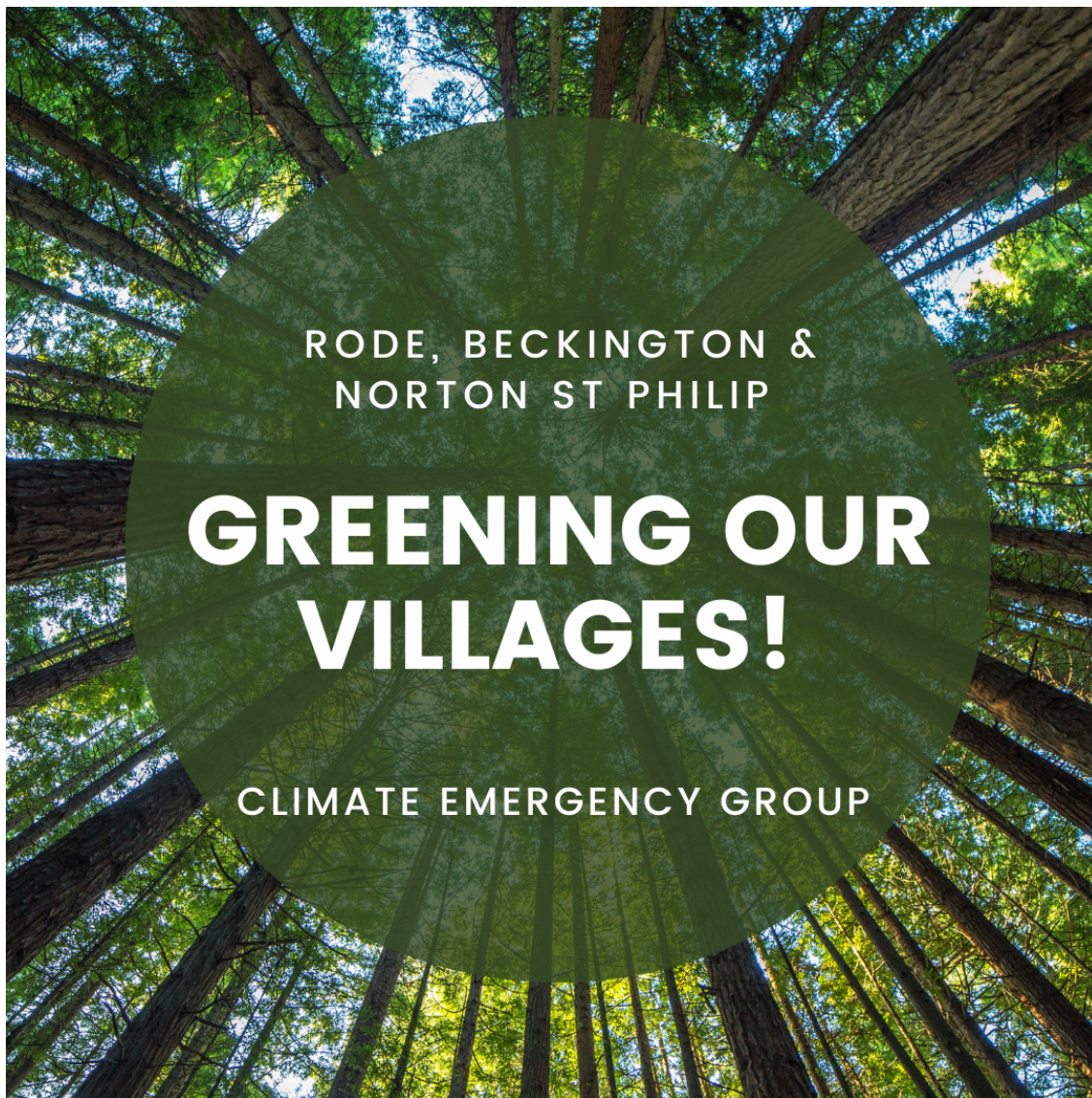


[View this email in your browser](#)



Welcome to the August Climate Emergency Group Newsletter

Since the last Newsletter we've had two significant political events - one local, one national.

The first of these was the election of Sarah Dyke as our new constituency MP. We were obviously very grateful to Sarah for speaking at our *Great Big Green Week* event in June....and, as Executive Member for Environment & Climate Change on Somerset Council, Sarah is obviously committed to the Climate Emergency battle. She has already made some fairly strong statements in relation to pollution of the River Frome as a result of sewage overflows (which is good to hear - the state of our rivers and seas is a national disgrace), and will no doubt stand up for climate causes in Westminster.

the North Sea...."A dark day for life on Earth", as Chris Packham said.

Hopefully this newsletter will cast a little sunshine to combat that darkness (although I should warn you that it includes a few of my holiday snaps towards the end!)

Happy reading, Jim

jim.mcauliffe@btinternet.com

PS: There are now 80 newsletter subscribers...if you know someone who might be interested in joining us, feel free to forward this issue. New subscribers can sign-up here:

<https://mailchi.mp/4b503e0ba20c/initial-sign-up?fbclid=IwAR2N42N4AEBZCnvzdJNHpu1na0KPFv4s0PZdYK7hJiwwKLm45ojMwGruF20>

Proposed Solar Farm in Rode

The planning application for the proposed new Solar Farm in Rode has been slightly delayed, and Low Carbon (the applicant) is now expecting to submit in the second half of this month. It is therefore likely that the public consultation period will begin around the end of August.

You may be aware that Somerset Council has recently rejected an application for a large solar farm near Watchet in West Somerset. The key reasons for the rejection were visual impact, and the quality of the land (which was deemed to be "Best and Most Valuable").

The decision notice, and accompanying documentation, is available on the Somerset Council website (follow the link below), then select "West Somerset" as the area, and key in the Ref No: 3/39/21/028:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/view-and-comment-on-a-planning-application/>



Visit a Heat Pump!

If the UK is to have any realistic chance of meeting its Net Zero commitments, a significant proportion of the population needs to de-carbonise their domestic heating. The government has already placed a ban on new gas boilers from 2035...and whilst this seems a long way off, if you live in an old, poorly insulated property, it's worth starting to think through the issues involved fairly soon. And of course, the more people who move to heat pumps as soon as possible, the better.

With this in mind, the UK innovation charity, NESTA, has set up "Visit a Heat Pump". The project is being supported by Retrofit Somerset, and the idea is to help normalise heat pumps and encourage people on the pathway to decarbonisation.

If you already have a heat pump, you can sign up as a host. Visitors will then be able to come and see your heat pump, ask questions, etc - the booking process is handled by NESTA, based on your availability. Those interested in visiting also sign up and will be told when there is a heat pump to visit in their area. As this is a new project, it might be a while until visits start, and there is no obligation to continue offering to be a host. Full details can be found here:

<https://www.visitaheatpump.com/>



Community Tree-planting Grants

The Tree Council's Branching Out Fund is now accepting applications for grants of up to £2,500 for community tree-planting projects. More info via the link below...the deadline for applications is 3 December 2023.

<https://treecouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/planting-and-care/our-grants/branching-out/>

Vallis farm

S O M E R S E T

Vallis Farm (including new local veg-box scheme)

In the past few years, various market gardens including Root Connections (2018), Frome Field 2 Fork (2021), not to mention Vallis Veg (2008), have sprung up in and around Frome as part of a wider movement to produce nutrient-dense food for local

responsible attitudes to fruit and veg production. Although, having officially launched its veg box scheme this summer – which includes a weekly supply of chemical-free veg, pickles and preserves all from their market garden – food plays only a part in its grander commitment to preserving biodiversity.

As well as food and biodiversity, the farm's main tenets extend to a place of 'community' and a 'centre for learning'. Though both are related, the latter involves a programme of things like scything courses and apprenticeship schemes (four people are currently working on the land as part of their horticulture studies), while the former is a work in progress that seeks to bring together artists and makers – including potters, herbalists, and fibre-spinners – as a place to practise and share their work.

Vallis Farm is developing into a lot of things – as a market and ornamental garden, as a place to learn new skills and a place to perform them, as a place for events, as a place to stay, and as a place to decompress.

Check out the veg-box scheme via the link below (they deliver to Rode & Beckington and other BA11 postcode areas outside Frome, with a £3 supplement):

<https://www.vallisfarm.co.uk/themarketgarden>



Frome Bike Project - update

Frome Bike Project has (finally!) been granted planning permission to set up a workshop at Station Approach.

A team of volunteers have already started work clearing the site; this will be followed by containers and a workshop from early August. To find the site, follow the path round the back past City Plumbing. Direction signs will be up as soon as possible. There's a lot to do, and if you're keen on helping with the build out of the space, let them know as there's a BIG list of jobs to be getting

constructing the workshop base and putting up the building itself.

Once fully operational FBP will be offering bike servicing, a shared workshop where you can use their tools and share skills, refurbished bike sales, volunteering opportunities and much more including group rides and e-bikes for hire. Check out our website for more details of FBP's plan:

<https://www.fromebikeproject.org/>



Vegan diets result in much lower climate-heating emissions

Eating a vegan diet massively reduces the damage to the environment caused by food production, the most comprehensive analysis to date has concluded.

The research showed that vegan diets resulted in 75% less climate-heating emissions, water pollution and land use than diets in which more than 100g of meat a day was eaten. Vegan diets also cut the destruction of wildlife by 66% and water use by 54%, the study found.

Read the article below for more detail:

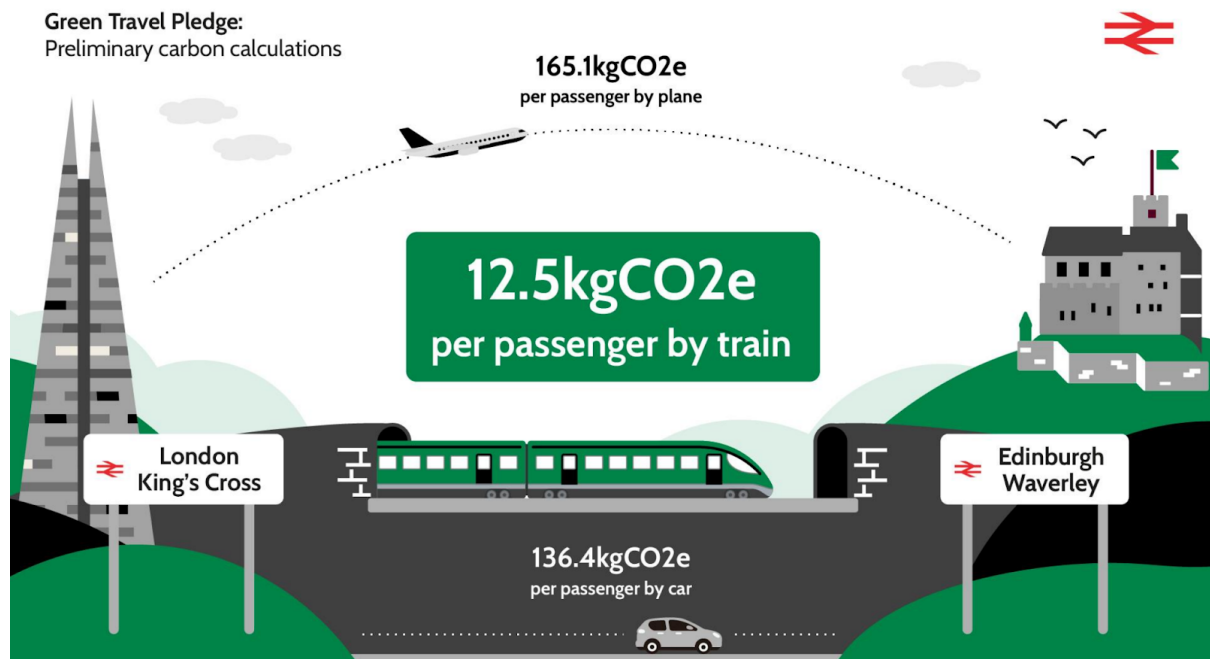
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jul/20/vegan-diet-cuts-environmental-damage-climate-heating-emissions-study>

The Energy Saving Trust has just issued a new guide to solar panels, you can download it here:
<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Solar-guide-July-2023.pdf>

Finally....A holiday in Norway - by train!

As Southern Europe is devastated by forest fires and suffers record-breaking temperatures as the planet inexorably warms, it's definitely time to think a lot more seriously about alternatives to flying (amongst many other things, of course). I'm afraid I'm no paragon of virtue here, but we've begun to do some serious long-distance rail travel (last year we went to a wedding in Catalonia by train, and discovered you can relatively easily get from Barcelona to Rode in a day!)

Interestingly, recent research has shown that train travel emits THIRTEEN times less carbon than flying, and TEN times less than travelling by car. This detailed analysis (undertaken by the consultancy, Thrust Carbon) is more accurate than previous studies, and indicates that train travel is even better for the environment (compared to the car or plane) than we previously thought.



But travelling by train has always been more than just an environmental choice. Firstly, it cuts out all the airport agro, and makes travelling seem civilised once again. And with train travel you feel like you're exploring, rather than just enduring the journey. So, earlier this year I contemplated my options for getting to Norway, where I'd booked a short kayaking & wild-camping break in the fjords.

By far the quickest and cheapest option was to fly to Oslo, and take the train to Voss

countries in just over a week. I should say straightaway that I'm fortunate that my work nowadays is very flexible, and I had the time to allow for the two and a half days' travel each way (in fact, ideally I would have taken longer – my journey gave just the briefest of glimpses of some wonderful places). And, although train travel by and large is cheaper in continental Europe (compared to the UK), after factoring in overnight accommodation, the total cost was significantly more than if I'd flown.

All rail travel to Europe has to start with Eurostar at St Pancras, so it was there that I began my journey with the evening service to Amsterdam. The direct train delivers you to the centre of the Dutch capital in around 4 hours - in time for a beer before bedding down at Pension Homeland (which I can thoroughly recommend – for location, cleanliness, and the general laid-back vibe!). The next day I made my way to the northern German port of Emden, and boarded the ferry to Kristiansand. It's an 18 hour overnight crossing – but forget any reference-points you may have to cross-channel ferries. This is more like a cruise! The ship is huge, with several very decent restaurants and a great theatre (where I watched a multi-lingual bingo/cabaret show – all announcements in German, Dutch, Norwegian and English!).



Helpfully, the ferry terminal at Kristiansand is in the centre of the town (and conveniently just a few hundred metres from the railway station). But Kristiansand itself is well worth a stay – there’s a lively street market (plenty of fish!), pleasant “old town”, a cathedral, port, gardens and a spectacular arts centre.

In the afternoon I took the train to Stavanger – and discovered another Norwegian gem. Again, the railway station is very central...a ten minute stroll takes you to the harbour front, with myriad vibrant cafés and bars on the quaysides. Ideally I would have had several days to enjoy the town, with its cobbled streets, white clapper-board houses, and fascinating maritime history.



However, next morning I needed to catch the early ferry to Bergen...and an opportunity for a leisurely 5 hour cruise up the Norwegian coast. By booking early, I got my ferry ticket for €44...and again, it's more like a mini-cruise than a ferry journey. The sea was like a mill-pond, but I imagine even in high winds it would be reasonably calm, as most of the route weaves in and out of islands, hugging the coast.



After a brief walk around Bergen (a slight disappointment, after Kristiansand and Stavanger) I hopped on the train to Voss – ready for my long weekend kayaking [I won't go into detail here, suffice to say the scenery was extraordinary – and the whole experience very memorable. I booked through Much Better Adventures (<https://www.muchbetteradventures.com/>) – check them out – they provide adventure-based holidays all over the world in conjunction with small companies, helping to sustain local communities).



I opted for a different route back, taking the train from Voss to Oslo (which, incidentally, is a memorable journey on its own), and the next day travelled to Hamburg via Copenhagen. I'd visited both the latter cities several times, and can thoroughly recommend them for either a long weekend or a lengthier break – both have substantial cultural offers, with plenty to explore in the surrounding regions.

The final leg of my journey took me from Hamburg to Brussels (via the splendid city of Aachen), and then to London on the afternoon Eurostar. Amazingly, every train and ferry was pretty much on time (a couple actually early), and there were precisely zero travel glitches – at least until I reached Chippenham! Fortunately the delay here was only around 30 minutes – a tree had come down near Westbury, and traffic on that line had been diverted, causing congestion between Chippenham and Bath.

My top tips for train travel are:

1. Book early! Fares can be incredibly cheap if you book 3 or 4 months ahead (most rail companies don't allow you to book much further than that – so start searching as soon as the seats go on sale). As an example, my advance purchase ticket from Hamburg to Brussels was €29...compared to the price on the day of €136.
2. Use the relevant national carriers' apps. These will provide the most up-to-date journey info, and also store your ticket electronically. The Norwegian Rail app (vy) is

3. If, like me, you're going to be spending a decent amount of time on the train, take a few books – ideally with some relevance to the countries you're visiting. I had a few physical books, plus several lined up on the Audible app. I also downloaded a bunch of podcasts and Youtube videos, which helped with some of the less interesting parts of the trip.

4. Use the buffet cars. In almost every case these are far superior to anything we have in the UK (indeed, GWR seem to have got rid of them entirely). And they're generally quite reasonable...sitting at a table with a sandwich and a beer, watching the world go by is one of life's simple pleasures!

Useful resources:

The Man in Seat 61 website: an absolute treasure-trove of information and inspiration for world-wide rail travel....but especially good for travel in Europe
www.seat61.com

Europe by Rail – The Definitive Guide. This book showcases 50 classic routes across Europe, and provides practical information on the best ways to book, where to stay, etc, etc. Check it out at www.europebyrail.eu – the website also contains updates and more information to help inspire you to travel by train.

Alistair Sawday's travel website also contains plenty to inspire. For example, check out this link: <https://www.sawdays.co.uk/detour/journeys/europes-most-spectacular-train-journeys/>

Footnote: The rewilded area in front of Rode Memorial Hall is showing signs of life!!



Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
Rode Climate Emergency Group · 17 High Street · Rode · Frome, Somerset BA11 6NZ · United Kingdom

