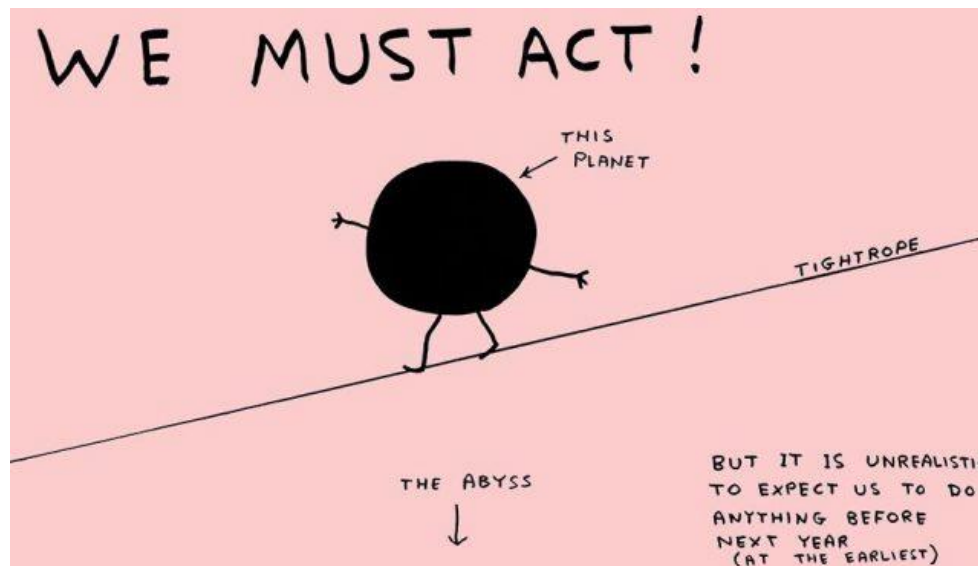


CHANGE FOR THE BETTER NEEDS POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

“That Human Ecology in 2023 is in trouble primarily because humanity has been enslaved by capital rather than capital serving humanity. In the last 100 years, and increasingly so in the last 50 years, so the world in which people and nature co-exist harmoniously has been fed to capitalism, the market, the powerful, the lobbyists”.



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It has been a bad summer for climate news: fires, droughts, floods, loss of crops, a huge increase in those seeking asylum due to war and climate emergencies, with hundreds drowning in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, melting glaciers in the Arctic and Antarctica. Thousands of emperor penguin chicks across four colonies in Antarctica are believed to have died because of record-low sea ice levels that caused a “catastrophic breeding failure” in late 2022, according to new research. Is that enough bad news to make us act differently?



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The sad fact is the planet as a whole is getting hotter, and the last 8 years alone have been the warmest on record. Vast numbers of people are on the move, or will be soon, in search of water supplies. This movement follows a month where the world experienced its

hottest temperature ever recorded, not once, not twice, but three times, as well as the hottest ever week on record; here in the UK, it was the hottest ever June.

The role of fossil fuels:

These are being subsidised at rate of \$13m (£12.27M) a minute, says IMF (International Monetary Fund). **Oil, gas and coal benefited from \$7tn (£5.5tn) in support in 2022 despite being the primary cause of climate crisis.**

That is equivalent to 7% of global GDP (Gross Domestic Product) a monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services produced in a specific time period by a country or countries. GDP is most often used by the government of a single country to measure its economic health. and almost double what the world spends on education. Countries have pledged to phase out subsidies for years to ensure the price of fossil fuels reflects their true environmental cost, but have achieved little to date. The power of the oil lobby, as China Petroleum Company, Saudi Aramco, Exxon Mobile, Shell plc, BP, Chevron Corporation, Total Energies, and Marathon Petroleum typify, have held us all to ransom, and continue to do as the world heats up, our oceans heat up and ecosystems start to collapse. The UK government is adopting the “we need them” attitude to new oil and gas leases off Scotland, new coal mine in Cumbria, and even drilling for oil in South Downs National Park.

The UK has opened up this new licensing round to allow oil and gas companies to explore for fossil fuels in the North Sea despite threats of a legal battle from climate campaigners. The North Sea Transition Authority has begun a process to award more than 100 licences to companies hoping to extract oil and gas in the area. Almost 900 locations are being offered up for exploration as the UK Government continues to back the North Sea oil and gas industry as part of drive to make Britain more energy (petrochemicals) independent. Or you might say petrochemicals dependent, instead of supporting more wind farms, home insulation or innovative technologies. Plenty of subsidies and tax exemptions to oil and gas. Local communities accused the government of “an environmental crime” after it emerged this week that potentially large-scale oil drilling is to take place inside the South Downs national park, despite widespread local opposition.



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Lack of transparency with subsidies:

An example of lack of transparency comes from The United Arab Emirates, which will run the crucial COP28 UN climate summit in December; it has failed to report its emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas methane to the UN for almost a decade, (Damian Carrington, The Guardian 17 August 2023). Its state oil company, ADNOC, whose chief executive, Sultan Al Jaber, controversially will preside over the climate summit, has also set itself a methane leak target far higher than the level it claims it has already reached. Cutting methane emissions from oil and gas production is seen as a vital part of climate action, and ADNOC announced in October 2022 that it would aim by 2025 to limit leaks to less than 0.15% of the gas produced. However, the company's estimate of its level of emissions for 2022 was 0.07%, announced after an ADNOC board meeting chaired by the UAE crown prince, Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed. The 0.15% methane target is also higher than the level achieved in 2019 by Qatar (0.06%) and Saudi Arabia (0.14%), according to a recently published satellite analysis by scientists at Harvard University in the US.

Ending the subsidies should be the centrepiece of climate action, the IMF said, and would put the world on track to restrict global heating to below 2C, as well as preventing 1.6 million air pollution deaths a year and increasing government revenues by trillions of dollars. The IMF's findings come as the climate crisis wreaks havoc across the world, from heatwaves, wildfires and floods from the Americas to Europe to Asia.

The G20 nations (**G20 or Group of 20**) is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union (EU). It works to address major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation and sustainable development. These nations, including the UK, cause 80% of global carbon emissions, pledged to phase out "inefficient" fossil fuel subsidies in 2009. However, the G20 poured a record \$1.4tn (£1.1tn) into fossil fuel subsidies in 2022, according an estimate by the International Institute for Sustainable Development thinktank. The World Bank reported in June that fossil fuel and agricultural subsidies combined could amount to \$12tn (£9.5tn) a year and were causing "environmental havoc".

Cutting fossil fuel subsidies "needs to be the centrepiece of efforts over the next few years to get on track with limiting global warming to below 2C", said Ian Parry of the IMF. But how to do it? The analysis calculated that ending fossil fuel subsidies would cut emissions by 34% by 2030 compared with 2019 levels, representing a large chunk of the 43% cut needed to have a good chance of keeping global heating below 1.5C.

Last month James Hansen said the world is shifting towards a superheated climate not seen in the past 1m years, prior to human existence, because "we are damned fools" for not acting upon warnings over the climate crisis; he is the US scientist who alerted the world to the greenhouse effect in the 1980s. His testimony to the US Senate in 1988 is cited as the first high-profile revelation of global heating. He warned in a statement with two other scientists that the world was moving towards a "new climate frontier" with temperatures higher than at any point over the past million years, bringing impacts such as stronger storms, heatwaves and droughts.

What about our role?

But we, yes that is you and I, and those haters of ULEZ, collude in all this. We feel entitled to drive where we want, when we want, in any size of car or to fly away several times a year on "cheap" flights to the sun or to visit new places. We have a prime Minister who prefers helicopters to trains "To save time, and I am important". Explicit subsidies, which cut the price of fuels for consumers, doubled in 2022 as countries responded to the higher energy prices resulting from Russia's war in Ukraine. Rich households benefited far more from these than poor ones, the IMF said. Implicit subsidies, which represent the "enormous" costs of the damage caused by fossil fuels through climate change and air pollution, made up 80% of these.

So, what needs to be done?

What are the answers to help individuals, the climate and long-term survival of the world as we know it? Of equal importance is the question, **“Are we as a nation willing to set an example? Persuade our politicians that they have to engage in uncertainty through effective leadership to promote change to benefit us all?”**

Chris Packham in his brilliant “Earth” five-part series on BBC 2 clearly demonstrated the cycles in Earth’s patterns over geological time and where we find ourselves, and the prospects for the world’s great ecosystems today. It needs to be compulsory watching and stimulate political discussion. But resistance to change is everywhere, and climate denial too, and the sense of self entitlement was seen in the demonstrations in London against the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) over the last weekend. Even though a major new report shows that harmful pollution emissions would be reduced by 26 per cent within the expanded ULEZ area - compared with what they would have been without the ULEZ coming into force. The report shows that ULEZ has reduced harmful pollution levels in central London by nearly half compared to what they would have been without the ULEZ. In inner London, pollution levels are 21 per cent lower than they would have been without the it. Each day, 74,000 fewer polluting vehicles are seen driving in the zone, a cut of 60 per cent since expansion in October 2021. Thanks to the ULEZ expansion to inner London, over four million people now breathe cleaner air, including children in 1,362 schools. The first year of the ULEZ expansion to inner London has achieved a dramatic reduction in emissions and air pollution, and a huge increase in the share of vehicles that meet the ULEZ standards, according to a major new report from City Hall and peer reviewed by Dr Gary Fuller at Imperial College London. Drivers of air quality are of course reducing fossil fuel use too!

It is estimated that 40,000 lives are cut short every year in Britain as a result of air pollution., which is also said to cost the NHS approximately £157 million, a number which is set to reach as much as £18.6 billion by 2023 unless action is taken. Although the introduction of the scheme in 2019 caused an uproar, the scheme is working – on average there were 44,000 fewer diesel cars driving into the zone each day. But London has a good bus and tube systems, and there are several alternative options to driving. What about rural areas?

Other transportation:

Amid all the resulting noise, a huge story about transport goes almost unnoticed: the ongoing decline of bus services, and how poorly prepared for the future it leaves us. After nearly 40 years of deregulation and outsourcing, profit taking and falling customer service, and nearly 15 years of the cuts and shortfalls imposed by Whitehall on local authorities, the mode of travel that still accounts for 69% of journeys by public transport is in an ever-worsening mess. The relevant statistics are stark, and sad: in 2002, for example, there were just over 18,000 numbered bus routes in England, but that number has since fallen to just under 11,000, with more cuts seemingly arriving every month. There are few symbols of the literal privatisation of everyday life more potent than unloved bus shelters adorned with emptying timetables, now such a fixed part of the average British streetscape that their fading away is taken pretty much for granted.

Where have all the buses gone?

Buses should be at the heart of public policy. Instead, the government panders to motorists while local routes vanish. (John Harris 6 August 2023 The Guardian). Large new housing estates in the countryside and not a bus to be seen. Towns strangled by cars that get worse every year, or so it seems to me as a driver of a 20 year old Mini. Fears over safety as analysis by Which? shows ‘autobesity’ epidemic means cars getting wider and longer with more than 150 car models now too big to fit in average car parking spaces.

At least 1,500 bus routes were cut just in the last two years in England, figures published by the Department for Transport have revealed. The latest report from the Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain showed that the number of local registrations fell from just over 12,000 in 2021 to fewer than 9,000 in 2023, although the DfT said many of the routes had been reclassified rather than lost altogether. The opposition accused the government of “vandalism against communities” and said more services were at risk. Campaigners and bus operators have urged the DfT to provide more long-term funding for buses to stem decline after a decade of cuts. Research found that the West Midlands was the region hardest hit by the decline in services, having lost two-thirds of local routes since 2010. The total across England fell from 17,394 in 2010 to 8,781 in March 2023. Last year there were 10,941 routes, according to the commissioners.

Louise Haigh, the shadow transport secretary, said: “The staggering decline in local bus services under this government is nothing short of vandalism against our communities. Millions of people rely on these essential services, but they are being left without a voice as routes are cut back year after year. “Labour’s plans will put passengers first by allowing communities to take back control over their bus services.”

Graham Vidler, the chief executive of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, which represents bus and coach operators, said bus services remained the UK’s most-used mode of public transport, and that passenger numbers – which dropped sharply during the pandemic – were now increasing by more than 10% annually.

But he added: “Bus operators are facing challenging economic conditions with industry costs up by 17% over the last year. Against this backdrop we have been clear the 21-month bus funding settlement from government is not sufficient to save every service. Operators and local authorities continue to work closely together to run buses where people want to go and to minimise the impact of any service changes.” Vidler said longer-term investment in bus priority measures that free buses from congestion and speed up journeys would enable more routes to function.

The Campaign for Better Transport said buses were crucial to the economy. Its spokesperson Alice Ridley said: “To prevent further cuts and grow the network back to the level needed, the government must change the way buses are funded and replace the multiple and competitive funding sources with a single, long-term funding pot.” But it is not only bus services but bus stations too, now seen as development opportunities as in Lewes, West Sussex: “not only do we need to know where all the buses have gone, we need to know why so many bus stations have disappeared. The closure of the bus station and its proposed demolition in Lewes, the largest town in the South Downs national park, is a case in point. The bus station has served the towns and villages in East and West Sussex admirably since the 1950s. The building has been allowed to deteriorate. It had an excellent cafe where you could buy a decent coffee and cake. It provided an interchange for buses and an invaluable rest area for the drivers, not forgetting the surrounding green planting done by local volunteers. It was very well used. And what is planned for the site? A block of 35 homes, three houses and 32 flats, totally out of keeping with the historic surroundings and with no affordable housing. Where will the buses go? Proposed is an on-street set of bus stops straddling either side of a busy A road, with limited shelter and seating, no refreshment facilities for drivers or passengers and an increased exposure to pollution. It would involve the removal of numerous mature trees”. Yet another example of “humanity has been enslaved by capital rather than investment serving humanity”.

Traffic Commissioner statistics showing a 38 per cent decline in local bus routes in Scotland between 2007 and 2023. Some 1,214 routes lost over this period, including 160 in the past year alone. Buses operated on 1,970 routes in 2022-23, down from 3,184 in 2006-07.

What is required?

A properly funded national bus service, preferably electric buses as we see already in Glasgow and Edinburgh, with very inexpensive fares, or free to encourage use, good regular services to encourage many more out of their cars. Buses need to integrate with train stations too, to encourage smooth interchange between different modes of transport, and at prices people can afford. Whilst the railway system in Great Britain is the oldest railway system in the world, as the first locomotive-hauled public railway opened in 1825, what followed was an era of rapid expansion. Nationalisation and privatisation have seen many different models of how to run the rail network, but it needs to meet the needs of both passengers and freight with long term sustainability at its core, and energy efficiency.

But, still we want to cling onto our cars to use how we want, when we want. We are the “entitled” generation wanting to fly at a whim, or head off on a cruise, or eat vegetables transported by lorries from far away, or fruit flown in from the Americas. All these are intensive fossil fuel users on which we have come to depend. So how do we break that dependency? Do we have any model that worked?



© Greenpeace **Food miles and the climate cost:**

A big Carbon footprint if food is delivered by air– due to the high climate impact of planes. After all, flying in food typically creates around **10 times** more carbon emissions than road transport and around 50 times more than shipping. While airfreight is only widely used for high-value, perishable products, like out-of-season berries, these products account for around 11 per cent of the UK’s food-transport emissions.

And that is only part of the story. Once imported food gets to the UK, there are more miles ahead. DEFRA estimates that moving food is responsible for 25 per cent of all miles covered by heavy goods traffic in the UK. Transporting food within, to and around the UK produces 19 million tonnes of CO2 annually – equivalent to around 5.5 million typical cars.

Finally, there is the distance that we travel to buy our food. For example, if you regularly drive to large, out-of-town supermarkets, the miles add up. In fact, each of us travels around 135 miles a year in the car to do our food shopping. (But given that over 50 per cent of the population does not own a car, it is closer to 270 miles.)

Whilst thinking about this whole topic about responsibility re. climate change, I came across a paper I wrote in 2000 for Responsibility and Business Practice Masters at Univ. of Bath "Food miles, carbon dioxide and the complexities of change". In 2000 I wrote:

“How great must the pain be? Not much altered behaviour. It seems to me that there are two choices facing us in reality: that first is, that things much get much worse and then communities and individuals will face up to their own responsibilities and change their life styles. The second is that in time, sooner or later, a government will issue rules to ensure we change. We will lose some of our democratic choices in that process and a command and rule period will be here.”

Food miles was a new topic in 2000, yet transportations of food STILL are the big users of petrochemicals. I realised in writing about it that the research was complex...I started with new potatoes from Egypt and Jersey....how naive was I?? Life cycle analysis, use of water, pesticide use, polythene bags or sacs for transportation, power between supermarkets etc

etc. But here I am again still plugging away 23 years later. Thinking about that 2000 paper I now question “What has changed?” This article is in part the next instalment and linking this time with what the UK did in 1939 when total war was threatened and our very survival was at stake. As again it is in this century.

I realise now it is only once in the last 100 years have we, as Great Britain, been forced to work collectively together to help us survive, and that was during and after World War 2 1939-1954 the years of petrol coupons and ration books were the survival tool. Whilst victory was declared in 1945 in Europe, petrol rationing only ended in 1950 and the last food rationing of meat ended in 1954.

So how did rationing work, and the effect on the British population? Could we, under such a system, do it again to save the ecosystems of the world? Could we make capital serve humanity and world ecosystems again?

The first commodity to be rationed in late 1939 was petrol, followed in January 1940 by the first foodstuffs: bacon, ham, butter, and sugar. Based on their experiences during the First World War, the British government expected that the conflict would become a ‘Total War’, meaning that all resources of society would need to be mobilized, and that civilians would also be affected by the war. At the time, Britain was a net importer of food, which made the country particularly vulnerable to disturbances in the global food market. In order to prevent serious shortages, as early as 1936 the British Ministry of Food had begun to make plans for the supply, control and distribution of foodstuffs. In addition to making stockpiles and preparing food control policies, by the summer of 1939 the Ministry had already printed 50 million ration books, ready to be used when necessary.

The use of this rationed fuel for non-essential purposes was an offence. Private vehicle use ultimately went down by 95 percent and, even with energy restrictions, public transport rose 13 percent. Buses and trains were the norm for reaching destinations. We walked, cycled, shared, worked collaboratively for the common good.

Later in the war, clothing and furniture were also rationed. In order to maximize war production and reduce imports, massive schemes were undertaken to recycle as much material as possible. Over-consumption and waste were considered selfish and unpatriotic, a message reinforced by government propaganda posters. Rationing saw health improve as more people had access to a better diet.

Rationing, though seen as a hardship, was also carefully designed as a ‘scientific diet’ and for those on the Home Front, there were strong indicators of broad health improvements. Rationing created the best-nourished generation of pregnant women in history, as poor people received enough nutrients to maintain their health. Between 1937 and 1944 infant mortality (up to age one) fell from 58 to 45 per thousand.

What was learned that we could replicate to help save the climate and ecosystem collapse?

“We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*, a familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road — the one less travelled by — offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth.”

— Rachel Carson, in *Silent Spring* (1962)

The transformation of such wartime economies, as we now in 2023 are needed again, tough measures, provided some important lessons from high politics to household management. It showed the **importance of fairness in creating popular support for tough measures** –so

that rationing and conscription were introduced as much in response to popular pressure from below as it was to a desire for national controls from above. It shows, too, how great the collective gains from individual small actions could be: collecting aluminium pans to melt down to build Spitfires may have been mainly symbolic, but simply collecting household scraps was enough to feed over 200,000 pigs, feeding a lot of people close to home.

Changing behaviour:

In trying to change the behaviour of consumers, the government deliberately chose rationing over taxation for reasons that were rational and progressive. Taxation alone – apart from disproportionately and unfairly placing a burden on the poorer households would be too slow to change behaviour. Rationing was quicker and more equitable. Tradeable rations were rejected through fear of encouraging fraud and inflation and “undermining the moral basis of rationing”. The historian Mark Roodhouse derives specific lessons for policy-making today: **if transferred to today, government would need to “convince the public that rationing levels are fair; that the system is administered transparently and fairly; and that evaders are few in number, likely to be detected and liable to stiff penalties if found guilty”.**

Some of the consequences of World War 2 rationing:

- Dependence on food imports halved between 1939 and 1945 and by 1943 there were 3,000 rabbit clubs and 4,000 pig clubs, the latter producing enough bacon for 150 million breakfasts. Allotment numbers grew from 850,000 in 1939 to 1,750,000 in 1943 and 10,000 square miles more land was brought into production.
- Petrol for private cars was withdrawn in 1942 and private vehicle use ultimately went down by 95 percent and, even with energy restrictions, public transport rose 13 percent. Spending on amusements also went up 10 percent.
- At the start of the Second World War in 1939, the United Kingdom was importing 20,000,000 long tons of food per year, including about 70% of its cheese and sugar, nearly 80% of fruits and about 70% of cereals and fats. Rationing was seen not just as restricting supplies, but also as guaranteeing them – preventing price inflation and profiteering. In 1942–43, £145 million was spent on food subsidies, including £35 million on bread, flour and oatmeal, £23 million on meat and the same on potatoes, £11 million on milk, and £13 million on eggs. All basic foodstuffs. Overall food consumption went down 11 percent by 1944 and eating patterns changed too. By 1944, 10 per cent of all food was being eaten in works and school canteens, cafes, and restaurants.
- Scrap metal was saved at the rate of 110,000 tonnes per week and 31,000 tonnes of kitchen waste was saved weekly by 1943, enough to feed 210,000 pigs.
- Households changed behaviour and their energy uses. Domestic coal use was cut by a quarter between 1938 and 1944. Electrical appliance use dropped by 82 percent from 1938–1944. Between 1937 and 1944 infant mortality (up to age one) fell from 58 to 45 per thousand. And, from being relatively high during the 1930s, suicide rates also fell during the war. It is generally now realised that the public health result was healthier diets for all ages, something that has gone downhill since processed food took over much of people's diets now.

We could do it, but it must be led by a government of national unity. Is that possible?



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Greenpeace:” Tell political party leaders: voters will judge you at the next election if you do not act on climate. Political party leaders must get serious about their climate pledges, so they can fix the mess this country is in”.

Maybe starting small in local communities, like Arran? Create models of good practice?

We did it in WW2, but are we now too self-centred to do it together for the sake of the world ecosystems and communities everywhere? It is not us against them, but all of us together.

Sally Campbell

August 2023