

## Hello

Why is this a climate emergency and does personal action matter? If you still need clarification on this [here's a talk](#) I gave recently to the Aster Group in Devizes.



Thanks to them for allowing me to use the film.

Also, a small plea. Last year I helped set up the charity [Avon Needs Trees](#), to buy land in the Bristol-Avon catchment area, to create permanent forest through planting and rewilding. Here's a [five minute talk](#) filmed last December that explains the project.



We are on the 'home stretch' to buy our first 34 acres, having raised a whopping £290,000. But we need more help to buy this spring, to prepare the land over summer and plant in autumn. If you find these news emails useful, or if your company has funds for community/environmental projects, please do get in touch or donate through [the website](#). Many thanks.

And here's some news.

1. Our cheapest and quickest renewable, onshore wind, is coming back!
2. OMG - the OGA is revising thoughts on North Sea extraction
3. Carney and Lagarde warn on 'stranded assets' - again - and the threats to the banking system
4. Is airport expansion over? And another BIG reason not to fly...
5. Two thirds of UK homes fail basic energy efficiency standards
6. Our demand for meat is driving the pesticide industry and deforestation
7. Government unveils Environmental Land Management
8. If food waste was a country, it would be the third biggest emitter...
9. Streaming may not be as bad as we thought...?
10. Some other bits of news

## [1. Our Cheapest and Quickest Renewable, Onshore Wind, is Coming Back!](#)

Well, whoopy-do. The government has finally [reversed its ban on onshore wind](#) bidding into the 'Contracts for Difference' mechanism from 2021. This means we are likely to see much more onshore wind, our cheapest form of renewable power, sometime around the mid-2020s. This is something that the Committee on Climate Change, utilities such as [Scottish Power](#), and the general public have been saying (shouting!) is absolutely necessary.

The UK's challenge is not just to eliminate our use of coal and gas in electricity production but replace our ageing nuclear (shutting down from 2023), gear up for increased demand as we switch to EVs and electrification of heating, and produce clean hydrogen for our heating, long-distance transport, steel and chemicals. So that's a lot of renewables we need...

If you're still wondering whether you should invest in solar and/or a battery, now is probably a good time to get moving. In the face of Coronavirus, governments and central banks are lowering interest rates to try and get us consuming more. That means your savings aren't earning much and borrowing is cheap - a good time for companies and individuals to invest... (One solar company in Bristol tells me they have 8 weeks supply at the moment.)

With regard to other renewables, it seems the innovative [wind kite](#) project in Scotland has folded.

But new solar is on the move. Producers of [quantum dot solar](#) (flexible, can absorb indoor light,) claim to be a step nearer to commercial viability and the holy grail of [perovskites seems closer](#). [Oxford PV](#) is, apparently, aiming at full scale production by the end of next year. These technologies could really increase our use of solar. See [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) for some thoughts.

## **2. OMG - the OGA is Revising Thoughts on North Sea Extraction**

It seems that our energy and emissions policies are now set to include North Sea oil and gas production, an unmentionable Holy Cow till now. The UK produces around half a million barrels of crude per day (of a global 100 million/day consumption) but this is still significant - and then there are the vast volumes of gas (methane)...

The Oil and Gas Authority was set up a few years ago to maximise production and [extend the life of the North Sea](#), but according to [this report](#), the objectives are now under review. A [typical rig](#) can consume the same amount of [energy as a small city](#) so efficiencies matter, as does cutting back on flaring, (a tax on this would be good). But it seems the main thrust of the initiative is simply to switch from oil to gas - no gain, and not good enough.

But let's celebrate. The fact that moving away from maximising production is on the agenda is the really big news - a welcome first step towards reality...

## **3. Carney and Lagarde Warn on 'Stranded Assets' - Again - and the Threats to the Banking System**

The drum-beats for the fossil fuel industries are getting louder. Here's a recent headline from the Financial Times's new (and pretty extraordinary!) Moral Money section: 'Think ESG is hot right now? You ain't seen nothing yet'. (ESG is Environment, Social and Governance, the new ethical/greener investment category.) 'The ESG dam is bursting,' the article continues, and auditors Deloitte expect an amazing half of all investments in the US to be in this category within five years – an explosion of \$12 trillion. That's money being moved out of conventional investments and into better stuff – double whammy.

A recent piece on the World Service's 'World in Business' confirmed that the cost of capital is definitely on the rise for fossil fuels. It once seemed that divestment would remain just a moral statement – but it's now having a very practical effect. The cost of capital will be the major factor in deciding whether most projects go ahead. On top of this, oil companies' declining 'social licence to operate' is quickly eroding their ability to strut the corridors of power and dictate the policies under which they operate.

Of course, that may mean rocky times for us as an economy – and even a banking collapse is possible. Former Bank of England governor Mark Carney and President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde were in London last week urging ‘Every company, every bank, every insurer to adjust their business models’. Banks have, apparently been slow to take account of climate risk, particularly when investing in the most vulnerable countries, and one FT article estimates possible losses of \$1 tn. Time to move your banking to the [Triodos or Co-op](#), neither of which invest in fossil fuels.

As a side note. It’s interesting – but bizarre – to watch how the financial world and governments are desperately trying to use conventional fiscal and monetary policies to maintain economic growth in the face of a very practical collapse in consumer demand. Policies to get us to spend more are the only tools we have – and it really makes the point how under-equipped our business sector is for practical onslaughts and the transition to localisation that we need for climate change.

#### **4. Is Airport Expansion Over? And Another BIG Reason Not To Fly...**

The third runway at Heathrow has been defeated in the courts – but on a [bit of a technicality](#). As with Bristol airport’s expansion, there will be appeals. Delay is our friend, but the fights aren’t over.

Clearly what we need is a big change of culture around flying – and [here’s the programme](#) to really scare you into taking a train or staying in the UK... Where does that air in a cabin come from? – and who would have thought that chemicals leaching off the engines are putting pilots into comas? There are court cases happening across Europe and the US regard to these ‘fume events’, and Unite is bringing ten test cases to the High Court in the UK, reflecting the claims of 100 crew. It is a genuinely disturbing report – particularly for anyone who is a frequent flier.

#### **5. Two Thirds of UK Homes Fail Basic Energy Efficiency Standards**

[Two thirds of UK homes fail on home energy efficiency](#). That’s more than 12 million homes with an EPC lower than C. Are our new-built homes any better? No. In [this report, a survey of 142 new estates](#) found that overwhelmingly, the design is ‘mediocre or poor’ when assessed against criteria such as walkability and car dependence, environmental impacts, and connectivity and amenities.

[Part L of the building regs](#) is the bit that deals with the minimum energy performance standards of new build. It’s now under review - and according to leading architects and engineers, the new proposals will actually reduce energy efficiency in new

homes. (What!? Why???) This is bizarre - given that heating is the country's biggest challenge and we need new homes to be meeting the most rigorous standards. Good to hear that there is an [Architects Climate Action Network, and they are making their voices heard on the issue.](#)

## **6. Our Demand for Meat is Driving the Pesticide Industry and Deforestation**

We have had several reports recently about how the [UK's grain-fed meat consumption is driving deforestation](#) in the Amazon, but a new Greenpeace report reveals how grain-fed [meat is also driving pesticide](#) use. Often these are [Highly Hazardous Pesticides \(HHPs\)](#), and Brazil is the world leader in their use. A UN report has found 'an epidemic of [human] poisonings by pesticides' in Brazil and a particular [threat to essential, pollinating bees](#) in the country.

Europe is no beacon of good practice. HHPs are 11% of UK's pesticides. Although the EU brought in common rules in the 1990s, many countries have been slow to transpose them into national law and there has been [weak enforcement from the EU](#). A [recent report](#) found that companies such as [Bayer and BASF](#) are making billions out of selling these chemicals, and another report out last month revealed [fraud in German labs over trials of Glyphosate](#). The [Soil Association had a petition to sign but it closed on March 5](#).

## **7. Government Unveils Environmental Land Management**

Storm Dennis has brought the potential effects of climate change even closer to home. It's not just the alarming effect of flooded homes and [abandoned coastal communities](#), but it's likely to add to the pressures causing [food prices to rise](#) and of course, torrential rain has caused a huge loss of soil carbon from our unprotected fields. The [brown in this water is carbon](#), becoming carbon dioxide in our rivers and oceans, acidifying and destroying life in them.

We need better soil management. Last week the [government unveiled its Environment Land Management \(ELM\) plan](#) which will start in 2021 to phase out payments based on how much land is owned and from 2024 will start to phase in payments for 'public goods' (trees, hedges, soil management etc). That leaves a bit of a head-scratching gap for farmers.

The other conundrum is that, while apparently backing higher land and animal management systems, the government is [refusing to say it will defend UK standards against cheap US sub-standard imports](#). Compare with the [French plan](#). BTW, if you hear

news presenters mis-framing this debate as one about human health impacts, instead of the environment and animal welfare, please write and complain immediately. ([Today.complaints@bbc.co.uk](mailto:Today.complaints@bbc.co.uk) may come in handy...)

## 8. If Food Waste Was A Country, It Would Be The Third Biggest Emitter...

As food prices rise, and we contemplate the impact of our globalised food industry on greenhouse gas emissions, it seems the first thing we can do is stop buying the stuff and then throwing it in the bin.... [If food waste was a country, it would be the third biggest emitter](#), apparently - **that's more than aviation**.... It seems the [problem is much worse than we thought](#).

## 9. Streaming May Not Be As Bad As We Thought...?

Many of us have been feeling very guilty about our streaming habits, but according to [Carbon Brief, the emissions have been greatly exaggerated](#). This is largely due to the increased efficiency and use of renewables by data centres.

However, if you live in Bristol, you have one fantastic resource as an alternative - [Flicks, the world's longest-running video shop, on Christmas Steps!](#) It's a real Bristol institution and has an enormous archive - and Dave and Dave who have given their lives to this are completely lovable!

## 10. In Other News

Here are several more pieces of information, each of which deserves its own paragraph.

- The UK has a [new commission looking at carbon pricing](#). There are some serious figures involved, so let's hope for results;
- Having given the OK to HS2, it appears that [plans to make up for environmental impacts may be sacrificed to cut costs](#). Please support [Chris Packham's campaign](#);
- [BP is withdrawing](#) from three major lobby groups - wow!
- Norway's national oil company, [Equinor, has decided not to drill in a major marine park](#) off Australia;
- [Hornsea One, the world's biggest off-shore wind farm](#), will soon be up and running;
- Pivot Power's [network of EV charging points](#) will start rolling out end fo this year;

- Article on the [environmental costs of on-line shopping](#);
- The [blockade of a proposed new coal mine in Northumbria](#) continues;
- The climate-denying fossil-fuelled [Heartland Institute has launched a German opponent to Greta](#); and [Bots are being used to amplify](#) the climate denying message;
- [Gas infrastructure in the US has been hit by a cyber-attack](#) - another reason to decentralise our systems as much as possible;
- [50 ways to go greener](#) from the Guardian;
- [Event in Bath: Living with renewables and managing energy demand](#);
- Professor Steve Melia at UWE has launched a [campaign against the building of 10 new roads around Bristol and 5 road widening schemes – please sign](#).

In my last news email I suggested three positive actions to do that month. It got positive feedback, so here's another three:

- Measure your food waste over a week and talk to the people you live with about how you can cut this;
- Substitute imported booze with some English wine (white is now very good), beer or cider - preferably local and organic. [This site](#) will help you;
- Buy a [few square meters of land](#) for your mother on Mother's day, instead of imported flowers.

One final thing. This [article from the Ecologist](#) is thought-provoking. Not only are we into the territory of 'unknown unknowns' but managing the problems won't be enough. We need to love the earth. Sounds sappy - but it's true.

Warmest wishes.

Nikki