

How to Build a Resilient, Resourceful Life

A practical guide to a safer, more
reliable future



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CHAPTER 1

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Everything in this booklet will be familiar. We've known most of it for years – it just never made its way into common behaviour.

But now that climate change is clearly on the agenda, more people are concerned to make a difference. And that's great news, because there is a lot we can do.

Of course, governments and big business can make the biggest changes, but we can't wait for them. We need loads of us to re-order our lives – how we behave, how we spend our time and, most important, how we spend our money – and together we can send a clear message about what is and isn't acceptable.

“IT WON'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE YOU DOING THAT”

This has been the common cry for a long time – my Dad said it to me for the first time in the early 70's. The idea that one person could make a difference to anything significant seemed bonkers, but I just knew I had to try.

I've lived as if the planet mattered for many years. It's been a constant learning and when I look back, I was fiddling while Rome burned, but I was doing everything I knew to do at the time.

Hence this booklet. I wanted to share all the options I know of. It's not an exhaustive list - there must be plenty I haven't thought of yet or got my head around yet.

SEND YOUR IDEAS AND I'LL ADD THEM IN.

Please don't read it and just comment about what I've missed or got wrong. Please send over any additional ideas and corrections to judithlj43@gmail.com and I'll update the booklet. That way we can make this a brilliant resource for others.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Please don't try and do this all at once – it will be too overwhelming.

Read it all through first to familiarise yourself with the possibilities,

Then choose the section that is most relevant to your life right now and start to get your head around it.

In my experience there are three phases of change:

1. The fascination of working out a new way to shop, eat, dress.... It's all new and quite exciting. You'll do some things really well and you'll make mistakes, but you'll feel good that you're being proactive
2. You gradually get accustomed to the new way – some of it is embedded and you take it for granted and some of it you mess up and get fed up with yourself.

3. It is now just part of who you are and you wonder why other people aren't doing the same.

Once you get to stage three, then there are two things you need to do.

Talk about what you've done: find a way to talk about what you've done, why you did it and how it feels. One part of our work is to green our own lives, but we always need to be encouraging others to do the same. The challenge is to do it in an inspiring way that doesn't leave people waiting for you to leave!

And let's be clear – you will overstep – of course you will. This is a learning curve. I've been irritating I know - still am sometimes - but better to try and get it wrong than to do nothing.

Take on your next challenge: your second action is to find the next section of the booklet that is relevant to you and get that one under your belt.

PLANET FRIENDLY LIVING BECOMES THE NORM

Finally you get to the stage where your first thought is: what effect will this have on the planet? Then you've made the shift and will be living as if the planet mattered – because she does!

What to look for

There are a few questions to hold in your mind as you make decisions:

- Where does the product /action begins its life?
- What impact will it have on life day by day?
- Where will it end its life?

My personal rule of thumb is:

- Has this thing I want been dug out of the ground?
- Will it rot down when I've done with it?
- Can it be used again or made into something else when I've done with it?
- Does it harm other people or nature at any point in its life cycle

Ultimately – how will I feel about myself if I do this?

YOU WON'T ALWAYS GET THE ANSWERS YOU WANT

There will always be times when the answer to those questions is not good. What I do at that point is to decide first and foremost if this is an essential. If so, then I review the action or purchase against the alternatives. At this point, I am looking for the 'least worst'.

Jane Goodall¹said: "You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

Just by living we have an effect and right now that effect is generally not great. So look for the least impact.

Cars is one that always comes up. Electric vehicles have batteries that need precious metals that are hard to extract and/or toxic. Manufacture is carbon heavy and creates more emissions.

The flip side of that is that EV's have a much smaller impact on the planet once in use – especially when green energy is involved – either from your provider or from your own solar panels.

All cars have a negative impact in production, but petrol/diesel cars carry on having an impact from extraction of oil through to air quality.

It's a decision you have to come to for yourself, but those questions will help you work out your priorities.

WORD OF WARNING

I have added web-links wherever I can to help you get started. I've tried always to find the information on a neutral site so you just get the info you want with no sell. That hasn't always been possible.

To be clear: I'm not recommending any product or provider. My mission is help people educate themselves so they can make informed decisions and I don't want to interfere with that process.

So take a look at the links and explore further until you know what you want to do.

Cross check: it's always important to cross check the information you see on a website. 'Eco' and 'green' have become buzz words because of climate concerns. However many of those using the words are not eco or green in any way, so never accept green credentials at face value. Do your homework or you might be disappointed.

I experienced that when we gave up our beloved petrol car for a smaller diesel because it was 'eco' and even carried the label. Imagine our disappointment when we learned that diesel was worse the petrol in terms of pollution!

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

One person taking action will make a difference - albeit extremely small. But if we work together we get a very different picture.

Pass the word on. Pass the booklet on - use the QR code at the back for anyone and everyone who is interested.

Inspire people with what you achieve and let's start living as if the planet mattered. After all - we really can't live without her.

CHAPTER 2

YOUR PLANET NEEDS YOU!

There is nothing worse than feeling helpless. Faced with the changing climate it is easy to blame someone else and wait for them to sort it out. The needs of the crisis feel too far reaching and well out of our control.

But therein lies our problem.

I can't think of anything worse than being in the grip of an existential crisis feeling helpless - believing we can't make a positive difference.

So it's time to take back control and look for the actions we can take in support of a healthy planet - and therefore healthy species - ourselves included.

QUICK RECAP - WHY WE'RE WHERE WE ARE TODAY

The bottom line: we actually need to stop digging

Let's start at the beginning. Carbon is a fundamental component of all life and is present in everything that lives or has ever lived. When anything containing carbon is burned that

carbon is released and it combines with oxygen to create the carbon dioxide molecule (CO₂). Carbon dioxide is also produced by decaying matter and by our breathing.*

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, which means it absorbs heat from the sun and traps it in the atmosphere. Depending on the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere, the average temperature of the planet will be higher or lower, leading to ice ages, interglacial periods or greenhouse periods.

So all those who say that climate has always changed are quite right. Over millions of years there have been huge shifts, driven by planetary shifts and changes in levels of carbon dioxide.

Fortunately for us the climate has been stable for the past 11,000 years, which is why humanity has been able to thrive and develop. Part of that enabling environment has been an average temperature of 15 degrees which is comfortable for life.

So in short

- Carbon stored safely in the earth has no impact on our atmosphere or our climate.
- But carbon dug up and burned releases carbon dioxide (CO₂)
- CO₂ absorbs heat and traps it in the atmosphere and that causes the temperature to rise

A bit of history

Coal is a naturally occurring material, made up of between 60% and 97% carbon. It was used for thousands of years for heating and industrial processes, but in relatively small

* Extract taken from What the Builder Won't Tell You

YOUR PLANET NEEDS YOU!

amounts because of the difficulty of mining deep seams. But with the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the steam engine, its use increased exponentially. It was easy to use coal because:

- coal was available for use as soon as it was dug up, whereas wood has to dry out before use.
- coal burns more consistently than wood
- coal was cheaper to transport - a wagon load of coal contained more potential heat than a wagon load of wood

Coal was formed from the breakdown of plant and animal matter. It was nature's way of locking up all that carbon so the atmosphere wasn't affected. When left to its own devices, the earth has a way of managing and holding life in the ideal balance.

With our big brains and bright ideas we think we can just have what we want and all will be well. Sadly with each new idea we upset that delicate balance between life and earth a little bit more.

IT WAS A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME

The use of coal and production of steam was such a good idea. And it could have stayed a good idea if we'd been a bit more circumspect.

Steam was just the beginning. The internal combustion engine, developing industry and major growth in population has required us to burn more and more coal and oil, producing more and more CO₂. All of which has resulted in an increase of average temperature by one degree. We are already on track for it to increase by another two degrees by the end of the century.

A BIT OF PERSPECTIVE

Two degrees doesn't sound that bad. After all, sitting in the garden having a cuppa with an extra two degrees might be quite nice.

Sadly what we're talking about is average temperature. But even then it's not that much – is it?

To get some perspective, the average temperature during the last ice age was only 4 degrees C cooler than we are today. 4 degrees C doesn't sound that much either, does it?

But if just 4 degrees less created an ice age what will three degrees of heating do?

Now it starts to feel very serious. It means sea level rises, extreme weather events, crop failures – the list goes on.

What is the way out?

We know what to do. Everything we need is already out there. We could begin now to live a more balanced life, in harmony with nature.

But we have to stop digging:

- stop using coal to create energy – use wind, wave and solar instead
- Reduce consumption so reducing landfill - focus on quality over quantity
- stop driving petrol cars – switch to electric vehicles, walk, cycle, use the train
- eat less animals – eat plant based and leave more land to return to nature, sequestering carbon
- become more energy efficient in life overall and at home

YOUR PLANET NEEDS YOU!

OK - let's get cracking!

CHAPTER 3

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

I have to admit, I put this off for too long. It just felt like such a chore to change my bank accounts.

HOW DOES BANKING AFFECT THE CLIMATE?

The question to ask is 'how does my bank invest my money?' How ethical they are in the choices they make?

I always imagine my money is sitting there waiting for me to need it, but of course that's not true. The banks use the money they hold to invest and make more money. And they will put the cash where it will do best – and that means companies that make plenty of profit.

Of course we all know which those companies are: oil, gas, arms, petrochemicals – all of which are damaging the earth on a daily basis leading us inexorably towards collapse.

BUT IT'S OUR MONEY

We can choose where we put our money. And it's one of the most significant actions we can take on behalf of the planet.

And it makes total sense. If you do everything else outlined in this booklet but leave your money in a bank that's supporting oil and gas you're undermining yourself. And you're actively supporting what really concerns you.

SO WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

You need to understand more about the bank you use, so you can decide if you're happy to stay there.

The sad truth is that the vast majority of banks are supporting climate breakdown through their investments – because it's good business.

You need to decide what your priorities lie. This one may really test your resolve. Is making money more important than a liveable planet?

And remember, it's the bank that's investing, so you don't get the benefit – that all goes to shareholders.

WHICH BANKS ARE PLANET FRIENDLY?

The list is relatively short with just a couple of the big banks plus smaller ones that specialise.

Go take a look. See if your existing bank is on the list. If not, explore the options that are available to you.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

The main issue is where they place their money.

- Does the bank invest in petrochemicals, oil or gas?
- Do they choose companies known for human rights abuses, animal testing, weaponry?
- Will they fund solar energy and EV's?

Take your time when exploring the websites and cross check against other sites. We know that websites can look very good at first glance, but if you go searching you can unexpected information. This is true for everything green.

CHANGING BANKS

It can feel like a big job to change banks but the reality is that they do all the work for you. The new bank will take control and sort it all out.

Subscriptions: The one problem I've found is when subscriptions try to renew and your bank card is different.

So just prepare yourself for this. If you're very organised and know all of your subscriptions then you can let them know ahead of time. But if not, don't worry, the relevant company or business will soon let you know. Then all you have to do is give the new bank details.

Online banking: you will have to learn how the new online banking app works since they'll all be different. But I'm sure you're more of a tech expert than me, so that won't be a problem!

CHECK YOUR PENSION

Our pension funds work really hard over the years investors hold them. In order to have sufficient money to pay out what we're entitled to and make a profit along the way, it's only the most successful companies that will be chosen. And most successful these days often includes the oil, gas and petroleum industries.

The way you receive your pension is also worth checking out, otherwise you could see out your life living off gas!

CHAPTER 4

HOME

2 1% of UK emissions comes from leaky homes. UK has the worst housing stock in Europe with every home built before 1990 needing a retrofit. That's a lot of carbon floating around just because we haven't prioritised energy efficiency.

Of course it didn't matter when energy was cheap. If we felt cold, we just whacked up the heating and carried on. Now the bills are sky rocketing, we've started to pay attention and an efficient home starts to make sense.

We need to retrofit: retrofit means putting into the home what wasn't there when it was first built. Increasingly these days, the word is used to describe making the home energy efficient.

This is planet magic, because there is no sacrifice. Nothing at all to lose – just getting used to:

- being more comfortable in cold and hot weather
- energy bills that are considerably lower and even non-existent

- having a property that's worth more because of the work done.

In addition to reducing energy bills and therefore carbon emissions, retrofit is the main way to get your home off gas. The sooner we all get off gas, the sooner we stop releasing such high levels of carbon. Not to mention reducing the toxicity in your home created by burning gas.

HOW DO WE MAKE HOME ENERGY EFFICIENT?

Making home energy efficient involves:

- **Airtightness:** cutting out the draughts that steal your heat
- **Insulation:** adding natural insulation that will keep the home warm in winter and cool in summer.
- **Ventilation:** putting back fresh air that can manage the moisture that used to leave the property through the draughts. Ideally this will be heat recovery.
- **Heat pump:** installing an air source heat pump so you can get off gas
- **Solar panels:** adding solar panels to any roof space you have

The challenge of doing this work is that most builders don't know how to work in a way that's positive for the planet. So as a homeowner, you need to understand what is needed. The good news is that going down the planet friendly route is also more healthy and protects you from the changing climate.

I have done this with my own Victorian terrace, reducing energy usage by 75% and paying next to nothing each year for the house and the car.

I've written a couple of books to help you do the same. All written in plain English with plenty of stories to make it an easy read:

Beginner's Guide to Eco Renovation¹

What the Builder Won't Tell You²

ENERGY HACKS FOR THE HOME

If you can't make this level of change in your home or you are a tenant, there are still ways to improve energy efficiency and comfort. I've written a short booklet full of energy hacks and you can access it here.³ It is entirely free with no copyright, so do pass it on to anyone who might need it.

ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Windows & excessive heat: If you have rooms that over-heat in the summer, then it's worth considering triple glazing. It will definitely keep you draught free but it will also hold all that excess heat at bay by reducing solar gain.⁴

If you want to keep warmth from the sun then go for double glazing. It still keeps the draughts out, but will allow in the solar gain.

If you can't change your windows, then look at:

- Blinds: on the outside of your window⁵ is ideal so the heat gets nowhere near your room.
- Brise Soleil⁶: put this outside your windows and it filters the sun. Let plants grow up it and it gives you even more shade.
- Reflective film: put on the outside of your windows, this will reflect the heat. Just take the birds into

consideration - it stops them seeing the window as a blockage.

Gas boiler: if you have an efficient gas boiler that is new or newish, then you are better sticking with it until it starts aging. Sometimes the most sustainable object is the one you already have!

When you're ready, an air source heat pump⁷ (ASHP) is a lot more efficient, but it also enables you to get off gas - and we all need to do that as soon as we can. Our dependance on gas is the primary driver of climate change n- and price rises.

In the mean time you can cut emissions and reduce your bills by changing the way you use your boiler. More about that here⁸

Refurbish furniture – it's tempting to want new as soon furniture begins to show signs of wear. If you can, refurbish what you have - get it cleaned, recovered, repaired. Look for local providers who can help⁹ you.

Buy preloved: first port of call when you're ready for new furniture is to check out preloved. Some charities take in furniture and refurbish it to sell on. Like Emmaus¹⁰ - a charity that involves homeless people in the work. We have an Emmaus shop in my town and it has some amazing stuff.

CLEANING YOUR HOME

Standard cleaning products¹¹ are full of toxins and VOCs that hang around and reduce air quality. After a good clean the air quality in the home is equivalent to standing beside a busy road.

Look for alternatives - there are loads of options out there. A good person to follow is Nancy Birtwhistle. She writes about

natural ways to clean and has at least two books¹² about it. She is also a regular on social media¹³.

Just some of the options I've discovered:

- bicarbonate of soda, vinegar and citric acid are useful for a wide range of chores.
- Use a window cleaning cloth that doesn't require cleaning fluid
- Try a non-toxic brand in a glass jar – like Purdy & Figg¹⁴

Most refill shops will stock natural cleaning products to put into your own containers, so you're reducing a plastic as well as improving air quality at home.

Shoe polish – rather than buying a plastic container of liquid polish just use an old fashioned tin with brushes and dusters. One tin will last you for a very long time and a bit of elbow grease can work wonders!

Vacuum cleaner: when deciding on a new vac, consider the use of inner bags. These are often expensive, never mind using plastic clips or reinforced paper. Instead choose a vac that you can empty easily without the need to constantly buy more bags.

You may also want to check out the capacity of a vac to filter allergens¹⁵ and pollen. It's another way to improve air quality.

Storage boxes: one of the first rules of living green is not to waste and that includes left over food. The challenge is how to store them. Plastic containers will release microplastics - into your food and into the water when put in the dishwasher. Silicone is meant to be better - but check that out and see what you think. Glass or metal¹⁶ are ideal. There are loads of options on the web.

APPLIANCES

When buying a new appliance, take a careful look at the energy rating.¹⁷ Choosing a washing machine or dishwasher that uses low energy can make a big difference. Look for one with an eco mode that also reduces water usage.

Tumble dryer: do you really need a tumble dryer? They are big users of energy and will drive your energy up high. You can get a heat pump tumble dryer¹⁸ that is much cheaper to run. At time of writing they are a bit more expensive, but the price is coming down, so do take a look.

Induction hob: this is a no brainer on many levels. It's easy to use, easy to keep clean and most important, no toxins in your kitchen. Using a gas hob¹⁹ reduces your air quality considerably.

Hard water: this pays a heavy toll on your appliances. Lime scale will shorten the life of any appliance - it harbours bacteria, causes blockages and reduces water flow. Look into water conditioners²⁰ - they reduce the impact of lime scale without adding salt to the water system and without all those heavy plastic bags.

BTW I've discovered that you can get cheap water conditioners. They work very well but for a much shorter time ie: about 3 - 4 years. So go for the best you can afford or find out if you can change them at a later stage.

Dishwasher: not just a nice to have, a dishwasher will use up to 80% less water²¹ than doing the washing up by hand. Made me think - I used to wash the pots by hand, now I put them in the dishwasher and use it more often.

CHAPTER 5

FOOD

The planet can feed us all easily if we just use the land wisely. At present vast swathes of land are dedicated to producing feed for animals who are then killed to feed us.

This is a real problem because it takes 50 to 100 times as much land to produce a kilocalorie of beef or lamb versus plant-based alternatives. So as more areas of the earth become unsuitable for cultivation, there is a very real risk of food shortages.

And that's not taking into account the destruction of forests and rainforests as trees are felled or burned to make most grazing pasture. We lose more of our biodiversity - animals and plants - every day of the year just to keep steak on the BBQ.

The climate impact of meat is enormous¹ – roughly the same as driving and flying every car, truck and plane in the world. It make up more than 14% of global emissions.

PLANT BASED EATING

If the world was plant based, we'd be using 75% less farmland than we use at present.

While we continue focusing on animal protein, we disturb the climate even more:

- Intensive animal farming produces half the carbon emissions of the fossil fuel giants eg: Shell and BP
- Forests are burned to provide grazing land for cattle – and that includes the Amazon rainforest - and that means loss of habitats and release of all that carbon that's been stored for millennia.
- Intensive farming requires high levels of antibiotics² which are ingested by meat eating humans as well as leached into the water system, increasing our resistance to this life saving medicine
- Abattoirs are linked to cruelty, terrible working conditions,³ mass outbreaks of Covid-19 and salmonella-ridden chicken exports.

So meat is not good for the planet, biodiversity or our health.

If you need to understand more or you're reluctant to give up meat, take a look at the film *Game Changers*⁴

If you use social media you can also search for some of the plant based, vegan content creators. You'll find that many of them are extremely fit and healthy⁵.

DO I HAVE TO GIVE UP MEAT ALTOGETHER?

You don't have to go all out vegan in one go. I heard one jour-

nalist describe herself as a ‘half arsed vegan’. She began with one day a week and went on from there.

If you can go without meat for three days a week you’ll make a really good contribution to the planet. Try a vegan restaurant* to see how the professionals⁶ do it. You may be surprised!

Cut down first: eat animals just a few times a week rather than every day and you’ll make a difference. I did it this way without ever intending to be veggie or vegan. I naturally reached a point where I just didn’t want to eat the meat part of a meal – it didn’t appeal any more.

Eat ‘good’ meat: you can choose meat that has been reared in a regenerative way ie: reared in a way that is positive for the earth. You can find out more about regenerative farming⁷ here:

Eggs: if you’re going to eat eggs, look for an outlet that sells free range – and I mean really free range. Many of those who claim it are definitely not – some are amongst the worst for cruelty. So do your research and ideally find a local provider where you can actually see the chickens.

Explore plant based cooking: many people assume that plant based eating is tasteless and boring. My meat loving husband has discovered that it’s often the sauce that makes a meat dish delicious and you can have the same sauce with veggies, pulses or tofu. There are some extremely good vegan cookbooks out there. Three of my favourites are: Bosh⁸ Happy Pear⁹ The Korean Vegan¹⁰

Cook more at home: this reduces plastic waste and makes for better quality food with no additives. However not

* Quality vegan restaurant example: <https://www.mildreds.com/>

everyone can come home and cook a meal from scratch every day, so you could try:

- Batch cooking at the weekend
- Find a service that delivers all the ingredients and a recipe for each day of the week
- Make one big dish that can last for two or three days

The more you take the trouble to cook your own food, the less you'll waste. You'll know just how much effort it's taken!

Use a slow cooker: chuck the ingredients in before going to work and you'll come home to a lovely dish all ready for you.

Like any change, it takes planning and a bit more time to begin with. I took on a vegan diet about five years ago, after 50 years as a veggie. It took a while for me to adjust and to work out what we liked. I took it as an adventure. Got myself a Happy Pear cookbook and got to it. It's much easier now.

Same will be for you. As soon as you get it under your belt it will be as easy as meat cooking is now. Good chance it will be a lot cheaper too.

Grow your own: see chapter on Protecting the Environment

CHAPTER 6

LIVING WITHOUT PLASTIC

Sadly recycling isn't a real answer. Only 8% of the stuff we put in the correct bin is actually recycled. The rest is burned, dumped or sent to other countries for them to deal with. None of which is helpful to the planet and a real disappointment when you've made all that effort.

The challenge to find what you need without buying it wrapped in plastic. So let's have a look at some of your options.

FOOD

Supermarket: most supermarkets have some fruit and veg loose and not wrapped in plastic. The more we choose unwrapped the more the supermarket will provide.

Remember you have buying power. So if you can't find what you want, make a point of asking for it and tell them why.

If you want something from the deli counter, take your own box. I've done this for years for my olives. They made a fuss to begin with. Now they call me the 'olive lady'¹.

Use farm shops: ideally choose one where they grow their own ²produce. If they still put the goods in plastic, refuse it and tell them why – hopefully they’ll listen to what you want. They may just not have thought of it.

Asian shops: These local shops often have fruit and veg out of packaging. And they’ll also have interesting stuff you might not see in the supermarket. Coriander is one I go for. Not only is it not wrapped but it’s a good handful and far cheaper than the fiddly bits you get in a plastic bag!

Find a refill shop: these are shops where you take your own³ containers and fill them - some you do it yourself, some they do it for you.

I find it quite a soothing pastime - at least once I sort out how it works:

- weigh your own container
- fill it with the product you need
- weigh it again to get the cost of the item.

Some supermarkets have been flirting with this, so keep reminding them what a good idea it is!

Milk in bottles: do a search for milk in glass bottles⁴ and you’ll find numerous companies that deliver to your door – just like the olden days. And they’ll do a range of milk including oat. My milkman delivers from an electric vehicle, leaving fresh bottles and taking back the used ones for serialisation and reuse.

Get cooking: if you have a favourite food that only comes in plastic, work out how you can make your own. For me, that’s hummus. Takes 5 minutes to make a big helping of hummus⁵ that feeds loads of us. The more you do it the quicker it gets. Get the liquidiser out saves on at least 5 plastic

cartons each week - and it tastes better, not to mention cheaper!

Eggs: Make sure to buy the eggs in cardboard boxes. Leave the plastic ones behind. (More about eggs in the food section)

Real bread: try making your own if you enjoy cooking. If not, a bread machine will give you delicious bread with little effort and no plastic bag. If you're not up for baking, find local shops that sell proper bread out of plastic. Some mills⁶ sell their own bread and – if you do fancy a go at baking – they may sell you fresh yeast which moves more quickly and reduces the time it takes.

Freeze bread: bake or buy a batch of good bread so you can cut it into slices and freeze it. That makes it really easy to manage. Quick minute in the toaster and it's ready to go. And you're not tempted to pop down to the corner shop for a plastic covered white sliced!

Forget multipacks: tissues, loo rolls, tins – many come bundled up together, wrapped in masses of plastic. It's designed to encourage you to buy more and carry it easily to the car. Short use by you and hundreds of years in landfill. Choose the separate items so you're not left with a bin full of plastic.

Take your own bag: always have a bag with you. Only accept a branded bag if it is paper. Make a point of asking, so the shop knows this is what people want

HYGIENE

Loo roll: There are plenty of companies⁷ out there that use recycled paper and bamboo in the same way.

Stop getting bleached white loo roll. It's just so the loo roll

looks nice while putting bleach into the water system. It is just a bum wipe after all!

Soap: forget the plastic bottle of liquid soap. Return to the bar⁸ of soap, preferably wrapped in paper or a cardboard box. If you really want liquid soap, find a local refill pantry and take your old bottle along to use again. Just search ‘refill pantry near me’ and you’ll find one.

Shampoo: use a refill pantry (see previous comment) or search for companies that send you the concentrate so you can add the water and cut down on transport cost. They may also take bottles back to reuse.

Menstrual products: go for period pants⁹ that can be reused. A Moon cup¹⁰ that is cleaned after each use is supposed to be better for you in terms of infection, so take a look and see what you think. This is quite a big change, but think of the money you’ll save!

Toothpaste: you can find refillable toothpaste¹¹ packages on the internet. This is important because there is no way empty toothpaste tubes can be recycled.

Toothbrushes: try the bamboo toothbrushes¹² – also available on the internet. Maybe check with your dentist to see what they recommend. I had one who thought they were fine and another thought they were no good!

Face creams: beauty products come in masses of plastic packaging. It’s the stuff of marketing, designed to make you spend your money. It works and is very appealing but once you start seeing the packaging for what it is, you might change your mind.

Find local producers – people are experimenting with new beauty formulations that don’t contain nasties and are better

for the environment. You can also write to your favourite brand and ask what their plans are for sustainability

Make up: same process as for face creams. Look for sustainable brands, try sustainability markets¹³, challenge providers on their packaging.

CLOTHES

Avoid the dry cleaners: if you do need to use them, take your own clothes cover to avoid the thin plastic covers provided.

Remember to hang your cleaned clothes out to air - always outside of your bedroom – they use a lot of toxic substances, which need releasing before you wear them again. And you definitely don't want to breathe that in while you sleep.

Cleaning products: think of all the plastic bottles you have under the sink and beside the washing machine. My guess is it's numerous. These are heavy plastic that will take ages to break down and even then they leave a legacy of millions of microplastics. Try your local refill shop or choose products where they send you small concentrated amounts so you can add the water. Then you can use the old bottles you already have.

Nancy Birtwhistle: loads of advice¹⁴ here for cleaning using natural products. Follow her on social media too.

OUTINGS

Forever cup: always carry your forever cup – never take a carry away cup. Even if looks like cardboard it will have a plastic layer in it and the lid will be plastic

Cutlery: carry cutlery with you when you go out - a ‘spork’¹⁵ is one option – serves all purposes.

Snacking: If you’re going to have to eat on the move, take your own food with you. It’s impossible to get take away food without plastic and taking your own will save you lots of money.

Having a drink: If you go to a theatre, ask for a proper glass or take your own with you. We have some foldable glasses¹⁶. They are plastic but are small enough when folded to carry in a handbag, so at least it’s not single use.

Always question: When you go to a sales outlet that doesn’t give you the option of non plastic, always challenge. We need to keep educating and your buying power is very helpful

GARDENING

Feeding the birds: RSPB¹⁷ sell some of their bird food in heavy paper sacks if you have room for the storage.

Compost: it’s very hard to buy compost out of plastic, but please keep asking.

Never buy compost that contains peat¹⁸ - this is depleting the essential peat bogs that hold so much carbon. It will soon be illegal but not until 2030.

Plastic plant pots: most plants are sold in plastic pots because they’re cheap and lightweight but they are very difficult to recycle once broken. You can find alternatives. Remember where you spend your money can be influential, so choose terracotta, coir, fibre, Vipots, bamboo or waste cardboard.

More about the plastic free garden here¹⁹

CHAPTER 7

WHAT WE BUY

ur addiction to consumption is part of the climate problem. The fashion industry is responsible for between 8% and 10% of our emissions and UK shoppers buy more than any other country in Europe.

We're talking fashion, home shopping, building - the list goes on. This section covers some of the options we have, but do go searching to see how you can find what you want without being part of the short term, throw away culture.

FASHION

Fast fashion provides us with poorly made clothes from cheap fabrics - often made from plastic - that get worn once or twice - then thrown to landfill or 'recycled'.

Sadly the reality of recycling is less than stellar and loads of the clothes are dumped. Much of it in the Atacama Desert¹ which has a mountain of clothes that can be seen from space.

Our consumption is a problem at both ends of the process - creation and end of life. We buy far more than we need, so don't value what we have and, because we want a bargain, we end up with poor quality clothes that can't stand the test of time.

HOW TO DRESS SUSTAINABLY

There are a number of different ways to find your clothes sustainably and have a fascinating time along the way:

Vinted: get to know Vinted². Look in real time shops and find what you want or choose brands you know fit you, then go search on Vinted. Remember to allow time for delivery – it can take up to 10 days to get what you've bought.

You can also sell the clothes you don't want to keep on Vinted. It gives you the chance to earn a bit of money as well as finding a new home for the clothes you no longer want

Charity shops: for most of us charity shops have been a good way to get rid of the stuff we don't want. But now they are a prime source of preloved clothes. Remember to leave time if you're looking for something special - it's pot luck as to what you'll find.

One piece of advice I heard was to visit the charity shops in the town you can't afford to live in. That way you get really good quality clothes at a price you can afford.

Vintage: 'Vintage' turns out to be remarkably recent (at least to an old lady like me!). Some towns are good for this, so ask around to see where your nearest outlet is.

You can also shop Vintage online.³ Everything from day to day⁴ clothes to designer brands⁵

Dress agencies: a dress agency⁶ sells second hand / preloved clothes. They look like a standard shop, but each item is a one off. It can be a very pleasant experience with interesting people running them. People who have a real love of fashion, in particular the preloved.

Alterations: if you're going down the preloved route, it's worth finding someone who can make alterations for you. I know one person who always buys preloved that is too big for her, then she gets it tailored specifically to her needs.

So ask around and try different people out. It can open up the options quite dramatically if you have someone who can make a quick alteration.

Repair clothes: when there's a problem with a garment, the temptation is to chuck it out and get something new. In years gone by this was unheard of. As a kid, my clothes were made for me by my aunty or knitted by my mother. I don't recall going to a shop until I was in my teens. And of course, hems got turned down, damage was repaired and seams let out or taken in. It's time for us to do this again - there's loads of advice about how to do this on YouTube⁷ if you're don't have experience of sewing

Learn to sew: if this is a skill you have, then how about making your own clothes?

There was places where you can get excess materials that would otherwise be thrown away by the big brands. Called headstock fabric, you can get top quality materials at a much reduced price.

A quick look on the web showed this site.⁸ I'm sure there are loads more out there for you to find. It could become a whole new way of life!

Clothes swap events: these events are organised by sustainability groups or charities and often advertised on Eventbrite ⁹

Each person arrives with a given number of clothing items - usually 2 or 3. These are hung together, then the same people come and take away the same number of preloved items they brought. It's a fun way to get a change in your wardrobe without creating more stuff.

If this doesn't happen near you, get a few interested people together and set it up or join a group that want to do it. It's a great way to save waste and meet like minded people along the way.

CHECK THE FABRICS YOUR BUYING

When looking at fabrics, think about end of life as well as wearing them tomorrow. A lot of the common fabrics used today are primarily plastic. They don't wear well, they shed microplastics into the water system when washed and they release toxins into your skin. Not very appealing!

Pay attention to the fibres you buy. Natural fibres last well, are comfortable to wear and work well in both cold and hot weather. They look a lot better over time than a plastic fabric too.

There are a wide range of fabrics, but it's easy to focus on the look and forget to check what you're actually buying:

- Polyester¹⁰ and nylon¹¹ are plastic and contain 'forever chemicals' that are absorbed into your skin when you sweat.
- Rayon¹² is made from natural cellulose and treated with chemicals.
- Tencel¹³ is made from wood pulp and solvents that can be recycled. It's non-toxic and biodegradable.

More about the best and worst fabrics here.¹⁴

CARING FOR CLOTHES

The first rule of sustainability when it comes to laundry is ‘less is more’. How often have you put clothes in the washing basket because you can’t be bothered to hang them up? Or is that just me!

We wash our clothes far more than we need. Some people expect to only wear a piece once before it goes into the washing bin. I guess they might not do their own washing!

But there are distinct advantages to less rigorous laundry:

- you save water
- reduce your detergent usage, so less in the water system
- your clothes are in better condition.

If you’ve been in a hot office or a pub, hand them on the line or out in the house to air for a bit. If you tend to dribble (like I do!) try spot cleaning.

Washing clothes: you can wash clothes at a much lower temperature than was previously thought. Most things will come out fine when washed at 20 degrees. Only when fabrics are heavily soiled do you actually need higher temperatures.

Most newer machines will have an eco setting. This uses lower temperatures but also less water. It can feel counter intuitive because they are often long cycles, but they are still more efficient.

Washing products: take some time to explore washing products to find out which are more eco friendly¹⁵:

- capsules are made from plastic.
- standard washing liquids and powders plus fabric softeners are full of chemicals which are not good for you or the air quality in your home.
- products come in large plastic containers filled primarily with water, so a big cost to carrying them around the country.

Refill shops: you can generally get good eco friendly products from refill shops which cuts down the use of large plastic bottles.

Laundry sheets: these are easy to access online and they can easily be sent through the post. All you do it take one sheet¹⁶ and pop it in the washing drum. No plastic, no liquid that needs watering down - just a sheet that dissolves and becomes soap. There are a number of different brands so go exploring on the internet

Natural products: you can make your own cleaning products - Nancy Birtwhistle¹⁷ is an endless source of information - and all from common or garden products like vinegar, bicarbonate of soda and citric acid.

I even discovered that vinegar in place of fabric softener works just as well! And no - you don't end up smelling like chips!

Look to your refill pantry for low prices on these basics.

UNDERSTANDING MICROPLASTICS

Microplastics¹⁸ are a major problem for humans and for the water system. They are everywhere - in our food, water, in our bodies - the list goes on. And all sorts of problems have been attributed to them including lower birth rate, so it's not something to be taken lightly.

When buying ‘new to you’ clothes, choose natural materials that don’t contain microplastics. You’ll find them a lot more comfortable, especially in the hot summers. They’ll also be longer lasting - which makes it worth spending a bit more on those elegant vintage pieces you find online or in a smart charity shop!

For your existing clothes find a way to catch the microplastics¹⁹— there are various filters or bags you can use that do this. This article will start you off.

Shoes: look for shoes made in leather or the new mushroom material.²⁰

Leather is a difficult one. It only exists because an animal has been killed. But it will rot down at the end of its life and not still be in landfill when your children’s grandchildren are adult. So you have to decide which way to go.

BUYING FOR THE HOME

Buying for the home is an industry all on its own. Social media, traditional media (magazines etc) and peer influence lead us towards new and better at home.

We’re happy to buy a car second hand, so now it’s time to get used to buying second hand for home. It’s cheaper, can be better quality, safer in terms of toxic off gassing and helps make home more individual.

Furniture: look for second hand. Try Facebook Marketplace²¹ - some items will be free, but most will be asking for some money. Freecycle²² is good if you need something short term eg while work is being done on the house.

Functional items: cutlery, crockery, pots and pans can all be found in charity shops or thrift stores. It takes a bit more time

WHAT WE BUY

to find what you need, so find the places that take those sort of donations and pop in whenever you're nearby.

Remember you can always take 'good enough' while you look for the best, then take back what you don't need so it can be sold again.

Fabric buys: not everyone wants to buy sheets and towels pre-loved, but give them a good wash and there is no problem. But if it's not for you, look for outlets where they sell stuff that would otherwise be sent to landfill. Just find out as much as you can first because some claim they are true outlets while others buy in specifically to sell at low prices.

Lighting: preloved furniture places will have lighting as well as general furniture needs. Emmaus²³ is a great example of this, but check your local area to see what's available. And take your time - stock will be different every time you visit.

DRESSING THE HOME

This is a big one. There are so many ways to make our homes lovely. Often sold cheap to be appealing, they have short term appeal so get dumped quickly and are often made of plastic materials.

So your question is:

- Is this so beautiful, I'll treasure it all my life'

versus

- 'I'll love this for a while, then dump it

Remember, what we dump will still be sitting there when your grandkids have their own grandkids.

So take your time and choose what you truly love so they

become heirlooms and hold wonderful memories in years to come.

And ditch the cheap plastic stuff that is for this season only.

HOME IMPROVEMENT

When you're getting the builders in, you can still think pre-loved.

Recycled timber: there are numerous providers of recycled timber ²⁴- just go searching and you'll find plenty of options. Learn from our mistakes - we went to frugal when buying a reclaimed gym floor from Juncker's²⁵ so it was a lot more work to lay. If we'd spent a bit more it would have taken half the time. So in this case - don't go too cheap!

Your builder may not be very happy - most prefer to get new from the builders yard because it's easier. One option is to take on the prep work yourself - there may be nails to remove or paint to get off and that does take time.

Doors and windows: there are companies²⁶ that collect, refurbish and sell second hand doors and windows. As long as you have someone who is good at installing (so you get the draught proofing you need) this is a great idea. We've got high quality for much lower price by doing this.

Wood floors: if you're planning on a wood floor, go for tongue and groove wood floors so you can lift them up to sell when you have finished with them. This is always worth thinking about when you're choosing - tongue and groove means the floor can be laid down without glue so also picked up without damage.

We sold on two large floors when doing a renovation. We got some money when it was welcome and someone got a really good floor for a lot less than the price of new.

Disposal of building materials: this is the final stage of the life cycle and worth paying attention²⁷to.

TECHNOLOGY

There is a huge pressure to get constant updates on the tech we use. It's not just functionality, but also street cred. Mind you, in older generations there can be marks for having such an old phone - a Nokia can be a real status symbol!

Buy refurbished: it is quite possible to buy fully functioning tech that has been refurbished²⁸. In fact it's becoming 'the' way to buy your next phone or tablet.

Tech has a big impact on the planet - spare parts, batteries, raw materials and water. So any way to reduce that is worth consideration.

Loads of checking is done to make sure the machine is fully functional, the drive is wiped clean and they arrive looking just as good as any new phone or laptop.

Always use a company that has a decent returns policy. It's likely to be around 30 days, so do pay attention early on so you can rectify any problems in the time scale.

And of course, it will save you money - and that's not to be sniffed at. Had my last refurbished phone for 5 years and only changed it then because social media use meant I needed more memory!

Risks of refurbished tech: there is the possibility of reduced battery life and of course you don't have the long warranty of a new phone. See this article²⁹ for more of the pro's and con's

CHAPTER 8

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Taking care of the environment around us is an obvious way to support the planet. We love to go walking in green spaces – parks, woods, commons – so why not get involved in protecting them?

There are many organisations and groups you can join or support:

Environmental groups: do a search in your local area for groups¹ caring for the environment. You'll find everything from building hedgehog houses to seeing toads over the road to litter picking. You'll be in touch with people of similar mind and do something helpful along the way.

Animal sanctuaries: sanctuaries often need volunteers to help with the work, so if this is something that moves you, then go searching for what is near you. Here's one place to start²

Allotments: get your own allotment or join an allotment group.³ In my home town there is an allotment group attached to the local community pantry. They provide fresh food for people in need. You may find there is something

similar near you or a group of keen gardeners who would be happy to take you under their wing.

Incredible Edible: this movement began in 2008 in Todmorden in the north of England. People started planting food in public places and invited everyone to help themselves. The idea⁴ is now being played out all over the country.

Check your local sustainability group to find out if they have an Incredible Edible.

YOUR OWN GARDEN

We are used to thinking of a garden as space for our own pleasure and for the kids to play. Both of which are totally valid. But we also need to recognise them as home to a range of different forms of wildlife.

Make your garden:

- **A sanctuary:** your garden can be a sanctuary for animals, including bees, butterflies, and insects. You can enhance this effect by learning how to make your space more inviting. This is a very disturbing aspect of the climate crisis and one you may well have noticed directly. I remember being plagued by Daddy longlegs insects, but now if I see one each year that's a treat.
- **Food source:** this is the perfect time to start growing your own vegetables. Any level of self-sufficiency is helpful as the farmers struggle to produce the food we need. There are loads of different ways to learn about this – on the web, through local gardening groups, through reading.

Suitable plants: you can make your garden more effective for yourself and nature by choosing native plants that suit the conditions you have and that will still function as the climate becomes hotter and drier. Joining a gardening group or taking an allotment and making friends there can be a great source of support as you learn more about this.

The products you use: pay attention to the products you use. Compost is a perfect example: sold in heavy plastic bags and often containing peat pulled from peat bogs that naturally holds large amounts of carbon. Dig the peat up and carbon is released into the atmosphere - just so your roses can thrive.

The government has banned the use of peat but the ban doesn't come into force until 2030. So make sure the compost you buy now doesn't include peat – and make sure the seller knows why you're not buying ones that do. It might make them to think twice when ordering.

Quality of pesticides: the pesticides we use have a major impact ⁵on the environment and our health. So go exploring or find out what your gardening mates use. There are some simple solutions, like a solution of washing up liquid sprayed on veggies that will get rid of aphids.

Start composting: there are different ways that you can make compost, ⁶depending on the space you have:

Bokashi: Bokashi is an anaerobic form of composting ⁷ie: you have to exclude all the air. You pack your food into a small bin and add a bran that helps to break the food down. After two weeks you can add it to a standard compost heap or dig it directly into the earth before planting.

Hot composting: this is a way to make compost more quickly ⁸. If done correctly you have good compost in about six weeks.

Wormery: if you don't have space for composting, look into a wormery⁹. It's just what it says - a specific form of box full of worms that will love your old bits of salad and veg and produce a nutrient rich compost. They also produce a liquid that is great for house plants.

Make your own: composting¹⁰ is not just about making your garden grow, it's a satisfying way to use waste food (raw, not cooked because that makes it more attractive to rats)

CARE OF YOUR GARDEN

Be untidy: 'leave the leaves'¹¹ rather than have a tidy pristine garden. This adds nutrients to your soil without destroying the wildlife habitat

Rewilding: give the chance for nature¹² to reinstate herself. If you need a bit of encouragement watch the BBC films¹³ by David Attenborough about the life in our gardens.

Become a highway: It's nice that one of the best things you can do in your garden is to neglect it! If you see small holes in your fence, resist the temptation to repair them. Hedgehogs, foxes, rabbits all need to move through their territory. Again the BBC films about gardens is an inspiration for this.

Build a bug hotel: you can make a bug hotel¹⁴ yourself or buy one in your local garden centre. Our bugs and insects are significantly affected by climate change and use of toxic materials, so any help we can give them is useful.

Build a pond: if you have space in your garden, create a pond¹⁵. It will become a gathering place for wildlife.

Companion planting: this is planting two or more plants¹⁶ together when there is a mutual advantage. Like planting lettuces and Brussels sprouts together – the lettuces are ready

before the Brussels get too big to overshadow them and it's a great use of space.

Regenerative gardening: this is a way of gardening that allows the earth to regenerate,¹⁷ becoming more positive and productive. All I know is it involved less digging which has to be good!

There is a very interesting film on regenerative agriculture on Netflix¹⁸ which will help you understand the movement.

WATER

We can't talk garden without talking water.

Water has become a global issue¹⁹. The United Nations describes us as 'water bankrupt'. And it's not only quantity but also quality of water. The levels of pollution in our rivers and the sea is scandalous - dangerous for aquatic life, animals and humans alike.

Urgent action²⁰ is needed to avoid global conflict, food shortages and excess deaths resulting from water shortages.

CARE FOR YOUR WATER

Against that background there is an urgent need for us all to take water more seriously. Think carefully about how you use water²¹ and how you might be more frugal.

Shower don't bath: you can get out of a shower clean having used significantly less water. Some people use an egg timer to keep below four minutes. Test yourself and see how quickly you can get the job done!

Change your shower head: you can get water saving shower heads that reduce the amount of water you use in each shower.

Catch excess water: stand in a plastic box and catch your shower water including the water lost while you wait for it to heat up. Use this on your garden.

Use your dishwasher: if you're lucky enough to have a dishwasher, use that rather than wash-up by hand. As long as you run it full, you'll save a significant amount of water. Washing up takes roughly four times as much water.

Use a washing up bowl: if you can't do that, use a washing up bowl rather than keep running the tap as you wash your crocks. If you use a natural washing liquid you can throw the final water on the garden when needed.

Stop the tap while you scrub: when cleaning your teeth it's tempting to leave the tap running. It's no necessary - it just a waste. So switch off until you actually need it.

Tend your leaks: always sort out your taps and any leaks you have. No point in wasting and running up your water bill.

Check your water bill: turn your water off at the stopcock and check that the meter stops going round. If not, then contact your water board and get them to visit. Any movement when your water is off indicates a leak in the pipes coming to your house. YOu're not using it, but you will be paying for it.

Use eco programmes: Choose the eco programmes on your appliances. It's a bit confusing because they are usually quite long, so it's counter intuitive. But this is because they are using less water. Look in your handbook or check on the web to understand how it works and choose eco whenever you can.

CHAPTER 9

MANAGING TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a major part of our lives. Love it or hate it, it's not going away any time soon, so it's important to look at the best ways of using it.

HEAD SPACE

For your own sanity, you need to create some headspace away from your phone, computer or screen. I say that, but I know it's not easy to do. Using Instagram as my main platform¹ to talk about climate and home means I spend a lot of time there, trying to work out what to post, how to post and when to post.

But screens are known to disrupt sleep, relaxation and relationships, so take a moment to consider if you've got the right balance or not. Maybe talk with your partner, friends and family to see what they have to say. Those closest can sometimes see us more clearly than we see ourselves!

ECO TECH

There are ways to be more eco when using tech:

Search with Ecosia: one quick change to make is to choose Ecosia² as your search engine. Every time you search, they do something good for the environment. You can also choose whether AI gets involved or not and Ecosia have their own more eco version of AI.

Be choosy about AI: there are specific times when AI can be useful. But that's not just to find a nice place to go out for supper. An AI search takes 10 times more energy³ than a Google or Ecosia search. So save AI for when you really need it.

Understand the data: if you love data there's an app⁴ that brings together all the elements of delivering the energy system. Way beyond my brain span, but if that's what you enjoy, take a look.

Use the tech to improve energy efficiency

There are numerous apps that can help with energy efficiency, so they are worth a look.

Summary of apps: there are a few websites that give options for energy saving apps:

<https://www.endesa.com/en/blogs/endesa-s-blog/light/apps-energy-consumption>

<https://loop.homes/>

<https://www.oncor.com/content/oncorwww/wire/en/home/energy-efficiency/5-energy-savings-apps-to-help-you-cut-costs.html>

<https://energysaverapp.com/>

Smart meter: I thought this was the little screen that sits in the kitchen or sitting room telling you how much energy you're using. In fact I'm thinking of an 'in house display' that links to the smart meter. The meter itself ⁵is part of the existing meter, so nothing you need to bother with.

The display is very helpful in terms of knowing what to expect when your bill arrives and how much energy you use at different times of the day. So it's worth having one and becoming familiar with your energy usage.

Heat pumps: there are specific apps⁶ that run your heat pump. They learn how you want the house to feel, then direct the pump to deliver that. It's much better to have a specific thermostat for your heat pump. We relied on the traditional system at first, but then learned that it didn't give the best energy efficiency.

Solar apps: you should be provided with an app when you install your solar. This is useful in that it helps you use your solar⁷ to best effect. Knowing when it is producing energy enables you to put on your appliances, cook the dinner or charge the car on sunshine.

The app will also help you see how much you'll get paid for your excess energy. We get back enough during summer time to pay for our winter usage.

Energy optimisation: there are a number of apps available now, not tied to your specific products, ready to help optimise energy⁸. Take a good look and review the costs to make sure they will be a good investment. I came across this one that says they take a percentage of savings, so if they don't save you money, you don't pay. Take a look and see what you think.

Ventilation systems: ventilation is the most common missing piece when it comes to making home energy efficient. Damp air is much harder to heat, so managing moisture is

important. If you are fortunate enough to have a whole house ventilation system you will have an app to help you manage it. Single room heat recovery systems also include an app⁹ so you can change humidity levels and monitor humidity when you're away from home.

CHOOSE YOUR ENERGY PROVIDER

Most energy providers are using green energy these days given that 52% of UK energy¹⁰ usage is renewable.

Still it is worth checking your provider to find out what their balance is. Some providers use more green than others.

Choose your tariff: there will also be a wide range of tariffs to choose from and it can feel as if you need an advanced degree to understand it! I always start by talking with someone at the company. They can navigate the information more easily, but it also gives you an idea of the customer service available to you.

Nighttime tariff: Its worth looking at the lower nighttime rates, especially if you have a battery. Charging the battery overnight, as well as your car, washing machine and dishwasher – all at a much lower rate - can make a big difference to your energy bill.

The other advantage to night time rates is that you're using up energy that might otherwise go to waste.

MANAGE THE VAMPIRES

Vampires are the machines that sit on standby for hours or days, using a small amount of energy all the time.

Loads of us leave the TV on standby so it comes to life faster when we want it, without realising it's constantly costing us.

Same for phones, ipads, coffee machines, kettles – the list goes on, Anything that sits on standby is costing money – albeit a small amount, but it soon adds up.

Have a quick think about the stuff in your home right now that's waiting for you. My guess is there are at least 10. Then think how long it would take to switch it on when you need it and off when you're done – my guess it will be miniscule.

So check out your vampires and get in the habit of switching them off at the plug.

BUY PRELOVED TECH

There is a huge problem with electronic waste, The United Nations describes it as an 'e-waste tsunami'¹¹ and a 'time bomb'.

By the year 2021, the total amount of manufactured electronic waste was 57.4 million tonnes.¹² Additionally, as the years go by, the total is increasing at a rate of roughly 2 million tons per year, on average and only 17.4% is recycled.

See chapter 7 for more about buying preloved tech.

Mine my phone: find out about the real cost of your phone here. ¹³Discover what it takes and the impact it has on others. Then it will make perfect sense to buy a refurbished version so you extend the life of what has already been made.

CHAPTER 10

TRAVEL

We have grown used to travelling whenever and wherever we want to. Not so long ago, holidays were a visit to the closest seaside town. But then came budget airlines and our expectations have changed totally.

We've also become very dependant on the internal combustion engine (ICE) and struggle to think about other ways to get around. Passing the driving test is a right of passage at the age of 17. TV heroes are created by driving cars too fast and dangerously.

Honestly it's hard to imagine life without a car. But it is one of the big causes of CO₂ emissions so a good place to start when deciding to live as if the planet mattered.

DRIVING

We're used to petrol and diesel cars. We just expect to drive wherever we want to go.

In reality, this reliance on an ICE is relatively recent. 50 years ago when I got my first car, there was never any problem finding a parking space - hard to imagine that now!

While it feels as if life has always been this way, in the scheme of things, cars are new stuff.

FLYING

This is the other main form of travel and we've become equally dependant on trips to the airport. Flying has an effect on climate not only through the fuel used but also because of the contrails. See this article¹ for more info

TRAVEL ALTERNATIVES

Drive an EV: Range anxiety is often cited as a reason not to drive an EV. It was an issue at the start, when the range was 100 miles or less. But these days standard cars have a range of 300 plus miles.

Who drives more than that without stopping for a break? And the infrastructure is improving every day so finding somewhere to charge is nothing like the challenge it was.

Another concern is that an EV isn't fast enough. Fun fact – it isn't possible to race Formula One cars against EV's because the EV can go so much faster. So now there is a special Formula E² class so EV's just race against each other.

Go test drive and see for yourself. I don't enjoy driving, but I still love my EV!

Everything Electric³ is a good Youtube channel for comparisons and detailed information about the options. They also run regular events around the country during the summer

months where you can see and test drive a number of different EV's.

Train: We all complain about the trains, but we are actually blessed with a very good train service in the UK.

20 years ago, I decided I wasn't prepared to spend my time in endless traffic jams and I've used the train for long journeys ever since. It's useful time – I can nap, read my book, do some work – and someone else worries about getting me there.

It just takes a different approach – a bit more prep, but then a much calmer journey.

Substitute train for plane: how often have I thought, 'it's only a hour in a plane, but when you work out the time spent getting to the airport, standing in queues for Security, waiting for the plane, queueing to get on board, waiting for take off..... you might find the train isn't much longer. And it's all useable time, instead of dead time in the airport (where you're constantly tempted to buy more 'stuff')

Bicycle: there are numerous benefits to riding your bike. Short journeys into town, popping to the shops, going to work or to the train station.

You can buy bicycles second hand quite easily or even pick them up for free on Freecycle⁴. You can also take courses⁵ in how to care for your bike . Go searching for opportunities in your area. You may also find your local sustainability group runs a course.

Walking: this is always a good option. Pay attention for the next week and see how often you automatically get in the car when you could just have easily walked.

You will be in better shape and healthier if you walk whenever you can. Get a good podcast⁶ or story book⁷ going and it's a lovely calm space in the day.

Taking the bus: depending on where you live, this can be a brilliant options for short and long journeys. The challenge is to access the timetable⁸ and then work out where the bus stops are. But you'll soon work your way around the system.

You can also do long journeys on a bus and they can be very comfortable. This website⁹ gives you timetables for trains, buses, ferries, trams and coach.

HOLIDAYS

The hotter summers produced by climate change mean there is less need to travel to other countries to relax in the sun. Plus the impact of forest fires can make holiday destinations rather alarming.

Instead look into holiday destinations in UK – for a hot holiday try Devon and Cornwall. For somewhere cooler and quieter, take a look at Scotland. Loads of different website for you to look through with all manner of different holidays.

Holiday on the train: Train holidays in Europe can be very exciting. Each part of the journey becomes a little holiday in its own right. Take a look at the website Man in Seat 61¹⁰ – he covers all the big train journeys in the world, giving you all the information you need.

Train travel opens up all of Europe without the carbon emissions.

Cycling holidays: if you find you enjoy your bike, you can go on cycling holiday in UK¹¹ or Europe¹², combining train journeys for the long treks and bike for the good bits. Loads of websites to give you more info.

CHAPTER 11

CAMPAIGNING

Campaigning is the perfect way to make your voice heard. It's the chance to express your concerns, frustrations and hopes for the future.

It also gives you the opportunity to come together with other people on the same wavelength. In my experience it's a huge relief to be with others who feel passionate about the planet. It means I can speak more freely without having to watch my tongue!

And of course, the more we work with others, the bigger the impact we can make.

FIND YOUR TOPIC

The trick is to find a subject you truly care about - then you'll be willing to put in the time and effort needed.

For many years people have been speaking out about the state of the planet and climate change. It wasn't easy in those early days – people really didn't want to listen. But now, many more

people have understood how urgent this is, so we're pushing on more of an open door.

I began campaigning for the planet back in the early '70s. I've marched for Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the whales, wildlife, ozone layer – the list goes on. My kids just came along - pushed in buggies with balloons tied to the handles – it's some of their earliest memories. I was also passionate about the right to a home, so gave time to Shelter and Shac. No surprise then that my present focus is on making home energy efficient for comfort, reduced bills and climate!

CHOOSE YOUR CAMPAIGN

Work out what grabs your attention and what frustrates you most. You need to really care if you're to make a difference - it's passion that keeps us going.

- Airport expansion
- Animal cruelty
- Wars (both for the people and the planet – war is a massive emitter of carbon)
- Oil and gas companies
- Destruction of the Amazon
- Internal combustion engines
- Intensive farming
- Water companies
- Loss of wildlife

This list is endless.¹

Stay in touch with what's happening in your community or join up with national organisations and lend a hand. Charities like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, WWF will have local groups all over the country. So join the one that appeals to you

and get stuck in. You'll find there are a few people who put in a lot of time and many others who are linked but not active, so I'd be amazed if you weren't welcomed with open arms.

Green hubs: there are increasing numbers of green hubs² and eco centres popping up around the country. They do amazing work informing the community about the possibilities for greening their lives and for causes that need their attention.

Emailing MP's: it can be really helpful to send emails to MP's³ to share your concerns about particular causes. Even if you know your MP is on board, it's still worth writing so they can report the number of emails they've received on specific issues.

You can only contact the MP that serves your area. I've tried many time to contact a range of MP's but generally you get a reply email telling you to stick to your own MP. It's frustrating, but use it as a spur to find other ways to reach out

Join wider campaigns: some organisations will email directly and ask you to send a specific email. They'll provide you with the wording that you can use verbatim or edit to suit what you want to say. Some will just need you to add your contact details before it's sent off for you.

These options are good ways to flood the person with the same issue to get them to pay attention. I was very uncertain about this for a long time, but then I understood that MPs have to report on the subjects that are coming up in their inbox. So a huge number of emails can increase the chance of your concern being registered.

Join a political party: if you connect with a specific political view point, join the relevant party and take part in their climate work. This may also give you a vehicle for influencing the people in power.

Religious groups: if you have a particular belief, then you a religious group may provide a good vehicle for you. Since the climate crisis encompasses fairness, justice and integrity, then it is a natural part of an organised religion.

Climate Coalition: this is the UK's largest group of people and organisations dedicated to tackling climate change and restoring nature. This is a good place to explore the options for other groups you might like to join and also a good collective to be part of. The more people involved in any action, the more likely it will have an impact.

GETTING YOUR OWN MESSAGE OUT

You may decide that you have a clear message or experience that you want to share. If so, then it might be time to befriend social media.

Set up a podcast: this is a good way to share ideas with other people. Invite those you admire or those who have a similar message. Film your conversation and post it on YouTube or a podcast site. There are loads of options – just put it into a search engine and take a look.

Social media: depending on your message, start an account on Instagram, Facebook or TikTok. There is an art to doing this, so don't expect to hit big numbers straight away. But if you like the idea of moulding your message in different ways, then give it a go.

To find training support, search on your chosen platform and you'll be inundated! Always check how many followers the trainer has, how long they've been on the platform and if you like their posts. Some are extremely good. Others have only just started, had one viral reel and believe they know the answers! Start off with some free courses to familiarise yourself with the platform and take it from there.

CAMPAIGNING

Youtube: this is the place for longer form videos as well as a different audience for the shorts you made for Instagram etc. There is an art to all of this, so put in some time to learn so you don't lose heart and give up.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judith Leary-Joyce is a sustainability advocate who has been changing her way of life over the past 50 years in order to reduce the impact she and her family make on the planet. As a result, she has undertaken everything from living plastic free to ethical banking to making home energy efficient. She has found many forms of climate action that are positive, practical and empowering

Judith shares her journey with warmth, honesty and hard-earned insight, inspiring individuals and homeowners to live in a way that is kinder to the planet and highly beneficial for themselves.

TEDx Climate Salon: thanks to all the participants of the Climate Salon for your contributions to this collection.

Books: Beginner's Guide to Eco Renovation, What the Builder Won't Tell You

TEDx talk: How you and your builder can help save the planet

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Blog: <https://www.ecorenovationhome.com/blog>

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