

12 09 2018

Hi

Last Saturday hundreds of thousands of people in **90 countries around the world** took to the streets to demand **urgent action on climate change**. College Green in Bristol saw around 400 people - thanks to the brilliant organisation of Fi Radford and other members of **BEAT (Bristol Environmental Activists Together)**. Here's a [great video if you want to see what it looked like around the world.](#)

And just a reminder that there are still places if you would like to **join a small team planting trees** on [Woodland Valley Farm](#) near Truro, **16th - 18th November**. Accommodation and food is free for a weekend's work; donations to the beaver re-introduction programme requested.

Here's some generally good news.

1. **India gets first offshore wind, Vietnam gets first solar.... about time!**
 2. **Government report concludes \$26 trillion of savings by 2030 from a green economy**
 3. **German coal** - possibly on its way out, at last...
 4. The risks of **more gas pipelines into Europe**
 5. **Our government has been burying critical reports on fracking....**
 6. What can we do to cut our gas use?
 7. Update on new **off-shore wind, biomass and waste-to-energy**
 8. Hemp based plastic pots
 9. **Ask your favourite charity where they invest and bank**
-
1. It's incredible - and in some ways heartening - to hear that **some major economies are still only just getting renewables off the ground (that means there's lots of great potential to get off fossil fuels in the very near future..).**[Vietnam had virtually no solar before 2017 \(!\)](#) and [India is only just starting on its first off-shore wind.....](#) The really good news is that both these economies are [rejecting plans for new coal fired power plants](#), *despite having domestic supplies of coal*. **The economics of renewables - plus issues of air quality - simply make wind and solar better bets - that's fantastic news.**
 2. Another powerful report on the logic and benefits of renewables has been released - the [New Climate Economy 2018](#). **Commissioned by our government** and six others, it concludes that a speedy transition could **save the world \$26 trillion by 2030**, creating jobs, savings and better lives. One day soon, we will wonder why we

thought going to petrol stations, building major power plants, polluting our air and congesting our cities was such a good idea.... **Having commissioned it, how will our government react?**

3. Europe, of course, still has a problem with getting existing coal off-line and **Germany is usually seen as the worst offender. Over a third of its electricity comes from coal, and much of that is very dirty 'lignite', generally known as 'brown coal'**. But the good news is that under the new coalition government, Germany has set up **a commission on how coal can be phased out, and it's due to report by the end of the year**. For the first time, there is **real hope that a positive plan will be put forward** and it's likely to start with alternative job creation in the Rhine/Ruhr mining areas. Success will put much more pressure on countries in the **old Eastern block that are also still heavily dependent on coal**.
4. **How will Germany meet the gap in its electricity production?** - particularly since the last of its nuclear will be closed in 2022. Renewables will be part of the solution but it seems **depressingly inevitable that there will be more gas-fired electricity plants**. The gap could be met with conservation, demand side response, more renewables and batteries but there are plans for two new major gas pipelines into Europe. **Details of the pipelines are in an attachment to this email.**

New sources of gas **could affect the viability of the UK's renewable transition, as well as Europe's**, if the proposed interconnector between Germany and the UK is built. For example, a build out of new technologies such as tidal stream or wave - initially more expensive - **could** be undermined by cheap imports....

5. Rather than seriously back energy conservation, **our government's strategy is to back fracking in the UK to ensure some gas independence**. The strategy of actually cutting our consumption only got a small nod when **the government outlined its objectives in last year's Clean Growth Strategy - to half energy use from new buildings by 2030.....** (The lack of ambition here is staggering....)

Fracking is, as far as we know, now going ahead at Preston New Road in Lancashire but **three damning reports have come to light in the last couple of weeks**. First, it appears the government **deliberately buried a report on the impact of fracking on air quality** - it was released quietly four days after the Lancashire licence was issued... (*This isn't just burying bad news - it's subverting democracy.*) Second, a new **US report shows a 770% increase in water use in fracking areas** - think this

summer's heat wave and water shortages for some of the implications for the UK... Third, it appears there have been [12 earthquakes in the Surrey area since April and leading geologists are saying the area may be too unstable](#) for oil and gas development.

For a better understanding of how the UK got into this mess over fracking, here's an excellent article [detailing how our MPs took advice from an American fraudster, owner of porn websites, now in a Texas prison...](#)

6. What options do we have as consumers? You can convert to 100% renewable gas, [biomethane](#). [Bristol Energy Company](#) and [Green Energy UK](#) are two companies offering this. Biomethane comes from our [600 anaerobic digestion plants](#). But whether you switch or not, cutting our heating is essential - through **maximum insulation and not heating areas we are not using. The UK wastes a staggering third of its heating - just 1 degree down on your thermostat should save around 8% of your bill. Most people don't even notice one degree...** You can cut gas use further by cutting your electricity use and minimising use in the winter 4pm - 8pm crunch period, when back-up gas and diesel generators are likely to be used. Gas fired electricity plants often make up 50% of our generation in the winter when our solar is low. [Please see attached information on the Bristol CHEESE project which uses thermal imaging to identify where your home is leaking heat, and also a short piece written by reader Vipul Patel about how using an energy monitor has helped him cut usage in the home.](#) I hear good reports on [smart thermostats](#) that you can control from your mobile phone. **If you have direct experience of these, I'd love to hear from you.**

There is also an [anti-fracking demo](#) on College Green at 12 noon on the **15th September**.

7. Good news this week from the one sector of renewables that the government is backing - the [world's biggest offshore wind farm came on-line](#), off the coast of Cumbria. This is **659 MW** but it will not hold the record for long. In 2020 it will be beaten by East Anglia One which will have a capacity of **714 MW**. Much bigger still are [Hornsea One](#) and [Two](#) (the latter is still waiting final consent) which will be **1200 and 1800 MW** respectively. This is all great news - more power with fewer turbines.. (To compare, Hinkley is two reactors each with a capacity of 1600 MW.)

Less positive is the news that [Drax](#) power plant has brought [on line its 4th unit converted from coal to biomass](#). Leaving coal behind is necessary of course, but the wood pellets used are **imported from the US, some from clear-felled forest, and Drax is under no obligation to plant trees to compensate**. I wrote to Drax about

their 'sustainability' claims back in July but apart from a 'holding' email, I've not had a response to the points made.

Closer to home, [Uskmouth power plant in south Wales has been given permission to convert from coal to pellets](#) made from 'biogenic' waste and non-recyclable plastic. It's unclear to me, at the moment, what this biogenic waste is (food waste, crops, crop residues??) or quite what pollutants and CO2 such plants put out. The claim is that the high temperature [destroys 'toxic organic pollutants' and others are 'removed' with rigorous cleaning](#) (and go where?). According to [this article](#), only 'harmless steam, CO2, nitrogen and oxygen' are produced - three of those are not harmless, I think... Given that we have this waste and that such plants do displace fossil fuels, it is unclear to me whether this is a good use of our rubbish or whether we are simply giving waste a value and building ourselves into an energy that will damage our environment for the next 20 years.....

8. You may remember that in a recent email I raised the **problem of unrecyclable plant pots**, used throughout the horticultural industry. Every gardener has dozens in their sheds and garages but **garden centres won't accept them back**. It seems the industry is beginning to think of solutions and one plan, as discussed on [this Farming Today](#), is to make these from **hemp**. It's unclear to me how viable, or how 'good' a solution this is, given the vast number we use each year. It seems there is a clear **case for re-using rather than recycling or changing the material**.

9. Here is another way to press organisations to divest and bank ethically. It's the time of year when many solicitors offer a [free will-writing service](#), so this may be on your mind at the moment. I have taken this as a spur to write to the charities who are likely to be beneficiaries from my will to ask **a) where are their investments, b) who do they bank with, and c) where is their staff pension scheme**. The replies have been interesting and I have dropped one charity from my will because of their use of Barclays Wealth Management services. Some charities have replied that, in their day-to-day banking, they need fast and flexible currency exchange (because they are working in Africa, for example,) and so are obliged to use the major clearing banks. This is disappointing but it seems unavoidable.

Below please find links to the **coming series in Bedminster**, and to a one-off talk in **Taunton on the 7th November**. I will also be talking to **Sustainable / Transition Clevedon on the 24th October** at the Quakers' Meeting Hall on Albert Road, 7pm - no booking required.

As ever, if you want to come off the mailing list, just let me know. I hope you found this email useful / interesting.

All good wishes.

Nikki

Bedminster Talks

1. What is Climate Change? - 9th Oct - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-what-is-climate-change-tickets-49404768994>
2. Global Energy Trends - 16th Oct - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-global-energy-trends-tickets-49405083936>
3. UK Energy, Emissions and Targets - 23rd Oct - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-uk-energy-emissions-and-targets-tickets-49405409911>
4. Is Nuclear the Answer? - 30th Oct - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-is-nuclear-the-answer-tickets-49405655646>
5. Land Use and Climate Change - 20th Nov - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-landuse-and-climate-change-tickets-49406080918>
6. The Way Forward - 27th Nov - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-the-way-forward-tickets-49406255440>

TAUNTON