

Sustainability Matters

Compiled and published by Ray Skinner, FCA

Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children



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99 Good News Stories You Probably Didn't Hear About in 2019

"If we want to change the story of the human race in the 21st century, we have to change the stories we tell ourselves.

"We watched the news this year. Maybe you did too.

"It didn't look good. Countries on the verge of collapse, people taking to the streets, some in peaceful marches and extinction rebellions, others in violent clashes with security forces. Populism rearing its ugly head, bigotry worming its way into the algorithms, power corrupting absolutely, the powerless ignored or locked in cages on the border. Trade wars, surveillance capitalism and 're-education camps,' war-torn hotspots mired in conflict, a global economy incapable of fixing its excesses, the partisan battle lines hardening, the lies becoming more brazen. An entire species fouling its own nest, the emissions (still!) rising, wildfires burning and losses cascading across ecosystems.

"Perhaps, like us, you willingly participated in this insane, 21st century global experiment: take a nervous system that's evolved for running away from cheetahs, and give it a big glowing screen showing it all the bad things happening in the world in near real time.

"Fortunately, that wasn't the only news. There were other stories out there, unsung victories for conservation, health, rising living standards, tolerance, peace, clean energy and environmental stewardship. Most of them didn't make it into the evening bulletins or our Facebook feeds though, and that means that what we saw on our screens in 2019 was not the world. It was a negative image of the world, in both the photographic and tonal senses.

"Here's a better picture; [99 truly remarkable happenings.]

More: <https://futurecrun.ch/99-good-news-2019>

Source: *SBC Weekly Pānui*, 9th January 2020

Editor: Note to self – Finish reading these stories!! 

2020 Sustainability Professionals Unconference

"The role of sustainability professionals is changing rapidly in response to the increasing urgency of social and environmental challenges. This retreat by and for senior sustainability professionals will empower you to work on collective challenges, look for new ways to create collaborative solutions and engagement, and support each other in this work.

More: Complete the form at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YMX2J6X> i to apply and receive the registration link.

When/Where: 4-7 March 2020; Station Lodge, Ohakune

Source: *SBC Weekly Pānui*, 16th January 2020.

Plastics Data Challenge

"The Plastics Data Challenge is a global innovation challenge that will source, support, and scale innovative solutions that address the leakage of plastic waste into the environment.

Applications close: 13th March 2020

More: www.incubationnetwork.com/plastics-data-challenge

Source: Global Initiatives, Singapore, 21st Jan. 2020. 

Climate Change Litigation Enters a New Era: Court Rules Emissions Reductions a Human Right

"The Supreme Court of the Netherlands in The Hague on Friday [20th December 2019] delivered what may be the most unequivocal legal statement so far that governments are responsible for acting to address climate change.

"In a closely-watched case that could have wide ramifications for litigation worldwide, the court ruled the Dutch government must reduce emissions by at least 25% by the end of 2020 compared to 1990 levels, going beyond the EU-wide objective of 20%.

"The ruling denied the Dutch government's appeal of an earlier ruling in favour of the Urgenda Foundation, an environmental group that first filed the case in 2013 on behalf of a group of Dutch citizens who wanted the government to move faster to reduce emissions. The government has argued that a legal obligation to meet a specific target would limit its flexibility in determining how to reduce emissions.

"The Supreme Court based its judgement on the UN Climate Convention and the obligations of the state under the European Convention on Human Rights. ...

"There have been 1,442 climate change lawsuits worldwide. This is the strongest decision ever', said Gerrard. 'The Dutch Supreme Court has upheld the first court order anywhere directing a country to slash its greenhouse gas emissions. This decision may inspire even more cases in other countries.' ...

More: <https://fortune.com/2019/12/20/climate-change-litigation-human-rights-netherlands/> plus www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03841-5

Also: www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/climate/netherlands-climate-lawsuit.html plus <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/476166-dutch-ruling-will-set-precedent-for-courts-to-review-climate>

Source: Kit Withers, 19th December 2019 and *New York Times*, 2nd January 2020. 

Ecopsychology: How Immersion in Nature Benefits Your Health

"Journalist Jim Robbins examines the growing body of research pointing to the beneficial effects that exposure to the natural world has on human health.

Numerous recent studies show that time in nature is an antidote for stress – lowering blood pressure and stress hormone levels, reducing anxiety and nervous system arousal, enhancing immune system function, and increasing self-esteem. 'Nature is not only nice to have, but it's a have-to-have for physical health and cognitive functioning', says one expert. Now, policymakers, employers, and healthcare providers are increasingly considering the human need for nature in how they plan and operate.

More: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/ecopsychology-how-immersion-in-nature-benefits-your-health>

Source: *Yale Environment 360*, 10th January 2020.

Editor: Applicable to cities and their dwellers. 

BlackRock Joins Climate Action 100+ to Ensure Largest Corporate Emitters Act on Climate Crisis

"BlackRock has today [9th January 2020] become the latest signatory to Climate Action 100+, an unprecedented global investor engagement initiative, to ensure the world's largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters take necessary action on climate change.

"With the addition of the world's largest asset manager, with more than US\$6.8 trillion in assets under management, Climate Action 100+ continues to grow in size and influence. BlackRock joins more than 370 global investors already participating in the initiative. The addition of funds it manages, brings total assets under management represented by investors participating in Climate Action 100+ to more than \$41 trillion. ...

"As signatories, investors commit to engagement with companies, in seeking to ensure they;

- Take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the value chain in line with the overarching goals of the Paris Agreement;
- Implement a strong governance framework which clearly articulates the board's accountability and oversight of climate change risks and opportunities; and
- Provide enhanced corporate disclosure in line with the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

"161 companies are engaged through Climate Action 100+. This includes 100 'systemically important emitters', accounting for two-thirds of annual global industrial greenhouse emissions, alongside 61 others with significant opportunity to drive the clean energy transition. ...

More: www.ceres.org/news-center/press-releases/blackrock-joins-climate-action-100-ensure-largest-corporate-emitters-act plus www.greenbiz.com/article/blackrock-goes-green-investment-giant-joins-climate-action-100-amid-controversy and www.eco-business.com/opinion/what-larry-fink-should-say-on-climate-change-in-his-next-letter-to-ceos/

Source: Ceres, 11th January 2020.

Decision Time for the Planet

The January 2020 edition of Ethical Corp's magazine [now freely available] has 'pulled out all the stops' to produce a 'bumper' 82 page issue which features insights from 16 global business leaders and change-makers to give their insights as to how business can lead and make the 2020s a decade of delivery.

This issue has been broken down into three parts:

- Tomorrow's capitalism – featuring insights from John Elkington, Sally Uren, Adam Matthews, Mike Barry and Henry Richards
- Social transformation – featuring insights from Lise Kingo, Paul Druckman, John Morrison and Jane Thomason
- Climate action – featuring insights from Filippo Veglio, Pat Dwyer, Lynn Scarlett, Jen Austin, Justin Adams, Bruno Sarda and Sunny Verghese

More: <https://events.ethicalcorp.com/reports/docs/340983/EC-Magazine-January-2020.pdf> 52.98Mb, 82 pages

Source: Ethical Corp, 11th January 2020

Editor: Some excellent reading. Notably though a complete absence of terms such as 'CFO' and 'Accountant'. 'Reporting' other than in advertisements mentioned 11 times.

PS: Ethical Corp is now fully owned by Reuters.

Accelerating NZ's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

"Submissions are invited on the discussion paper *Accelerating renewable energy and energy efficiency*.

"The paper focuses on two major work streams, encouraging energy efficiency and the uptake of renewable fuels in industry, and accelerating renewable electricity generation and infrastructure. We look forward to your feedback on the best way Aotearoa can achieve a more energy efficient and renewable energy system.

"This discussion paper examines a range of barriers and issues, and seeks feedback on a range of options to accelerate the use and supply of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. The reduction of energy-related carbon emissions will be critical to achieving Aotearoa's climate goals.

"The discussion paper asks over 100 questions across two parts and 11 chapters:

- Part A: Encouraging energy efficiency and the uptake of renewable fuels in industry
- Part B: Accelerating renewable electricity generation and infrastructure

Submissions close: Friday 28th February

More: www.mbie.govt.nz/have-your-say/accelerating-renewable-energy-and-energy-efficiency/ 133 pages 3.55Mb

Source: *SBC Weekly Pānui*, 19th December 2019

Editor: Does not seem to look at reducing demand for energy e.g. reducing volumes of road transport or process heat, or improving design and or/operation of buildings generally or housing.

NB: See articles about liquid air; <https://www.environmentalleader.com/2019/12/liquid-air-energy-storage-first/> i.e. cryogenic energy storage. Plus; www.pv-magazine.com/2019/10/22/highview-power-to-build-uks-first-large-scale-cryogenic-energy-storage-facility/ plans to build of 50 MW/250 MWh 'liquid air' facilities in the UK and www.rechargenews.com/transition/liquid-air-storage-offers-cheapest-route-to-24-hour-wind-and-solar/2-1-635666

Omnicide: Who is Responsible for the Gravest of All Crimes?

"As the full extent of the devastation of the Holocaust became apparent, a Polish Jew whose entire family had been killed, Raphael Lemkin, came to realise that there was no word for the distinctive crime that had been committed: the murder of a people. His life work became finding a word to name the crime and then convincing the world to use it and condemn it: genocide. Today, not only has genocide become a dreadful part of our lexicon. We recognise it as perhaps the gravest of all crimes.

"During these first days of the third decade of the twenty-first century, as we watch humans, animals, trees, insects, fungi, ecosystems, forests, rivers (and on and on) being killed, we find ourselves without a word to name what is happening. True, in recent years, environmentalists have coined the term ecocide, the killing of ecosystems – but this is something more. This is the killing of everything. Omnicide.

"Some will object, no doubt, that this does not count as a 'cide' – a murder or killing – but is rather a natural phenomenon, albeit an unspeakably regrettable one. Where is the murderous intent? Difficult to locate, admittedly, but a new crime also requires a new understanding of culpability... [Long thoughtful article.]

More: www.abc.net.au/religion/danielle-celermajer-omnicide-gravest-of-all-crimes/11838534

Source: Malcolm Rands, Facebook, 6th Jan. 2020.

Obituary: David Bellamy OBE, Botanist and Broadcaster

"David Bellamy OBE, author, broadcaster, environmental campaigner and botanist. Born: 18 January 1933 in London. Died: 11 December 2019, aged 86.



"London-born Bellamy, who became a household name as a TV personality, scientist and conservationist, died on Wednesday [11th December], according to the foundation.

"His colleague, David Shreeve, described him as a 'larger-than-life character' who 'inspired a whole generation'.

"In later life Bellamy, who lived in County Durham, attracted criticism for dismissing global warming.

"In 2004 he described it as 'poppycock' – a stance which he later said cost him his TV career.

"Bellamy worked in a sweet factory and as a plumber before embarking on his broadcasting career. ...

More: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-50752089>

Source: CSEAR, 30th December 2019.

Finance for the Future 2019 awards

"Finance for the Future [UK] was founded by ICAEW and The Prince's Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S) in 2012. In partnership with Deloitte, the programme highlights the essential role the finance function plays in driving integrated thinking in decision making and in building sustainable business models. Its key ambition is to share best practice, drive awareness, inspire action and develop a community of finance leaders, committed to create more sustainable outcomes for their organisations.

"The December 2019 winners and highly commended were;

"Building sustainable financial products award
Winner: Ecology Building Society, (UK)
Highly commended: Accounting for Energy, (UK)

"Communicating integrated thinking award
Winner: ABN AMRO, (The Netherlands)

"Driving change through education, training and academia award
Winner: Climate Change & Finance at Imperial College Business School
Highly commended: Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research (CSEAR), (UK)
Judges' comments: CSEAR has delivered significant change in academia in its lifetime to date. It is difficult to imagine what social and environmental accounting would look like had CSEAR not existed. The judging panel was particularly impressed with the passion of individuals involved and their determination to create a space for the evolution of accounting practice. CSEAR has made a seminal contribution to social and environmental accounting research, driven change over many years, and shaped the landscape we see today.

"Embedding an integrated approach award
Winner: Tesco plc, (UK)
Highly commended: Stora Enso, (Finland)

"Innovative project award
Winner: SteamaCo, (UK)
Highly commended: Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), (India)

"Investing and financing award
Winner: Globalance Bank, (Switzerland)

More: www.financeforthefuture.org

Source: CSEAR, 30th December 2019.

Self-driving Cars will Not Fix Our Transportation Woes

"Autonomous cars, left to their own devices, will likely do more harm than good, says a researcher in sustainable transportation. Studies have found that mass use of self-driving cars could lead to an increase in carbon emissions by 200%. [Longish article.]

More: www.eco-business.com/opinion/self-driving-cars-will-not-fix-our-transportation-woes/

Podcast or Perish Featuring Markus Milne

"A new episode of Podcast or Perish is out, featuring my interview with Prof. Markus Milne. I am now trying to figure out how to weave 'backcountry camping' into my financial accounting syllabus.

"Podcast or Perish is a show about academic research and why it matters. It is highly multidisciplinary, but I've been fortunate to interview some great accounting colleagues, including Christine Cooper (whose episode has already appeared) and upcoming guests Marcia Annisette and Prem Sikka.

"Prof. Markus Milne of the University of Canterbury is one of the pioneers of research on environmental accounting. A passionate environmentalist and mountaineer ...

More: www.podcastorperish.ca/episodes/episode-010-markus-milne plus www.canterbury.ac.nz/news/2019/nature-inspires-research-for-award-winning-professor.html

Source: CSEAR 18th January 2020

Editor: There is as a transcript – it's long. Recorded14th May 2019. A very useful reflection for 'reporters' and others.

Tales of Sustainable Travel

"I have been trying to live and travel sustainably for 9 years. It's hard and it's not always convenient. For me it's worth it, rewarding and it's my choice. I left Australia 4 months ago on a 6 month trip around the world.

"Countries I have travelled to include: Philippines, Qatar, Czech Republic, Vienna, Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, England, Iceland, Canada and currently in the United States. 12 countries, 25 cities/towns visited so far.

"To get to these places I have taken:

- 7 flights in that time
- 15 trains
- 4 buses
- 6 car ride-shares (mostly in the United States and short distances when there was no public transport available!).

"I'm still yet to calculate my carbon emissions to offset the travel I haven't already offset.

More: www.linkedin.com/pulse/tales-sustainable-travel-miranda-siu/

Source: Miranda Siu, 30th December 2019.

The Net-Zero Economy Report - 2020

"*The Net-Zero Economy Report - 2020*, released on Wednesday [15th January 2020] by The B Team, highlights the need for radical collaboration in corporate climate action. The report showcases how some companies are already working with each other, their employees, suppliers, investors and others to accelerate action toward a clean energy future.

More: <https://bteam.org/our-thinking/reports/net-zero-economy-report-2020> plus <https://bteam.org/assets/reports/Net-Zero-Economy-Report-2020.pdf> 26 pages, 3.63Mb

Source: *ClimateHome News*, 18th January 2020.

Losing Earth: The Decade We Could Have Stopped Climate Change

"I've just read a great book which you might like... *Losing Earth* by Nathaniel Rich. It's subtitled *The Decade we Could have Stopped Climate Change*. I read it shaking my head all the way through, remembering the frustration I felt at the time. I'm so glad the world has finally caught up with where we were thinking 20 years ago.

More:

www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/01/magazine/climate-change-losing-earth.html "This narrative by Nathaniel Rich is a work of history, addressing the 10-year period from 1979 to 1989: the decisive decade when humankind first came to a broad understanding of the causes and dangers of climate change. Complementing the text is a series of aerial photographs and videos, all shot over the past year by George Steinmetz. With support from the Pulitzer Center, this two-part article is based on 18 months of reporting and well over a hundred interviews. It tracks the efforts of a small group of American scientists, activists and politicians to raise the alarm and stave off catastrophe. It will come as a revelation to many readers – an agonising revelation – to understand how thoroughly they grasped the problem and how close they came to solving it ..."

Excerpt from an article comprising an entire issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. The book published April 2019 has 224 pages.



Source: Raechel Cummins 26th December 2019 – the original 'Carbon Accountant'.

National Freshwater Conference 2020

"Sharing strategies to protect our most important resource.

"This year, the country's leading freshwater experts give their responses to the latest National Policy Statement for Freshwater. Presenters will share ideas about achieving the 25 year goal for improved freshwater quality, protection and allocation.

"Those delivering expert presentations include the nation's leading freshwater resource lawyers, scientists, academics, activists, environmental researchers, hydrologists, Māori stakeholders and community catchment organisers.

When/Where: 26-27th Feb +workshops 28th, Wellington

More: www.conferenz.co.nz/events/national-freshwater-conference-2020

Source: Conferencenz (Snail mail), 18th January 2020.

London's New Artificial Trees Guzzle as Much Pollution as 275 Regular Trees

"The world is, finally, awakening to the imminent threats posed by climate change and pollution, and London is starting to do its bit to help. From zero-emissions streets to pollution-eating solar panels, along with restaurants trending towards zero-waste and veganism, the capital has begun to put greener, more sustainable methods into practice. Next in the war on global warming are three new City Trees, a series of CO2-filtering structures which have just been installed in Leytonstone.

"Useful as they are, calling the City Trees 'trees' is a bit of a misnomer. They're actually towers filled with different types of moss, which eat up particulates and nitrogen oxides whilst simultaneously producing oxygen. The City Trees include their own irrigation and energy systems which allows them to operate whatever the weather, and also collect data about the surrounding environment, which can then be used to inform further green solutions.

More: <https://secretldn.com/city-trees-london-pollution/>

Source: SnippetTS, 16th January 2020.

Climate Change Pushes Investors to Take the Temperature

"Policymakers are pushing investors to do more to ensure their portfolio choices help to meet the United Nations sponsored 2015 Paris Agreement to combat climate change by limiting planetary warming to well below two degrees Celsius, and preferably to 1.5°C.

"Reuters Newsagency reports a vanguard of insurers and pension funds, many of whom will be in Davos this week for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, say part of the answer is a new "temperature score" that gives a snapshot of how their investments are contributing to climate change.

"A single score, they say, can help them navigate the reallocation of capital from heavily polluting sectors of the global economy likely to take a financial hit to greener companies poised to profit.

"So far, the temperature metric has been adopted by only a handful of the thousands of financial institutions worldwide but the buzz it has generated shows how investors' concerns about climate risk are finally moving into the mainstream.

"There's still a massive amount of work to be done on this but it's very encouraging that we as an industry are being forced to answer this temperature score question," said Mark Lewis, head of sustainability research at BNP Paribas Asset Management. ...

More: <http://econews.com.au/63397/climate-change-pushes-investors-to-take-the-temperature/>

Source: eco-News, 20th January 2020.

Temperature™ Score

"The Temperature™ Score is a unique new metric which quantifies the extent to which corporations across the world are contributing to the rise in global temperature.

"How Does It Work? By translating publicly reported greenhouse gas emissions from each company to a Celsius degree temperature, based on sector specific emissions pathways, the Temperature Score recognises companies which are leaders in climate action. It provides a simple and tangible metric for making comparisons on climate impact between companies, for all stakeholders.

"Scoring. Each company is given a score of 1.5, 2, 2.7 or >2.7°C. This represents the increase in global temperature if every other company were to behave like them. Companies which do not fully and publicly report their emissions data are given an incomplete disclosure score of 3°C.

"Emissions Intensity Ratio. The Temperature Score uses the metric of emissions intensity ratio (EIR) to translate company emissions into a temperature score. An EIR is the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per unit of economic value added, which measures the degree of coupling between emissions and economic growth. A smaller number means that there is less coupling – so the growth of the company is less strongly tied to increased emissions. Company EIR is calculated by summing the Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, and dividing by the company's revenue. ...

More: <https://arabesque.com/temperature-score/> plus https://arabesque.com/docs/sray/marketing/temperature/temperature_score_methodology.pdf 10pages, 515kb

Source: Editor, 20th January 2020

Editor: Is there is a major flaw in the methodology in that it makes the assessment against carbon intensity not against absolute carbon? With its appealing 'simplicity' it is though a step in the right direction and an inducement to act.