

Some personal thoughts on adaptation....

Even though I have been writing and speaking about climate change for several years now, this year's extreme cold and extreme heat have brought home to me a new focus, a new level of anxiety. The Beast from the East lasted 10 days in February – I can't help but wonder what if it lasts a month this winter? How bad will those supermarket fights get? What if there is serious flooding in Bristol? What if we have power cuts? Even if not this year, maybe the year after, or the year after that....?

And what about the heat. I love the sun but this year I had to make daily trips, carrying bottles and buckets of waste water from my home to my allotment 10 mins walk away (where there is no running water). In the end, I lost most of the produce. What if the dry spell is longer next year? What if there is increased heat? What if a dry spell becomes a drought and water use is restricted?

Reading [Professor Jem Bendall's paper](#) (circulated in a recent email) prompted further reflections. What should I do, personally, to prepare – practically and emotionally?

My first decision was to splash out on thermal curtains for my lounge.... I have enormous windows that give me a wonderful view and I've never wanted to obscure it. My heating bills are very low, even in the depths of winter as I only turn on electric radiators when I *really* need them, or when I have guests. I rely mainly on very warm men's jumpers that go over everything, thermal socks, hot water bottles and a duvet on the sofa.... I've always worried about the embedded emissions in the enormous amount of curtain material, and thought I could get away without buying any. But now I've decided it's time....

Second, I've bought 100 W solar panel to go on my balcony, and this feeds into a lead-acid battery. With controller and inverter, it cost less than £300 and I can run my computer, charge my phone, use my radio and a light (though not all together). Actually, I bought it more as a learning tool (to understand my power consumption better) but it has the added benefit of helping me go a little off-grid. I'm looking at whether I can scale it up so that I can charge my bike battery and boil a camping kettle.

Of course I also have several SolarAid lamps, which each last around five hours and just sit on my window cill, charging up. I read that [one utility in the north of England is preparing for blackouts with a mobile storage unit](#).

Third, well I'm just making sure I don't go into winter with an empty food cupboard... I don't suppose this is really necessary – but if the weather's really bad, I'd prefer to hibernate and not have to think about getting to a supermarket...

And that made me think about my son, who lives elsewhere in Bristol and probably won't have a choice about getting to work in whatever weather... His Xmas present will be really good walking boots and a few sets of thermals...

And over the next year, it's clear that food prices are going to go up. That's from a 20% drop in global production, but also Brexit, rising oil prices, new shipping fuel standards etc. I live (happily) on a low income, but need to factor that in.

Thinking about next summer, I've bought more water-butts and I plan to make sure they are all full by the start of summer. I already have good soil that holds moisture well, but I'm continuing to make more compost so that I have plenty of mulch in spring. I'm also changing my planting – more fruit trees and fruit bushes and more self-seeding spinach and leafy perennials that don't need any care.

I've also dug a third pond..... My poor frogs had very little water to splash around in this summer – hopefully, there will be enough in 2019. I've planted more wild flowers too (from Feed Bristol) so that wildlife at the allotment has a better chance of survival. Some of the planting is also happening on communal ground near me – so far, undisturbed and doing well.

With regard to preparing emotionally, that's more difficult. I realise that getting involved in practical projects – my allotment, and guerrilla planting on local land – gives me an enormous positive boost and some real fun. Without these, it would be easy to sink into depression. Doing the talks, and moving my pension and my savings into renewables also gives me the sense that I am doing what I can – as does signing all the petitions and writing to my MP frequently.... I get enormous pleasure from whizzing around on my electric bike and shopping locally – I haven't been into any of the big supermarkets for several years now and I think that has truly improved my well-being!

Despite all that, I find that I am often overwhelmed by sadness. How come we didn't realise what we were doing? It's so obvious now that we know the facts – on plastics, on our agriculture, on air quality, on climate change... Living and dealing with climate change isn't something I expected for my later years. Getting curtains and a solar panel are completely inadequate responses. The enormous sense of things slowly getting better, across the world, has gone.