

Hi

I hope you will be able to join me – and many thousands! – at the **international strike for the climate on College Green, 11am, Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September**. This is organised by the youth strikers in Bristol but adults are warmly invited.

Here's some news that I hope you find useful and interesting. A word document is attached for easier reading on some devices.

1. **The public has little idea of the scale of change required**
2. Japanification – what's happening to the world economy?
3. **David Koch's death – and changes in the US**
4. **Brexit – the impacts on energy**
5. Hunterston B – back on line temporarily
6. **Extreme water stress affecting a quarter of world's population**
7. The UK's farmers – change happening
8. **A whole lot of good clean-tech news**
9. **Falling consumer demand for flights is now 'existential' for industry**
10. Local news

1. It was sobering to read the [statements from our government's outgoing chief environment scientist](#), Sir Ian Boyd. **"We talk about sustainability, but we don't really know what it means.... We need to change our behaviours and our lifestyles.** We certainly won't be able to travel as much as we have in the past.... We've got to reduce demand to a much greater extent. Emissions are a symptom of consumption, and **unless we reduce consumption we'll not reduce emissions."**

He is calling for a **Net Zero Ministry to vet all government policies, and taxation to be used actively to incentivise low carbon, and penalise high carbon, lifestyles.**

Many of us still seem to feel that it's not our responsibility to make changes – that it's up to governments alone to deliver carbon neutrality... Here's one powerful argument in favour of personal action–

the [first few lines of a poem by Drew Dellinger](#) – **What did you do when you knew?** In the very near future, we will all have to ask that of ourselves.

The more positive point is that **consumer behaviour is powerful**. Together, change in our consumption *is* making industry, agriculture and governments move – and cutting consumption really doesn't have to be a negative. **There are many pluses to slow travel; local organic food; a slimmer wardrobe; the sharing economy etc. We could just find ourselves in a happier, healthier economy...**

2. Of course, one immediate effect of reduced consumer consumption is that **economies stop 'growing' in the way that we have conventionally measured them** (sales of goods, converted into a Gross Domestic Product figure). Despite decades of attempts to find an alternative – a Human Development Index, a Happiness Index etc – we have **stuck with GDP, even though it doesn't measure what we actually value**.

Brexit may have hidden recent changes from many of us but **the world economy is heading into weird, uncharted territory at the moment**. Despite a low oil price, a low dollar and extremely low interest rates, growth around the world is right down. **'Japanification' (people just not buying, to put it simply) seems to be spreading to Europe and possibly even the US**. It may not be obvious to you or me, but it matters to the fund managers who have billions to invest in safely 'growing' assets. **Around \$17 trillion of world funds are now being lent at negative yields to governments** – ie *lenders are paying governments for taking money from them...*

It has always been difficult to see exactly **what a no-growth economy might look like – but we've known that it's essential to keeping carbon emissions down**. It does look as if the transition is upon us – complicated by Brexit, trade wars, growing protectionism etc. Will governments react simply with tax cuts to stimulate consumer spending? – or **will they start investing seriously in the green tech we need, creating 'green growth' as a step towards 'no growth'...** It's not clear – the conventional response is simply for more consumer-led growth...

3. I wouldn't normally celebrate anybody's death but like millions of others, the news that **David Koch is no longer walking the earth came as some relief**. If you are not acquainted with the infamous family, here's a [review I wrote several years ago of the family's biography](#).

**Does his departure leave us in a safer place?** Well, the encouraging news is that [29% \(!\) of the American public is now expressing 'alarm'](#) about climate change, up from just 14% six years ago. And **cracks are appearing in the denialist ranks – bizarrely, pitching the oil and gas industry *against* the climate sceptics**. Trump's current plan is to roll back regulations on fugitive methane emissions from gas production, but the industry can see **dozens of public court cases looming, so finds itself oddly opposed to this measure that is supposed to liberate them to emit without fear**. **Again, it's public pressure that is achieving this**.

4. **What does Brexit mean for energy policy?** Well, here are a few thoughts. First, we will **no longer be bound by the EU's burden-sharing agreement that committed us to 20% of renewable fuel** across power, transport and heating by 2020. The UK is at a **measly 11%** and if we stay in the EU, we could find ourselves explaining lack of progress to the ECJ. **By leaving, we will also not be bound by the target of a 40% cut in GHG by 2030 or a renewable energy target of 32%**. There's a [good chart in this article showing our lack of progress compared to most of our neighbours](#).

We currently have five interconnectors trading electricity between the UK and Ireland, Northern Ireland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands – and we have [another six under construction](#). With 'no deal' we will be outside the EU's energy market and trade is unlikely to remain 'frictionless' – [ie there will be costs and more complex trading arrangements](#).

Heavy industry across Europe participates in an **Emissions Trading System which currently adds almost €30 to the price of a tonne of carbon emitted** – encouraging industry to be more efficient and helping

drive coal out of Europe. The **price could crash if there is no agreement between the UK and EU and British industry just dumps its allowances in the market.** The government has said they will impose a fixed £16/tonne in the UK, on top of our own carbon floor price, but this will not prevent a **catastrophic price drop in Europe and our own floor price is set only to 2021.** It is possible that coal could become 'economic' again.... **(Is this another reason why Aaron Banks, of Banks Mining, is funding Brexit and applying to [open a new mine at Druridge Bay?](#))**

5. **Two nuclear reactors have been closed at Hunterston B power station for almost a year** because of [cracking in the graphite blocks where the reaction takes place](#). EDF has now, apparently, persuaded regulators to **allow one reactor to resume operation for four months.** All our nuclear power plants have been given **ten year life extensions but they are scheduled to be decommissioned from 2022 onwards – and possibly earlier, given safety concerns.**

Even if Hinkley comes online sometime between 2026 and 2030, there will be a **drop in our conventional power production – a gap that can only be met with decreased consumption or fast-installed renewables.**

6. **Seventeen countries around the world are under extremely high water stress – and from the maps in this article, it [seems the UK will also be at high risk by 2030 and very high risk by 2040.](#)** In central and west France this year water shortages have been severe with restrictions in 85 out of 96 departments.

There are many things we can do to help... First, it's the **extractive and manufacturing industries that are extremely heavy in water usage.** As this article points out, [Bangladesh is pumping its underground reserves out to feed its clothing factories.](#) Here are some [alarming fashion facts from Oxfam and info to share.](#) Please sign up for the [Second Hand September Pledge.](#)

Industrial agriculture is also a major driver – [our demand for intensively reared meat, of course, but also most large-scale annual crops.](#) The least we can do is **stop importing wine from drought-stricken areas such as**

**Australia, Chile and South Africa.** The economic advantages of exporting to us are far out-weighted by the environmental damage and risks to local populations. Time to get a taste for UK cider!

7. Agriculture in the UK is changing. This edition of [Farming Today is one insight](#) (start 3 mins in) – a look at **several mixed farms that are now managing soil carbon, and getting off the treadmill of chemical inputs.** Although many of us are turning to vegetarian or vegan diets, the programme makes the case for **small-scale farming, using low intensity livestock to manage the soil sustainably and maximise food production.** The first farm featured highlights the issue – a family farm surrounded by **three mega farms which will all, undoubtedly, have high greenhouse gas emissions, particularly nitrous oxide.** It seems to me that it's good to occasionally support [pasture-for-life production](#), to keep these family farms in business and prevent mega-farm takeover; and we all need to be **supporting local, organic and seasonal horticultural crop farming.**

8. Here are a few links to lots of interesting new green tech ideas:

- ❑ [Hyundai has joined Toyota and others in producing an EV with its own solar panel on top](#) – reduces fuel costs but very expensive;
- ❑ An [organic, edible plant spray could help preserve the life of food](#) and reduce packaging and waste;
- ❑ [Farming seaweed might soak up a lot of carbon and produce a biofuel](#) – or we sink it to the bottom of the deep ocean to store;
- ❑ Beetles could turn [plastic waste into white paint](#);
- ❑ [Hot water from abandoned mines](#) could be used in UK heating – apparently a quarter of UK homes sit on old mines;
- ❑ The [UK just got its first solar powered train line.](#)

9. **Flight-shaming is catching on**, particularly in some countries in Europe. In a recent FT article, Scandinavian Airlines states that **just the 3% drop in domestic flights in Sweden has become 'an existential question'** for

the industry – and within the last six months, **‘sustainability’ and ‘passenger attitudes’ have become a ‘hot topic’.**

As Mike Berners-Lee says, **‘We just have to bite the bullet on aviation, because we just don’t know how to do it in a low-carbon way.’** It’s not just the CO2 – the **nitrogen dioxide, particulates and contrails are also major contributors to global warming.**

There is still time to [make an objection to the proposed expansion of Bristol’s airport](#). It was recently discovered that the managers there have been writing to past customers to drum up support, and this is likely to be a breach of data protection. There is a [fighting fund](#) to which you can also contribute. Here’s a [link to the 2020 flight-free pledge](#).

Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Energy Group will be hosting a panel [discussion on the expansion on Tuesday September 10<sup>th</sup>](#). If you book and find you can’t come, please cancel your ticket as this event is likely to be popular.

10. And here are a few local events:

- ❑ Sustainable Shirehampton – opening event with speakers (inc me...) 10am Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> Sept, Methodist Church off High St – tickets not required;
- ❑ [Keeping warm in an older property – Clifton library, Sept 12<sup>th</sup>](#), 7.30pm;
- ❑ [Sustainable Oceans Fest – Sept 14<sup>th</sup>](#) – Clifton High School;
- ❑ [Festival of Sustainable Business starts 17<sup>th</sup> September](#), free exhibition and many events and talks;
- ❑ [The Insurgent Power of the Commons – the Cube – 17<sup>th</sup> Sept](#);
- ❑ **Big international climate strike – 11am, College Green, 20<sup>th</sup> September**; adults are invited by our youth strikers who are organising and leading this event;
- ❑ **People’s Assembly organised by XR**, College Green, 1pm 21<sup>st</sup> Sept – no tickets, just come;
- ❑ [Nature walk from St Werburgh’s to Frenchay](#), donations to Avon Needs Trees, September 22<sup>nd</sup>;

- ▣ [Totally green pub quiz in support of Avon Needs Trees](#) – Kensington Arms, BS6 – September 23<sup>rd</sup>;
- ▣ [Rewild your garden – September 26<sup>th</sup>](#), Clifton library.

Many thanks. **As ever, if you would like to come off the mailing list, please just let me know.**

All good wishes.

Nikki