

New Year's Carbon-Lite Revolutions

WHATEVER SORT OF YEAR YOU HAD IN 2006, and I hope it was a good one, it's time to put it behind you. You won't have missed out on the big news. 2006 was the year our worst fears about climate change and global warming got confirmed. Not just that it really is happening (and that's bad), but that the change really is much worse than the scientists thought. So the time has come - for a big green turn-around - and a total rethink of our future - if we still want one!

TIME FOR A TURN AROUND ON CARBON

THERE ARE A GREAT MANY INTELLIGENT COMMENTATORS (e.g. Nicky Gavron, Deputy Mayor of London) now saying that we humans have just a few years left, to act on a massive scale, to reduce global CO₂ emissions, or it will be too late to prevent a sequence of devastating chain reactions in the Earth's climate systems that make it unbearable for all humans - this century! (Not just for those in Bangladesh and Africa now.) GAME OVER - for our grandchildren. Our home planet - up in smoke.

Steady Dave, aren't you being alarmist? No, I don't believe so. Alarming maybe, but it's a very alarming situation. The *alarm* is waking people up all over the world. We don't need (and can no longer afford) to wait for our leaders to tell us what to do. We can all start to act responsibly now - and so set in motion a low carbon bandwagon that will be irresistible. Cool, chic and overwhelmingly alluring. Then, we can hope that China does copy us, rather than fearing she copies us now.

One response is to start doing some revision. Everything we once knew at school about the carbon dioxide story, but are afraid we forgot. It's time for calm, not panic, but it's also time for action. Time for change on a scale bigger than evolution. Welcome to the start of the low carbon revolution.

Many are starting to "plan for their children's future" in new exciting ways. e.g. reconsidering just how addicted to fossil fuel they really want to be - personally. As far as the media go, it's as if one

huge hidden truth, conveniently covered up for years, has broken free! Not unlike the emperor's new clothes. The good news is it's ok to talk about it now in polite company! Hollywood superstars have 'got it' and green is definitely the colour to be seen in. See Leonardo DiCaprio's film about Global Warming on www.leonardodidicaprio.com

So, 2006 was the year that 'The Truth' came out, both in the form of the Al Gore film 'An Inconvenient Truth' and also the breaking of ranks in the media. Sir David Attenborough (*voted the world's most trusted man by Readers Digest*) heroically 'came out' on the BBC in the Spring, and acknowledged "*No longer have any doubts*". It was only a matter of time before all the media followed. And they did, The Sun and Mirror included. The net result in 2006 was a surge in demand for low-carbon products, homes and lifestyles.

This is a huge opportunity for positive change, for innovation, for new habits. Provided, that is, we can get ourselves motivated and over the fact that Mother Earth has been diagnosed suspect terminally ill. Worse still, that it is us who are the toxin causing her illness. Heavy? Yes. Heavy like our Western carbon footprints. Many of us never spared a thought to the 10, 20 or 80 tonnes a year of CO₂ our lifestyle entails. Like CO₂, it was and is still invisible. But that doesn't make it unimportant. Now we know it, we cannot un-know it. CO₂ is the biggest pollution issue we are facing by far. It's dead urgent.

It's 2007. The future is low carbon. There are plenty of things we can all do to get started. Of course we don't have to do anything, survival isn't compulsory! No, there is a more positive space we can go to in all this - a guilt free low-carb zone. We can all be low carbon leaders. We can create low carbon communities. We can watch our footprint shrink and be proud of the small habit changes we find are not only possible but pleasurable and rewarding. Low carbon lifestyles are the fashion, and will be - for the scary foreseeable future. Guzzling fossil and wasting energy will be socially undesirable, and soon utterly passé. As well as being, increasingly, prohibitively expensive, not just as fuel prices rise steadily, but also as governments start to introduce big sticks and carrots to turn the carbon super-tanker round.

So, first steps first... that home 'footprint'. How addicted are we?

If you visit <http://specials.uk.msn.com/carbonemissionsestimator> or 'Google' MSN carbon estimator, you will get a rough idea of your current tonnage, the size of vast balloon or cloud that invisibly shadows your lifestyle, or that you are carrying around on your back.

Don't worry about the exact numbers, but you will quickly get a good feel for the relative scale of things. Watch the sky turn purple as you contribute your bit of carbon! See how much comes from the electricity bill, how much from the fuel bills, how much from car use, and how much from flying.

Say the total is a dispiriting 40 tonnes. Don't panic. That's great news. That means you have more to offer that your greenest neighbour in terms of savings! With a little effort, tackling the list below, you will be able to trim a mighty 4 to 8 tonnes off - just like that. (And £1000 to £2000 a year too.)

40 tonnes of CO₂ a year for a relatively affluent lifestyle is not uncommon.

But you need to get down closer to 5 tonnes per adult, to be on the UK average.

And in just 20 years or so, you need to be down at 2 tonnes per adult.

Did someone say revolution?

Right - here's the deal.

You have seen lots of articles like this in the past. The difference with this one is that you are actually going to DO these simple tasks - for real. No more tomorrows. This is *Mission Possible* now. None of them are beyond you. All will shift you forward - into a lower carbon clearer space - it will feel good to be a climate leader.

Fit an 'Electrivate' or 'Wattson' and see all the electricity flowing in your house for the first time in your life. Get to grips with what uses watt. See for yourself the effect of the tumble dryer - on your bills and on the planet. www.4ecotips.com

Systematically go through the house replacing every old fashioned light bulb with a new energy efficient (EE) bulb. If you have lots of recessed downlighter spots you may be a bit stuck. If you cannot get EE bulbs to fit, then compromise and fit a dimmer switch. The beauty is you will see your lighting costs fall instantly with the meter you fitted. That's positive feedback. www.efficientlight.co.uk mention *carbon coach* and get 10% off bulbs.

Switch to a green tariff - this is pimps! The customer service with companies like Good Energy, ecotricity and Green Energy is great - once you've tasted clean green energy you won't ever want to go back. It costs a few quid more, but its carbon free and shifts a few tons.

Give your heating system a spring clean. Add insulation, fit draught excluders, add foil insulation behind radiators on external walls, and consider getting a new boiler or heat source. Consider a solar panel for hot water. How about a delicious wood burning stove - www.stovesonline.co.uk

Trade down the car. Down, that is, in its CO₂ emissions per mile. You don't need to go all the way and buy a Prius (but do test drive one - you may find you cannot walk away). Look at the CO₂ per km figures and give yourself a budget. Treat yourself to the best car you can get that fits within that carbon band.

Take a holiday. Have a think - with your partner or family - about whether it always has to be a 24 hour each way flight to New Zealand for a one week holiday. It's a free country but as soon as you become aware that every hour spent in the air unleashes a quarter of a tonne of CO₂ equivalent, you just won't do it as much, or as often. It's that simple.

And remember how many people were boasting about taking their holidays in Britain last year. For heavens sake - why not! The joy of travel and seeing the world is not something we will give up easily, but against the knowledge that each hour in the air costs us dear - it's only natural to start to avoid two long trips when one short one and a longer stay can be more productive!

Reward yourself. Invest in low carbon technologies. There are funds that invest in a basket of low carbon and renewable technologies of the future. How wicked is that. We get rich by saving the planet. Now that's more like the revolution we wanted to hear about Dave. Why keep the best for last?

Invest in your property. Think about it slowly. The way the world is going, do you think that property values for houses that require less energy for the same comfort are going to be (a) rising or (b) falling. This changes the nature of the home improvement equation completely. Before it was a case of spend a few thousand to save a few hundred on bills. Now its spend a few thousand to save several hundred on bills - AND - (a big and) - add a thousand onto the asset value. Home carbon improvement? Give me some.

The last one is the best. Enjoy it. Savour the journey. Celebrate every habit shifted. Dust down the bike. Rediscover long walks. Shower with a friend. Get your body back by exercise. Enjoy the lower bills and the new freedoms. Open your mind to the possibility of a life high on energy and low on carbon. Celebrate and feel good that you are more part of the solution than you used to be, and that you are becoming a master pollution solution low carbon leader.

by DAVE HAMPTON

the carbon coach

live a more carbon conscious life for less

See next page for some more Energy Saving Tips from the Carbon Coach

www.carboncoach.com



Your Mission Possibles

Energy and more Saving Tips from the Carbon Coach

LIGHT BULBS

Do you have ANY old-style traditional bulbs anywhere that could readily be replaced by new energy efficient ones?

I like www.blt-direct.com
www.lightbulbs-direct.com and
www.efficientlight.co.uk
(Mention Carbon coach and get 10% off with efficient light)

These have a wide range of bulbs - good prices and plenty of info to help you choose before you buy.

GREEN TARIFF

www.good-energy.co.uk - my choice
www.ecotricity.co.uk
www.greenenergy.org.uk

are the 3 'green tariff' electric companies I like.

PORTABLE ELECTRIC METER

Buy an **electrivate**. This new device shows you exactly how much electricity each device in the home uses. If you act on the information it provides you, you will have recouped the cost of the electrivate in a matter of months and it will continue to help you save money. Visit www.electrivate.co.uk for more information or purchase one from www.4ecotips.com

NEW CAR

Don't forget to look out for one of those hyper efficient and powerful diesels when next you trade in.

Visit www.vcarfueldata.org.uk or www.whatgreencar.com to see your current car's green rating.

FLIGHT OFFSET

just pay www.carbonneutral.com or visit www.climatecare.org

Live a more carbon conscious life for less

Learn how you can reduce harmful CO₂ emissions at home and at work by subscribing to Communiqué, my FREE newsletter at www.carboncoach.com

If CO₂ were purple we would have seen the sky change colour during our lifetimes.

Sign a petition to the Prime Minister about Personal Carbon Disclosure for leadership on www.petitions.pm.gov.uk/carbonclouds/

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