
Re: u3a Second Nature July 2023

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3 April 2024 at 18:21

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Bulletin 001

This is my first 'proper' bulletin to the network. I'll try and follow Frances's example of sending something out about once a month, and I'd like to thank her for all the hard graft that she has put in on this and other aspects of the role. I'm reluctant in a way to add to the huge volume of climate-related newsletters and articles that are already out there (I already don't read half the stuff that I'm subscribed to) so I'll try and keep to developments in u3a and to topics that might promote discussion within groups.

I've used the title 'Second Nature' because I had to set up a new email address in a hurry, but also to remind us that it should become second nature to think about environmental impact when we take decisions, and as instinctively as we think about the financial impact.

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I'd value your opinions on how you think the Subject Adviser should be spending his time (polite answers only please) and what you want to see in this bulletin.

Best regards

John Baxter

Subject Adviser, Climate Change & Environment

Website content

I'm posting material that is of more general interest on the [u3a Climate Change & Environment website](#). I've added two new buttons there - NEW and FAQ. I'm interested in the [GB generation mix](#) for example, and our progress in decarbonising the electricity supply, so I will post on this as the stats come out from ESO each month. Not all the NEW stuff is new (I wrote some of it a year or two ago for another forum) and some of the FAQs I just made up. This one [is it true that solar panels do not work if the temperature is too high?](#) was a genuine member question however. (Spoiler alert - no it isn't true.) Please tell me what content you would like to see on the website.

A note on sources: I am a Guardianista (and indeed a Guardian Supporter) and I frequently forward links to content from that paper. This is for practical reasons, not political ones - unlike your favourite newspaper Guardian content is not behind a paywall (you may have to register, but you won't have to pay). I will from time to time link to content from The BBC, [The Conversation](#), [Ensia](#), and other sites that I consider credible.

In the press

Three recent Guardian articles have influenced the way I think about things:

- Jonathan Freedland: [the climate movement has the right answers, he says, but we use the wrong words](#) - we talk about climate change and warming (which really sounds quite cosy) and not about climate emergency, crisis, and dangerous heat.
- Hannah Ritchie on '[climate tribalism](#)'. She takes an idea from economist Michael Munger, that we split into 'directionalists' and 'destinationists'. *Directionalists back any solution that takes us towards the final goal. In climate, this means they support anything that puts a notable dent in emissions. Destinationists are less flexible: they have an ideal outcome in mind. They block and reject anything that doesn't fit their perfect vision.* Many of the conversations that I have within climate groups make a lot more sense now. For the record, I am very much a directionalist: I don't know what a sustainable world will look like, and I don't expect to see it, but I'd very much like to see us moving towards it, starting now.
- Amy Fleming on [how to reduce your exposure to microplastics](#); in the Health & Wellbeing section, not environment. This is a well-balanced piece I think. In a nutshell: (i) microplastics are already everywhere; (ii) there's not much evidence that they are a threat to human health, but (iii) it's probably a good idea to limit your exposure as best you can.

When you see packaging like this everywhere you could be forgiven for thinking that the plastics problem has been solved:



(My old English teacher would want me to point out that surely this should read "the same *number* of peas".)

One of my less obvious sources of information is [Resource](#), a trade paper for the waste management industry. If you're in Scotland you will find this a useful source on the travails of the DRS. This week I found an informative article on [how to dispose of cooking oil](#) so that it doesn't become a fatberg. I also read about [how to recycle tennis balls](#) - I didn't learn much useful from this, except that RSPB has used them to make nests for harvest mice at their Dee Estuary site in Wales. Here is a picture of a mouse, posing for the benefit of RSPB's PR team:



Objectives for a u3a Climate Group

I'm working on a Discussion Note on this to prepare for a Zoom call. If your group has well-defined objectives then I'd like to see them so that I can recycle them there. Of course there's nothing wrong with an objective that says "we just get together for coffee and a natter" - after all, that's what most u3a groups do. If you'd like a draft of the note, email me.

Slogan of the Month

I'm not a great fan of slogans, but the Mailchimp manual says that I should end with a Call to Action, so here goes:



There is no prize for guessing where I got the inspiration from.

(ends)



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