

# Sustainability Matters

12<sup>th</sup> May 2016

A fortnightly selection of topical **news and views** about economic, social and environmental issues.  
Designed especially for accountants and those who use the services of accountants.

## Sustainability Matters is;

- Compiled and published by Ray Skinner of *Sustainability Matters*, providers of specialist services relating to sustainability and business support. **Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children.**

## Neoliberalism – The Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems

“George Monbiot, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016

“...Even if your listeners have heard the term before, they will struggle to define it. Neoliberalism: do you know what it is? ....

“For all that, there is something admirable about the neoliberal project, at least in its early stages. It was a distinctive, innovative philosophy promoted by a coherent network of thinkers and activists with a clear plan of action. It was patient and persistent. The Road to Serfdom became the path to power.

“Neoliberalism’s triumph also reflects the failure of the left. When laissez-faire economics led to catastrophe in 1929, Keynes devised a comprehensive economic theory to replace it. When Keynesian demand management hit the buffers in the 70s, there was an alternative ready. But when neoliberalism fell apart in 2008 there was ... nothing. This is why the zombie walks. The left and centre have produced no new general framework of economic thought for 80 years.

“Every invocation of Lord Keynes is an admission of failure. To propose Keynesian solutions to the crises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to ignore three obvious problems. It is hard to mobilise people around old ideas; the flaws exposed in the 70s have not gone away; and, most importantly, they have nothing to say about our gravest predicament: the environmental crisis. Keynesianism works by stimulating consumer demand to promote economic growth. Consumer demand and economic growth are the motors of environmental destruction.

“What the history of both Keynesianism and neoliberalism show is that it’s not enough to oppose a broken system. A coherent alternative has to be proposed. For Labour, the Democrats and the wider left, the central task should be to develop an economic Apollo programme, a conscious attempt to design a new system, tailored to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### More:

[www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot)

**Notes:** Long article with 3,964 comments and 228,709 shares by 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016. George Monbiot’s *How Did We Get into This Mess?* was published April. Order from information in above reference.

**Source:** 17<sup>th</sup> April perhaps from *Facebook*? ❖

## SUSTAINABILITY GROUP EVENTS

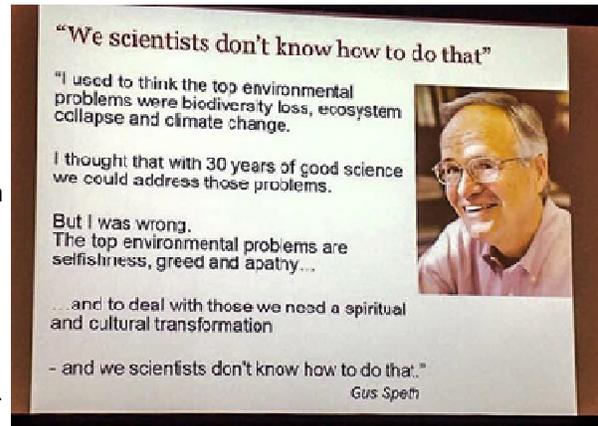
Next event – Date of webcast yet to be ‘sorted’.



Announcements in ‘due course’. ❖

## We Scientists Don’t Know How to Do That

In the cover message of *Sustainability Matters* of 28<sup>th</sup> April the following was provided ex Malcolm Rands of eco-Store fame;



Cerasela Stancu responded; “This morning your quote of Malcom’s *Facebook* post got my attention.

“Some years ago I read a book by Sam Harris called *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (Note he is author of *End of Faith* so a lot of controversy around his views).

“However, having worked in science for many years and seen the struggle scientists have to communicate to influence, I thought the book above gives some answers around the need and possibility of scientists to influence values. It is a fascinating read nonetheless.

**Source:** Cerasela Stancu, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016. ❖

## Two Important UN Appointments

“... Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, Mexico’s former foreign minister and currently ambassador to Germany, will replace Christiana Figueres of Costa Rica, who held the post for six years and will step down in July. Ms Espinosa made her mark in climate circles when she took the helm at the UN talks in 2010, a year after the process was nearly derailed in Copenhagen. ...

“...Norway’s former minister for the environment and international development, Erik Solheim, has been appointed to head the UN Environment Program (UNEP). Mr Solheim worked at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as head of the development assistance committee. The former minister

will replace Achim Steiner who has been executive director of Nairobi-based UNEP for the past ten years. Solheim was Norway’s minister for the environment and international development from 2007 to 2012.

**More:** <http://econews.com.au/50403/mexican-diplomat-new-head-of-major-un-climate-office/>

**Source:** *eco-News*. 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## Vast Planting of Trees Needed to Boost Green Economy

"..... Pure Advantage's new paper, "*Our Forest Future*", has been welcomed by the Government and the forestry industry.

"New Zealand urgently needs to plant swathes of new trees - more than a million hectares of them - to help combat climate change and boost a green economy, a major business think-tank says.

"Pure Advantage today [22<sup>nd</sup> April] launched its new report, *Our Forest Future*, as the Government signs a landmark UN agreement to rein in global warming.

"The group calls for a new national forest strategy that would halt deforestation and ultimately create 1.3 million hectares of new forest.

"It argues planting huge new blocks of permanent native forest and fresh high-carbon commercial forests could avoid large areas of land being lost to erosion, help off-set agricultural emissions and put the country on course for a net-zero greenhouse gas future.

"Along with erosion-prone land, new forest should also be planted along waterway margins and urban forest, where the environmental benefits of trees, such as protecting river ecosystems, would be much greater.

"New Zealand needed to expand its forest cover, prioritise forest that would remain permanent, allow for diversity in forest stocks and bolster measures to protect them, the report's author, Dr David Hall, said.

"It pointed to a shortage of capital as the biggest obstacle to new forest planting, but suggested ways tree-planting could pay off - particularly by strengthening relations of responsibility between polluters and 'anti-polluters'. [Long article including some interesting stats at the end plus others in the report.]

".... In 2011, Pure Advantage was founded on the conviction New Zealand is in a global race for green growth - and we cannot afford to slip behind. **Since then, not enough has happened - and, in certain respects, things have only got worse.**

"For example, in 2011 the Global Green Economy Index had New Zealand ranked number one in its assessment of 27 of the world's leading economies. In 2012, we slipped to sixth. In 2014, we were ranked 18<sup>th</sup> among sixty survey countries.

"*Our Forest Future*, is written in the spirit of getting us back in the running for the race to a green economy. It takes the view we shouldn't be a 'fast follower' in the transition to a low-emissions world. Rather, we should be a 'canny leader' - that is, we should follow where we must, but lead wherever we can - because by leading on the issues that affect us most, we will gain disproportionately from finding solutions.

### More:

[www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=3&objectid=11626613](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11626613) plus <http://pureadvantage.org/news/2016/04/22/our-forest-future/>

**Source:** *NZ Herald* and Pure Advantage, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016 and Phillip Mills 28<sup>th</sup> April. ❖

## Carbon Targets for Shipping - Pressure

".... Shipping now makes up around 2.2% of world emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> ... forecast to increase 50% to 250% by 2050 .... estimates air and marine transport, which now jointly account for 5% of global emissions, could contribute as much as a third of all emissions by 2050. ... 'Such growth (in emissions) will undermine reduction efforts by all countries and other sectors to limit warming to the 1.5/2°C agreed in Paris.' ....

**More:** [www.reuters.com/article/us-carbon-shipping-idUSKCN0XW141](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-carbon-shipping-idUSKCN0XW141)

**Source:** *eco-News*, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## Revision of AS/NZS ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management Systems

"... The objective of this Standard is to specify the requirements for an environmental management system that an organisation can use to enhance its environmental performance.

"The objective of the revision is to introduce key improvements such as increased alignment with an organisation's strategic direction, proactive initiatives to protect the environment and the inclusion of a life cycle perspective, considering each stage of a product or service, from development to end-of-life. The revised Standard will encourage organisations to consider how external environmental conditions can affect their operations through issues such as climate change as well as identifying the impacts it has on the environment. This will allow organisations to identify broader issues of organisational risk which might compromise their operations and organisation.

"This Standard is identical with, and has been reproduced from *ISO 14001:2015, Environmental management systems—Requirements with guidance for use.*

**Closing Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

### More:

<https://shop.standards.govt.nz/default.htm?action=viewDraft&mod=drafts&draftId=DR%20ISO%2014001:2016%20CP>

**Source:** Standards NZ, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## ISO 5001 - Have You Heard About It?

"ISO 50001 is based on the management system model of continual improvement also used for other well-known standards such as ISO 9001 or ISO 14001. This makes it easier for organizations to integrate energy management into their overall efforts to improve quality and environmental management.

**More:** [www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso50001.htm](http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso50001.htm)

**Source:** Editor 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## Some USA Fracking Facts

"... According to the Energy Information Administration, in 2000, approximately 26,000 hydraulically fractured wells produced 3.6 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) of marketed gas in the United States, making up less than 7% of the national total.

"By 2015, the number of hydraulically fractured wells had grown to an estimated 300,000, and production from those wells had grown to more than 53 Bcf/d, making up about 67% of the total natural gas output of the United States....

**More:** [www.environmentalleader.com/2016/05/06/companies-are-benefiting-from-fracking-boom-while-greenies-pine/](http://www.environmentalleader.com/2016/05/06/companies-are-benefiting-from-fracking-boom-while-greenies-pine/)

**Source:** *Environmental Leader*, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## Electric Bikes - Good Info to Know

A February 2016 *Consumer* article tells you most things you need to know about e-bikes. It covers;

- Accelerating gently into the future
- Anatomy of an e-bike
- A primer on e-bike styles
- Buying an e-bike
- A snapshot of e-bikes in NZ
- Not quite a free ride
- Power to the people
- Here come the e-bikes
- Legal-ease
- A member's experience

**More:** <https://www.consumer.org.nz/articles/electric-bikes> - subscription may be required.

**Source:** *Consumer*, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## ***Driven by Purpose with Intrepid Travel Co-Founder Geoff Manchester***

"Can a business really leave the world a better place? At the heart of Intrepid Travel's business are people – Intrepid's team members, travellers and locals they interact with at thousands of destinations around the world. From the very beginning Intrepid Travel was about more than just making a profit. Geoff and his business partners were passionate about delivering the best travel experiences ever for those people. Intrepid has grown over 25 years by focusing on that purpose. They combined it with their strong belief in providing true value for the people and communities in their destinations. By giving back to the communities where they travel they have become a powerful force for change in the world. Find out how at this special event.

"In this one rare opportunity you'll hear how the Conscious Capitalism principle of 'purpose' has been the vital focus of this business and why that was important in creating a distinctive comparative advantage in a market that is now being challenged by mainstream operators. In this increasingly competitive and demanding marketplace, how do conscious business principles mean better and stronger organisations?

**When/Where:** 7:30-10:00am, Wed. 25<sup>th</sup> May, AUT Business School, Sir Paul Reeves Building

**More:** [www.consciouscapitalism.org/Driven-by-Purpose-with-Intrepid-Travel-Co-Founder-Geoff-Manchester](http://www.consciouscapitalism.org/Driven-by-Purpose-with-Intrepid-Travel-Co-Founder-Geoff-Manchester)

**Source:** Conscious Capitalism NZ, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## ***Climate Change Implications for NZ***

"New Zealand is being affected by climate change and impacts are set to increase in magnitude and extent over time.

"Floods, storms, droughts and fires will become more frequent unless significant action is taken to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases, which are changing the climate.

"Even small changes in average climate conditions are likely to lead to large changes in the frequency of occurrence of extreme events. Our societies are not designed to cope with such rapid changes.

"This report describes in general terms the changes in climate that are expected globally and nationally during the 21st century, before focusing on six key areas of risk for New Zealand:

- Coastal margins
- Flooding from rivers
- Availability of and competition for freshwater
- Changes to our surrounding oceans
- Threats to unique ecosystems
- Flow-on effects from climate change impacts and responses overseas.

Climate Change Implications for New Zealand report sections:

- Understanding Risk
- Global climate change
- NZ climate change.....

"Ultimately, how the future plays out depends critically on significantly cutting emissions of greenhouse gases as quickly as possible over coming decades in order to limit climate change to below 2°C. Even 2°C is not risk-free and will still result in significant consequences. Effective management of these risks will require active engagement at all levels of government, industry and society.

**More:** [www.royalsociety.org.nz/expert-advice/papers/yr2016/climate-change-implications-for-new-zealand/](http://www.royalsociety.org.nz/expert-advice/papers/yr2016/climate-change-implications-for-new-zealand/) plus [www.sustainnews.co.nz/article/20160420/new-zealand-vulnerable-to-threats-of-climate-change-royal-society-report-finds](http://www.sustainnews.co.nz/article/20160420/new-zealand-vulnerable-to-threats-of-climate-change-royal-society-report-finds) and [www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/301826/sea-level-rise-threat-to-nz-coasts](http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/301826/sea-level-rise-threat-to-nz-coasts)

**Source:** Greenpeace Facebook, 19<sup>th</sup> Apr, SnippETS, 21<sup>st</sup> Apr. ❖

## ***For James Hansen, the Science Demands Activism on Climate***

"Climate scientist James Hansen has been a prominent figure in the global climate conversation for more than 40 years. His 1988 congressional testimony on climate change helped introduce the problem of rising greenhouse gas emissions to the American public, and he has led study after study examining exactly how our world will change as a result of global warming.

"Eight years ago, however, Hansen made the rare decision to begin engaging in climate activism, and he has since protested mountaintop removal in West Virginia and gotten arrested outside the White House in a rally against the Keystone XL pipeline.

"His actions have earned him both praise and criticism from the media and scientific community. Recent scientific endeavours of his – including a study last month [March] that was publicised prior to being peer-reviewed – have also generated controversy.

"In an interview with *Yale Environment 360* last week, Hansen, former director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, opened up about his unconventional career path, his frustration watching policymakers' four decades of climate inaction, and what he believes the world could look like a century from now.

"I don't think that I have been alarmist – maybe alarming, but I don't think I'm an alarmist', he said. 'We have a society in which most people have become unable to understand or appreciate science, and partly that's a communication problem, which we need to try to alleviate.' .... [Long article].

**More:**

[http://e360.yale.edu/feature/james\\_hansen\\_scienc\\_e\\_demands\\_action/2981/](http://e360.yale.edu/feature/james_hansen_scienc_e_demands_action/2981/)

**Source:** *Yale Environment 360*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016. ❖

## ***Making Australian Groundwater Data Accessible to All***

"Over the past few years the Bureau has expanded its groundwater information and now offers an integrated Groundwater Information Suite. The suite is a valuable tool for both technical and non-technical users.

"For the first time, decision-makers in industry, government and the community have easy access to comprehensive, nationally consistent information on groundwater across Australia. [For instance] The Australian Groundwater Insight is a user-friendly map portal designed for non-experts in government, policy development and the general public.

"The Insight shows hydrogeological information alongside information about licences, entitlements, bore density and groundwater management areas. The Insight also presents trends in groundwater levels over time and recent groundwater levels compared to the long-term average.

"It's a valuable tool for non-experts as it provides background information that can be used to understand groundwater at a particular location or across Australia. It's also mobile friendly. For example, a farmer looking to find out about groundwater on their property could look up information on management areas, groundwater entitlements and groundwater level trends and status, all of which would be returned for the GPS location of their mobile device.

**More:** [www.bom.gov.au/water/groundwater/index.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/water/groundwater/index.shtml) plus [www.bom.gov.au/water/about/publications/document/groundwater\\_infosheet\\_web.pdf](http://www.bom.gov.au/water/about/publications/document/groundwater_infosheet_web.pdf)

**Source:** *Groundwater Research News*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016

**Editor:** Seems like an excellent set of tools – Does NZ have something similar? If not would there be benefits? ❖

## Defining What Matters

"International sustainability standard setter GRI and RobecoSAM, the investment specialist focused exclusively on Sustainability Investing (SI), have today [3<sup>rd</sup> May] released the research publication *Defining What Matters: Do companies and investors agree on what is material?* The publication, funded by the Alcoa Foundation, examines whether the information companies disclose in their sustainability reports correlates with what investors want to know. The study found general alignment between disclosed topics and investor interests. The research also indicates GRI's approach to materiality is appropriate as a basis for disclosures to investors, as it gives a broad perspective on risk. Additionally, these new findings indicate a number of ways in which companies can improve their disclosures to make them even more relevant for investors.

"Materiality is the threshold at which topics become important enough to be disclosed. To investigate whether companies are reporting information that meets investors' needs, GRI and RobecoSAM studied 129 sustainability reports from three sectors, mining, metals and electric utilities and uncovered a number of findings:

- 1) In all three sectors, there is general alignment between the topics disclosed and information investors want to know, though this is less the case for companies in the electric utilities sector.
- 2) GRI Standards are well placed to form the basis of disclosures for investors as evidenced by the fact that RobecoSAM's investor-driven approach to materiality complements GRI's approach.
- 3) Investors want companies to disclose more in depth information that explains the relevance of disclosed topics to corporate strategy and the assessment of opportunities and risks. This provides investors with the insights they need to understand the long-term potential of companies.
- 4) There is agreement among investors and corporations on the growing importance of a materiality analysis for defining the most important sustainability issues.

**More:** [www.globalreporting.org/information/news-and-press-center/Pages/New-RobecoSAM-study-reveals-GRI-Standards-fit-for-investment-grade-disclosures.aspx](http://www.globalreporting.org/information/news-and-press-center/Pages/New-RobecoSAM-study-reveals-GRI-Standards-fit-for-investment-grade-disclosures.aspx) plus [www.globalreporting.org/resourcelibrary/GRI-DefiningMateriality2016.pdf](http://www.globalreporting.org/resourcelibrary/GRI-DefiningMateriality2016.pdf)

**Source:** GRI Newsletter, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## Nepal Earthquake – Consequences

"..... millions across the mainly rural nation were exposed to increased landslides. Major life-supporting ecosystems were also severely damaged..... A rapid environmental assessment undertaken by the Government of Nepal following the earthquake revealed significant destruction of forests and protected areas as well as damage to ecotourism infrastructure such as nature trails, trekking routes and camping sites. The earthquake also destroyed renewable rural energy technology solutions such as improved cooking and biogas stoves. Water sources shifted in some areas, with reduced or no flows in places, and new sources starting to flow in others. Freshwater ecosystems were also affected by increased sedimentation and some rivers were temporarily blocked by landslides. The economic cost of loss of ecosystems services from landslides has been estimated at nearly US\$328 million. ....estimated 3.9 million tons of earthquake debris, included hazardous material.

**More:** [www.ecovoice.com.au/one-year-after-nepal-earthquake-supporting-greener-reconstruction-in-nepal/](http://www.ecovoice.com.au/one-year-after-nepal-earthquake-supporting-greener-reconstruction-in-nepal/)

**Source:** *eco-Voice*, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## Creating Living Buildings and Integrated Design: Short Course

"Would you like to commission, design and deliver Living Buildings in Aotearoa NZ?"

"This Professional Practice short course aims to share valuable information, great experience and inspire you to play your part in creating a sustainable future for Aotearoa.

"Graduates from previous years have been designing Net Zero Energy homes, building Flagship Living Education Centres or modeling Net Zero Energy Airports.

"The course is offered to architects, construction professionals, design professionals, engineers, clients and community workers enabling diverse and rich dialogue whilst learning to create authentic sustainable projects and outcomes. ...

"As a Practitioner course, students are encouraged to apply the learning to a real project. Follow up bi-weekly webinars support your learning and project implementation. The course offers deep understanding and practice of;

- How can we live sustainably on this planet?
- The Living Building Challenge goals as drivers for positive change of our buildings and communities
- Lots of case studies
- The challenges and solutions to achieving the goals in NZ
- How do we work together to create the best outcomes for the budget, time and quality constraints? ...

Tutors are Jerome Partington, .... and Caroline Robinson .....

### Where/When:

Christchurch, Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June  
Auckland, Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> and Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June  
Dunedin, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> and Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July

**More:** [www.op.ac.nz/study/sustainable-practice/creating-living-built-environments/](http://www.op.ac.nz/study/sustainable-practice/creating-living-built-environments/)

**Source:** Living Future NZ Collaborative, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

## Teaching Case Study Competition

"... All [CSEAR] members (including PhD students and practitioners) are invited to contribute a teaching case study as part of our initiatives to develop the effectiveness of Accounting and Sustainability education.

"The winner(s), ....., will be invited to present their cases in a plenary session at the CSEAR UK conference in St Andrews this year. .... The aims of this competition are:

- To develop a database for CSEAR members of high quality Accounting and Sustainability teaching cases;
- To encourage the development of high quality teaching cases and promote effective case writing strategies;
- Facilitate the exchange of ideas leading to the improvement of case research, writing, and teaching;
- Assist with the distribution and publication of cases.

"The topic of the case can cover any aspect of Accounting and Sustainability. This will be broadly interpreted ... and is NOT restricted to the accounting and sustainability practices of large multi-national corporations.

**Key Dates:** 10<sup>th</sup> June, Deadline for submission

1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, Winners notified

23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> August, Winners present cases at CSEAR UK

**More:** [www.st-andrews.ac.uk/csear/membersarea/teach\\_comp/](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/csear/membersarea/teach_comp/)  
[Member sign in required]

**Source:** CSEAR, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2016. ❖

Contributions and feedback are welcomed.

Send your news items, handy hints, case studies, suggestions, comments and questions to Ray Skinner of *Sustainability Matters*.  
eMail: [ray@sustainabilitymatters.co.nz](mailto:ray@sustainabilitymatters.co.nz) Phone: +64 (09) 443 0773 Web: [www.sustainabilitymatters.co.nz](http://www.sustainabilitymatters.co.nz)