

Sustainability Matters

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Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children

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Designed by
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A 20th Birthday

On 6th May 2001 the first edition of a newsletter which became *Sustainability Matters* was published. The editions were weekly through to mid-August 2002. Readers thought weekly was too often, and have since been published fortnightly, with breaks over Christmas/New Year, during occasional international travel and from time-to-time for health issues.

20th birthdays are perhaps times to pause and reflect and perhaps too to celebrate. 🤔

A key reflective question is 'Has it been worth it?' The outputs are one thing. The outcomes are another. What change has *Sustainability Matters* fostered, encouraged, achieved? Has it been, or is it, effective in what it strives to achieve? And in particular, how successful has it been in fostering 'Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children'?

What would be the impact(s) if publication was discontinued? The world certainly would not gasp, nor collapse. Would it be missed? These and other questions arise on the 20th birthday.

Some readers eagerly look forward to receiving the newsletter and consider it a valued and valuable resource. For others it is perhaps a nuisance more than anything else. And of course there will be a wide spectrum in between.

But one never really knows what it might trigger. A handful of readers have been recipients from the start or close to it. A few weeks ago a person who asked to go on the mail list in 2004 asked for an address change to be actioned and clearly has retained interest. That was the second message ever from her. Dialogue with a small group occurs quite often and is much enjoyed. Others 'sign up' with great enthusiasm and a few months later change their roles and disappear, or simply advise "Thanks but no thanks". It's interesting.

Sustainability Matters, curated by the same person since inception, is perhaps the longest lived New Zealand newsletter of its type. Of itself that is likely inconsequential.

Chartered Accountant recipients – they are the intended primary readership of *Sustainability Matters* – remain few – a disappointment. It seems what 'flicks their switch' about ESG, 'sustainability', call it what you will, remains unknown. Yet as trusted business advisors they, through their employers and clients, have much to gain and contribute.

It is pleasing to see peak accounting bodies in more recent times, becoming more engaged in this arena. Most of the effort though seems to be focussed on the 'top end of town' rather than 90%+ of their members who have little direct involvement with such matters, at least for a few more years.

Chartered accountants with their extensive connections throughout societies could have immense positive impacts by engaging, supporting, helping, fostering and encouraging those they engage with, ramping up benefits to be obtained via numerous frameworks and tools, be it the Sustainable Development Goals, modern slavery, looking after soils, life cycle assessments, influencing design of buildings, purchase of motor vehicles and so much more.

Happy 20th birthday *Sustainability Matters* !

Source: Editor.



Entries open for 2021 Sustainable Business Awards

"The Sustainable Business Awards are New Zealand's longest-running and pre-eminent sustainability awards. Now in their 19th year, they recognise businesses, local government, social enterprises and individuals for success in sustainability.

"Entry to the awards is free. It is open to all organisations and individuals in New Zealand.

"Kiwis want to know who is making a positive difference, so we can support these businesses over the coming years. And that's where these Awards come in. They are a great way to celebrate your sustainability achievements and share them with Aotearoa."

"The Sustainable Business Awards provide the chance to compete in 10 categories of sustainable business:

- Sustainability Superstar
- Climate Action Leader
- Social Impactor
- Going Circular
- Restoring Nature
- Communicating for Impact
- Climate Action Innovator
- Outstanding Collaboration
- Good Food
- Change Maker

"The Supreme Award will be awarded to a business for outstanding performance in all aspects of sustainability. Last year's Supreme Winner was Northland eco-retreat and honey business, Tahiti."

Entries Close: 21st June 2021.

More: <https://sustainable.org.nz/awards/>

Source: SBN, 10th May 2021. 🌐

About that Other Greenhouse Gas ...

"Carbon dioxide has always been considered the main culprit of global warming. And while reducing carbon dioxide emissions remains the absolute priority, a growing chorus of voices within the science and environmental communities has called attention to the warming caused by methane, another potent greenhouse gas.

"Now, a major United Nations report is set to declare that reducing emissions of methane, the main component of natural gas, is far more important than previously thought.

"Quotable: While cutting back on carbon dioxide emissions will remain urgent, 'it's going to be next to impossible to remove enough carbon dioxide to get any real benefits for the climate in the first half of the century', said Drew Shindell, the study's lead author and a professor of earth science at Duke University. 'But if we can make a big enough cut in methane in the next decade, we'll see public health benefits within the decade, and climate benefits within two decades.

More:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/climate/methane-leaks-united-nations.html> [Possible paywall] Report expected to be published 'next month' per <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/overnights/550196-un-slashing-methane-emissions-more-important-than>

Source: *Climate Fwd* [NY Times], 29th April 2021.

Editor: The finding is not really surprising. 🌐

The Scourge of Modern Slavery – and New Zealand’s Yawning Inaction

“Have you ever wondered whose hands have sewn your clothes, assembled your gadgets or made your children’s toys?”

“Twelve-year-old Karan has some idea. Instead of learning at school, he toiled long hours in a back-street shoe factory. His days were spent with industrial strength chemicals and little protection or ventilation, gluing the soles onto shoes.”

“None of us want to have any part of enslaving people. Yet many of the 40 million children, women and men estimated to be in modern slavery worldwide are producing the products which – through global supply chains – are in our homes and workplaces here in New Zealand.”

“The New Zealand government has not yet made a commitment to follow other countries in introducing modern slavery legislation. Minister for workplace relations Michael Wood has said he will consider this issue.”

“We look back on the transatlantic slave trade of previous centuries with horror, yet there are more people in modern slavery now than there ever were then.”

“As a country which aspires to treat all people fairly, we urgently need an effective Modern Slavery Act.”

More: <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/29-04-2021/the-scourge-of-modern-slavery-and-new-zealands-yawning-inaction/> plus www.signforfreedom.nz/ and www.signforfreedom.nz/uploads/8/9/4/0/89405540/sign_for_freedom_faqs.pdf

Source: Trade Aid and World Vision via ActionStation, 7th May 2021. 

Financial Sector (Climate-related Disclosures and Other Matters) Amendment Bill

“The Government has introduced legislation to require certain financial entities to report on their climate change impacts. The Bill implements ‘policy to broaden non-financial reporting by requiring and supporting the making of climate-related disclosures by certain Financial Market Conduct (FMC) reporting entities and supporting related matters.’”

“This is an omnibus Bill which will amend the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013, the Financial Reporting Act 2013, and the Public Audit Act 2001. The Bill has been referred to the Economic Development, Science and Innovation Select Committee.”

“The Minister in charge of the Bill, David Clark, said in introducing the Bill: ‘There’s four main elements to the bill. The first is it introduces mandatory climate-related disclosures for most listed issuers, along with large registered banks, licensed insurers, and registered managers of investment schemes. Secondly, it requires the disclosures be made in accordance with climate standards which will be issued by the External Reporting Board – known as the XRB to those in financial circles. Thirdly, the Financial Markets Authority – known as the FMA – will be responsible for enforcing compliance, and it will do that under its current existing statutory powers, including monitoring the disclosures. Fourthly, the XRB will be able to issue guidance material on environmental, social, and governance reporting and other wider aspects of non-financial reporting.’”

“The Minister noted there are similar requirements being developed internationally. He said ‘Late last year, the International Financial Reporting Standards, the foundation which looks at international accounting standards, consulted publicly on a proposal to establish a sustainability standards board with a climate-first mandate.’”

Submissions Close: Friday 28th May 2021.

More: <https://mailchi.mp/eco.org.nz/tieke-eco-news-alerts-events-6-may-818016>

Source: Tieke: ECO News, Alerts & Events 6th May 2021. 

Cost vs Benefits: Passive House

“When you’re building a home, cost is inevitably at the front of your mind – particularly in today’s market, where building and material prices seem to rise each week. Respond Architect’s Joe Lyth shows us why investing more up-front will see you enjoying savings and health benefits well into the future, and how you can mitigate cost increases.”

“Joe has long been interested in creating more energy efficient, healthy homes. However, he’s recently become somewhat of an expert in the area – achieving his Passive House certification and designing and building his own Passive House in Tahekeroa, North of Auckland.”

“I’ve experienced first-hand the stress of building from the perspective of the client, especially when it comes to cost management!’ Joe says. ‘But I’m absolutely a firm advocate of paying for quality up front to benefit you in the long run – which is what Passive House certification is all about.’”

“Building to Passive House standards guarantees a home which is warmer, drier, healthier and far more energy efficient by using a scientifically calculated formula, thorough observation, and testing throughout the build. Achieving Passive House levels of efficiency is centred around five key elements: airtightness, minimal thermal bridging, ventilation, good windows and good insulation.”

“If you get these elements right, you’ll create a home which is more comfortable to live in, more durable, and far cheaper to run’, says Joe. ‘The materials can be no different from a standard project. Passive House Certification is concerned with the result, not how you get there. While the systems and attention to detail required to achieve the certification can add cost, you can balance this by assessing the buildability of the project, simplifying or reducing the form, and balancing your priorities.’”

More: <https://respondarchitects.co.nz/cost-vs-benefits-passive-house>

Source: Prendos, 29th April 2021.

Editor: The article does not provide insights to costs, rather what is entailed in building to meet Passive House certification. 

Addressing Climate Risk – Practical Steps

“You may be thoroughly sick of hearing about climate change in the media. You may be deep into the issue and have already devoured and be planning to comment on the Climate Change Commission’s recent report. You may be underway with making changes in your organisation. Or you may be still consumed by COVID response issues and yet to start.”

“Wherever you are at we provide some practical suggestions on steps to take on this critical strategic issue. ...”

More: www.rsm.global/newzealand/insights/special-reports/addressing-climate-risk-practical-steps

Source: Craig Fisher, 29th April 2021. 

Vital Soil Organisms Harmed by Pesticides

“Pesticides are causing widespread damage to the tiny creatures which keep soils healthy and underpin all life on land, according to the first comprehensive review of the issue.”

“The researchers found the measured impacts of farm chemicals on earthworms, beetles, springtails and other organisms were overwhelmingly negative. Other scientists said the findings were alarming, given the importance of these ‘unsung heroes’. ... The analysis warned soil organisms are rarely considered when assessing the environmental impact of pesticides. ...”

More:

www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/04/vital-soil-organisms-being-harmed-by-pesticides-study-shows plus www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fenvs.2021.643847/full

Source: Malcolm Rands, Facebook, 4th May 2021. 

Silence like Scouring Sand

"One of America's quietest places, and the valiant effort to keep it that way.

"RAIN POUNDS against the open tailgate of my car, where I've taken shelter from the worst of the storm. Water pours from the hemlocks onto the devil's club. From maple bole to bole, raindrops bounce, splattering salmonberry and sorrel. I shrug into my rain gear, shoulder my pack, and splash across the parking lot. Rain bells off cars, smacks against my hood, beats on my shoulders, and drums on the garbage bag covering my pack. Against all instinct, I'm going to backpack into the clattering teeth of this North Pacific gale, in search of silence.

"It's not easy to find silence in the modern world. ...

"It seems that Gordon has tapped into a wellspring of human yearning for stillness and concern for the commonweal of natural sounds. The Noise Pollution Clearinghouse cites several hundred organisations working to prevent the harm that noise causes, from the Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition to the World Health Organisation.

"They argue the air is a commons, a public good, shared and cared for by all. Like secondhand smoke or elevated mercury levels, dumping noise into the air damages the well-being and health of the many, in order to benefit the few – a violation of the ethic of the commons.

More: <https://orionmagazine.org/article/silence-like-scouring-sand/>

Source: *Orion*, 1st May 2021; Written October 2008. 

The Year of Choosing Daringly

"2020 took a big bite out of our complacency and our 'it-can't-happen-here' denialism. The shocks to our personal and global systems will reverberate for the rest of our lives. The harvest of these ruptures, though, begins now. We can't leave it to powers that be to tell us what this all means – now, right now, our year of choosing daringly begins. There's a crack. We can be the light – if we grab the chance to shape the stories of our future. ...

More: www.postcarbon.org/the-year-of-choosing-daringly

Source: Post Carbon Institute, 30th April 2021 

Growing Demand for *Climate Action Toolbox*

"More than 7,600 people have checked out the new *Climate Action Toolbox* in the first month. Join SBN's webinar series starting next week [13th May] to learn more about using this free online tool to reduce your carbon footprint. We are also running workshops for business groups which focus on a specific sector or region. And, a big thanks to our climate action partners and all the organisations which are helping to promote the toolbox. Together we're making difference.

"The toolbox is a simple self-assessment tool to help reduce the carbon footprint of any business. It focuses on five key areas – transport (moving people and goods), office operations, site operations and equipment, and the design and making of products.

"The toolbox identifies priority action areas based on your business type and core activities. It provides tailored advice and support which includes:

- Step-by-step guides for reducing emissions
- A personalised action plan which you can review and update
- Links to useful tools, resources and information
- Inspirational stories about businesses already taking climate action

More: <https://sustainable.org.nz/climate-action-toolbox> plus <https://sustainable.org.nz/sustainable-business-events/climate-action-labs-moving-people/>

Source: SBN, 5th May 2021. 

A Comprehensive Guide to Carbon Reporting

"A climate emergency has been called, ice caps are melting and all your organisation has to do is start carbon reporting...

"It sounds too simple to be true, and that's because it sort of is.

"Reporting upon your carbon emissions is a complex task and it can be difficult to find all the information you need.

"That's why we've collated all the info you need to know about carbon reporting, giving you a comprehensive guide to handling your emissions.

"Learn about:

- GHG Accounting
- GHG Protocol
- ISO14064
- Scope One, Two and Three Emissions.

"And once you've got the hang of those, learn how to:

- Select a Base Year and Measurement Period
- Determine Your Organisation's Boundaries
- Select Your Calculation Approach and Collect Activity Data
- Report on Your GHG Emissions
- Rinse and Repeat Annually.

"Greenhouse Gas Accounting: Greenhouse gas or GHG accounting is the way to audit and inventory greenhouse gas emissions. This can be used to measure individual, or most commonly, organisational GHG emissions.

"You may have heard the term Carbon Footprint, referring to an organisation's greenhouse inventory. The name can be misleading, as a carbon footprint is not, in fact, limited to carbon emissions. Instead, it can encompass a variety of greenhouse gases (GHGs), evaluating their collective warming impact.

"These GHGs can be expressed in terms of CO₂ by using CO₂-equivalents (CO₂e), based on their relative global warming potential (GWP).

"A full organisational GHG emissions assessment takes into account the greenhouse gases produced directly and indirectly from the organisation's activities.

"This forms the carbon footprint of the organisation and includes scope one, two and three emissions. More on those later.....

"For now, let's get you started on the basic frameworks you need to know to handle your emissions.

"Rinse and Repeat Annually. We know, it's a lot to take in..... That's why creating a solid strategy to deal with your GHG emissions is more important than ever, especially with new climate-related legislation on the horizon ...

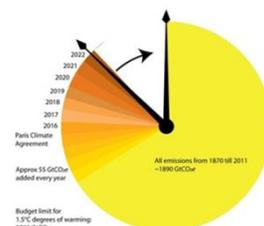
"To finish with a quote, 'You cannot do all the good the world needs, but the world needs all the good you can do.'

More: www.carbonems.com/single-post/carbon-footprinting

Source: CarbonEES, 30th April 2021. 

Time [for Australia] to be Cool and Green

"Australia is experiencing intense climate change effects sooner than most other countries. Yet our government is only just starting to respond, well behind others. It can be hard to know what to do about it, especially at a personal level. ...



More: www.ecovoice.com.au/time-for-australia-to-be-cool-and-green/ [Source of fascinating graphic not found.]

Source: *EcoVoice*, 3rd May 2021. 

GRI and <IR> Reporting Training

"Proxima are New Zealand's accredited training partners for the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and Integrated Reporting <IR> frameworks. Both frameworks are internationally recognised and have been recommended and endorsed by NZX as part of its 2017 Reporting Guidelines for listed companies to report on their sustainability related information. The frameworks help organisations credibly communicate their true sustainability performance to a range of stakeholders, and are equally valuable as internal strategic exercises as they are external communications initiatives.

"Positions are available for their upcoming GRI course to be held in June and <IR> course to be held in July.

When/Where: 9th/10th June, Auckland (GRI) and 28th/29th July (<IR>)

More: <https://proxima.global/courses-and-training>

Source: Sally Wilks, Proxima, 3rd May 2021. 

Inaugural Green Building Report – NZ Herald

"The premier report will coincide with the NZ Green Building Council's Green Property Summit in Auckland. It will include the Council's work in driving this important agenda.

The New Zealand Government's December 2020 declaration of a climate emergency, along with its commitment to adopt green building standards will further accelerate the shift to zero carbon and the demand for efficient, healthy, certified buildings.

"Inside the inaugural Green Building report, we will consider the significant role the building and construction sector will play in helping New Zealand reach its climate change goals, including net zero carbon by 2050 and will hear from relevant Ministers including Climate Change Minister James Shaw.

"We'll take a look at MBIE's Building for Climate Change Programme which aims to reduce emissions from buildings during their construction and operation while also preparing buildings to withstand changes in the climate and explore why it is a hugely important acknowledgement and a step towards the ambitious vision to change the way New Zealand builds.

"We will consider how New Zealand can be a leader in tackling our climate emissions in this space for the global building and construction sectors.

When: Published 6th May

More: www.nzherald.co.nz/business/green-building-rental-apartments-go-green/SRXU7643CFQ75WVHJFZGZ2WJA/
[Links to a series of articles. Paywall]

Source: Editor 4th May 2021. 

Building for Climate Change

"We're working on reducing emissions from buildings during their construction and operation, while also preparing buildings to withstand changes in the climate.

"In September and October 2020, we asked the public for their views on our proposals to increase the operational efficiency of buildings, and to reduce the embodied carbon across the lifecycle of buildings as part of the Building for Climate Change programme.

"Key Themes

"Consultation snapshot [Graphic]

"On 6th April, consultation opened on proposed changes to the energy efficiency clause of the Building Code.

Closes: 28th May 2021

More: www.mbie.govt.nz/building-and-energy/building/building-for-climate-change/ updated 16th April 2021

Source: Editor. 

Jeanette Fitzsimons Active Climate Grants

"We are pleased to announce the second round of the Jeanette Fitzsimons Active Climate Grants.

"This year we are again able to offer two grants of \$5000 each – thanks to the assistance of the Science+ARTS Trust (S+ART).

"Our involvement with S+ART enables us to broaden our scope. S+ART's purpose has been to promote art-science education, programmes and facilities to arts and science students, practitioners and to the general public.

"Thus we are happy to consider applications for community-based projects which incorporate an arts or performance dimension. They will still have to meet our original criteria of involving young people who wish to innovate, promote and implement the sorts of things that Jeanette believed in and are reflected in Our Climate Declaration goals.

"The future of the awards beyond this round remains uncertain. We would be grateful for donations to make them secure. You can do so at info@ourclimatedeclaration.org.nz

More: www.ourclimatedeclaration.org.nz/

Source: Our Climate Declaration 11th May 2021. 

Collective Business Activism Required to Hold Politicians to Account

"Earlier this week [1st week of May], a host of big-name [UK] supermarkets, food-to-go chains, suppliers and manufacturers threatened to boycott Brazilian-based products if lawmakers there do not bolster laws designed to protect the Amazon rainforest.

"Retailers including Iceland, Aldi, Asda, The Co-operative Group, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose & Partners and Morrisons all banded together in signing a letter calling for an overhaul of impending legislation dubbed a "land grabbers bill" by environmental groups.

"For Iceland boss Richard Walker, the convergence of businesses to create a unified voice calling for action to combat deforestation in Brazil is a prime example of how corporates can embrace their own sense of activism to drive sustainability globally while being mindful of smaller organisations down the supply chain.

"Walker, like many businesses and green groups, hopes future trade deals with have strong environmental criteria attached.

"This is an existential issue', Walker said. 'We don't have time to wait for the free market to sort things out. I'm a capitalist, but I believe we do need more market intervention from Government for environmental issues and we need a better, stronger framework for the market to operate in.

More: www.edie.net/news/16/Iceland-boss-Richard-Walker--Collective-business-activism-required-to-hold-politicians-to-account/

Source: edie, 6th May 2021. 

New North Island Solar Energy Network a 'Game Changer'

"A new company has unveiled plans to build five solar energy farms in the upper North Island at a cost of \$300 million, which will together be capable of providing about 1% of the country's electricity supply.

"Lodestone Energy has secured sites near Dargaville, Kaitaia, Whakatane, Edgecumbe and Whitianga for the solar farms which it describes as 'a massive turning point for the country's energy production'.

More: www.stuff.co.nz/business/125090584/300m-plan-for-five-solar-energy-farms-providing-1pc-of-countrys-supply

Source: NZ Herald, page A21, 12th May 2021. 