

01.05.2019

Hello

I hope to see some of you at the screening of **'Economics of Happiness'** on **Tuesday 7th** at the Kensington Arms, Stanley Road, BS6, **7pm**. This will also be a chance to **exchange ideas on carbon cutting**, and learn from each other – and have some fun!

Here's some news which I hope you find useful. As usual, there is a Word copy attached for easier reading on some devices.

1. **A significant change of mood and tone around climate change – finally!**
2. The **Environment Bill** – a sign of what will happen with Brexit
3. **VW gets going on EVs just as criminal charges arrive**
4. **Shipping execs call for a go-slow to cut greenhouse gases**
5. Amazon gears up for 1-day deliveries
6. **Nuclear just isn't 'green'**
7. What **Trump** is up to at the moment – a **major rebuff on Arctic drilling**
8. **Deforestation – the UK has had 100 wildfires this year...**
9. **A million UK homes get 'green gas'**
10. Some clean tech links, and why not to cut your lawn...

1. **What a difference in just a couple of weeks** – helped by the Attenborough documentary, Greta Thunberg's visit from Sweden, and a lot of Extinction Rebellion activity..... Extraordinary. **I hope you too are sensing a tide turning...** The question is, as ever, whether this will be fast enough, given the scale and urgency of climate change.

In particular I loved this article in Investment News **'Why the City Needs to Join the Rebellion'**, and this one, stating that **24% of fund managers think the oil industry should wind itself down**, and in this one, accountants PricewaterhouseCoopers have found a **striking change in business attitudes since 2017 with a third now prioritising the environment above financial returns**.

But I am sure you will also have heard the interviews with economists, politicians and business leaders saying **rapid decarbonisation is**

'undoable', will be unpopular and – Heaven forbid! – inflationary! There seems to be no understanding in some quarters that **Business As Usual is *not* an option. Physics *trumps* economics and what is politically possible...** No civilisation ever went into a battle for its own survival worrying about inflation... Move over The Incumbency... **We lost the opportunity for a slow transition a couple of decades ago.**

2. Given the **critical importance of land management to climate change and biodiversity protection, we should all be aware of two crucial bits of legislation** currently going through parliament. The Environment Audit Committee is warning that the Environment Bill will lead to protections being 'severely downgraded' from current EU standards. It states that the document 'lacks coherence' and that several government departments will be exempt from all environmental responsibilities. **The power to enforce action on climate change will be outside the Office for Environmental Protection's remit.** The linked article is extremely clear and easy-to-read. **Please write to your MP.**

What about the Agriculture Bill, also going through Parliament? Michael Gove insists that it will ensure fairer, environmentally better outcomes by paying landowners for eco-services. However, there is a threat to these promises if the trade deals we sign bring in cheaper, substandard imports.

The main focus is any **possible trade deal with the US**. It is **unlikely that the UK will, on its own, be able to withstand the pressure to include agriculture in an agreement, as the EU has done so far**. In fact, it seems the government has already reneged on its commitments. As this Farming Today report the government's planned no-deal Brexit tariffs will lift the ban on egg imports from countries with the worst standards – India, Argentina and Ukraine. This is a worrying indication of things to come.

3. There is some encouraging news that, finally, the [former CEO of VW and four other senior managers have been charged with fraud in Germany](#). The whole Dieselgate scandal has, so far, cost the company £24 billion (and us a lot of poor health).

Happily, under their [new, woman CEO](#) the company is now [taking a lead in switching to electric vehicles](#). Its focus is on smaller, less expensive cars, costing less than €20,000. Maybe one day we will all be proud to own a VW...?

Here's an [interesting guide to the tactics most car manufacturers are using in their 'slow walk' to electrification](#). Tomorrow, we expect the Committee on Climate Change to urge – again – that [our government brings forward its ban on new fossil fuel cars from 2040 to 2030](#). The current delay is effectively just another subsidy for the oil industry.

4. Among the business leaders getting worried about climate change are **100 senior shipping execs, who are together calling for speed limits on our sea-borne freight**. The industry aims to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by **50% by 2050 (from 2008 levels)** – and a 10% cut in speed would get things moving with no major investment. Still not enough, of course, and it's likely to be resisted by companies shipping perishables – all those oranges and bananas and livestock that need fast, high fuel consumption shipping. **Another reason to think about our imported and exported food and its carbon footprint.**
5. In contrast, **Amazon is gearing up for a one-day delivery time** for members of its Prime programme, in the hope of attracting many more online shoppers. The climate change risk is **more impulse-buying, more flights, more half-empty delivery trucks and vans etc.**

The company has not yet joined the [RE 100, the group of 174 multinationals that have currently pledged to go 100% renewable](#). If this,

and the company's [extraordinary tax avoidance](#), haven't yet led you to a [boycott of Amazon](#), you may want to consider.

6. Last weekend I was at a protest outside [Springfields](#) in Lancashire, where our nuclear fuel pellets are made. Following the event, we went a short distance up the road to the [New Preston Road fracking site](#) (worryingly close...) and were treated to a live webinar with indigenous activists in Canada, the US and India where uranium is mined. I have read and talked about [heap leaching](#) and [in-situ leaching](#) (to separate uranium from rock) but never before heard directly about the impacts on local communities – they're devastating. **If anyone still thinks nuclear power is low carbon or environmentally friendly, please think again...**

The [building delays and extraordinary costs of nuclear](#) are another reason this fuel is not a low-carbon option. The longer we rely on a nuclear build-out (**we were supposed to be cooking Xmas dinner on Hinkley C electricity in 2017...**), the more we rely on fossil fuels.

Please see attachment for more news on nuclear, and the impact of our nuclear deterrent on our defence budget.

7. There is mixed news from the US. The [courts have ruled against President Trump's attempt to open up 128 million acres of federal waters in the Arctic and the Atlantic](#) to oil exploration. This was just one of three legal setbacks on environmental issues last week, and nearly two dozen since he came to power. Great news.

However, Trump's disregard for the environment continues. He is reported to be trying to get [high level nuclear waste around the US reclassified as 'low level'](#) to reduce the costs of storage; blocking a [report on pesticide risk](#) and [issuing executive orders to speed the](#)

[approval of oil and gas pipelines](#). Just a couple of days ago the new head of the Environment Protection Agency confirmed that climate change is not a priority...

One US development that affects the UK directly is [Enviva's plan to build the world biggest wood pellet plant in Mississippi](#). Most of our biomass plants, big and small, rely on [wood pellets from the US](#). This results in 130,000 acres of woodland being cleared *each year*.... Please sign [this petition](#) and support [Biofuel Watch](#).

8. Wildfires are a feedback loop. The hotter it gets the more they occur, removing a carbon sink while putting millions of tonnes of carbon into the air. How shocking – how extraordinary - how awful - to read that the [UK has had more than 100 wildfires this year](#) already *this year*....

Planting trees is essential. Do you know a school or community group that could get involved? The [Woodland Trust is offering free packs at the moment](#).

9. Decarbonising our heating is the UK's biggest challenge. There seems to be good news in that a [million homes are now using 'biogas'](#), generated from sewage, food waste and crops. The latter is, unfortunately, not as green as it appears since crops will be heavily sprayed with petrochemicals to ensure maximum production, and all [biogas](#) contains a high proportion of CO₂ that needs to be separated from the methane. However, this is probably better than taking methane (natural gas) out of the North Sea or shipping it in from Qatar...

One interesting – long awaited – development is that the **trial of hydrogen in a closed heating network is about to start at Keele University (130 buildings)**. The supposition is that our gas grid could take up to **20% hydrogen**, so this trial is key.

10. Here are a few links to **new tech** info, and some **cutting-carbon-at-home tips**:

- [Tidal power now at testing and demo stage in Scotland;](#)
- [London trial for bio-solar leaf – but what to do with the carbon?](#)
- [World's first 100% solar powered train;](#)
- [Holland builds sun-tracking solar panels on water;](#)
- [10 low-impact UK holidays;](#)
- [How and when to cut your lawn, to create a meadow;](#)
- [Why you should wash your tin foil before recycling;](#)
- [How long do biodegradable and compostable bags last?](#)

And just a final reminder that **twelve homes across the city will be open for viewing** and [discussion of carbon-cutting tips on the weekend of the 12th/13th May](#). And great news- work is soon to start at the [new Portway railway station](#) – the first in the city for 20 years! Bath and West Community Energy has a [share option open at the moment](#), for those with money to invest, and there's an [unusual offer from Ripple Energy](#). This is not financial advice!

If you know of anyone still not registered to vote in the European elections on the 23rd May, the Bristol website is electoral.services@bristol.gov.uk, or call 0117 922 3400. And, thinking about our elections, if you haven't seen this [TED talk by Observer journalist Carole Cadwalladr](#) then please do watch.

Saving/restoring our democracy is an essential part of fighting climate change...

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

Warmest wishes

Nikki