



ACT Newsletter February 2021

This month's newsletter continues coverage of some national and international themes. This is not necessarily because Teignbridge has had a few slow weeks but rather a reaction to Robert Jenryk MP regarding a new coal mine in Cumbria a "local issue". Hopefully we can report on a change of mind on that topic next month.

ACT Members' Forum on Climate and Ecological issues 10:30am – 12:00pm 27 March 2021

As the first in what we hope will be a series, we are running the above online Zoom event to cover some of the climate and ecological issues considered important by our members.

For more information, and to submit your own suggestions for topics to cover, see our [website post](#). Suggestions by Tuesday 23rd please.



ACT is looking for a Town and Parish Coordinator.

One of ACT's main objectives is to help all Town and Parish Councils across Teignbridge to become carbon neutral. We have been offering this assistance for the last two years but the success and demand is such that we need an extra pair of hands.



Full training, support, and contacting details will be given.

The successful person will be able to call on the knowledge and support of all the experts in ACT's various topic groups to work towards achieving this core objective.

We are applying for funding but hope that someone could start the project as a volunteer. When we have funding, we envisage this to be an on-going self-employed role.

For more information and full details of the role please [email us](#) by Friday 5th March.

The Economics of Biodiversity



In 2019 HM Treasury commissioned a report from Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta to establish how we should account for Nature in economics and decision-making. [The Dasgupta Review](#) has now been published and its unequivocal conclusions can be summed up by one of its findings:

“Our unsustainable engagement with Nature is endangering the prosperity of current and future generations”.

The main report is over six hundred pages long however the key issues and findings are summarised in the [Headline Messages](#).

In conventional economics, and measures such as GDP, neither Nature’s provision of the natural resources we use, nor the damage we do to Nature when returning the waste products, are accounted for, they are regarded as “externalities”. The review develops the economics of biodiversity in the certainty that we and our economies are embedded within Nature, not external to it.

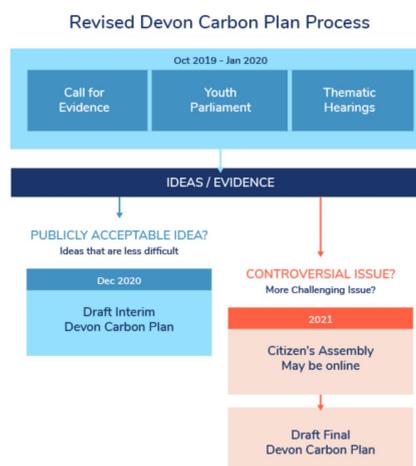
The review demands that Nature is viewed as a capital asset, recognising its maintenance and depreciation (financial depletion) as say a business would the maintenance and depreciation of its roads, buildings and factories. In this way it is hoped that economies and business will come to recognise the true inclusive cost of their activities.

Whilst the findings of the review, in terms of the unsustainable effects we are having on Nature, are very welcome, many complain that trying to establish monetary values for such complex and diverse earth systems are impossible and, as seen with over twenty years of attempts to establish corporate environmental accounting, will take more time than we have left to make a difference. In other words *Life doesn’t happen in money* (Kate Raworth).

Interim Devon Carbon Plan - consultation closes

The consultation, organised by Devon Climate Emergency’s [Net Zero Task Force](#), closed on 15 February.

Whilst the consultation covered many issues, its prime purpose was to establish the earliest credible date by which Devon should plan to be net zero in terms of CO2 emissions.



The plan lays out a roadmap for Devon to achieve net zero by 2050 at the latest, which matches the Nation's legally binding target. It is our view however that this is far too late and that, in accordance with more than half of local authorities who have published plans, 2030 should be Devon's target date. We have evidenced our views in [this submission](#) to the Net Zero Task Force.

Bill Gates turns his attention to Climate Change



Bill Gates has been giving interviews about his new book “How To Avoid A Climate Disaster” and you can catch up with a serialised version on [BBC Radio 4](#), 9:45am starting 15 February.

Based on interviews and reviews, he brings his fascination for science and for understanding how things work, plus his huge wealth, to focus on the problem of getting to near zero carbon, and he talks more in terms of zero carbon, than “net zero”, which relies on technologies to remove CO₂ from the air.

He is as honest about the huge challenges the world faces as he is about the inequity of rich countries polluting whilst poor countries suffer the consequences, and is also up front about his own colossal carbon footprint, a consequence of his weakness for private jets.

It is his solution to the latter however that casts doubt over his approach. In order to make his flights carbon neutral in 2021, he has started to fuel his jet with biofuels (made from plants). He has also started to invest in a company that captures carbon dioxide from the air in Iceland, to offset his family's other emissions.

It seems not to occur to him that he could fly less and release the plants, or land they grow on, for more useful purposes and, similarly, that if his family used the more traditional ways, that you or I might use, to reduce

our emissions, then the carbon capture facility could be better used to cope with currently unavoidable emissions from industry.

This approach and blind spot is also present when he imagines technological advancements that will provide the huge quantities of extra renewable (and nuclear) energy we will need, not only for our current levels of demand but also to cater for the increasing demand from poorer nations, in other words reducing demand and consumption, in richer countries, seem not to be on the cards.

This assumption of business as usual, only greener, extends to his belief that divesting from Fossil Fuel companies, reducing meat consumption and car use is probably pointless and outweighed by the need to find cleaner ways to power and produce steel and cement, rather than perhaps to imagine that we might also reduce our demand for them or find alternative materials.

Finally, on relying far more on locally grown food, his view is that any benefits would be outweighed by the carbon footprint of all the greenhouses necessary to grow them, a result no doubt of his predilection for grapes every day of the year.

Teignbridge - Progress with the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Cllr. Jackie Hook, executive member for Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Defence reported to Teignbridge District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9th February 2021. For more information have a look at our [website post](#).

The Green Homes Grant loses its funding

Launched by the Government less than six months ago and set to run till March 2022, the Green Homes Grant provides householders with a voucher for up to £5,000 (£10,000 for benefit recipients) to use against the cost of certain home efficiency improvements (e.g. heat pumps and insulation).



The Government pledged £2bn towards the scheme, with £1.5bn earmarked to cover 600,000 homes. By the end of last month however, with many complaints about the inefficiencies of the scheme, only £71m in vouchers had been issued and the Government [is now indicating](#) that all but £320m of the funding is likely to be withdrawn.

It is estimated that 27 million homes need efficiency improvements and so we await a new, more fit for purpose, scheme.

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