



ACT Newsletter September 2021

The Great Big Green Week 18-26 September

It was so good to get all “un-virtual” again last Saturday in Dawlish at the start of the GBGW. There’s still lots more to see and do so check out the



[Events Programme](#) for the rest of the week and, if nothing else, look out that broken vase, ripped shirt or lifeless toaster that you’ve yet to throw out and take it along to the 6th Dawlish Fix Fest Repair Café, on Saturday in The Manor House, Old Town Street.

We are at it again on Saturday 25, this time by the Clock Tower in Newton Abbot, with our Wildlife Wardens and Climate Change displays but this time with the Electric Vehicle roadshow at which you can see a selection of cars and talk to their owners about their experiences of EV ownership.



First electric vehicle roadshow comes to Newton Abbot

- Come and ask owners:
- How long does an electric car take to charge?
 - What are they like to drive?
 - How far can it go?
 - Where can I charge it?
 - What does an it cost to run?



The IPCC's 6th Assessment Report

Last month the UN's IPCC published the first part of its 6th Assessment Report (AR6). Entitled *The Physical Science Basis* (for Climate Change), it was written by the IPCC's Working Group I, comprising 700 authors from 66 countries, and involved the assessment of thousands of peer-reviewed studies.



The UN Secretary-General António Guterres said the Working Group's report was nothing less than "[a code red for humanity](#)". The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable". These and similar views appear to have caught the attention of world leaders and, together with the impending COP 26 in Glasgow, will have helped shape the [PM's speech](#) at the UN General Assembly on 22 September.

There was no new science in the report but opinions are now more robust, with greater degrees of certainty, and without the cautious language of the past. See our [website post](#) for more detail.

Lottery funding for communities to take action on climate change



To coincide with COP26, the UK Government's [Together for Our Planet](#) initiative has been created to inspire positive climate action. National Lottery funding, of between £1,000 and £10,000 for each application, will support this by helping voluntary and community organisations to take action on climate change.

Organisations that can apply include; constituted groups/clubs, voluntary organisations, charities, CIOs, CICs, not for profit companies, educational establishments and local councils

Projects, which will tend to begin after the COP, should reflect what matters to your community and could cover; food, transport, energy, waste, consumption and the natural environment.

The total fund is £2.5m and applications close on 18 November, see [here](#) for further information and how to apply.

Air Pollution

We are all conscious of the effects on climate change from carbon dioxide and other gasses given off by burning fossil fuels, however many confuse this with, or are unaware of, the direct damage to health from other pollutants, such as Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and microscopic particles, PM10 and, the more damaging, PM2.5, produced by burning fossil fuels and wood or from the tyres and brake pads of vehicles.



At the beginning of September a report from the [University of Chicago](#) and summarised in [The Guardian](#) showed that air pollution is cutting the life expectancy of billions of people across the world by an average of over 2 years, ie more than smoking or drug abuse.

Back in 2005 the World Health Organisation (WHO) released guidelines for the maximum average annual exposure to each of the pollutants but, despite pressure from many quarters, and estimates of between 30,000 to 40,000 premature deaths per annum in the UK from poor air quality, the UK's own exposure limits for particulates have remained above the WHO's with PM10 at twice and PM2.5 two and a half times as high.

On its passage through the House of Lords this month the Environment Bill suffered [ten defeats](#) including an amendment requiring the government to adopt a target on fine particulate (PM2.5) pollution that is "less than or equal to" the WHO's guideline level but then, just over a week later, the WHO released [new guidelines](#) drastically reducing its

previous limits meaning that the UK now has 4 times the limit on NO₂, 5 times the limit on PM2.5 and 2.7 times the limit on PM10.

With about 90% of the world's population already suffering poorer air quality than the WHO's 2005 limits, an estimated global death rate of seven million and the impact on Covid 19 deaths, air pollution is of equal importance to greenhouse gasses when discussing emissions. For a full summary see this [Guardian piece](#).

ACT Wildlife Wardens

Here's [a summary](#) of the information wardens share with councillors on first introduction, it illustrates the wonderful scope of their work. Also don't miss September's [Podcast #6](#).

The Fossil Fuel industry's hidden failsafe

Some of us may remember a childhood conundrum in which a parent or older sibling would toss a coin for a crucial decision uttering the phrase "heads I win, tails you lose", well it seems that the fossil fuel industry has a similar, but shadowy, dual failsafe.

Despite the UK hosting COP26 in November and the [International Energy Agency](#) calling for a halt to all new fossil fuel development in 2021, stating that existing fields will produce more oil and gas over the coming decades than can be consumed for a 1.5C temperature increase, the government is still on track to approve new developments, including the [Cambo](#) oil field off Shetland.



Whilst accusations of double standards and hypocrisy abound the government can rightly say that it is legally bound to maximise the extraction of its offshore reserves under the [Infrastructure Act 2015](#) consequently this, together with increased subsidies and tax cuts, has resulted in the UK's oil extraction having grown every year from 2015 to 2019.



But what if our climate obligations overrode the Infrastructure Act and the UK refused to honour extraction licences?

Back in the late 1990s a legally binding treaty, known as the [Energy Charter Treaty](#) (ECT) was created to enable obstacle-free international trade in the energy market. Incorporated within this is a mechanism, devised earlier by Shell's lawyers, known as investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), which allows companies to sue governments for introducing policies that could affect their future earnings. Can you see where this is going?

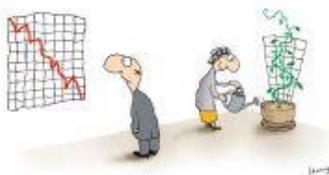
This is now written into hundreds of treaties with over fifty signatory countries, including the UK, meaning that if any country puts a fossil fuel company's future profits at risk, the company can sue the country for loss of those profits and, whilst the country might withdraw from the treaty, the potential liability will remain for another twenty years. Here is [a report](#) on the case of a UK oil company suing Italy under the ECT.



There is now a movement, [Stop ISDS](#), campaigning to break the hold of corporations under the ECT but, on 2 September, [The Court of Justice of the European Union](#) held that EU climate polluters can no longer use the ECT against member states. What is not clear however is whether this will let the UK off the hook with the operators of Cambo, and other fields, if and when its climate obligations trump its extraction benefits.

An economy for climate & nature

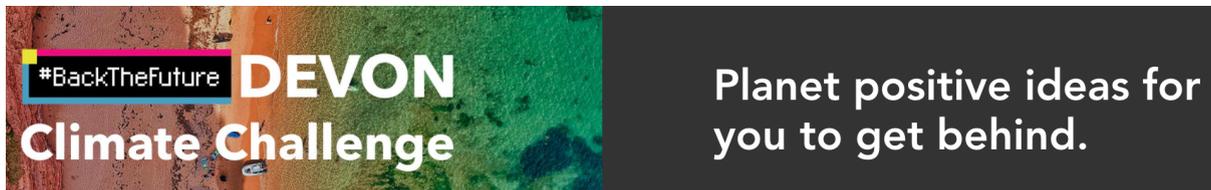
In order to tackle the climate and nature emergency many will call for less or better use of resources, in terms of reuse, recycling and waste reduction, whilst others identify how "capitalism", with its dependence on never ending consumption and growth, needs fixing.



But what if we could look at this holistically, rising above politics? What if we could unlearn what we've grown up with and start afresh with a clean sheet of paper to map out frameworks fit for us and the planet in the 21st century?

Academics like [Kate Raworth](#) and [Katherine Trebeck](#) have spent years thinking and writing about this and so here is [a post](#) that puts some of their thoughts into imagining a life and economy in balance with what the planet can provide.

#Back the future - support local projects through crowdfunding



Devon County Council and Crowdfunder have chosen six local climate change projects to receive up to £5,000 each from the council in match funding to go towards a crowdfunding campaign.

Funding is being accepted until the 7 or 8 October, more information on the [Crowdfunder site](#).

Government releases its Hydrogen Strategy

In August, to back up number 2 of the government's "[Ten point plan](#)", the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) released its [Hydrogen Strategy](#).



The strategy is based upon a 'twin track' approach supporting both 'green' and 'blue' hydrogen, with the latter (made from natural gas) taking the lead until the former (made by electrolysing water) can catch up and take over as the technology develops and costs come down. See [our post](#) for more information.

Why is climate and nature getting the short straw with government spending?

This question has been examined, and answers suggested, in a series of five pieces on our website covering the brick wall that most public spending, including that needed for climate change, faces when it comes to finding the money, as well as money creation in general and how,

through a fresh pair of eyes, the government generates and processes public money, for our benefit.

For decades and often without knowing, economists and politicians have



kept the public in the dark over the real workings of money and government spending to the point where we just accept, without question, statements concerning “taxpayers’ money” or the government having to “tighten its purse strings”. The following pieces will hopefully sow a few seeds of doubt that all is not as it appears to be.

[1. Introduction](#)

Covering the financial realities of using public money to get any significant policy off the ground and how the government can delay or question the availability of that money using fiscal (its money flow) explanations whereas, in reality, the decisions are probably political.

[2. The banks, the government and that Money Tree](#)

Unearthing the origins of our own and public money and how there’s nothing magic about the money tree.

[3. The mythical government purse](#)

The government’s finances are nothing like a household budget, in which spending is constrained by income, the government can never run out of money and taxes are neither income nor used to pay for things.

[4. Government “borrowing”](#)

When you pay £100 into your savings account with the bank, to gain a few pennies interest a year, do you worry that the bank has just borrowed £100 from you and wonder how and when it will pay you back? If not then why should it be any different when you buy £100 of Premium Bonds, or your pension fund invests £20m in government bonds? Are these funds government borrowings or our savings?

[5. So what is Quantitative Easing \(QE\)?](#)

Examining the smoke and mirrors of the government borrowing from itself, but still calling it borrowing and how and where it can inject new money into the economy during a crisis, through a different tree root.

[6. Further reading](#)

As it says.

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