

IN THIS ISSUE: Local Ancient Yew wins 'Tree of the Year', Contrails: their Origin and Impact, Going Car-Free and Tackling the Climate Crisis: Local's Views on Guildford's Car Free Day, Just Stop Oil: Spectacle or Substance?, Autumn & Winter with The Mount Volunteers, Rosamund Community Hub: An Update, The Secret World of Fungi (from the Unstead Community Reserve), What To Read, Cop27: Successes & Failures, The Future of Bus Travel in Guildford



Guildford Environmental Forum

newsletter

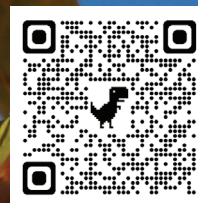
December 2022 - February 2023

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Autumn colours persist into November as temperatures stay well above average; photographed by Raymond Smith



## Local Ancient Yew Wins Woodland Trust's 'Tree of the Year'

By Sarah Davis

A SPECTACULAR yew tree at Waverley Abbey, near Farnham, thought to be over 500 years old and whose roots grow out of Britain's first Cistercian monastery, has been crowned 'Tree of the Year' in the Woodland Trust's 2022 competition. The winning yew will now go on to represent the UK in the European 'Tree of the Year' contest. The Waverley Abbey yew is a truly spectacular ancient tree, with roots growing into and around the ruins of the English Heritage site, Waverley Abbey – the very first Cistercian monastery, founded in Britain 900 years ago.



'It is great to see that this magnificent tree has been recognised as 'Tree of the Year' 2022, and the way the tree is rooted within the ruins of the abbey is a great symbol of the fact that our ancient trees are intertwined with other aspects of our cultural heritage,' Dr Michael Carter, English Heritage senior properties historian, said of the win. 'We're calling for greater protection for these living legends, so that they are cared for in the same way as our historic buildings. This tree is one of the many that have witnessed important moments in our history.'

The yew tree at Waverley Abbey has been witness to history for nearly 500 years. Whilst the exact age of the yew is unknown, it is likely that it has watched over the abbey grounds since shortly after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536 – and has seen its surroundings transformed from a thriving religious community into a picturesque ruin. 'The tree is a truly spectacular reminder of the passage of time and a very worthy winner of Tree of the Year.'



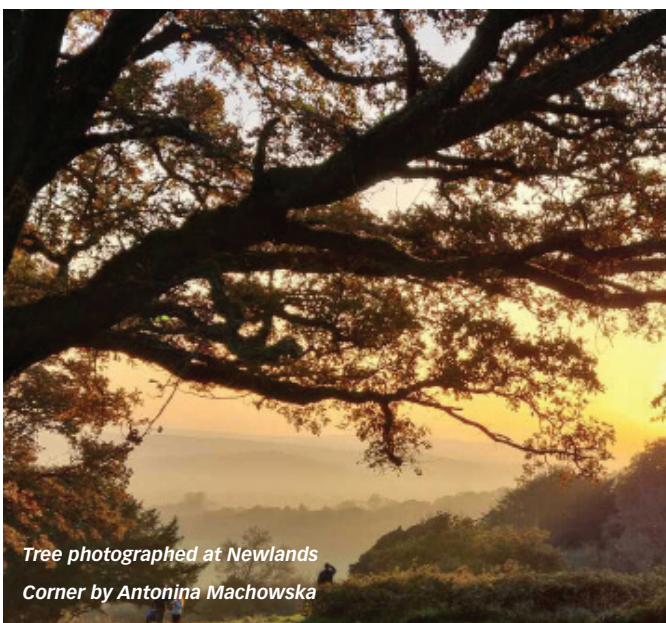
Now in its eighth year, the Woodland Trust's Tree of The Year contest celebrates the nation's favourite and most beautiful

trees, the role they play in fighting climate change and their importance to nature and to our history and heritage. It celebrates these living legends, ancient trees that have withstood the test of time, each a constant safe haven for wildlife in a changing and sometimes disconnected landscape. The Waverley Abbey Yew proved to be a wonderful example of how important trees are. Its multi-stemmed form, dotted with holes, crevices and areas of decay, is an invaluable habitat for wildlife.

## How old is an 'ancient' tree?

Ancient trees are defined by their old age, particularly when compared to other trees of the same species. There is no set age for a tree to be considered ancient, as different species age at different rates.

Birch trees, for example, are fast-growing, and could be classed as ancient at 150 years old, while a yew tree might receive the same accolade at 800 years of age. The Fortingall Yew in Perthshire, Scotland, could be considered the oldest tree in the UK; modern experts estimate it to be between 2,000 and 3,000 years old, although some think it could be far older – maybe even 5,000 years old!



Tree photographed at Newlands  
Corner by Antonina Machowska

There are thousands of old or ancient trees in the UK. They're important to our heritage and wildlife, yet they don't get the protection they need. Please support the Woodland Trust's campaign for legal protection for ancient trees by signing their [petition](#).

**Less than 10% of ancient trees have been recorded in the UK! Help the Woodland Trust build their ancient tree inventory by 'mapping' any trees you see that you think are old enough. Log your sighting via their website and an expert will visit and verify it.**

# Contrails: their origin and impact

By Richard Seymour

CONTRAILS, or condensation trails, are best observed under warm anticyclonic conditions when the air is clear and largely cloud free. To get a better idea of the volume of aircraft flying over the UK and other parts of the world, the website [flightradar24.com](https://flightradar24.com) is amazing as it shows the massive number of aircraft in the sky in real time. Most contrails are seen between 7,500 to 12,000 metres above the Earth's surface and can remain in the sky for a number of hours. They are formed by the combustion of kerosene in jet engines - in the process water vapour is produced, and since the air temperature at high altitude is below freezing, the water vapour condenses quickly and freezes. Particles of soot from the jet engines act as condensation nuclei and thus a narrow trail of ice crystals forms behind the jet engines. This is the contrail.

If the air outside the aircraft is very dry, the ice crystals sublimate to become an invisible gas. In contrast to this, if the air is humid, the ice crystals remain, as can be seen in the above photograph. Contrails tend to remain longer if the aircraft is flying ahead of an advancing warm front where high level cirrus clouds can be observed, indicating an increase in moisture at high levels.

There are three types of contrails - short lived, persistent non-spreading and persistent spreading. Short-lived contrails form behind jet aircraft as a white line, but only last a short period of time if the air is only slightly moist. In contrast, the persistent non-spreading contrails form when the air is moist and can remain for 12 hours or more. The persistent spreading contrails form when the air is very moist and a number of these contrails can join together, forming a human-induced cirrus cloud.

*This photograph was taken in May 2022 at 7:00am and shows the legacy of jet aircraft flying over Guildford.*



***Contrails from aircraft are playing a significant part in climate change as they trap radiated heat from escaping into space and block sunlight from reaching the earth.***

The difference between incoming energy and energy radiated back into space is known as radiative forcing. As more energy is absorbed than radiated, the atmosphere is becoming warmer. Aviation accounts for between 2.5-3.0 % of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the key point here is that this lasts for a long time in the atmosphere. Civilian aircraft emit 2% of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> plus the effect of contrails estimates suggest they are responsible for about 3.5% of warming. The evidence indicates that there is a need to change the fuels used by jet aircraft from kerosene to biofuels, hydrogen or electricity - but doing so sustainably and practically would be a massive challenge.

The Department of Transport has published a Jet Zero Strategy which aims to decarbonise the aviation industry by 2050. It will be interesting to see how much will be achieved by this strategy, given that the number of flights following the pandemic is increasing.



# Going Car-Free and Tackling the Climate Crisis: Local's Views on Guildford's Car Free Day

By Sunethra Mendis

ON SUNDAY 25th September, Guildford celebrated another car-free day. It was an opportunity to showcase just how Guildford town centre might look and feel like, without the sound of the cars or the smell of diesel and petrol. People could wonder around anywhere instead of being confined to the pavements, and that's exactly what a large number of locals did. The town was buzzing with people strolling around, stopping and chatting anywhere they liked, sampling vegan food and other local produce, enjoying street play or popping into the stalls of environmental NGOs to engage in conversations on climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis.

Many such conversations were triggered by Guildford Environmental Forum's quick questionnaire survey, titled 'Local people's Views on Climate Change'. The survey managed to collate written responses from 30 local people on the day. *This is what they said:*

## LOCAL PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE: GEF's Key Findings

- Respondents unanimously agreed on the importance of climate change, but most respondents (60%) were not aware that the GBC declared a climate emergency in 2019.
- There's a high level of consensus on the most important things the respondents think a climate emergency should mean in practice and the changes they would like to see locally. These include:

Reducing car traffic from the town centre. *More car-free days.* More of the town centre being pedestrianised. *Less air pollution from traffic.* More reliable and affordable public transport (buses in particular). *More, better and safer cycle lanes together with safe cycle parking.* Better infrastructure and support for EVs such as more charging points and support for e-taxis, electric buses and trains. *Incentives for residents to use more renewable energy, such as community energy schemes, relaxing planning and conservation area regulations on domestic solar and new windows.* Better engagement with the public.

### What people said . . .

'Buses are unreliable - they don't run to the timetable and have no shows.'

'Too many bus companies! We need a single ticket scheme.'

'I have to drive due to lack of safe cycling lanes.'  
'Charge more for parking!'

'Planning of developments must involve more flood prevention.'

'Use the council's spending power for change!'

There is 100% agreement on the need for Guildford Borough Council to have a clear strategy and to publish performance data on their stated objective - to 'deliver us on the pathway to becoming carbon neutral by 2030'. More reporting is needed on 'regular milestones of what they are aiming for; metrics of how they will do so; how they are engaging community and businesses in doing so'.

# Lifestyle Changes?

On lifestyle changes people wish to make, reducing car dependency (via public transport or bicycles) as well as home insulation schemes came out on top. Transitioning to electric cars and improving waste management were also mentioned by many.

The top 2 things that could make it easier for people to adapt to a lower carbon lifestyle:

- support & incentives for home insulation, energy schemes e.g. group purchase schemes for community renewables, subsidised or council procured heat pump/solar sources, incentivising landlords to insulate rented homes;
- better cycling infrastructure (e.g. more, better & safer cycle lanes, safer cycle parking) and a high proportion of respondents have also asked for better public transport infrastructure (e.g. affordable, reliable and more frequent buses).

The other **top asks** include incentives for local business to make more local produce readily available and to go greener (e.g. less plastic wrapping), incentivising e-cars and disincentivising town centre car traffic (e.g. increased parking charges), and better support for recycling domestic waste (e.g. more council oversight to give it credibility, free council run tips open 24/7, better information).

## What people said . . .

'Some local roads are in such poor condition as to be a risk to the life of those commuting on two wheels.'

'Can you incentivise my landlord to insulate my house?'

'I'd like free waste tips run by GBC and open 24/7.'

'I feel like I am breathing the end of a tailpipe when I cycle up Epsom Road!'

'We need dedicated cycle lanes on all roads.'

There's near universal (92%) support for pedestrianising more of central Guildford. Pedestrianising the whole town centre and pedestrianising North Street get a similar level of support from respondents. Pedestrianising the Friary area gets also mentioned. All car owners have indicated that they are considering cutting their car use by switching to cycling, car shares, public transport or walking.

## Looking ahead to Car-Free Day 2023 and beyond

Car-Free Day has become a successful annual event on the Guildford calendar, but the views of locals challenge us all to pause and think. Do we want to just keep repeating the annual event, or do we want to build on it and go beyond it? What about the other 364 days of the year?

***A number of options for next year can be built on the opinions expressed by local people on the 2022 car-free day:***

Extending the car-free zone (e.g. more of the town centre / more of the river front – e.g. Millmead, car-free residential streets)

Extending the car-free period (e.g. a car-free weekend / car-free Sundays throughout the year)

Actively promoting public transport on car-free day and beyond (e.g. free-buses, subsidised tickets)

Showcasing what the town centre could be if vehicles were removed permanently (e.g. pop-up parklets/public squares)

London is a testimony to the fact the modern life doesn't have to depend on owning a car. Unfortunately, in places like Guildford, our land-use and transport policies have created car dependency. There is another important lesson from London: low car ownership and drastic reduction of private cars **isn't enough** to get rid of congestion and local air pollution unless effective action is taken to curb the numbers of delivery vehicles, empty private hire vehicles (which circle around while waiting) and service vehicles ('Regent Street had 36 different operators doing recycling. Each person was doing the right thing, but add them all up together ...').

If we want to reclaim our town centre and turn it into a healthy, enjoyable and inviting public realm, it will have to be done as a part of a bigger programme to move people out of their cars. We need to get 45% of local journeys using active travel - walking and cycling. Car-free days should be part of that, and can provide a great opportunity to test, promote and showcase measures that will form a part of a comprehensive plan. If extended beyond an annual event to become a meaningful part of a climate strategy, it can also deliver quick wins on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and enhancing local air quality.

We can build the climate friendly future we actually want, provided we are serious about it and are willing to pay the price. The decision is ours to make.

## Just Stop Oil: Spectacle or Substance?

By Isabel Davies

Just Stop Oil's actions this autumn involving a number of revered works of art can certainly be called spectacle. In this late stage of climate action, in the face of ever-worsening outlooks, it can become hard to separate the performance of action (e.g. greenwashing) from actual, substantive change. Perhaps this is why Just Stop Oil's actions have received backlash even from those of us already strongly invested in the fight to stop climate change.



I was surprised by my own reaction to the protests, given that I am usually in support of activism that challenges the status quo, especially in regards to climate action. There was something distinctly shocking about the footage of the can of soup hitting Van Gogh's masterpiece. I have a drawing on my childhood bedroom wall, a recreation of the *Sunflowers* that I drew when I was six - it is an image that holds such a huge amount of meaning and history to people, especially in Europe. Nonetheless, it was a strange realisation to have, that despite my knowledge of how desperate our current climate situation is, and how drastically things need to change in order to prevent catastrophe, I still believed some things were inherently untouchable.

'Soup on canvas' may be clickbait-y, sensationalist, quickly gone from our headlines, but I have found that - at least for me - its impact has remained. Van Gogh and Andy Warhol are not immune, and neither am I, neither are you, from the devastation of climate change. One of the most terrifying emotions I experience in the face of the climate crisis is apathy; I become so overwhelmed and distressed, my brain just switches off. That's not what happened when I saw Just Stop Oil's protests; I may have been dismayed, yes, upset, even a little disgusted, but at least I felt something, and strongly. In that small way, for me, they succeeded.



# Autumn and Winter with the Mount Volunteers

By Frances Rollin



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INSPIRED BY the wonderful work that the Pewley Down Volunteers carry out, a working group has been set up to try and improve the Downs on the other side of Guildford, known as the Mount. There are 4 fields – all owned by Guildford Borough Council - which run from above County School to the top of the Farnham Road.

In pairs and small groups we worked for 3 hours using tree poppers, loppers and mattocks to remove hawthorn bushes, roots and all. We also dug some scrapes (a bare patch of earth) and planted kidney vetch seeds – the sole plant-food of the small blue butterfly.



Both digs were thoroughly enjoyable – it has been really super to meet so many members of the local community, all keen to be involved in this environmental project. We have, at the time of writing, made significant progress on clearing the field. It is wonderful to see how much difference two sessions can make.

Butterfly Conservation had already started clearing this field, so this summer, we could see the results achieved by scrub clearance. A field trip with some botanists in June revealed a significant number of flowers and grasses in a small part of the cleared

All four fields are rare chalk grassland – with the potential to be a haven for biodiversity. However, on three of the fields, the hawthorn, brambles and wild clematis are taking over and causing the wild flower and grass mix to suffer.

section including some personal favourites, the pyramidal orchid, eyebright and common centaury. A regular butterfly transect happens across the fields, which reports a good number and selection of butterflies.

The new volunteer group – the Mount Volunteers – met for our first two proper practical sessions on 16th October and 20th November, the plan being to clear the scrub from the third of the four fields. We were lucky that the sun shone for both of our meetings. The turnout was fantastic on each occasion, with over 40 people attending the October session. This included some students from Surrey University, who are keen to form an on-going partnership with us. Whole families came along, a few dogs and part of an Onslow tennis team!

Further work parties are planned on 22nd January 2023 and 26th February 2023. We may have a further one in March, if we can be sure we are not disrupting any ground nesting birds. Please do contact Frances Rollin ([francesrollinart@gmail.com](mailto:francesrollinart@gmail.com)) if you would like to volunteer.

Many thanks to John Andrews from Guildford Borough Council for both practical and moral support for our project on the Mount. Thanks also to Pewley Down Volunteers and Butterfly Conservation for expert advice and - crucially - for lending us all the equipment!

# Rosamund Community Hub: An Update

By Clare Millington and Adrian Thompson

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## Design & Build

AFTER the very slow start due to the Covid restrictions and a change of design, the Rosamund Community Garden Hub is going full steam ahead and is on track to be finished in spring 2023. The original design of a cob dome structure has given way to a simpler and more achievable build. The original lattice frame has been moved to another part of the garden to make a beautiful living arbour, which will provide a lovely wildlife haven planted with flowering and fruiting climbers as well as somewhere to sit and meet in the summer.

Jon Kalviac (who has been running our natural building workshops) has designed and built a sweet chestnut framework to support the bespoke canvas that will be fitted in the Spring. The three entrances are nearly complete with stone and cob surrounds, and there are gorgeous recycled bottle windows.

A lot of the cobbing and building has been done by the volunteers and the cob workshops have been run by Jon. We are planning more workshops next summer to finish the walls with decorative natural plasters. The next cost will be the fitting of the canvas, a wood burning stove and the flooring, which, in the interim, will be beaten earth. The build will continue to be a platform to showcase cob and wattle and daub techniques, run as workshops to demonstrate these wonderful ancient skills.

## Finance

The delays that caused by Covid meant that material costs escalated more than expected. In addition, changes in design meant that the original cost forecast was no longer achievable. The original estimate was £16,286, which was covered by grants received from the Community Foundation for Surrey (£10k) and from Guildford Borough Council (£6.3k). To date, the net costs of the Hub project have been £15,705 and a further £5,450 is still needed to complete it.

It was to cover this shortfall that GEF launched a crowdfund in October, working with Spacehive and GBC to raise the additional funds needed. GEF are delighted to report that, within 7 weeks of the launch, just over £5,000 has now been raised! The Spacehive crowdfund will remain open for a few more weeks to increase our Hub contingency a little more. GEF and the Rosamund team are hugely grateful to all those who have pledged to fund the completion of this project.

Having raised the initial £2,700 from GEF and Rosamund members and their friends (there were over 50 individual pledges!), we were able to show how much local support there was for this project. We were therefore delighted to learn that the Guildford Community Group had pledged the additional sum of £1,303 - a generous pledge quickly followed by an anonymous pledge of a further £1,000 to take the total raised to just over £5,000.

We are hugely grateful to Spacehive and to Guildford Borough Council for their generous support. Furthermore, the Hub project could not have been initiated without the initial £16k in funding and the huge volunteer effort to get the project to its current stage.

Special thanks also to Helen Harris and Clare Millington who have driven the project forward over the last two years!



# From the Unstead Community Reserve: The Secret World of Fungi

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Did you know the Unstead Nature Reserve has its own community newsletter? Unstead is a small wetland reserve in the River Wey Valley, currently being restored by the Unstead Nature Community Group in conjunction with the Thames Water Biodiversity team. They have their own monthly newsletter, which you can receive by becoming a member on [their website](#)! Here is an excerpt from their November issue: The Secret World of Fungi . . .

Last month I spoke about the importance of deadwood in a balanced ecology. In the photos, you will see an array of fungi found on the reserve during October, a number of which, you will see, are growing on dead and decaying wood.

This month we have been looking at the secret, mysterious world of fungi. Fungi come in all shapes and sizes, from the familiar mushroom shape to balls and brackets, but these are just the fruiting bodies which pop up once or twice a year.

Fungi play a huge role in the release of nutrients held within wood and other organic matter debris, and are essential in the recycling process, making those nutrients and minerals that are locked away, available again.

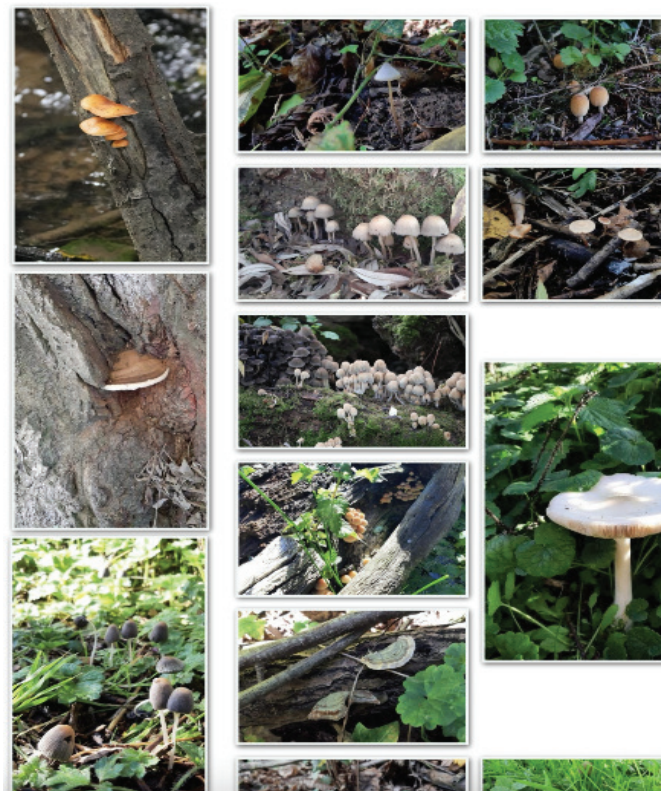
The main part of the fungus, the part that lives on long after the fruiting bodies have gone, is hidden within the medium that the fruiting body grows from, whether that's the soil, rotting wood, dung or even nuts and seeds. It's a dense, tangled network of threads (called hyphae) that together are known as a mycelium. These networks can stretch for metres through the soil, connecting fungi to the roots of trees, grasses and other plants.

Most of the photographs were taken by Ben Acton, so a big thank you to him for his efforts in finding and recording these. Up to now we have not included fungi in our species spreadsheet but from this month onwards Peter will record the

positively identified species on a new tab on his sightings spreadsheet.

Thanks to Ben, and with the help of one of our member experts, the fungi shown opposite have been positively identified, but it would appear the world of fungi (as I always thought it to be) is rather complicated, as explained in the extract shown below, taken from an email from our fungi expert:

'Nice collection of photos, but I can warn you straight away that it's extremely difficult to identify anything from photos as you can't always get an accurate idea of the size of the fungus and often the one defining feature is not obvious. It's always helpful to be able to see the underside of the fungus - difficult if you don't want to pick it - but sometimes it's crucial!'



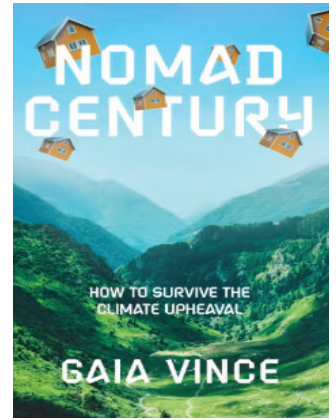
I, for one, will be looking out for more specimens on my walks around the reserve, and following the guidelines on the previous page when I take photographs for identification.

## WHAT TO READ: *Nomad Century* by Gaia Vince

reviewed by Allen Lane

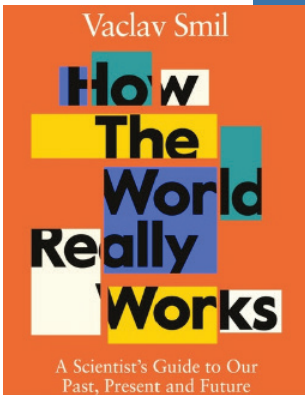
GAIA VINCE won the royal Society's Science Book prize for her previous book, and now she takes a long hard look at our possible future. In her view it is likely that the average global temperature rise will exceed 2°C in 2050, even with our net zero policy - the level heat that results will melt more ice creating more warming as the exposed land and sea absorb the sun's rays. Temperatures will rise to the point that crops will fail and humans will find it difficult to work outside; the inevitable result will be mass human migration.

We are facing our own species emergency, and people will move towards higher latitudes where living conditions will remain suitable. Vince asserts that with every degree of temperature rise a billion people will be displaced: 'The quadruple threat of drought, heat, wildfires and flooding will utterly reshape Earth's human geography . . . (but) we can plan for this unavoidable migration while we return the planet to a fully habitable state', if we accept that migration is not the problem - it is the solution. In the aftermath of Brexit, the government had to relent and grant visas to the migrant workers desperately needed to harvest our summer crops. Cutting back on such migrants proved to be a chimera. Don't forget, too, our population is getting older, and our young people are reproducing at less than replacement rate; only new young migrants contributing to the tax base will enable us to take care of our aging population. As Mary Roach writes: this is the 'most important book I imagine I'll ever read.'



## WHAT TO READ: *How the World Works* by Vaclav Smil

reviewed by Colin Summerhayes



VACLAV SMIL is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and one of the world's top thinkers. In his latest book he explores the fundamental realities governing our prosperity and offers a reality check, a heavy counter to the wishful thinking that informs the climate debate. Smil points out the magnitude of the world's current material, energy and food system and its undeniable dependence on an enormous fossil-fuel-based infrastructure. He reminds us that at current rates of introduction of wind and solar energy it will take decades until renewable sources can replace fossil fuels for electricity, and more decades again before alternative sources (such as hydrogen) will drive our cars, ships and aeroplanes

He reminds us that modern civilization is supported by four essential pillars: steel, ammonia, cement and plastics. Even with abundant renewable energy we would still have to develop large-scale processes to produce these basic materials. As yet, such large processes show no signs of emerging. Even if they did so, it would take enormous efforts to make them global, and there is no indication that such a transformation of our economies is on the cards. Electric cars are making an appearance but we are far from the days when all cars will be electric. 'The high relative share and the scale of our dependence on fossil carbon make any rapid substitutions impossible . . . based on engineering and economic realities.' The International Energy Agency sees the share of fossil fuels declining from 80% of global energy demand in 2019 to 72% by 2040, though with aggressive policies this could fall to 56; the rest of our global energy supply will still come from fossil fuels by 2050. Unless we can achieve net zero by that time (extracting the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere as we emit), this means we face a hot future and a raft of new concerns for human survival.

Smil is a pragmatist. He is convinced that humans are clever enough to get themselves out of serious difficulties, but there is no denying that we are in for a rough ride as our use of fossil fuels gradually declines. He also warns that AI is not the answer, it's a distraction - if you are listening too closely to techno-optimists, remember - caveat emptor (buyer beware).



# COP27: Successes & Failures

By Alastair Atkinson

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THE GLOBAL political system met in Egypt in November for the latest COP (Conference of the Parties). The need to act has never been clearer, and the backdrop to this meeting was a series of emergencies relating to Covid, conflict and climate. The scene was set at the start. Global average temperature rise is already 1.1°C compared to pre industrial levels. People around the world are experiencing the effects of climate change, from heatwaves and droughts to floods and superstorms. Only the wealthiest countries can (so far) cope. As Sherry Rehman, Minister of Climate Change, Pakistan, implored "Vulnerability shouldn't be a death sentence." For many of us watching COP27 from afar, it felt like we were still inching backwards rather than making the necessary strides forwards.

More progress was made in mitigating the impact of climate change than in reducing the causes of climate change. The urgency to do more will therefore only increase in the coming months and years. Here are five key takeaways:

**Loss and Damage agreement.** The biggest achievement of the conference, especially when it's combined with the funding for mitigation measures. Whilst some funds have always been available for schemes to cut carbon and adapt to climate change, no funds had been available until now to repair the losses.

**Is 1.5C still alive?** The Emissions Gap Report 2022, released by UNEP just before COP27, painted a bleak picture, finding that without rapid societal transformation, there is no credible pathway to a max 1.5°C future. For each fraction of a degree that temperatures rise, storms, droughts and other extreme weather events become more severe.

**Countries failed to decisively move away from fossil fuels.** Countries repeated the "phase-down-of-coal" phrase featured in last year's agreement at COP26 in Glasgow. While the final text does promote renewables, it also highlights "low emission" energy, which critics say refers to natural gas - still a source of greenhouse gases.

**Deforestation commitment.** The Forests and Climate Leaders' Partnership was launched on behalf of a group of ambitious countries to drive delivery of the 2030 target to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030; this programme covers 30% of the global forest.

**So what should the UK be doing?** the Climate Commission has produced a Summary report but a key action will be actually delivering the UK's contributions to the Paris Agreement. The UK must implement its Net Zero Strategy to deliver its legislated domestic targets and international commitments. It must strengthen its response on climate adaptation, which remains weak, with an ambitious, action-oriented third National Adaptation Programme in 2023.

**Role of the private sector.** There were more private sector companies attending COP this year, which is a reflection of the increased importance of the role of private organisations in mobilising finance and delivering climate mitigation on the ground. One clear success of this approach is the cost of renewable energy which is - nationally and globally - becoming the cheapest option, so removing the 'assumed green subsidy'.

# The Future of Bus Travel in Guildford

By Adrian Thompson

GEF MEMBERS recently attended a very interesting talk by Rob Vince, Key Account Manager for Stagecoach South, regarding:

1. Is Guildford getting the bus service it needs?
2. Does the proposed new bus station allow Guildford's transition to bus travel?
3. How can we encourage more people to travel by bus?

It was really helpful to hear views - some surprising - from the perspective of a key bus operator.

- Stagecoach South started to operate electric buses in 2018, but services were impacted significantly by the pandemic. They plan to decarbonise by 2035.
- Patronage has recovered but is only recently back to 90% of pre-pandemic levels and only 60% for concessionary fares.
- Staff shortages (about 20%) are still causing reduced frequency of services. It takes 12 weeks to train new staff.
- Surrey County Council are responsible for the Guildford bus networks and have launched a [consultation](#) that ends on 6th January.
- Surrey County Council were unable to get funding for their plans despite the Government having published a National Bus strategy in March 2021.
- In September 2022, the Government announced a £2 bus fare cap for the first 3 months of 2023.
- Not surprisingly, Stagecoach would like to see more priority given to bus funding and services as part of a long-term strategy to reduce car travel and encourage improvements in bus services. Examples of help include more bus lanes and better signal optimization that would encourage Guildford residents to use cars less. This would require buses to be more reliable and comfortable.

Most would agree that existing bus station facilities are unsatisfactory, having been underfunded for years, and the North Street Redevelopment plans include significant changes. Unfortunately, both Stagecoach and Surrey County Council have significant concerns about the impact that the proposed redevelopment plans will have on future services. They have made these points strongly, but will they be heeded? It seems that there is a real need for councils and the government to work more strategically to provide the framework for bus services to recover from the pandemic.

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Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future. Join us in our work around the town and have this newsletter posted or emailed to you four times a year. Forum membership is only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, while for age 21-25 it's £5 and for under 21s it's free. New members are warmly welcomed! Please contact Adrian Thompson or Sarah Smithies with any queries.

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Please send all newsletter submissions for our spring edition (articles or photographs) to Isabel Davies by (February) at the latest!