramco, CNOOC and SINOPEC in China, Equinor in Norway, Petrobras in Brazil, among many others. **For 25 countries, oil/gas brings in more than 20% of their countries' revenues, and many of them are more than 50% reliant on oil /gas income.** We need these states to diversify their economies and stop privileging their oil and gas sector.

**So, is there nothing we can do? What about the role of Western 'super majors'?** In fact, Western oil companies, particularly **Shell, BP, Exxon Mobil, Chevron, ConocoPhillips and Total, play a really important role.** They work in partnership with the NOCs, bringing capital (our investments and savings) and tech expertise. That is why it is worth putting real pressure on them. The problem is that the personal expertise of the execs and staff is *only* in delivering oil and gas. In the past, that's been highly profitable. So they too are extremely reluctant to change.... And our governments have given them **enormously privileged positions within our economies and policy making.**

Before you despair, it's good to know that these **oil companies are facing multiple, unprecedented challenges:** a consistently low oil price, peak demand, shareholder and legal challenges on climate change, divestment and massive debt. Oh, and one in four of their staff are within five years of retirement - recruitment is unsurprisingly difficult... **Now we just need to stop using their products and push them to transition to energy companies...**

5. **So what could a UK government green bond invest in?** Well, tidal stream power now seems [a proven technology](#) – delivering predictable renewable power without building a barrage. [Ninety one MPs \(from all parties\)](#) have just written to Energy Minister Claire Perry to ask her to give this serious backing. The UK has some of the best tidal resources in Europe and tidal stream has the potential to become a significant employer and export industry. This really could be a useful addition to wind and solar – it just needs support to expand, through our Contracts for Difference mechanism.
6. Another thing our government could do is **stop subsidising diesel buses....** Bristol MP, Thangam Debonnaire, has been pushing for reform of the **very generous Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG)**. This is what makes the economic viability of moving to electric / hydrogen buses unclear. [If you think the government's answer of reforming 'when time allows' is inadequate, please click on the 'no' button here.](#)
7. **Will we soon see taxation of jet fuel? – currently, there is none.** A leaked EU report states that an [increase in ticket price of 10% would cut 11% of traffic but have a negligible effect on overall employment.](#) Currently, countries have the right to tax fuel for internal aviation and on fuel taken on board within Europe – **but we don't**. This means that aviation will have grown 68% over this decade, and its greenhouse gas emissions are likely to be a [staggering 20% of the world's total by 2050...](#)

There is some good news in that the [Scottish government has dropped its plans to cut passenger tax by 50%](#). This was because of environmentalists' protests.

There is more good news: the UK had a significant drop in holiday flights last year. Thomas Cook reports a 12% drop, and a reluctance to book in advance this year. [If you haven't yet pledged to go flight-free in 2020, here's the link.](#)

8. The UK is [already experiencing drought](#) in some areas of the country, and [northern Europe, including Scotland](#), has already suffered **major fires this year...** On [this morning's Farming Today](#) (best source of info on all things environmental!) the **World Wildlife Trust reported that seven bee species are now regionally extinct in our eastern counties, 25 are threatened and another 31 are of concern.**

As we are all reeling from the [IPBES report on the world's biodiversity loss](#) – now a threat on a par with climate change – we need to start buying **more organic, local, food to support our 'web of life' and protect our soil carbon** (which helps with water retention).

9. **GMOs** are still being pushed as the answer to our need to feed 9 billion by 2050 (though cutting food waste and reallocating livestock land seem like more sustainable ideas..). GMOs generally rely on Round-Up to kill off all surrounding growth - GMOs themselves are engineered to be resistant. However, now, Bayer (which has bought Monsanto) admits that over-use has led to [resistance in at least 43 weed species](#).

In addition, Bayer faces 13,000 court cases for the health problems caused by Round Up (glyphosate). Three have already been settled against the company – the last came with [an order to pay \\$2bn in damages...](#) Their share price has sunk. Here's a [useful link](#) giving some details as to why we should want this banned. [Europe, at the moment, has failed](#) to do so.

Can we farm without this, and other, chemicals? Yes – but we need a return to **smaller scale, more productive, market gardening.**

10. **Plastics are sometimes seen as one of our 'ecological stressors' but not a climate change issue.** The [American Centre for International Environmental Law has just launched a comprehensive study](#) looking at, among other things, 'fugitive' gas emissions (methane) in the production process. They found that emissions from the plastics lifecycle could reach 1.34 gigatons per year within ten years, **equivalent to an horrific 295 coal fired power stations....**

In the last budget, the Chancellor announced **plans for a tax on plastic that is not at least 30% recycled**. This would have given some certainty to our recycling industry and allowed them to scale up. But the [plastics lobby is fighting this hard, despite public commitments](#) that they are 'on-side'.

Recent marine samples indicate that the [number of plastic bags may be stabilising](#) – whoopee ([even Al Qaeda has banned them!](#)) – but this is only one component of our plastic waste. There is another small bit of good news in that [we now have cleaner beaches](#) as litter picks have become popular. If you're taking part, you might want to consider a ['brand audit'](#), to see where the stuff is coming from... And sign this [Greenpeace petition](#).

#### 11. Some Bristol news:

- ❑ **Extinction Rebellion** in Bristol is now so big, it's split into two. Please look on Facebook for meeting details.
- ❑ ER will be demonstrating against **Bristol airport's proposed expansion** in Weston Super Mare on the **19<sup>th</sup> June, 2pm**.
- ❑ Bristol has a [Fruit-and-Veg trail in June](#) to encourage growing
- ❑ **Bristol Walking Alliance** is [hosting an event on May 29th](#) and a [Walkfest](#) till the end of the month
- ❑ The planned gas peaker plant in St Phillips was defeated overwhelmingly, thanks to the coordination of [RADE](#).
- ❑ A panel discussion on transport options in Bristol, hosted by Bristol Civic Society, was asked if any of our objectives could be met without some penalty on motorists. The answer was 'No'.
- ❑ Want to see what a green wall might look like? The [Future Economy Network](#) on Glos Road (old Maplin building) has just had one planted.
- ❑ [Future Economy Network](#) will also be hosting a discussion of Bristol's [2030 carbon neutrality target on May 28<sup>th</sup>](#) and has an interesting **Festival of Sustainable Business coming up in September**.

