

Sustainability Matters

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Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children



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CFOs Take Lead on Climate Risk and Value Creation

"Globally companies are feeling increasing pressure to act on climate change. However, CFOs report that to date, companies' climate responses focus primarily on short-term, cost-saving measures. Leading CFOs understand the risks that climate change presents to their company and industry, and the significant opportunities that lie in becoming part of the solution.

"Late last year, Deloitte and the Sustainable Business Council brought together a range of Aotearoa New Zealand's leading CFOs in the Deloitte Greenhouse for our first 'Climate Risk & Value Creation' workshop. By combining subject matter experts, global best-practice and local insights through a collaborative co-design process, we explored how CFOs can take the lead in managing climate risk and creating value. Below is a selection of the key takeaways:

"While some CFOs continue to believe the issue of climate change is outside of their mandate, evidence suggests the opposite is true.

"Your organisation's response to climate change cannot be tackled by a single function. It must be woven through your organisation's strategies, functions and processes. Addressing material risks requires breaking down silos and engaging in integrated thinking. This is key to driving a shift in your organisation's culture – one of the biggest challenges identified in the workshop. ...

More: <https://blog.deloitte.co.nz/articles/feeling-the-heat-cfos-take-the-lead-on-climate-risk-and-value-creation/>

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

Another Splendid Selection of Timely Articles

The 9th April edition of *SnippETS* newsletter contains a splendid selection of articles appropriate for the current times. Articles canvassed include;

- How can the climate crisis cut through the Covid-19 media storm?
- While we fixate on coronavirus, Earth is hurtling towards a catastrophe worse than the dinosaur extinction
- The *Irish Times* view on the post-coronavirus future: Glimpses of a better world
- With the climate crisis and coronavirus bearing down on us, the age of disconnection is over**
- Tackle climate crisis and poverty with zeal of Covid-19 fight, scientists urge
- What mobilising innovation for COVID-19 can teach us about catalysing climate tech
- Why plastics are also a climate issue
- Why NZ lags behind Scandinavia on climate action
- Offshore Wind report released
- Not just biofuels: Algae's next wave
- Oceans can be restored to former glory within 30 years, say scientists

More: www.carbonems.com/single-post/2020/04/09/Snippets-for-9-April-2020

Source: *SnippETS*, 9th April 2020.

** Highly recommended 'Damage the environment and we damage ourselves.'

How Are We Helping the World Emerge From This Emergency?

"These are tough times. Anyone who thinks they know where this is going is delusional. We're in uncharted waters, and they're getting rougher ...

"COVID, as terrible as it is, offers lessons we need to heed: We face not a single threat, but a series of crises threatening human health and livelihoods, economic prosperity and planetary stability. Each crisis has unique drivers and triggers, but all result from our collective choice to live beyond the planetary boundaries without ensuring all of us who share this beautiful little planet have enough. All can be solved only by collective action and good leadership. As scary as this all is, it should not be lost on us that governments the world around have transformed the global economy, dedicated trillions of dollars to the fight, and imposed draconian measure on us.

"Being forced to change in this way was a ghastly mistake. People are dying. Businesses are dying. Much that we all loved about our old way of life will never recover, and I mourn all of that. But humanity will emerge, and rebuild. As we do, will we have learned anything that might enable us to craft a finer future? One scientist even estimated the reduction in air pollution from this cessation industrial pollution will save twenty times more lives than the virus will kill.

"Had we heeded the scientists' warnings, we could have dealt with the threat of pandemics by protecting the ecological integrity of species that can pass such diseases on to people, and with effective public health programs that prepare us for any outbreak. Similarly, investing now in renewable energy and regenerative agriculture can solve the climate crisis at a profit. The stimulus we should be giving now is to the industries which will build the economy of the future, not those which diverted their profits from the last bailout to lavish executive paydays.

"Now is the time to imagine a finer future. ...

"Most of all, hold to the belief we still have it in us to create a Finer Future. Remember parable of the caterpillar which opens the book: A caterpillar is a consumptive beast, devouring leaves, vegetables, until one day it stops. It has no earthly idea why, but suddenly, its whole world stops. Rather like ours has. The worm enters the profound isolation of the chrysalis. As it is enveloped by threads of transformation, it literally melts into what are called 'imaginal cells'. That goo of possibility is the beginning of an unimaginably different future. As the fragile butterfly emerges, it is the struggle to escape the strands which had encased its transformation that then gives the new pollinator the strength to fly. No longer a fat consumer, it is a bringer of new life to the plants it once destroyed.

More: <https://mailchi.mp/f4f26ffd3963/how-are-we-helping-the-world-emerge-from-this-emergency?e=16b61356d1>

Source: Hunter Lovins, 9th April 2020.

In the Face of a Pandemic, Climate Activists Re-evaluate Their Tactics

"Climate change is front and centre in the 2020 election, but the advent of the coronavirus has advocacy groups treading carefully and moving campaigns online. ...

More: <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/19032020/climate-change-activism-coronavirus>

Source: *Carbon News*, 23rd March 2020.

What is Plastic Offsetting? And Can it Really Help to Fight the Plastic Crisis?

“Companies are under growing pressure to reduce the amount of plastic they produce and consume, as the plastic waste choking the oceans continues to horrify consumers, anger activists and worry investors.

“But for some companies, there is only so much plastic they can realistically remove from their operations for the foreseeable future.

“A restaurant can stop offering customers straws, coffee cup lids and carrier bags. But what about the food packaging which extends a product’s shelf life?

“Companies can offset unavoidable plastic use by investing in projects that tackle plastic pollution. This is known as plastic offsetting.

“One of the first organisations to offer companies a plastic offsetting service was Seven Clean Seas, the brainchild of former financial advisor and shipbroker Tom Peacock-Nazil, who founded his firm in 2018.

“The Singapore-based company, which is already profitable after less than two years of operations, offsets the plastic a company cannot eliminate by removing an equivalent amount of plastic trash from beaches and waterways around Southeast Asia.

“Seven Clean Seas has removed an estimated 54,000 kg of plastic from the marine environment since launching, for corporate events as well as offsets. ...

More: www.eco-business.com/news/what-is-plastic-offsetting-and-can-it-really-help-to-fight-the-plastic-crisis/

Source: eco-Business.com, 18th March 2020.

Research: Nearly US\$640bn Coal Investments Undercut by Cheap Renewables

“Research by think tank Carbon Tracker Initiative has shown nearly US\$640 billion of investment in coal-fired power capacity worldwide is at risk because it is cheaper to generate electricity from new renewable energy.

“Institutional investors are increasingly withdrawing from fossil fuel companies due to the risk their assets will become stranded as tougher carbon emissions targets discourage their use and renewable energy becomes even cheaper.

“Reuters Newsagency reports the study examined the economics of 95% of coal plants which are operating, under construction or planned worldwide.

“The study found building new wind and solar plants will soon be cheaper in every major market across the globe than running existing coal-fired power stations, and raises fresh doubt about the medium-term viability of Australia’s \$26bn thermal coal export industry.

“Globally, 499 gigawatts (GW) of new coal power capacity is planned or under construction with an investment cost of US\$638 billion.

“More than 60% of global coal plants are currently generating electricity at a higher cost than could be produced by building new renewable energy.

“By 2030 at the latest, it will be cheaper to build new wind or solar capacity than continue operating coal in all markets, the report said...

More: www.econews.com.au/63865/research-nearly-us640bn-coal-investments-undercut-by-cheap-renewables/ plus <https://carbontracker.org/reports/how-to-waste-over-half-a-trillion-dollars/>

Source: eco-News, 13th March 2020.

A Movement Grows to Help Farmers Reduce Pollution and Turn a Profit

“Journalist Janet Marinelli reports on an innovative program in Pennsylvania that is showing farmers how to plant cash crops in riparian buffer zones to generate income, stabilise stream banks, and clean up waterways. More than 100,000 miles of U.S. rivers and streams are polluted by nitrogen and phosphorus, much of it from agricultural runoff. Rather than trying to take farmland out of production, Marinelli writes, Pennsylvania’s new program focuses on planting fruit and nut trees and plants that can be marketed to the floral trade.

More: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/a-movement-grows-to-help-farmers-reduce-pollution-and-turn-a-profit>

Source: *Yale Environment 360*, 12th March 2020

Editor: The ideas might be adaptable to use in NZ among other countries.

Housing – Impacts of Governments Policies

“This is a story of collapse, all told in one remarkable graph.

“The graph was created by Kay Saville-Smith, a social scientist who specialises in housing. Saville-Smith knew there had been a long-term decline in the construction of low-cost housing. The [NZ] Productivity Commission had already identified it. The purple line on her graph shows it.

“But she wanted to know why, so she pored through decades of raw data, looking for the cause.

“She found it. The vertical bars on the graph show government spending on house construction, in 2017 dollar terms. There are periods where it rises but the overall direction is down. The line follows the same pattern: everything that happens in the bars happens in the line too, a couple of years later. There’s a lag between funding and construction, and it has several causes, but the relationship is clear.

“The graph runs from 1960 to 2012. It includes state housing and lending to councils and community housing providers. Importantly, it also includes loans to help people buy their first homes from private-sector companies. It shows that we largely stopped building all these low-cost homes and it explains why.

“The government stopped investing in them. Or, as Saville-Smith titled her graph, ‘Sucking out housing finance is what happened’. ...

“What kind of country would we have if the Government had continued to accept that duty?

“With an ongoing programme of building new low-cost housing and helping people buy into it, the past three generations of children would, as entire generations, have grown up in warm, dry homes.

“Their health would have been better; schooling would have been easier; family and community relations would have been under far less stress.

“This is a story of collapse. But it wasn’t just the low-cost home construction industry that collapsed. The moral purpose we expect of politicians went with it. The damage has been incalculable. It will take years, decades, to fix.

More: www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12310412 – with graph!

Source: *NZ Herald*, 22nd February 2020, page A20

Editor: This is an important story and a ‘must read’. The negative impacts go beyond those mentioned in the article. It also says much about the *laissez faire*, or free, market.

Green COVID Response and Shovel Ready Projects – Tragedy and Opportunity for Change

"The massive tragedy of COVID-19 and its associated personal, social and economic shocks and disruption, offers a rare and compelling opportunity to rapidly transition to a new order of human affairs. This is to a low carbon, much lower impact and a much fairer and appreciative world with a greater space for nature.

"It won't be easy, but the COVID-19 crisis has shown that rapid mobilisation and shifts can be done – and that we must do it.

"It is a peculiarity that humans can and will mobilise to adopt disruptive change when the threat is immediate and demonstrably personal but stay unmoved by more severe but more abstract threats including climate and oceans systems destabilisation and enduring harms to the future of all life.

"Governments are radically redirecting and ramping up their investments and citizens are accepting controls. Governments are using powers neither they nor we could have imagined would be so readily used and complied with against COVID-19. Though terrible, the harms from the virus are not nearly as bad as the long-term predicted harms from climate change. For decades, pleas from scientists, academics, activists and others for urgent action to avert the profound damage to humans and the environment from climate change have been shrugged off by Governments

"Now is the time to make decisive changes in direction and in our economic, social and power relationships and systems. We emphatically must not return to 'normal'. If we are to have a hope of taking good from the COVID tragedies, we must address structural issues of inequality, impunity of those imposing environmental harms, over consumption and reckless use of resources, and we must reach for new governance systems with social inclusion and equity.

"The COVID crisis is a product of our dysfunctional social and economic practices. We have so crowded out nature, preyed upon it and impacted its systems that there is hardly any space left.

"Why not projects for investment in health, in environmental protection, in education and research? For insulation and energy efficiency – and hence employment and investment where people already live? For mapping, monitoring, and understanding environmental systems harms and biodiversity losses? Why not biosecurity (e.g. Kauri dieback) and biodiversity education and protection measures such as wilding pine eradication, and regenerative agriculture? What of new measures to support knowledge whether this be Mātauranga Māori insights into climate change and biodiversity restoration or databases for taxonomic identification of organisms? Restoration of the seas, for example mussel and oyster beds pillaged in the past. Shovels? Really?? ...

"Regressive investment projects – and the very limited and unimaginative development thinking of the terms of reference for the infrastructure projects have been widely called out. Most recently and emphatically by Rod Carr, the head of the Climate Change Commission, on Radio NZ and in their letter to the Government on economic stimulus package. So too by Mike Joy, by Wise Response, Geoff Bertram, Greenpeace, and many more. ...

More: <https://mailchi.mp/eco.org.nz/tieke-eco-alerts-events-15-april> plus must read letter at <https://ccc-production-media.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/public/Climate-Commission-advice-re-stimulus.pdf>.

Source: Tieke: *ECO Alerts & Events*, 15th April 2020.

As Himalayas Warm, Nepal's Climate Migrants Struggle to Survive

"Pushed out of their village by a drought and lack of food, a group of Nepalis are fighting to amplify the voices of those forced to relocate by the planet's warming.

More: www.nytimes.com/2020/04/05/world/asia/nepal-himalayas-glacier-climate.html

Source: *The New York Times*, 9th April 2020

Editor: The experiences and learnings will apply similarly to many others and not solely in Nepal.

Mike Hosking Sparks Surge in Sales of Eco - Apartments

"Weeks in isolation are making all of us rethink a lot of things we took for granted, maybe even our dependence on the car.

"Not so long ago, a developer wouldn't have dreamed of building an apartment block with no car parking spaces for residents.

"Even just five years ago, it was considered a tricky proposition. But that's all changing as local authorities in New Zealand follow the example of big cities around the world, beefing up public transport and developing infrastructure that encourages "active transport" – getting about by bike or walking. ...

"Daisy, Ockham's large 10 Homestar development in Mt Eden [Auckland], was designed with no residential car parks, with the aim of reducing the carbon footprint of residents. Instead there is just one car space for a Cityhop car that can be booked by residents should they need private transport. ...

"Ironically, it was an 'anti' opinion piece by broadcaster Mike Hosking that sparked a surge in sales. Hosking didn't like the name, and he couldn't understand why there were no car spaces for residents in Daisy. He said he wouldn't consider buying an apartment unless it came with three car parks.

"That publicity sent sales skywards, so much so that Ockham management sent him a bouquet of daisies when the last apartment sold.

"It was all good fun', Wong says. 'But the carparking carry-on overshadowed the real innovations at Daisy. Every aspect of the building was designed and conceived to meet the highest possible environmental standards. We wanted to show it could be done.' ...

More: www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/real-estate/120364121/new-apartment-developments-ditching-car-parks-for-postcarbon-future plus https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Hosking

Source: The Forever Project, 10th April 2020.

Just Grounded

"STAY GROUNDED is a global network of more than 150 member organisations, among them local airport opposition and climate justice groups, NGOs, trade unions, initiatives fostering alternatives to aviation like night trains, and organisations supporting communities which struggle against offset projects or biofuel plantations. Also individual activists, academics, trade unionists and interested people can contribute to the network.

"STAY GROUNDED aims to exchange experiences, support each other, and campaign together for a reduction of aviation and its negative impacts. We also engage in fighting problematic climate strategies like offsetting emissions and biofuels. Our vision is a form of mobility that rests inside the planetary boundaries and allows a livable future for us and our children.

More: <https://stay-grounded.org/about/>

Source: Our Climate Declaration, 14th April 2020.

Coronavirus and Limits to Growth

"Generations of New Zealanders will be paying for the economic recovery caused by the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic, says Finance Minister Grant Robertson. That's why we have to have a plan for what the economy looks like. Robertson said that tourism and international education won't be coming back for a while, and we need to look at manufacturing, and adding value to products in New Zealand as well as exporting them. The Government was working on a package of initiatives, including infrastructure and other regional schemes. He has tasked Shane Jones and Phil Twyford for finding physical infrastructure projects that could boost economic activity and employment opportunities. There is a website for submissions on \$10 million projects. He has groups within the public sector looking at both clean energy initiatives and the housing market.

"So, is it eventually back to Business-As-Usual? Can the Limits to Growth debate help us in using this crisis to transition to a more resilient and prosperous world? ...

"How can we use the Covid-19 crisis to move to a more resilient economy? Here are three suggestions;

"First, the Government has established a fund for physical infrastructure projects, but there will be many unemployed New Zealanders who will not be included in this initiative. There should be the establishment of a social and environment fund. There are many needs in the education, health, welfare, and community that can provide the many services to improve our wellbeing in line with Jackson's recommendation about work.

"Second, there should be a requirement that all proposed expenditure have a social and environment evaluation, in line with Treasury's Living Standards Framework and Government's Sustainable Development Goals, and appropriate social measures.

"Third, the Covid-19 virus crisis has shown that when the nation has firm leadership, and using the best science available, the nation can be united. We urgently need a public discussion on how to transition as changes will only come and stick if there is an informed public.

"We cannot afford another 50 years delay.

More: <https://column-articles.blogspot.com/>

Source: Robert Howell, 10th April 2020.

Los Angeles Air 'Cleanest in World' Since COVID-19 Lockdown

"When we think of the United States city of Los Angeles' skyline, the vision is one obscured by smog, with thick air pollution hanging over its downtown buildings.

"However, with the city, and the entire state of California, under stay-at-home orders to stem the deadly outbreak of coronavirus, something dramatic has happened to the air in LA. ...

"Beginning early last month, Environment Protection Agency (EPA) air quality data shows that the city of Angels experienced its longest stretch of 'good' air quality since at least 1995. [Photos] ...

"A study just released, by Xiao Wu and Dr Rachel Nethery of Harvard University, also linked exposure to PM 2.5 to an increased risk of death from COVID-19. ...

"Since California's stay-at-home order went into effect, Professor Zhu's team has found that traffic across the state has fallen by around 80%.

More: <http://econews.com.au/64144/los-angeles-air-cleanest-in-world-since-covid-19-lockdown/>

Source: *eco-News*, 15th April 2020.

Think Resilience – Videos

"Think Resilience features twenty-two short video lectures by Richard Heinberg, one of the world's foremost experts on the urgency of transitioning society away from fossil fuels. Watch the introductory video here: ...

"We wanted to offer our community a little support while we all continue to practice social distancing – so we've made our online course, Think Resilience, FREE now through Earth Day 2020 [22nd April 2020].

"The world is flooded with information about our nanosecond in planetary history, and the mess we've made of it. What's much harder to find is a clear, cogent depiction of the much, much bigger picture... That's what I got from the Think Resilience videos: the context of everything. It colours everything I've read since about the climate and our future.' – David Pogue, N Y Times columnist and technology writer.

More: <https://education.resilience.org/>

Source: Post Carbon Institute, 9th April 2020.

Experts Warned of a Pandemic Decades Ago. Why Weren't we Ready?

"In a rueful look back at her prescient book, an author wrestles with why we shrugged at the nightmare warnings and hopes this time will be different.

"The single biggest threat to man's continued dominance on the planet is the virus', Nobel laureate Joshua Lederberg said that three decades ago. So why weren't we ready? That's what author Robin Marantz Henig explores for National Geographic. She writes we almost, in the 1990s, learned the lessons of preparation and surveillance to halt pandemics such as the coronavirus. 'Maybe', she concludes, 'we'll learn them for real this time.'

More:

www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/04/experts-warned-pandemic-decades-ago-why-not-ready-for-coronavirus/

Source: National Geographic, 14th April 2020.

Environmental Justice Atlas

"The environmental justice atlas documents and catalogues social conflict around environmental issues.

"Across the world communities are struggling to defend their land, air, water, forests and their livelihoods from damaging projects and extractive activities with heavy environmental and social impacts: mining, dams, tree plantations, fracking, gas flaring, incinerators, etc. As resources needed to fuel our economy move through the commodity chain from extraction, processing and disposal, at each stage environmental impacts are externalised onto the most marginalised populations. Often this all takes place far from the eyes of concerned citizens or consumers of the end-products.

"The EJ Atlas collects these stories of communities struggling for environmental justice from around the world. It aims to make these mobilisation more visible, highlight claims and testimonies and to make the case for true corporate and state accountability for the injustices inflicted through their activities. It also attempts to serve as a virtual space for those working on environmental justice issues to get information, find other groups working on related issues, and increase the visibility of environmental conflicts.

"Growing consumption of resources is fuelling ever more conflicts globally. Most of these are used to satisfy the material needs of the rich segments of the world population. But over-consumption by the rich visits ecological violence on the poor. It is a story of luxury for some v. livelihood for many. ...

More: <https://ejatlas.org/>

Source: Our Climate Declaration, 14th April 2020.

