

Sustainability Matters

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Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children

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Change the Conversation – Redefining How Companies Engage Investors on Sustainability

"The report provides specific, investor-informed recommendations for how companies can better communicate the breadth, scope and financial value of sustainable business strategies. It also calls for deeper involvement of C-suite executives and board members as messengers of sustainable business priorities.

"We need to see corporate sustainability managers operating as business partners and leaders", said Candace Hewitt, Responsible Investing Senior Analyst at Nuveen, a TIAA Company. "We also need to hear from CFOs regarding how they perceive value creation around sustainability and what that means for systemic business results."

"The recommendations underscore a critical theme: Meaningful, effective, and consistent communication with investors on sustainable business priorities requires that companies be proactive, not reactive.

"We hope you'll read the report, which includes direct perspectives from leading investors and examples of companies that are already putting these recommendations into action. You can also learn more about the need to change the conversation by reading a new blog from Ceres' CEO and President Mindy Lubber.

"As our world has changed, so too have investor expectations. Now it's time for companies to change the way they engage with their investors. It's time to change the conversation.

More: www.ceres.org/resources/reports/change-conversation-redefining-how-companies-engage-investors-sustainability 3.5Mb, 40 pages.

Source: Ceres, 8th February 2019.

Melting Glaciers and Ice Sheets Threaten Extreme Weather

"Researchers from the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development found that the so-called 'Third Pole' could lose one-third of its glaciers, even if global warming is kept within the Paris Agreement's lower threshold of 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. That would have huge knock-on impacts for Asian economies – 250 million people live in the immediate region, and 1.65 billion people live in the valleys of the Ganges, Indus, Yellow, Mekong and Irrawaddy Rivers which are fed by these glaciers.

"This is the climate crisis you haven't heard of", Philippus Wester, one of the study's authors, said. "Global warming is on track to transform the frigid, glacier-covered mountain peaks of the [Hindu Kush-Himalayas] cutting across eight countries to bare rocks in a little less than a century. Impacts on people in the region, already one of the world's most fragile and hazard-prone mountain regions, will range from worsened air pollution to an increase in extreme weather events."

More: <https://globalinitiatives.cmail19.com/t/ViewEmail/r/08B1E598F42763D32540EF23F30FEDED/01265CB9EA44E6FDF7E8006BBCB98688>

Source: *Responsible Business*, 14th February 2019

Editor: The article goes on to outline a newly found discovery in Antarctica.

How Much More Evidence Needed for Action?

"A new report from the Britain's centre-left Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) warns politicians and policymakers have failed to grasp the gravity of the environmental crisis facing the Earth.

"The IPPR think tank said human impacts had reached a critical stage and threatened to destabilise society and the global economy.

"BBC News said in the report scientists warned of a potentially deadly combination of factors. These include climate change, mass loss of species, topsoil erosion, forest felling and acidifying oceans.

"The IPPR report said these factors were 'driving a complex, dynamic process of environmental destabilisation that has reached critical levels. This destabilisation is occurring at speeds unprecedented in human history and, in some cases, over billions of years.'

"The IPPR warned the window of opportunity to avoid catastrophic outcomes was rapidly closing.

"The authors have urged three shifts in political understanding: on the scale and pace of environmental breakdown; the implications for societies; and the subsequent need for transformative change.

"They said that since 1950, the number of floods across the world has increased by 15 times, extreme temperature events by 20 times, and wildfires seven-fold.

"They acknowledged that at least climate change featured in policy discussions, but other vitally important impacts barely figured.

"Professor Harriet Bulkeley, an expert in geography at Durham University, told BBC News the IPPR paper was a good interpretation of the current evidence, but she said it raised the question of how firm evidence of environmental threats had to be to prompt government action.

"We know lots of good things to do", she said, "but often the argument is made that we need to have 'evidence-based policy. This can, of course, be used as an excuse for delay. So, I guess the question is how much more evidence is needed for action?'

More: www.econews.com.au/60085/new-uk-report-warns-environment-in-multiple-crises/ plus www.ippr.org/research/publications/age-of-environmental-breakdown 44 pages, 1.23mb

Source: *eco-News*, 14th February 2019.

Ministry for Environment Survey – Environment Aotearoa

"The Ministry for the Environment is preparing for the release of Environment Aotearoa 2019 in April next year. It is the second 'synthesis' report in our ongoing series of environment reports with Stats NZ, covering all aspects of New Zealand's environment. As such it will provide a robust overview of the issues facing New Zealand's environment. Ministry for Environment would like to know how you use the reports and products, both within your organisation and with your own stakeholders. Go to the [survey here](#). [Very long URL]

Source: *Tieke: ECO Alerts & Events*, 20th February.

Update of Non-Binding Guidelines on Non-Financial Reporting

"The Technical Expert Group on Sustainable Finance set up by the European Commission in July 2018 published in January 2019 its first report on companies' disclosure of climate-related information.

"The adverse events associated with climate change cause damage to people and ecosystems, cost millions in damage, and disrupt business. And businesses have a large part in greenhouse gas emissions. This is why disclosure on ESG issues has become a must for investors to best assess impacts and risks, and for companies to take action to mitigate them. More importantly, more transparency can also help companies identify opportunities, and contribute to securing capital and a more diverse investor base.

"The report contains proposals for disclosing not just how climate change might influence the performance of a company, but also the impact of the company itself on climate change.

More: www.globalreporting.org/information/news-and-press-center/Pages/TEG-publication-update-NFRD-2019.aspx
53 pages, 1.23Mb

Source: GRI, 15th February 2019. 

Bernie's Impact

"Sen. Bernie Sanders caught the establishment Democratic Party off guard three years ago; few anticipated the strength of his candidacy and message.

"Things have changed. Sanders announced on Tuesday [19th February] he is running for president again – but this time, he's not the underdog. This time, he is a frontrunner who, despite coming in second in 2016, has fundamentally altered the Democratic Party.

"The rallying cries that distinguished Sanders from Hillary Clinton in 2016 – Medicare-for-all, a \$15 minimum wage, campaign finance reform – are no longer unique positions. In some ways, that's an advantage for him; he's become a progressive father figure who can credibly claim a lifelong dedication to the issues the party is now standing behind. ...

"In 2016, Sanders said he would start a 'political revolution'. Today, it's hard to overstate the influence his campaign – which railed against corporate greed, economic inequality, and money's influence in politics – has had on Democratic politics.

"Sanders's policy ideas have arguably had more of a lasting influence on Democratic politics than Clinton's platform did. The policies Sanders campaigned on three years ago are now mainstream.

"Sanders 'is not a candidate who is adopting these issues – he has always been running on these issues', said Joshua Ulibarri, a partner with the Democratic polling firm Lake Research Partners. ...

More: www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/2/19/18200479/bernie-sanders-running-president-2020 plus www.cnn.com/2019/02/19/bernie-sanders-is-running-for-president-in-2020--here-is-his-platform.html

Source: *The Economist*, 20th February 2019. 

The 0.01% Has Enormous Impact

"Humankind is revealed as simultaneously insignificant and utterly dominant in the grand scheme of life on Earth by a ground-breaking new assessment of all life on the planet.

"The world's 7.6 billion people represent just 0.01% of all living things, according to the study. Yet since the dawn of civilisation, humanity has caused the loss of 83% of all wild mammals and half of plants, while livestock kept by humans abounds. ...

More: www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/21/human-race-just-001-of-all-life-but-has-destroyed-over-80-of-wild-mammals-study

Source: *Carbon News*, 23rd May 2018. 

Is this Law Firm's Apparent Approach Ethical?

"Lawyers for mining firm Adani proposed waging 'war' on opponents of its controversial Queensland mine by using the legal system to pressure government, silence critics and financially cripple activists, according to documents obtained by the ABC.

"The draft copy of Adani's new law firm's aggressive strategy to bring the Carmichael mine to life is labelled 'Taking the Gloves Off' and outlines a commercial proposal by AJ & Co to win a multi-million-dollar legal contract with the Indian mining giant.

"In the document, the Brisbane firm promised to be Adani's 'trained attack dog'.

"The strategy recommended bankrupting individuals who unsuccessfully challenge Adani in court, using lawsuits to pressure the Queensland Government and social media 'bias' as a tool to discredit decision-makers.

"In a section called 'Play the Man', it recommended "where activists and commentators spread untruths, use the legal system to silence them".

More: www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-19/adani-law-firm-put-forward-trained-attack-dog-strategy/10821470

Source: ACF, 19th February 2019

Editor: Acting in the public interest is a key element of 'profession' and 'professional'. 

Law Change Could Support Organic Dairying and Revitalised Waterways

"A shift towards organic farming practices would help to protect and enhance our environment and our [NZ] economy.

"We want to see the Government better commit to organic dairy production and therefore more sustainable farming practices', says Soil & Health National Council member and former Green Party MP, Steffan Browning. There is growing public concern about the environmental impacts from intensive dairy farming, especially in relation to water quality and human health. Certified organic dairy farming prohibits the use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser, has lower stock numbers, more biodiversity, higher animal health outcomes, grass-fed cows with no GE feed or palm kernel supplements, and is generally less intensive than conventional dairy farming.

"The Ministry for Primary Industries is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Dairy Industry Restructuring Act which includes looking at incentives or disincentives for the dairy industry to transition to higher-value dairy production and processing that global consumers seek for a premium, and more sustainable environmental practices on and off-farm.

More: <https://organicnz.org.nz/submissions/submission-on-dairy-industry-restructuring-act-2001-review-2/> for Soil and Health's submission

Source: *Tieke: ECO Alerts & Events*, 13th February 2019

Editor: Submissions closed 8th February 2019. 

Ecofest North

"Ecofest North this year rolls out an epic programme of events; more than ever this year we have attempted to host and support an all-inclusive variety of activities with something to do, make or learn for all ages.

"From young eco-warriors to time aged guardians; there will be something for everyone to get involved with.

"From tiny explorations to gigantic beach cleans, bike rides, workshops and online we will attempt to reach all corners of the North

When: 9th March to 24th April

Where: Matakana and Kaipara Flats in the north to Devonport and Birkdale in the south

More: <http://kaipatiki.org.nz/ecofest/>

Source: Kaipatiki Project, 1st March 2019. 

Ireland's Democratic Experiment Lays the Ground for Stronger Climate Action [Democracy in Action]

"The Citizen's Assembly could become a model for developing informed, fair and ambitious climate policy – if the government accepts its recommendations

"Ireland's struggle with climate change cuts to the heart of people's daily lives and reflects the country's revival after recession: more cars on the road and thriving cattle farms.

"That makes it a political hot potato that Irish governments have tended to kick down the road – until it came to an assembly of 99 randomly selected citizens, tasked with weighing in on some of the country's most contentious social issues.

"The Citizens' Assembly spearheaded Ireland's vote to overturn an abortion ban in 2018, after a similar public consultation led to the vote to allow same-sex marriage in 2015. Now, the assembly could force Dublin's hand on divisive and expensive new measures to tackle climate change, including raising the carbon tax on road fuels and extending it to agricultural emissions.

"How closely the government sticks to the citizens' 13 recommendations on climate change remains to be seen in the next few months. But Ireland's bottom-up approach to policymaking is at the vanguard of a trend towards more participatory, consultative democracies aimed at building consensus – and political cover – on thorny issues such as Brexit and French tax reforms.

"The key: strip out the party politics and arm the public with information.

"Politicians are looking over their shoulders the whole time at the next elections', said Mike Loughnane, one of the Irish assembly's members, from Dublin. 'If the model is constructive, in such a way that encourages honest and open debate, then honest and open debate will result. If you bring in less baggage, there's less contention.' ...

"Touted as an 'exercise in deliberative democracy', the Citizens' Assembly started in late 2016 with members chosen at random and varying in age, gender, social class and location.

"They were tasked with weighing in on five policy issues including abortion, how to deal with an ageing population, and climate change, and met over 12 weekends until it wrapped up in mid-2018. They listened to experts, broke out into discussion groups, and voted on recommendations.

"The Citizens' Assembly showed that if you structure the debate around information, discussion, questions and answers, and allow citizens to really thrash things out with expert advice – in a manner that is intelligible to them – very often people will shift their positions', said Sadhbh O'Neill, an expert adviser to Naughton's parliamentary committee and a PhD candidate on environmental policy at University College Dublin. ...

More: www.climatechangenews.com/2019/02/18/irelands-democratic-experiment-lays-ground-stronger-climate-action/

Source: *Climate Change News*, 23rd February 2019. 

Free Guide – Business Waste

"Taking full responsibility for the waste our work produces seems like sustainable business 101, but it's not always that easy. SBN has produced a new guide to assist you. ...

"The *Smart Procurement Guide to Waste Services* is one of a series of guides being produced by SBN. The intention is to make smarter procurement standard practice across New Zealand. In the coming months we will be producing a similar guide on cleaning, with more to follow.

More: www.smartprocurement.org.nz/resources

Source: SBN, 29th May 2018. 

Stunning and Expensive Refrigerant Leaks

"Trident Seafoods Corporation, one of the largest seafood processing companies in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, will spend up to \$23 million to reduce coolant leaks from refrigerators and other equipment and to improve compliance; the company will also pay a \$900,000 fine. Trident agreed to the settlement with the EPA and the US Department of Justice to resolve alleged violations of the Clean Air Act.

"The EPA says Trident violated the Act by failing to promptly repair leaks of the refrigerant R-22, an ozone-depleting hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC). This allowed its appliances to leak refrigerant at high rates for thousands of days, releasing over 200,000 pounds of harmful refrigerant to be released into the atmosphere, according to the EPA.

"Trident will retrofit or retire 23 refrigeration appliances used on 14 marine vessels to use an alternative refrigerant that does not harm the ozone layer compared to typical refrigerants. Trident also agreed to retrofit nine of these appliances as part of a Supplemental Environmental Project.

"[Yet] Trident Seafoods says it has a strong commitment to sustainable fishing practices. 'We respect our surrounding environment the same way we respect fisheries – by honoring our responsibility in the way we use resources,' its website claims. 'Because we process as well as harvest seafood, we can hold ourselves to a higher standard of accountability – we are constantly innovating to reduce the environmental footprint of vessel and shore operations.' ...

More: www.environmentalleader.com/2019/02/179412/ plus <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/u-s-settles-trident-seafoods-corporation-reduce-ozone-depleting-emissions>

Source: *Environmental Leader*, 21st February 2019

Editor: 'The total estimated emission reductions from this settlement are equal to the amount from over 143,000 passenger vehicles per year, the CO2 emissions from 734 million pounds of coal burned, or the carbon sequestered by over 790,000 acres of forests in one year.' 

New Zealand's 'Nude' Produce Is Flying Off the Shelves

"Breaking news: people are more likely to buy fruit and vegetables that aren't wrapped in plastic. It has taken several years, and a pretty huge anti-plastic movement, for supermarkets to realise that fresh produce actually sells better when you can see, smell and touch it. Since New Zealand supermarket chain New World stopped wrapping fruit and veggies in plastic as part of its 'food in the nude' campaign, sales of some vegetables have increased by 300%.

"When we first set up the new shelving our customers were blown away', Bishopdale New World supermarket owner Nigel Bond told the *New Zealand Herald*. 'It reminded me of when I was a kid going to the fruiterer with my dad, you could smell the fresh citrus and spring onions. By wrapping products in plastic we sanitise and deprive people of this experience; it (dispensing with plastic) was a huge driver for us.

"After we introduced the concept we noticed sales of spring onions, for example, had increased by 300%', he added.

'There may have been other factors at play but we noticed similar increases in other vegetable varieties like silverbeet and radishes.' ...

"New World supermarkets have replaced plastic packaging with refrigerated shelving with a built-in vegetable mister..

More: <https://wellmadeclothes.co.nz/articles/NewZealandsNudeProduceIsFlyingOffTheShelves/> plus www.nzherald.co.nz/sponsored-stories/news/article.cfm

Source: Craig Fisher, LinkedIn, 1st March 2019. 

Bamboo: Nature's Forgotten Solution for Green industry

"Sometimes, the best technology isn't a technology at all. Bamboo, the fast-growing grass plant, common to Africa, Asia and South America, is a natural, renewable and low-carbon material with the tensile strength of steel, and a huge amount of potential for greening infrastructure.

"As available, scaleable solutions go, bamboo is a forgotten solution. There are over 30 million hectares of bamboo across the world, and more is being planted every year: As a way to restore degraded land, and as a vital means of income for millions of people across the world. ...

"This means bamboo can create a large number of durable products which store carbon over several years, in addition to the carbon stored in the plant itself. Recent research shows that over a period of 30 years, one hectare of bamboo plants and products can sequester up to 600 tonnes carbon – more than certain species of tree. ...

"And in China, bamboo is being used to build storm-drainage pipes, utility poles, street lights, wind turbine blades and shock-resistant exteriors for bullet-train carriages, prompting *The Economist* to predict last year China's bamboo sector is 'about to shoot up'.

"With a tensile strength greater than that of mild steel, and an ability to withstand compression twice as well as concrete, bamboo products can provide a low- or even negative-carbon alternative to materials like PVC, concrete, plastic and steel.

"Replacing traditional materials with bamboo could be an important way to 'green' emissions-intensive infrastructure initiatives, and the plant is gaining traction at high levels.

"The International Standardisation Organisation is commissioning more research into standards for bamboo products and housing, to enable more rigorous testing and guidelines for designers and architects. On a national level, more countries could follow the example of Ecuador, which recently published a technical guide for farmers regarding the sustainable management of bamboo plantations. ...

"The benefits of such support can be seen in China, where strategic subsidies since the 1980s – and a keen desire by some businesses to stop relying on timber imports – has created an industry valued at \$30 billion.

More: www.eco-business.com/opinion/bamboo-natures-forgotten-solution-for-green-industry/

Source: eco-business.com, 20th February 2019

Plus: Farmers in Kenya have found an innovative solution to stop landslides
<https://www.facebook.com/worldeconomicforum/video/s/vb.7746841478/1924231657685593/> 0:50

Source: Craig Skinner, 20th February 2019. 

Homes lose \$15.8 billion in value as seas rise, Maine to Mississippi

"Owners of coastal properties are getting hit by a rising tide of bad news. Higher sea levels slashed home values in 17 states from Maine to Mississippi by \$15.8 billion over a dozen years, according to updated research from the nonprofit First Street Foundation. Florida showed the greatest loss in relative home values at \$5.4 billion, followed by New Jersey at \$4.5 billion and New York at \$1.3 billion.

"The research focuses on the impact of rising water levels from 2005 to 2017 for 25.6 million coastal properties, rather than the cost of damages tied to specific events such as Superstorm Sandy, which ravaged New Jersey and New York in 2012, or New England storms

More: www.cbsnews.com/news/homes-lose-15-8-billion-in-value-as-seas-rise-maine-to-mississippi/

Source: Carbon News, 1st March 2019. 

Renewables are Most Affordable Option

"A new Transpower report into the future of electricity has been labelled 'the most disruptive study to emerge in the New Zealand energy space' according to Greenpeace campaigner, Amanda Larsson.

"The country's electricity grid operator, Transpower, released an addendum to last year's report on New Zealand's energy future, *Te Mauri Hiko*, which confirms a renewable future is the most affordable for New Zealanders. The addendum, called *The Sun Rises on a Solar Energy Future*, takes into account new technical work done by Transpower around battery technology.

"This latest update leaves no question New Zealand should have a future powered significantly by solar. 'This report is a game changer. It's the most disruptive study to emerge in the NZ energy space, and it's exactly the sort of forward-thinking our Government should be taking notice of'

More: www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand/press-release/transpower-issues-game-changing-report-on-solar/ 20 pages 7.32Mb

Source: Tieke: *ECO Alerts & Events*, 20th February 2019. 

Mr. Jones Tells the Story of the Man Who Exposed the Ukrainian Famine

"Walking through rural Ukraine in 1932, having eluded his Communist Party chaperone, Gareth Jones witnessed disturbing deprivation. People were starving, fighting each other tooth and nail for a single loaf of bread. Bodies lay in the street until they were piled up and carted away on wagons. While its own citizens suffered, the Soviet Union was continuing to export grain, projecting an image of prosperity to the West. Recent estimates have suggested that around 4m people perished in 1932 and 1933, around 13% of the Ukrainian population, in what is known today as the Holodomor ('killing by hunger'). At the time, though, few believed Jones's reports; many politicians, diplomats and journalists tried to discredit him.

"In *Mr. Jones*, a feature film which premiered at the Berlinale, the journalist's search for the truth makes for stylish and compelling historical drama.....[Paywal]

More: www.economist.com/prospero/2019/02/20/mr-jones-tells-the-story-of-the-man-who-exposed-the-ukrainian-famine plus www.bbc.com/culture/story/20190211-berlin-film-festival-review-mr-jones and www.theguardian.com/film/2019/feb/11/mr-jones-review-agnieszka-holland-james-norton-berlin-film-festival

Source: *The Economist*, 21st February 2019. 

Blue the Film: A Call to Arms for Our Oceans

"Australian scientist and filmmaker Karina Holden wrote, produced and directed *Blue the Film*. She talks to Kathryn Ryan about this feature length documentary which salutes the ocean's beauty while challenging the threat posed to it by humans: for instance that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Filmed in the South Pacific, Australia, Hawaii, the Philippines and Indonesia, *Blue* is narrated by seven conservationists, each with a different concern for the ocean. Karina has a Postgraduate degree in Conservation Biology from University of Queensland and over 200 articles in print in nature magazines, including National Geographic. *Blue* will screen at *The Wild Dunedin Film Festival* on Sunday 22nd April.

More: www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/2018633707/blue-the-film-a-call-to-arms-for-our-oceans 27:38 plus <https://bluethethefilm.org/> and www.documentaryaustralia.com.au/films/2902/blue

Source: SBN, 21st February 2019. 