



Seniors' Climate Action Network (SCAN) Newsletter

August 2020

Financing the Transition to a Sustainable Future for Humans on Planet Earth

There is a debate about how we can afford what is needed for transition without inviting total financial collapse. At the same time there has been a growing unease with our neo-liberal based economy, and a very significant proportion of our society are fully convinced that you cannot continue with a (GDP) growth based economy. As Sir David Attenborough says "Anyone who thinks that you can have infinite growth on a planet with finite resources is either a madman or an economist." All GDP growth comes at a cost to our environment. There are now various new economics initiatives that come under the umbrella term "Modern Economics". One common theme is that in contrast to what we have been told, countries with sovereign control over their currency are able to use government debt to not only deal with the recovery from COVID-19 or other disasters such as an earthquake, but also reshape the economy for a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy in order to mitigate the impact of climate change. A cash injection stimulus into the economy by a government is not inflationary when an economy is not running at full capacity with high unemployment. Government debt is not the same as private and business debts which are expected to be repaid. Debt of a government does not need to be paid back to itself. A government debt is not a bogeyman. It is simply an historical record of government deficits in the past. As opposed to what Bill Clinton said — "it's the economy, stupid" — instead we should say "it's human welfare in times of need and the environment, stupid".



[This article https://positivemoney.org/2020/06/government-debt-and-covid-19-why-theres-no-need-to-worry/?link_id=0&can_id=c0b527432b11bb763a472e2887c95994&source=email-looking-back-looking-forwards-2&email_referrer=email_876500__subject_1193173&email_subject=what-does-our-future-look-like](https://positivemoney.org/2020/06/government-debt-and-covid-19-why-theres-no-need-to-worry/?link_id=0&can_id=c0b527432b11bb763a472e2887c95994&source=email-looking-back-looking-forwards-2&email_referrer=email_876500__subject_1193173&email_subject=what-does-our-future-look-like)

discusses why financing the transition in the UK is not of particular concern. The arguments are valid for New Zealand as well -- financing should not unduly limit how New Zealand goes about what needs doing in building a truly sustainable future.

Post Covid-19 Recovery



It is imperative that in addressing the recovery all opportunities to help mitigate climate change are taken. It is widely accepted that in the next 10 years we *must* make real headway in the transition to a fossil-free future. While New Zealand has passed a carbon zero bill,

little actual reduction in green house gas (GHG) has been achieved. While there has been a lot of discussion, and a lot of supportive words, action is largely absent.

It is very important that we don't go back to 'normal' after the Covid-19 pandemic. To do so would miss our best opportunity to develop a new normal that is sustainable. Pat has written an article (see below) discussing what we have learnt from Covid-19 and what can be done to help bring about the necessary changes — *Response to the Crises - Living with uncertainty and urgency - Learnings from COVID.*

Coal

It is clear that coal moving to leave it in companies seeking stop now. As an



has had its day, and we should be the ground, but there are still some consents to mine more coal. This must example we note that Bathurst Coal Ltd has applied to Environment Canterbury and Selwyn District Council for consents to continue operating and expand an open cast coal mine (known as Canterbury Coal Mine), including retrospective and future operation at Bush Gully Road, Malvern Hills, Selwyn. <https://ecan.govt.nz/do-it-online/resource-consents/notifications-and-submissions/current-consent-projects/bathurst-coal-limited/>

Fonterra Dropping Coal

After resisting a move away from coal in recent years Fonterra announced in July it had put a stop to installing any new coal boilers or increasing capacity to burn coal. This commitment is the latest in a series of targets the Co-operative has set as it looks to embed sustainability at the heart of everything it does.



These targets include:

- Reducing emissions by 30% across all its manufacturing operations by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050;
- Reducing water use by 20% across manufacturing sites by 2020;
- A tailored Farm Environment Plan for every Fonterra farmer by 2025;
- 100% recyclable, reusable and compostable packaging by 2025;
- Powering its Stirling site in Otago with electricity rather than coal.

<https://www.fonterra.com/nz/en/our-stories/media/no-new-coal-boilers-for-fonterra.html>

Global Demand for Fossil Fuel

There is a growing movement towards the use of renewable energy, and away from fossil fuels. This FutureCrunch article details what is happening around the world <https://medium.com/future-crunch/2020-is-the-worst-year-ever-for-fossil-fuels-531cdcc6fc5c>

Climate Change Commission



While it is pleasing to note the establishment of the Climate Change Commission <https://www.climatecommission.govt.nz/> it is disappointing the first package of work, that was due on 1 February 2021, has now been delayed until 31 May 2021, a delay of 4 months. However the Commission has been active in providing advice to Government. We look forward to seeing the Commission ensuring real progress on lowering GHG emissions.



Election 2020

Our incoming Government needs to feel they have the political capital necessary for taking decisive action on actually reducing our GHG emissions. What we have seen with the current coalition is one "bold" action, the banning of new offshore drilling, and the passing of a zero carbon bill, but nothing substantial to actually reduce GHG emissions. Candidates need to show they will support getting on with the job.

Donna and Pat are meeting with 2 members of Gen Zero to compile an election resource which assesses political parties' policies on climate change as we did in 2017. Members of SCAN will be asked to help circulate and hand out the resource in their local shopping areas and in George St or share it on line with family and friends.

Kiwibank Eschews Fossil Fuel Investment

It is pleasing to note that Kiwibank has agreed to withhold banking services from entities that are directly involved in or that get the majority of their business revenue from the extraction, production and manufacturing of coal, oil and gas. The policy shows a commitment to climate action that sets a precedent for New Zealand's banking sector. <https://www.kiwibank.co.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-we-stand-for/business-of-doing-good/responsible-business-banking-policy/>



Electric Vehicles



It is good to read that the Dunedin City Council now plans to have 20 EVs by 2021. We await a similar move from central Government. <https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/dcc/council-charging-ahead-get-20-electric-vehicles>

While many countries have substantial incentives to increase the uptake of EVs, and discourage fossil fuelled vehicles, little has been done in New Zealand. This is clearly an election issue.

National Climate Change Risk Assessment for New Zealand

The Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 requires a risk assessment at least every six years. The Climate Change Commission will carry out future risk assessments. The first risk assessment lays the groundwork for the next by documenting the method. The first New Zealand climate change risk assessment is now out.

<https://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Climate%20Change/national-climate-change-risk-assessment-main-report.pdf>

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## Response to the Crises - Living with Uncertainty and Urgency –



### Learnings from COVID

*Patricia Scott*

### Leadership and Communication

*In times of uncertainty and crisis, effective leadership requires the leaders across all disciplines (government, health, science, social science, etc) to show:-*

- *they are a team and trust the international consensus of research findings in relation to the crises' issues. However there needs to be systems experts to give an overview of how the various crises interact.*
- *there is a long term plan to deal with the crises and they agree on the way forward. While there may be some differences of opinion there is a level of global consensus as to the steps we need to take. Nations can propose plans of action in the context of the wider global community's plans.*
- *they have the present and future wellbeing of the people and planet at heart.*
- *in a crisis people accept government has a strong role to play including*

*ensuring that all citizens have sufficient income to ensure their whanau's wellbeing.*

- *that individual rights are respected while emphasising we are a collective interdependent whole - he waka eke noa – we are all in this together.*
- *the plan will only work if our behaviour is based on kindness and caring for one another, especially the most vulnerable.*

## **A New Narrative, a New Vocabulary**

*We quickly learned the COVID story and vocabulary until we were all fluent. The climate change story is more complex but we are already becoming familiar with it: more extreme weather events, melting ice sheets and sea level rise, greenhouse gases and tipping points. We must become more familiar with it so we can engage in consultations which affect our livelihoods and wellbeing. The old narrative of growth and consumerism, competition and market forces, is difficult to displace. Households and nations are trapped in a system of globalisation, foods out of season, international travel and migrant labour, all based on the use of fossil fuels. It is not yet widely accepted that our current economic system with the lifestyle it dictates, perpetuates the growing crises. Yet transition to a more sustainable low carbon future is essential and urgent; a difficult message to get across. The new narrative must be about resilient and sustainable local communities in harmony with the biosphere that will emerge from living with the crises. It is a story about living by Nature's principles.*

## **Listening to Nature**



*Human communities are dependent on the healthy functioning of Earth's ecosystems for their continued existence. The planet is constantly showing signs of extreme stress; the large scale disruptions of Earth's systems (extreme weather events, rising temperatures, extinction of species, huge social inequalities, pandemics, etc.) are the result of human activities which fail to respect the Earth's systems and the Earth's limits; we ignore the signals at our peril. Listening to Nature must be the foundation of the planning and functioning of all human systems from now on.*

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