

Sustainability Matters

4th August 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.**

It's Time to Get Rid of All the Green Crap in Politics

"Britain's post-Brexit government has scrapped the Department of Energy and Climate Change, or DECC. Good riddance: If we're serious about fighting climate change, we shouldn't have created the department in the first place.....

"And while we're at it with scrapping unnecessary green crap, there also shouldn't be any green political parties: All political parties should be green. ...

"Similarly, the world of finance should not concern itself with green bonds – all bonds and other investments should be green. What's the use of a tiny 'green bonds' segment in the capital markets that merely serves to highlight that all other bonds are likely not climate-friendly?

"This only diverts talent and resources into pushing green bonds, instead of channelling the efforts of so many well-meaning and capable professionals into greening all bonds.

"The very real problem we face is that the proliferation of climate change departments, green parties, green bonds, eco-this and eco-that is marginalising the effort to fight climate change and to decisively transition to clean energy lifestyles and economies.

"On the surface, they appear to be championing environmental causes, but in reality they – more and more – act as a hindrance, entrenching the idea of climate action as a fringe issue, not the concern of 'real' departments, political parties, citizens and investors....

"So if you are in a climate department or a green party, unshackle yourself by joining the mainstream and make a difference there.

More: www.eco-business.com/opinion/its-time-to-get-rid-of-all-the-green-crap-in-politics

Source: eco-Business.com, 27th July 2016. ❖

Best-practice Reporting Workshop

"Participants are guided through the key elements of producing best-practice sustainability and integrated reporting using local examples. Best-practice elements from *Towards Transparency* – New Zealand's annual best-practice reporting review publication are workshopped. Report authors present detailed insights into how they achieved best-practice reporting outcomes.

When/Where:

8th September, Christchurch

15th September Tauranga

29th September Auckland

More: www.envirostate.co.nz/gri-brochure.pdf

Source: Calum Revfem, 29th July 2016. ❖

SUSTAINABILITY GROUP EVENTS

Next event – Date of webcast yet to be 'sorted'.



Announcements in 'due course'. ❖

Which Diet Makes Best Use of Farmland? You Might be Surprised

"A new study published in the journal *Elementa* suggests food choices that make use of grazing and forage land as well as cropland could feed more people than those that completely eliminate animal-based food from our diets.

"Vegetarian? Omnivore? Vegan? What should we eat if we want to feed a growing population while minimising the need to farm more land? We know meat-based meals require more farmland than plant-based ones. But which diet is the best fit for the mix of croplands and grazing land that supports agriculture today? That's a different question with a potentially different answer, since much of the land we use to produce our food is better suited for grazing livestock than growing crops.

"A new study published in *Elementa* explores this perplexing question of the 'foodprint' of different diets. Researchers calculated how much land is needed to feed people under 10 diet scenarios ranging from conventional American to vegan. The study considered land currently farmed throughout the entire continental United States and looked at not only the amount of land needed to support each diet, but also how much of the available land each scenario could use.

"The 10 scenarios included a diet based on current U.S. food consumption patterns and another that reduced fats and sweeteners to bring the calorie level in line with U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The remaining eight scenarios maintained healthy calorie levels but moved toward increasingly vegetarian eating patterns, including ovo-lacto vegetarian, lacto vegetarian and vegan.

"Land requirements decreased steadily as the proportion of food derived from animals declined, with the three vegetarian diets requiring 0.13 to 0.14 hectares (0.32 to 0.35 acres) per person per year..... ['Best' scenario deliberately omitted from the excerpts! Have a look!]

More: www.eco-business.com/news/which-diet-makes-best-use-of-farmland-you-might-be-surprised/ and www.elementascience.org/articles/116

Source: eco-Business.com, 27th July 2016. ❖

Do You Derive Benefits from *Sustainability Matters*?

If you do, you may wish to consider making a donation to support the back-office costs and hours of effort. Every

contribution is much appreciated. How much? You choose. As a suggestion \$46 would be very welcome. GST receipts provided. Bank account details are;

Sustainability Matters

A/c No. 123 011 0249104 00

That's at the ASB Bank, Queen Street branch. ❖

Global Forced Displacement Hits Record High

“GENEVA, June 20 (UNHCR) – Wars and persecution have driven more people from their homes than at any time since UNHCR records began, according to a new report released today by the UN Refugee Agency.

“The report, entitled *Global Trends*, noted that on average 24 people were forced to flee each minute in 2015, four times more than a decade earlier, when six people fled every 60 seconds.

“The detailed study, which tracks forced displacement worldwide based on data from governments, partner agencies and UNHCR’s own reporting, found a total 65.3 million people were displaced at the end of 2015, compared to 59.5 million just 12 months earlier.

“It is the first time in the organisation’s history the threshold of 60 million has been crossed.

“More people are being displaced by war and persecution and that’s worrying in itself, but the factors that endanger refugees are multiplying too,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.

“At sea, a frightening number of refugees and migrants are dying each year; on land, people fleeing war are finding their way blocked by closed borders. Closing borders does not solve the problem.”

“Grandi said politics was also standing in the way of those seeking asylum in some countries.

“The willingness of nations to work together not just for refugees but for the collective human interest is what’s being tested today, and it’s this spirit of unity that badly needs to prevail,” he declared.

“The report found that, measured against the world’s population of 7.4 billion people, one in every 113 people globally is now either an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee – putting them at a level of risk for which UNHCR knows no precedent.

“To put it in perspective, the tally is greater than the population of the United Kingdom – or of Canada, Australia and New Zealand combined. It is made up of 3.2 million people in industrialised countries who, at the end of 2015, were awaiting decisions on asylum – the largest total UNHCR has ever recorded.

“Also in the tally are a record 40.8 million people who had been forced to flee their homes but were within the confines of their own countries, another record for the UN Refugee Agency. And there are 21.3 million refugees.

More: www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html plus www.oxfam.org.nz/what-we-do/emergencies/syria-conflict-crisis

Source: Editor 1st August 2016. ❖

Sticker Shock: The Soaring Costs of Germany’s Nuclear Shutdown

“German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s 2011 decision to rapidly phase out the country’s 17 nuclear power reactors has left the government and utilities with a massive problem: How to clean up and store large amounts of nuclear waste and other radioactive material.

[Long article which has implications beyond Germany – see also the commentary which follows the article.]

More: http://e360.yale.edu/feature/soaring_cost_german_nuclear_shutdown/3019/

Source: *Yale Environment 360*, 29th July 2016. ❖

The Bottom Billion: Can We End World Poverty?

“**Overview:** Ending world poverty is a major humanitarian concern that poses many challenges. With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the challenge continues. This one-day course explores the existing structures and processes of development assistance, the chances of ending poverty and role of the SDGs in this.

“**Target audience:** This course is for anyone who is concerned about global poverty and who wants to learn more about international initiatives, development agencies, and how they work.

“**Learning objectives:** By the end of this course, participants will:

- Understand definitions of poverty and how it can be measured
- Have gained an understanding of the structure and dynamics of current development assistance
- Have assessed the achievements of the MDGs and developed an appreciation of the challenges faced by their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals
- Develop an understanding of the role that individuals can play in reducing poverty, both as citizens and consumers.

When/Where: Saturday 6th August, 10:15-5:15pm, Levin

More: <http://ce.victoria.ac.nz/courses/465-the-bottom-billion-can-we-end-world-poverty>

Source: Victoria Continuing Education. 22nd July 2016. ❖

This Changes Everything Study Guide: Free Online

“This is a free guide for the book by Naomi Klein, and the film of the same name, targeted at young people, to help users look critically at the idea of how our economic system’s push for continual growth impacts both the environment and quality of life for all people. Lessons invite users to consider what is our relationship with the earth, and how we can reinvent a just and clean economy.

“This is a free guide for the book and film targeted at grades 9-12, to help users look critically at the idea of how our economic system’s push for continual growth impacts both the environment and quality of life for all people.

- Lesson 1: Our Global Economy’s Impact on the Climate
- Lesson 2: People, the Planet, and Economic Growth
- Lesson 3: Climate Change and Social Justice
- Lesson 4: What Is Our Relationship with the Earth?
- Lesson 5: Reinventing a Clean and Just Economy
- Lesson 6: How Do People Change the World?
- Lesson 7: Crisis and Opportunity
- Lesson 8: Is Geo-engineering the Answer to Global Warming?

[For each there are specific areas to be covered and questions to be considered.]

More: <http://thischangeseverything.org/studyguide/>

Source: *Tieke: ECO Alerts & Events*, 27th July 2016

Editor: Although US-centric there is likely to be much of value for use in other settings. Lesson plans, handouts, film clips, plus references to an extensive list of other resources including an excerpt from the 45 minute film ‘*Do the Math*’. This is a documentary about the rising movement to change the terrifying math of the climate crisis and challenge the fossil fuel industry. It chronicles Bill McKibben in a David-vs-Goliath battle to fight the fossil fuel industry and change the terrifying math of the climate crisis. ❖

Benefits from Reducing Water Consumption: A Case Study

"A little more than a year ago, California's Gov. Jerry Brown ordered mandatory water reductions of 25% throughout the state. And in some areas, citizens were ordered to reduce consumption by 35%. This was all in response to more than four years of severe drought.

"However, in June 2016, those mandatory reductions were lifted, mainly because the state was blessed with considerable rainfall the previous winter. As a result, local water agencies were given the authority to determine on their own whether mandatory water reductions were still necessary and, if so, what the amounts should be.

"Now the state-wide restrictions have been lifted, reports are coming in showing how well the state did at reducing water consumption – and the results have been surprisingly good, in some cases surpassing the restrictions. As of April 2016, California's Water Resources Control Board reported water consumption was down more than 26% compared to April 2013. On a per capita basis, Californians were using more than 104 gallons of water per day in 2013; they are now using about 77 gallons per day...nearly 25% less.

"Researchers also began looking to see if this reduced water consumption translated into a reduction in energy use in the state as well. There is actually a very close connection between water use and energy consumption.

"Simply, when we reduce the amount of water consumed, it reduces the amount of energy needed to transport and treat water [including waste water]. By reducing the amount of energy needed to transport water, we also reduce the amount of GHG released into the atmosphere.

More: www.environmentalleader.com/2016/07/29/did-california-stop-mandatory-water-conservation-efforts-too-soon/

Source: *Environmental Leader*, 30th July 2016. ❖

The Natural Capital Protocol

"The Natural Capital Protocol is a framework designed to help generate trusted, credible, and actionable information for business managers to inform decisions.

"The Protocol aims to support better decisions by including how we interact with nature, or more specifically natural capital.

"Every business wants to create greater value, be more efficient and make better decisions. The Natural Capital Protocol aims to help you to do this. In fact if you are not already incorporating natural capital into your decision making you are very likely to be missing significant risks and opportunities for your business.

"Applying the Protocol can help you to:

"Until now, natural capital has for the most part been excluded from decisions and, when included has been largely inconsistent, open to interpretation, or limited to moral arguments. The Protocol responds by offering a standardized framework to identify, measure, and value impacts and dependencies on natural capital.

"The Protocol Framework (figure 0.1) [See web page] covers four stages, 'Why', 'What', 'How', and 'What Next'. Protocol Stages are further broken down into nine Steps, which contain specific questions to be answered when carrying out a natural capital assessment.

More: <http://naturalcapitalcoalition.org/protocol/> 139 pages, 3.03Mb

Source: Rob Jerrom, LinkedIn Environmental Consulting Professionals, 26th July 2016

Note: Board members have connections to IFAC, GRI, A4S and BSR. Project hosts: ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales). The first two sector guides cover Apparel and Food & Beverage. ❖

Philippines 'Rattles the Cage' of Climate Change

"The world's largest oil, coal, cement and mining companies have been given 45 days to respond to a complaint that their greenhouse gas emissions have violated the human rights of millions of people living in the Philippines.

"In a potential landmark legal case, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR), a constitutional body with the power to investigate human rights violations, has sent 47 'carbon majors' including Shell, BP, Chevron, BHP Billiton and Anglo American, a 60-page document accusing them of breaching people's fundamental rights to 'life, food, water, sanitation, adequate housing, and to self-determination'.

"The move is the first step in what is expected to be an official investigation of the companies by the CHR, and the first of its kind in the world to be launched by a government body.

"The complaint argues that the 47 companies should be held accountable for the effects of their greenhouse gas emissions in the Philippines and demands that they explain how human rights violations resulting from climate change will be 'eliminated, remedied and prevented'.

"It calls for an official investigation into the human rights implications of climate change and ocean acidification and whether the investor-owned 'carbon majors' are in breach of their responsibilities.

"The commission's actions are unprecedented. For the first time, a national human rights body is officially taking steps to address the impacts of climate change on human rights and the responsibility of private actors', said Zelda Soriano, legal and political adviser for Greenpeace Southeast Asia, one of the groups which has brought the complaint to the CHR.

"This is an important building block in establishing the moral and legal 'precedent' that big polluters can be held responsible for current and threatened human rights infringements resulting from fossil fuel products. From the Netherlands to the US, people are using legal systems to hold their governments to account and demand climate action," she said.....

More: www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jul/27/worlds-largest-carbon-producers-face-landmark-human-rights-case

Source: *Carbon News*, 28th July 2016

Editor: Philippines being part of the TPPA adds additional interest. Impact on outcome? ❖

A 'Powerful' Submission

On 14th March 2016 Wise Response provided a 'powerful' submission to the Local Government Select Committee for its deliberation on proposed changes to the Resource Management Act. In the preamble to the specific submission points the submission canvasses;

- Earth our home
- Limits to growth
- Earth's planetary boundaries
- What emerges from the state of our global ecosystem?
- Interpretation for Resource Management.

It also refers to issues such as the housing affordability and availability. Hopefully the submission and others will resonate strongly with the members of the Select Committee.

More: www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/submissions-and-advice/document/51SCLGE_EVI_00DBHOH_BILL67856_1_A499251/wise-response

28 pages, 513Kb

Source: Editor, 23rd July 2016. ❖

Measuring Natural Capital in Business Just Got a Whole Lot Easier

"Last week the natural capital protocol was launched in London. This represents the culmination of a project over four years.

"The Natural Capital Coalition started life as the TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) for business coalition in Singapore in 2012. Its purpose was to bring together work being undertaken by business in relation to natural capital and engage key stakeholders to collaborate to shape the future of business thinking and action on natural capital. In 2014, it became the Natural Capital Coalition to better reflect its purpose and work.

"38 organisations formed the key the core development team including a consortium led by the World Business Council for Sustainable development (WBCSD) and over 450 providing input during the two year project to develop the protocol. The protocol certainly reflects a significant amount of collaboration, with so many public and private sector organisations coming together to create the Protocol, which is freely available to everyone.

"So what is the Natural Capital Protocol?

"In the Coalitions own words: *The protocol is a standardized framework designed to generate trusted, credible, and actionable information that business managers need to make truly informed decisions. It brings together and builds on a number of approaches that already exist to help business measure and value natural capital, and, by harmonizing them, will allow all businesses everywhere to benefit from understanding their relationships with nature.*

"Natural Capital covers climate, water, energy, biodiversity and waste, bringing these environmental stranded together with a uniform strategic approach. The protocol has been piloted by over 50 businesses including Shell, Coca-Cola, Yorkshire Water and Nestle.

"As Peter Bakker, President and CEO of WBCSD said at the launch: *As we move to fulfill the Paris Agreement and achieve the SDGs, business will need to take a holistic view and start including information on natural and social capital in the definition of performance. The Natural Capital Protocol will help companies make better, more informed decisions.*

"The Protocol will hopefully provide the framework to enable companies to take aspects of natural capital into account in their decision making.

More: <http://naturalcapitalcoalition.org/natural-capital-protocol-launched/> plus <https://www.charteredaccountants.com.au/secure/myCommunity/blogs/KMcWilliam/number-one-in-numbers-blog/719/measuring-natural-capital-in-business-just-got-a-whole-lot-easier>

Source: Karen McWilliams, CAANZ, via LinkedIn, 25th July 2016

Sustainability Reporting Growing in Asean, But Quality Lags

"Almost all of Asean's top listed companies are carrying out sustainability reporting, but they have a long way to go when it comes to improving the quality of their reports and being transparent about their anti-corruption policies.

"... also launched a separate study exploring the degree of public anti-corruption commitments by the top 50 listed companies ...

More: www.eco-business.com/news/sustainability-reporting-growing-in-asean-but-quality-lags/

Source: eco-Business.com, 27th July 2016. ❖

The Trickle-down Effect in Green Buildings Hasn't Worked; Time to Move On

"There's a school of thought that looks at what the sustainable property industry has achieved in the past 15 years and says while the top tier of the industry has benefited enormously, the movement has had next to no impact on anyone else.

"According to Richard Palmer, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff's associate director sustainability, the trickle-down effect of sustainability has been about as successful as the economic trickle-down effect. In other words, it's been a failure.

"Citing figures from ClimateWorks, Palmer said since 2005 the industry as a whole had improved its energy intensity by just 2% in the commercial sector and 5% in residential.

"Palmer was addressing an influential audience of executives from UrbanGrowth NSW, the Committee for Sydney, AGL and NSW Art Gallery expansion team, Lendlease and fellow engineers from his own team. They were attending a sustainability leaders' private lunch ... in Sydney on Wednesday [24th July].

"This time frame', Palmer said, 'includes almost every single project certified under Green Star, the entirety of projects constructed since the Building Code of Australia introduced mandatory energy regulations and the vast majority of residential since NatHERS, and it includes almost all of the NABERS operationally rated buildings.

"So for every voluntary certification and statutory initiative we've thrown at the industry, for all the conferences and for all the conversations, we have singularly failed to shift the entire industry.'

"At the top of the market, Palmer said, the story was entirely different..... the best we've thrown at it today has achieved less than we might have hoped for." ...

More: www.eco-business.com/news/the-trickle-down-effect-in-green-buildings-hasnt-worked-time-to-move-on, plus www.thefifthstate.com.au/innovation/building-construction/the-trickle-down-effect-in-green-buildings-hasnt-worked-time-to-move-on/

Source: eco-Business.com, 27th July 2016. ❖

Chernobyl Into a Massive Solar Farm

"Chernobyl could soon start producing energy again – this time as a massive solar farm. Thirty years after the meltdown of the nuclear power plant, Ukraine is looking for investors for a 1-gigawatt solar farm in the 1,000-square-mile exclusion zone, where radiation levels remain too high for farming or forestry, reported Bloomberg.

"The project would cost \$1.1 billion and transform Chernobyl into one of world's largest solar installations. Government officials say that two U.S. investment firms and four Canadian energy companies have expressed interest in the project. The European Bank for Reconstruction & Development is also considering financing the solar farm.

"The Chernobyl site has really good potential for renewable energy', Ukraine's environment minister Ostap Semerak said. 'We already have high-voltage transmission lines that were previously used for the nuclear stations, the land is very cheap, and we have many people trained to work at power plants.'

More: http://e360.yale.edu/digest/chernobyl_solar_farm/4771/

Source: Yale Environment 360, 29th July 2016. ❖

Contributions and feedback are welcomed.

Send your news items, handy hints, case studies, suggestions, comments and questions to Ray Skinner of *Sustainability Matters*.
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