



Forum 21 Newsletter

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Working for a Fair and Sustainable Western Somerset

Is carbon removal going to help us meet Paris goals?



The Committee on Climate Change says a government strategy to deploy new, radical technologies at scale by 2050 must begin now – but how effective are they?

While the Government's Committee on Climate Change (CCC) is urging it to kickstart technologies to suck carbon dioxide from the air in order to meet the goals of the Paris climate change agreement, others are arguing such an approach is not viable.

Piers Taylor to speak at launch of the Community Land Trust

Piers Taylor, presenter of BBC's *The 100K House*, will speak on 'Housing for the Future' at the launch of the West Somerset Community Land Trust. The Trust aims to provide affordable housing in the area.



The launch is on Tuesday, 1 November 7pm at the Beach Hotel, Minehead.
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The global climate deal, which the prime minister, Theresa May, says the UK will ratify by the end of 2016, pledges net zero emissions by the second half of the century to avoid the worst impacts of global warming. Given that some emissions, such as those from aviation and agriculture, will be very difficult to reduce to zero, that means removing some carbon from the atmosphere.

Planting trees is the simplest solution but is limited by the land available, meaning more radical technologies need to be developed, such as chemically scrubbing CO₂ from the air and burying it. "A strategy for deployment [of new carbon-removal technologies] at scale by 2050 should start now given the timescales inherent in bringing new technologies to market," the Committee says.

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But George Monbiot, writing in the *Guardian* (28 September) says: "The belief among some governments that they can overshoot the climate targets, then at a later date suck carbon dioxide out of the air, depends on scenarios that would be no less realistic if they involved sorcery."

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Forum 21 is a not-for-profit company whose aims are to raise awareness about ecology, natural history, resource conservation, sustainable development and environmental studies as well as to conserve and protect the environment and natural resources.

Urgent action needed to cut emissions from buildings

A Committee on Climate Change (CCC) report says the UK must act urgently to cut emissions from the heating of homes and other buildings largely reliant on gas and causing 20% of the nation's emissions.

UK emissions have fallen 38% since 1990 but virtually all of this drop is from greener electricity.

Lord Deben, the CCC's chairman, said, a 'step change' was needed in how the UK heats its homes, a problem that threatens the UK's ability to meet its carbon targets. The CCC said the government must focus on the rollout of heat pumps and low-carbon district heating systems and the testing of hydrogen as a clean-burning replacement for natural gas.

Hydrogen has the advantage of using the existing gas network but is as yet untested. The hydrogen could

be produced using spare renewable electricity, from biofuels or from fossil fuels. The latter would only be low carbon if emissions were captured and stored but ministers abruptly cancelled its flagship carbon capture and storage policy in November 2015. The CCC said hydrogen should receive similar research support to the £250m the government is already giving to small modular nuclear reactors.

The CCC also criticised the government's slowdown in home energy efficiency measures: just half the number of homes made warmer and cheaper to heat in the last parliament are due to be upgraded in this parliament, and ministers abandoned a plan to make all new homes zero-carbon.

"We still have millions of homes that have not been made as efficient as

they could be and we are still building homes that we will have to retrofit in a very short period of time," said Lord Deben. The CCC estimates 7m homes still have inadequate loft and wall insulation, the most basic form of energy efficiency, after the coalition government's green deal policy failed.

Deben said the new ministers in May's government, including energy and business secretary, Greg Clark, and climate minister Nick Hurd, have long track records in backing strong climate action. "I am optimistic but I still want to keep those feet to the fire," he said. "The fact is, crunch time is here. By law, the government have to provide a programme to reach [the CCC's] carbon budgets." The government's carbon reduction plan has been delayed by the Brexit referendum but is expected by February 2017.

Stop digging – that's the only way to meet Paris targets, says George Monbiot



A report by Oil Change International, spells out what this means.

Using the industry's own figures, it shows that burning the oil, gas and coal in the fields and mines that is already either in production or being developed, is likely to take the global temperature rise beyond 2C. And even if all coal mining were to be shut down today, the oil and gas lined up so far would take it past 1.5C.

The notion that we can open any new reserves, whether by fracking for gas, drilling for oil or digging for coal, and still keep to the Paris commitments is simply untenable, says Monbiot.

"Governments such as ours, now ratifying the Paris agreement on climate change, haven't the faintest idea what it means – either that or they have no intention of honouring it", says George Monbiot writing in the *Guardian* (28 September).

The Paris agreement, signed by 200 nations in December, pledged to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2C above pre-industrial levels, and aspired to limit it to 1.5C.

There are tax breaks for North Sea oil and gas companies, and fracking, but not for renewables.

The report uses the hazard assessment adopted by the United Nations. This means a 66% chance of preventing 2C of global warming and a 50% chance of preventing 1.5C – an assumption of risk that in any other field would be regarded as reckless.

Even so, to prevent the odds from becoming any worse, a 2C target means that we can use only around 85% of the fossil fuel that's currently available while a 1.5C target means we can extract little more than a third. So what's the point of developing new reserves if the Paris agreement precludes

the full extraction of those already in production, asks Monbiot.

The only means of reconciling governments' climate change commitments with the opening of new coal mines, oilfields and fracking sites is carbon capture and storage: extracting carbon dioxide from the exhaust gases of power stations and burying it in geological strata. But despite vast efforts to demonstrate the technology, it has not been proved at scale, and appears to be going nowhere.

The belief by some governments that they can overshoot the climate targets, then at a later date suck carbon dioxide out of the air, is totally unrealistic, Monbiot concludes.

Biodiversity

Farming blamed for 56% decline in UK species - "The UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world"

The latest State of Nature report analysing species decline in the UK over the past 50 years, comes to the shocking conclusion that 56% of species have declined and that 15% of those assessed are at risk of national extinction. The UK has lost more nature than the global average – we are now one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world.

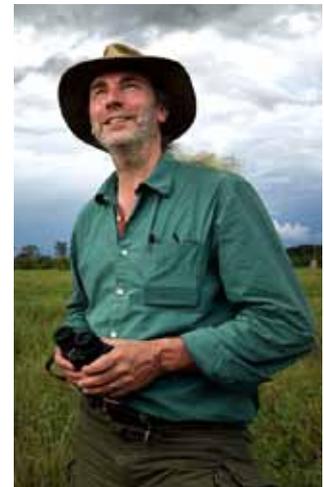
Writing in *Nature's Home*, the RSPB's magazine (Winter 2016), Simon Barnes attributed this sharp decline to farming: "We have doubled our wheat and milk production since the 1970s. We are losing wildlife at an accelerating state".

Barnes refers to Tony Juniper's book *What Nature Does for Britain* in which he estimates the value of the annual services to agriculture by pollinating insects at £400 million; he also assesses the use of pesticides by UK farmers at 31,000 tonnes a year.

Mixed farms are no longer viable, says Barnes. Crops are sown in the autumn rather than the spring, grazing is more intense, we've lost semi-natural habitats like field margins and hedges, so depriving our land of biodiversity and bioabundance.

But some farms are showing that farming for both profit and wildlife can work. Farming is changing but it is a slow process.

Barnes concludes: "Whether it will change fast enough or widely enough, we can't tell. We can only hope... and do what we can to support this cultural shift. Working with rather than against nature is essential if our great-grandchildren are to have a land worth living in and a countryside capable of restoring their souls. ..."



Simon Barnes
"Working with rather than against nature is essential if our great-grandchildren are to have a land worth living in".

Fracking & biodiversity

Potential fracking sites 'rich in wildlife'

Many of the areas marked as sites for fracking are rich in wildlife that perform crucial functions, from pollination to decomposition, researchers have found.

Scientists say that almost two-thirds of the areas that have been labelled as suitable for shale gas extraction have levels of biodiversity equal to or above the national average, according to a new analysis of records collected from across the country.

"A lot of the areas that have opened up to shale gas licensing actually harbour much higher than average levels of biodiversity," said Tom Oliver, of University of Reading who is a senior author of the study in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*. "We only have one natural heritage and we have to protect it."

The study, which analysed previously

collected records of more than 5,500 species, including those of birds, plants and butterflies, found that 65.3% of proposed areas that have been designated suitable for fracking have levels of biodiversity equal to or above the national average, including parts of Lancashire and South Wales.

For the study Britain was divided into 10km by 10km squares and the records were made by volunteers between 1970 and 2013. The assessments took into account the climate and geology of the area, as well as variations in the thoroughness of the recordings, thereby allowing different locations to be given a rating for their biodiversity, and compared to each other. The results are available to explore in an interactive digital map. The scientists say the approach offers a new, fine-grained approach to looking at biodiversity across Britain. That, adds Oliver, will help, "to inform

the location of large infrastructure projects or ecological restoration work".

The study also looked at how biodiversity had changed over time, focussing on changes between two time periods, 1970-1990 and 2000-2013. While in many areas the decline in the presence of protected species mirrored that of biodiversity more widely, in others that was not so. "That wider biodiversity is still important for a whole range of functions – pollination and pest control and decomposition – and also just the species that people value seeing in the environment," said Oliver.

A spokesperson from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy said: "Any company that wants to carry out fracking must conduct an assessment of the impact on the environment and habitats, and earlier this year we brought in extra protections so that fracking could not take place in a number of protected areas that are home to wildlife."

Local news

Exciting new project to provide affordable housing

An exciting new project to provide genuinely affordable housing in West Somerset will be launched in Minehead on 1 November.

The Trust will be working alongside the Exmoor Housing Network building or converting properties to provide long term homes which will remain in community ownership. The Trust wants to work with communities to understand the needs of people and find ways to help increase the amount of suitable housing.

People looking for an affordable home, as well as those who might be able to help or who want to build

their own houses, are all welcome at the event.

The presenter of BBC 2's 'The 100K House' Piers Taylor will speak on Housing for the Future. Piers is working on regeneration of the East Quay in Watchet and on innovative designs for affordable housing.

The Trust welcomes ideas and is happy to answer questions. The launch takes place on Tuesday 1 November at 7pm at the Beach Hotel, Minehead and is open to the public. For more information contact Maureen on 01643 709478, Hester 01643 821768 or email maureen@wsclt.com.

Drop in for help with housing and benefits

Anyone needing advice about Homefinder, benefits, the bedroom tax or budgeting can drop in to the West Somerset Advice Bureau on Thursdays, between 2 and 4 pm. Help will be available to log in to Universal Credit or Homefinder.

If you would prefer to make an appointment call West Somerset Advice on Freephone 0800 802 1808.

Forum 21

Surviving Winter

Forum 21's volunteers will once again be working hard to identify and visit older people who are eligible for a Surviving Winter grant to help them keep warm this winter.

The Somerset Community Foundation is running the project again which is funded from pensioners who donate their winter fuel allowance.

People over pensionable age on low incomes are encouraged to apply. If they are in receipt of guaranteed pension credit they are almost certainly eligible for a grant that could be as much as £250, but others struggling to keep warm can also apply. Those over 50 with long term sickness or disability that makes them unable to work may also fit the criteria. We are hoping to find people who haven't received the grant before.

Contact Lorna Scott
01984 634 242,
mail@forum21.org.uk

Seasoned logs for sale

Volunteers have been busy clearing and chopping wood for Forum 21's Community Woodland Project. We can now offer seasoned logs for £75 per load, £40 half load, bags at £2 when available.

Contact Lorna Scott (as above).

Nuclear power

Government support for submarine capability linked to Hinkley C decision

The green light given to Hinkley C is given added significance in the light of research published recently by the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex. This shows how intense British Government attachments to nuclear submarines help drive a strong bias in UK energy policy in favour of nuclear power.

"The Government's own data shows the UK to be blessed with abundant, secure and competitive renewable energy resources", said report co-author Professor Andy Stirling. "In a world turning much more to renewables than nuclear power, Britain might be expected to be taking a lead in these new technologies".

Yet a greater priority in UK policy making appears to lie in maintaining 'nuclear submarine capabilities'.

Parliamentary Select Committee reports and

many other military policy documents reveal intense pressures for strong government support for skills and training, design and manufacturing and research and regulatory capabilities linking with the civil nuclear industry.

"We found strong fears that without continued commitment to civil nuclear power, the UK would be unable to sustain the industrial capabilities necessary to build nuclear submarines," said report co-author Dr Phil Johnstone.

The report *Understanding the Intensity of UK Policy Commitments to Nuclear Power* documents strongly-held views in UK defence policy, that nuclear-propelled submarines form a crucial military capability.

University of Sussex 21 Sept 2016 <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/newsandevents/index?id=36984>

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