

GREEN STEPS... 26.11.2018

This isn't an exhaustive list – I'm sure there is much that I have left out.... And it's not meant to be finger-pointing... It's really a case of understanding our own consumption, and understanding that we are at the heart of the economy – what we buy, and who we buy from, matters. We are already having a profound effect on the food and energy industries – big companies can be very sensitive to changing consumer demand...

My suggestion is that you do one action at a time, but keep challenging yourself to do more....

### **FIRST THOUGHTS... STEP ONE**

1. Get out your last year's electricity and gas bills – do you understand them? Plot how much you have consumed and spent. If your bills are quarterly and on direct debit, start taking monthly readings (eg last day of the month).
2. Make a note every time you go to the petrol pump. How many litres and how much are you paying? Keep the record going for several months so that you understand your consumption and costs. Think about which journeys you could actually walk / cycle / lift share / use public transport.
3. Discuss the above with whoever you live with. Look at bills together. Where could you make savings? Remember you save much more energy than you will see on your bill because of the losses in getting that petrol / diesel / electricity to you.
4. Get an appliance monitor, use it and then share it with others. Some libraries and green groups have these. Some are better than others – I have found Energenie OK to use. Start to understand what your kettle, TV, fridge, microwave etc are using.
5. One degree down on your thermostat should save about 8% of your bill. You probably won't notice the difference... Buy some thermal socks, a big jumper and have a duvet ready for snuggling on sofa. Look at simple insulation measures – draughts could be costing you a fortune and are often simple to sort.
6. Put washing on as low a temperature as possible – 'freshening' washes really can be in cold water or just 30 degrees. Don't wash if you don't need to.
7. Dry clothes outside or in ventilated space indoors as much as possible. Avoid using a dryer.
8. Turn stuff off at the wall. Radios and gadgets with screens generally continue to consume even when the appliance is turned off. Why do we all need to leave our microwaves and ovens on??
9. Avoid unnecessary electricity usage at peak hours ie winter evenings 4 – 8pm. This is not the time to put your washing on or vacuum the house...Get used to looking at Drax Electric Insights or Gridwatch – get to understand the UK's power production and consumption.
10. Shower instead of bathing.
11. Cut your meat consumption.

12. Buy more organic – at the very least, make your meat, milk and cheese organic.
13. Avoid produce that is clearly out of season – strawberries in January, lettuce in February... Look for labels to say food is grown in the UK and get to understand what is in season.
14. Substitute fizzy and imported juice drinks with UK apple juice – preferably organic. Substitute imported alcoholic drinks with UK cider, beer, wine etc – choose local and organic.
15. Buy natural cleaning products – soap nuts are really effective for laundry, vinegar for limescale etc. If buying commercial stuff, make sure you can re-fill the plastic. The same for shampoos and soaps.
16. Avoid as much plastic as possible – find where you can refill your own containers, go for wood toothbrushes.
17. Share tools. Cut your grass less often -one hour's petrol mowing pollutes as much as 40 cars. Use electric.
18. Think before you buy. You can get almost everything these days second hand. Don't impulse buy clothing in particular... Buy second-hand presents, experiences or consumables rather than stuff.
19. Avoid peat. Cover bare soil with a green manure over winter. Plant wildflowers for nature where possible, rather than nursery reared garden plants grown in peat. (Feed Bristol is a good local source.)
20. Take a holiday on an organic farm. Ask the farmer lots of questions – they'll be happy to answer.
21. Use Ecosia as your search engine – they plant trees for you.
22. Send a donation to the green charity of your choice – a campaigning organisation, wildlife, tree-planting, renewables... Many to choose from.
23. Buy toilet paper that is recycled paper.
24. Cut your food waste. Most of us under-estimate our waste....
25. Talk about climate change. This needs to be 'normalised' .... Generally, we accept what we grew up with as 'normal' but we've been having increasingly extreme weather since the 1980s...
26. Get marching and join Extinction Rebellion. In ten years time, we will all have to ask ourselves what we did when we knew the facts...

## **THEN AFTER THAT..... STEP 2**

1. Change your electricity supplier to 100% renewable. Some suppliers are greener than others – please ask if you need information. If the tariff will cost you more, you can off-set this by reducing your consumption... Take the 10% challenge (ie cut by 10%).
2. Change your gas to 100% renewable gas. Fewer companies offer this but Bristol Energy Company and Green Energy UK are two that do.
3. Tell your supplier you intend to submit monthly readings and will pay the actual amount for that month. Don't be out of touch with your consumption and bills.
4. Change your light bulbs to LEDs, whether the old ones have come to the end or not.
5. Get a home survey done. CHEESE operates in Bristol, doing thermal imaging to identify your heat loss – other projects exist elsewhere in the country.

6. Get advice on how to heat your home. You don't need to heat unused rooms – just keep them on the bare minimum and close the door. The Centre for Sustainable Energy have good advice sheets online, and on simple insulation. One degree down can save 8% off your bill....
7. Understand how your central heating works – two thirds of British people don't! You have multiple controls – how water thermostat, radiator thermostats and a house thermostat, and a clock. You can get radio controls installed in a hall area that make it easy to adjust the time and the house thermostat, depending on your schedule and the weather.
8. Get a heat thermostat app so you can control your heating when you are away from home.
9. See if you can apply all these principles to your work-place. Is there someone responsible for energy use / sustainability? Could that person be you? Most companies don't look at their energy consumption – like home owners, they just pay the bills quarterly...
10. Challenge yourself to use the car less. Electric bikes are huge fun and make the hills of Bristol easy.. Check out your local bus and train routes. When going long distance, could you use public transport?
11. Cut your flying. Consider lower impact holidays – in the UK or by train abroad. Take a tree planting holiday!

#### STEP THREE.....

1. Move your bank to the Triodos. The Co-op has not divested from nuclear, although it has from fossil fuels, and it does not invest in renewables. The Triodos positively invests for a green transition.
2. Write to your insurance company and ask them if they are still insuring coal assets and are they investing in coal assets? What are their plans for full decarbonisation? Are their policies in line with the Paris agreement?
3. Write to your pension provider and ask where your top ten investments are, even if you can't move. Are you happy with those investments? Tell them you are worried about Scan move your pension, consider alternatives. The same for your savings.
4. Join a local energy / green group – if there isn't one, set one up. In Bristol, the Bristol Energy Network is there to help you.
5. Invest in positive solutions – this can be small amounts, or sometimes gifts. Try EtheX, Triodos Crowdfunding, Join Trine and Abundance.
6. Put up solar panels. The FIT is still there till the end of March but past this deadline, it's still a good financial proposition for many of us. Just ask one of the local companies to do an assessment for you – no obligation.
7. If solar panels aren't an option for you because you expect to move soon or you live in a flat, try a one-off movable panel with a battery. I've done this in my flat and the cost was around £300. It feeds my computer and a few other gadgets.
8. Moixa and PowerVault are two UK companies offering battery storage too and have particular offers. Tesla, of course, is already well known.
9. Get a smaller car or buy an electric. If this is not possible at the moment, start planning for your next purchase – most of us change cars every 8 years or so.