



PLANET VS PLASTICS
It's time to clean up our planet – EARTHDAY.ORG reveals how you can help

'BE ORGANIC'
Jo Wood shares how she turned her rock 'n' roll lifestyle (and health) around by switching to organic

IT'S NOT EASY BEING A SOLUTIONIST
Jonathon Porritt explores whether hope has been politicised, and how to avoid falling into despair

PACKAGING ORGANIC
Soil Association looks at why the organic standard permits synthetic materials in packaged goods

EARTH DAY 2024



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Welcome to My Green Pod Magazine!



Katie Hill, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
katie@mygreenpod.com

The theme for this year's Earth Day (22 April) is Planet vs Plastics – and I can't think of a hotter topic. Plastic is everywhere – in our clothes, food, water, blood and even in the air we breathe. More plastic has been produced in the last 10 years than in the entire 20th century, and the industry shows no sign of slowing.

The goal for Earth Day 2024 is to unite students, parents, businesses, governments, churches, unions, individuals and NGOs in a call for the end of the use and production of plastics – for the sake of human and planetary health. EARTHDAY.ORG is demanding a 60% reduction in the production of plastics by 2040, with an ultimate goal of building a plastic-free future. Its president, Kathleen Rogers, has described the campaign as 'a call to arms, a demand that we act now to end the scourge of plastics and safeguard the health of every living being upon our planet.'

Formal negotiations for an international and legally binding instrument on plastic pollution – also referred to as a UN treaty to end plastic pollution – began in November 2022, with completion expected by the end of 2024.

In the meantime there are things you can do today that will help to reduce the amount of plastic in our streets, parks, rivers and oceans; joining a cleanup and auditing the brands on the packaging you collect can help put pressure on businesses, while writing to your MP will tell your elected representative this issue matters at a local level, too.

You can also make a difference by supporting brands that use conscious and low-impact packaging – but don't forget to check the product ingredients! Greenwash in this area is rife; 'plastic free' is no guarantee the product inside is not just as toxic to the environment as a plastic wrapper would be.

For this issue we spoke to people who are addressing the packaging problem without compromising on the ethical credentials of what's inside the packet. I hope you get some inspiration that will help you to make a difference – big or small – this Earth Day.



ABOUT US

My Green Pod is an independent, family-run UK business, founded by Katie Hill and Jarvis Smith. We want to share the real stories behind the brands and people working tirelessly to offer ethical alternatives to mainstream products and services. You might not see these options on the high street and they may not be the first to appear in online searches. But they are on mygreenpod.com. Use the search bar to find conscious lifestyle inspiration – and you could save some cash along the way!

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The estimated annual cost of plastic-related health illnesses in the USA is **\$250 billion**

Less than **9%** of all the plastic ever produced has been recycled



Polyester accounted for **54%** of all clothing in 2021

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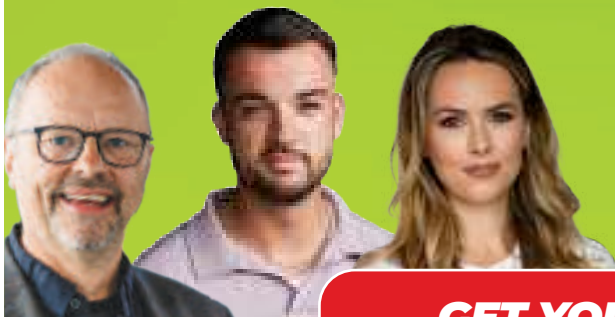
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PLANET VS PLASTICS

EARTHDAY.ORG's **Michael Karapetian & Evan Raskin** explain why it's time to clean up the plastics industry – and how you can help



Today, there is no escaping plastic pollution. It can be found in every corner of the world, from the remotest parts of Alaska and the Sahara to the Amazon rainforest and the freezing isolation of Antarctica. We've all heard laments that plastics have been found on the tallest mountains and in the deepest trenches of the oceans – and the sad fact is that it's true.

PLASTIC PRODUCTION

Microplastics, the tiny slivers of plastic that the naked eye cannot see, are even inside our own bodies; they've been associated with a whole range of health issues, including hormone disruption, Alzheimer's, reproductive issues, obesity, cancers, male infertility, strokes and much more.

This environmental and public health crisis is why EARTHDAY.ORG (EDO) chose 'Planet vs Plastics' as the theme for Earth Day 2024, and is calling for a 60% reduction in plastic production by 2040.

Considering that half of all the world's plastic is single use, this is not an overly ambitious goal. It's what the planet needs.

POLLUTER ACCOUNTABILITY

EDO started the Great Global Cleanup (GGC) in a bid to tackle the exploding environmental issue of plastic pollution head on. Since its inception in 2019, hundreds of thousands of volunteers across 192 countries have removed over 160 million pounds of rubbish, demonstrating just how much can be accomplished when everyday people band together.

This Earth Day, EDO will again be activating worldwide cleanups – but this time with the intention of not just cleaning up, but also holding the real polluters to account.

We are inviting our amazing cleanup partners and volunteers to consider taking part in Brand Trash Audits; this involves logging the type of plastic rubbish collected, the brand name on every single item and how much of it they are cleaning up.

In November 2023, the New York Attorney General's office sued PepsiCo for polluting the Buffalo River; the result of Trash Brand Audits conducted by another NGO served as part of the evidence used against PepsiCo. This is what inspired us to do the same type of audit.

Information about how to do these Trash Brand Audits, plus the Data Card sheets you will need to do them, will soon be released on our website, allowing any cleanup crew, anywhere in the world, to take part. Everyone is invited.

ACTIVATING LEGISLATION

The Trash Brand Audits build on a long history of Earth Day activism that has led to institutional change. The very first Earth Day – led by Denis Hayes, one of the founders of EARTHDAY.ORG – took place back in 1970, and mobilised 20 million Americans to take part in nationwide protests.

Their actions led to some of America's most important environmental legislation, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the founding of the Environmental Protection Agency – all three of which form the backbone of US conservation policy to this day.

Over the decades, Earth Day has evolved into the largest secular observance in the world, mobilising over 1 billion people globally every year to engage in meaningful action for our planet.

SPOTLIGHT ON ARMENIA

This year we will see a massive cleanup in Malaysia thanks to the participation of 200,000 volunteers in Penang Island, and we're delighted that 3,000 students in Zimbabwe are planning to clean up and enjoy a music festival in the process.

But the highlight is the very first official Great Global Cleanup in Yerevan; the beautiful capital city of Armenia is older than Rome and has one of the largest growing environmental movements in the Caucasus region.

We are working with our partners at Maqoor and the Armenia Tree Project to engage hundreds of volunteers to pick up litter and take part in a conference at the American University of Armenia. This conference will highlight the many NGOs working in Armenia to continue to develop this country's ecological landscape. It comes on the heels of the government of Armenia committing to doubling the country's tree coverage by 2050. It has already planted over 8 million trees towards this goal.

The Great Global Cleanup really is a core driver of volunteer action for Earth Day globally and we have no intention of stopping any time soon. Yet we are

If you're ready to get involved, our Global Cleanup Map already hosts 5,000 public cleanup events worldwide, meaning finding a cleanup near you is as simple as logging on to EARTHDAY.ORG and looking at our map. If you can't find a local cleanup, why not host one yourself?

THE HISTORY OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

It would be remiss to denounce plastic pollution without acknowledging how we ended up here. Back in the 1950s, when plastic first became available, nobody could predict where it would lead – but last year alone, globally we produced 400 million US tons of it.

Less than 9% of all the plastic ever produced has been recycled because the plastic-producing industry has no interest in recycling it; it is cheaper for industry to keep creating new, virgin plastics.

If we continue on the present trajectory, by 2060 the plastic industrial complex will triple production to 1,200 million tons of plastic a year.

They won't take responsibility for the plastic crisis they are creating until we force them to – which is why taking part in a Brand Trash Audit is so important.

The fossil fuel industry is desperate to see plastic production and usage rise because it needs to keep selling oil as we move away from oil to power our cars – perhaps why Exxon is one of the world's biggest producers of single-use plastic. The fossil fuel and plastic industries are one and the same.

BE THE CHANGE

Ultimately, we can all play a role in physically cleaning up plastic trash but we can and should also advocate for an end to the production, proliferation and pollution of plastic. A simple phone call to your MP can make a huge difference, and this type of action has been the driving force for change since the beginning of the environmental movement.

When the first Earth Day occurred in 1970, it inspired millions of people to make a stand. Those people demanded a better future for themselves and their planet, and kickstarted a monumental change that shifted environmental governance for ever. It created the modern environmental movement as we know it today.

So don't let their work be in vain and don't be downhearted. Get involved and take action; join a



LEFT TO RIGHT:
Young volunteer at a beach cleanup in Lagos (2022); Michael Karapetian being interviewed by Colm Flynn at LDI World Annual Summit in Estonia (2023); a cleanup at Thol Lake in India; Michael Karapetian with Merle Liivand, The Estonian Mermaid (2023); cleaning up the streets in Alabama; Michael Karapetian at an Apple-sponsored cleanup (2023)



longing for the day our volunteers no longer need to pick up the plastic industry's mess.

THE POWER TO EFFECT CHANGE

As well as bagging tonnes of rubbish, cleanups empower individuals to get involved and bring about real change beyond their own front door. Discussions about climate change and the need to protect the environment can leave us all exhausted, overwhelmed, anxious and confused, but we've found that taking part in a cleanup can really help.

Cleanups have the power to engage people from all demographics, across the political divide. Anyone can look at a beach, river, lake or park that is covered in plastic and decide to take action. Seeing a carpet of plastic bottles, torn styrofoam and discarded food packaging triggers us all. The GGC shows people they have the power to change this ugly landscape for the better.

Taking part in a cleanup can also strengthen our 'green muscle memory' and lead to further action and advocacy. We call it the 'GGC action switch' as it seems to inspire a need to stand up for the planet!

We have been force-fed plastics and we must break this cycle of addiction – for the good of our own health, if not the planet's.

Most of us forget that plastic is not inert; it breaks down into micro and nano plastics that we all inhale and ingest every day – through the water we drink, the synthetic fast-fashion clothes we wear and the plastic-wrapped food we eat. Even the dust in our own homes is contaminated with them.

These tiny fragments of plastic – and plastic chemicals like BPA and phthalates that leach out of them – have been found in the human bloodstream, our urine, the arteries of our heart, our lungs and our brains. They have even been found in the human placenta. The health consequences of all this involuntary plastic consumption cost the US alone an estimated \$250 billion annually as it treats the array of plastic-related health illnesses out there.

Not content with wrecking our health and our environment, plastic is also playing a part in wrecking the climate. In fact, the production of plastic accounts for 4% of all greenhouse gases – and that's set to hit 12% by 2060.

GGC event, do a Trash Brand Audit and write letters to your elected officials demanding action to curb the plastic industry.

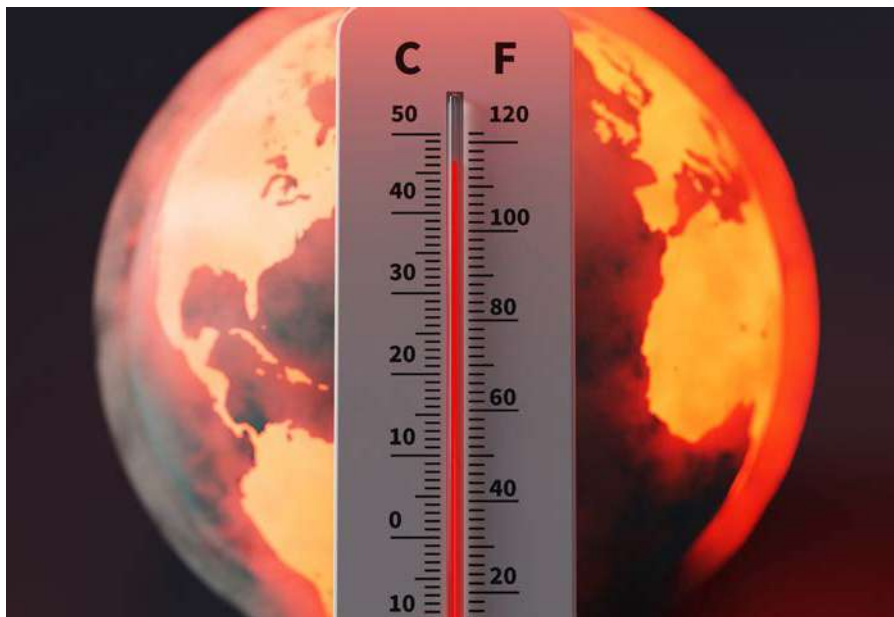
Sign our Global Plastic Treaty, reject buying fast fashion, tell your local supermarkets to curb their obsession with wrapping and packaging our food in plastic, stop using single-use plastic bags, bottles and utensils.

Be conscious of how much plastic you're using and throwing away every single day, and be the change you want to see. We can end plastic pollution – but we will only do it together.



Find out more

- Join a cleanup and get information about Brand Trash Audits at EARTHDAY.ORG



It's not easy being a SOLUTIONIST

Jonathon Porritt explores whether hope has been politicised – and how we can avoid falling into despair

Let's spare a thought today for the 'stubborn optimists' and 'indefatigable solutionists' who have taken upon themselves the critical task of holding us all back from despair at today's ever-worsening Climate Emergency.

Their task gets harder and harder as the data from the climate front line gets grimmer and grimmer.

With El Niño stoking the flames of our rapidly warming world throughout 2023, providing that reassurance got somewhat complicated. And as the emblematic threshold of 'no more than 1.5°C increase above pre-industrial levels' also went up in smoke at the end of the year (hopefully on a temporary basis, with the El Niño effect already abating) it got very, very complicated indeed.

THINGS AREN'T GRIM ENOUGH

Up until around 2015, I was one of those indefatigable solutionists – albeit with a slightly darker edge! But it became apparent that today's incumbency (massively powerful fossil fuel companies, standing shoulder to shoulder with massively corrupted and compromised politicians and their billionaire media backers) had literally no intention of pivoting towards a genuinely just and sustainable world. So I began to question some of the dominant tropes in the solutionists' worldview.

That progressive companies can 'offset' the power of that evil incumbency. They can't. That all the technology we need is right there to drive radical decarbonisation of our economies. It is, but that won't happen fast enough on this incumbency's watch. That the majority of people see the threat of accelerating climate change and want our politicians to act before it's too late, but they have little appetite for engaging politically to ensure that's what our politicians are obliged to do.

In short, things aren't grim enough yet to defeat that incumbency. You may think I'm exaggerating, but just get your brain around these few words from the CEO of Saudi Aramco back in March: 'We should abandon the fantasy of phasing out oil and gas, and instead invest in them adequately, reflecting realistic demand assumptions.'

My question to all stubborn optimists and indefatigable solutionists is this: why do you suppose the CEO of every single progressive company you know wasn't lining up to condemn this self-serving insanity? Could it possibly be they're ultra-cautions line-toers?

Without that readiness to stand up and be counted, standard corporate solutionism offers no reassurance. Few solutions. No grounds for optimism – stubborn or otherwise.

This would appear to leave us with a difficult choice: hang in there with the hope-mongers, however naïve their political instincts may be, or throw in your lot with the doom-mongers, however disastrous that might prove to be – both psychologically (on a personal basis) and politically.

HOPE – AND MORE

Fortunately, it ain't that binary! The truth of it is that we do indeed need everything on the solutionists' agenda. We need all that technology, and a lot more besides. And that revolution is well and truly underway: investments in renewables accounted for an astonishing 86% of all new capacity in 2023. I've heard Mark Jacobson (author of *No Miracles Needed: How Today's Technology Can Save Our Climate*) speak on a number of occasions – and I'm a BELIEVER!

We still need all those progressive companies to help smooth the path to a sustainable global economy. I've just spent the last 30 years working with some of the best of them, and I know what they could do if they weren't so cravenly enthralled by today's all-powerful shareholder-first capitalism.

And, yes, guess what? People really do expect more of their politicians. And as things get grimmer (which they will), it's still possible that they will rise up to protect literally everything that matters to them in their lives.

It all comes down to that: will we see a massive 'rise up' social tipping point kicking in before a dozen or more physical tipping points take us into irreversible changes? Or will that moment come too late?

That possibility is why I'm doubling down on my criticism of the stubborn optimists and indefatigable solutionists peddling their hopium in a way that is detached from political reality. We have to make sure hope is not being deployed as a mechanism to maintain the status quo.

FINDING YOUR SWEET SPOT

The author David Lambert is keen to strip away all the illusions around the standard hope trope: 'Recently, the insistence on hope seems to be getting political. That beautiful word now seems to have a shadow, a doppelgänger, and I have started to wonder why. There is something not quite right about the optimism and positivity espoused by business and political leaders; something almost coercive. And likewise, there seems to be a new level of vehemence around insisting we must have hope.'

I can't pretend that those words don't make me uncomfortable. Personally, I often find myself conflicted trying to keep the balance between authentic hope and gratuitously disempowering despair. All I know is that we all have an obligation, right now, to find our very own 'sweet spot between hope and despair' – and then live by that as bravely as possible, in everything we do.

Find out more

■ Jonathon Porritt is an author, campaigner, founder-director of Forum for the Future and former chair of the UK Sustainable Development Commission (2000-2009). Read more at jonathonporritt.com

'There is something not quite right about the optimism and positivity espoused by business and political leaders; something almost coercive.'

DAVID LAMBERT

AUTHOR, 'HOPELESS': SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT HOPE AND MODERNITY

Infrastructures for Peace

Madeleine Mosse, CEO at Plan for Peace, explains how building a more peaceful world ‘happens on every level’

As we look at the state of the world this Earth Day, it’s easy to feel disheartened. War is surging around the world, bringing mass deaths, pushing people out of their homes and disrupting food production and economic supply chains.

Meanwhile, climate change is amplifying threats such as food insecurity, water scarcity and resource fears, while also spurring migration.

In the face of such large-scale suffering, you may be wondering how you can make a difference.

HOW TO BUILD PEACE

At Plan for Peace, we support societies to build Infrastructures for Peace. Just as countries invest in the infrastructure of war – spending huge sums on military hardware, the training of personnel and strategies for defence – we demonstrate how by investing in human resources, mechanisms and policies that build trust and connection, de-escalate violence and facilitate dialogue, we can effectively build peace.

Elements of an Infrastructure for Peace differ in every context. They can involve developing national social cohesion strategies, establishing peace committees that ease tensions, supporting inter-community dialogue or putting in place effective early warning systems. They could encompass new institutions such as Peace Museums or Ministries for Peace, and reforms across education and the security forces.

The important thing is that peace is systematically strengthened at every level of society – from grassroots to the government – and, crucially, that it is shaped by local actors.

PEACE THROUGH CONNECTION

This approach was transformative in post-apartheid South Africa, where Nelson Mandela led the formation of local peace councils, the Peace and Reconciliation Commission and other initiatives as part of a concerted and systematic peace effort that many credit with preventing civil war.

Another way of looking at an Infrastructure for Peace is to see it as a well-functioning web of relationships; where people feel connected, we know that peace can flourish.

Often, as was the case in Northern Ireland, it isn’t just political will that sustains peace, but the compounded quality of thousands of positive micro-relationships between people and groups.

In the words of John Paul Lederach, a famous peacebuilder and our mentor at Plan for Peace, it’s about understanding that ‘Ultimately in the long picture the wellbeing of my enemy’s grandchildren and my grandchildren are intimately tied together.’



ABOUT PLAN FOR PEACE

Plan for Peace was founded in 2020 by three-times Nobel Peace Prize nominee Dr Scilla Elworthy to help create a groundswell of people, governments and institutions committed to a world without violent conflict. In the UK, Plan for Peace supports and

connects community leaders and changemakers through its Changemakers in Turbulent Times programme. Globally, the organisation’s work is focused on supporting countries to build viable Plans for Peace – strategic processes and frameworks to help prevent violent conflict.

LETTING GO OF BLAME

An Infrastructure for Peace must also recognise the change that needs to take place at the individual level. This is the hard emotional work that requires enormous courage.

Moving beyond our natural desire for revenge, blame and judgement is perhaps the most challenging endeavour of all. Peacebuilding doesn’t only take place on the frontlines of war, it takes place in our homes, workplaces and communities as well.

Our Head of Peacebuilding, Jo Berry, has her own incredible story of making peace with the man who killed her father. ‘Through deep listening and empathy we can disarm those that we are in conflict with’, Jo says. ‘Once we have let go of our need to blame, we can have a new conversation where both sides can hear each other, despite the difference. This then opens up the possibility of finding a way forward that engages the needs of both parties.’

We believe that building a more peaceful world happens on every level, which is empowering because it means that all of us can make a difference. In these turbulent times we must not lose hope: we know that change is possible. To believe in hope is a form of non-violence in itself, and an essential quality for any peacebuilder. One that we can all embody.

Find out more

■ Join the Plan for Peace movement at planforpeace.org



Plan for Peace has worked with changemakers in Bradford (main image) and Slough (above) to develop Infrastructures for Peace



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• **M27 PRESENTS: "EL CONDOR PASA: ANDEAN HOPE" FEATURING THE UNITED NATIONS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PROMOTING THE WORK OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES (UNPFII)**

IRINA GAGITE (SOPRANO), MARCO MATUTE (TENOR), MARIA RONDON (SOPRANO), DANTE VALDEZ (COMPOSER), PREDRAG VASIC (CONDUCTOR)

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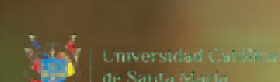
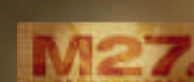
• **VIRTUAL MESSAGES BY;** DR. JANE GOODALL, LEONARDO DICAPRIO, STEVIE WONDER & RINGO STARR

• **CULTURAL SHOWCASES BY LAMA TASHI NORBU & TENZIN TSEGA (HIMALAYA PEACE MESSENGERS)**

• **12 HOUR BROADCAST OF EARTH DAY CELEBRATIONS VIA HUBCAST, FROM: NEW YORK, MIAMI, EGYPT, AUSTRALIA & VANCOUVER**

• **FILM SCREENINGS BY "EARTH ELDERS" AND OTHERS**

• **ECO DIGITAL ART EXHIBITION**



HERO PRODUCTS

Introducing our April Heroes!

We've picked these products because we believe they are all best in their class for people and the planet. They represent simple, sustainable switches that will help to keep you, your home and the planet healthy – without compromising on experience or performance!

View all our Heroes at mygreenpod.com/heroes

FOOD & DRINK

BIRD & WILD COFFEE

Certified Fairtrade, organic, Shade Grown and Bird Friendly. mygreenpod.com/heroes/bird-wild-medium-roast-coffee



ARBIEKIE NÀDAR GIN

This delicious gin – the world's first climate-positive spirit – is made from peas. mygreenpod.com/heroes/arbikie-nadar-gin

TRAVEL

LONELY PLANET'S FLIGHT-FREE EUROPE

80 ways to explore the best of Europe – including Stresa, Piedmont, Italy (below) – by train, boat or bike. mygreenpod.com/heroes/lonely-planet-flight-free-europe



HOME & GARDEN



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HEALTH & BEAUTY



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An award-winning scent made with organic essential oils and no synthetic fragrances. mygreenpod.com/heroes/haoma-organic-eau-de-parfum-no-1

TOP 5 APRIL SWITCHES

1

Calculate the carbon footprint of your banks, pensions and bills and switch to a greener solution using the MotherTree switching service.

@MotherTreeLtd
mygreenpod.com/heroes/mothertree-switching-service

2

Swap bottled for filtered water to save cash as well as single-use plastic. The Coldstream Undercounter Water Purification System provides great-tasting water straight from your tap.

@Coldstream
mygreenpod.com/heroes/coldstream-undercounter-water-purification-system

3

Each KIND2 Solid Shampoo Bar is equivalent to two bottles of liquid shampoo – but without the single-use plastic packaging!

#KIND2
mygreenpod.com/heroes/kind2-shampoo-bars

4

Forget cut flowers wrapped in plastic cellophane – grow your own stems to bring into the house (or leave in the garden).

Created by conservation scientists, Seedball takes the hassle out of growing bee- and butterfly-friendly wildflowers.

@seed_ball
mygreenpod.com/heroes/seedball

5

Honest Supplies offers generous rolls of triple-quilted, plastic-free and 100% recycled toilet paper, ethically made in the UK.

#HonestSupplies
mygreenpod.com/heroes/honest-supplies-100-recycled-3-ply-toilet-paper

SENSEMAKING IN COMPLEXITY

Dr Tina Karme believes business can drive the integrated solutions we need for a sustainable future

We often hear about the need to seek compromise – especially when there are multiple viewpoints – and can frequently end up engaging in debates that we call discussions, or worse: ‘dialogues’.

According to Dr Tina Karme’s research on sensemaking and sensebreaking, debates are neither discussions nor dialogues because most of the time they focus on convincing an audience that one side is right and the other wrong.

‘This type of exchange of viewpoints and understanding rarely helps a new sense or new understanding to emerge’, Tina tells us. ‘Most of the time, we enter and leave the debate with the same opinions and understandings that we had at the beginning.’

Tina’s research focuses on complex issues, and encourages approaches that move beyond compromise and towards integration. ‘Integration is a resolution to tension, where neither part needs to sacrifice what they see as important’, Tina explains. ‘In many sustainability-related complex issues, we need these types of solution; meeting halfway with poor solutions that are not working is not the answer.’

IS PROFIT ‘BAD’?

For Tina, we need more dialogue that is geared towards the discovery of integrative solutions – and she believes the business sector should help to sponsor and drive this shift.

Activities that nurture dialogue with different actors form the foundation of problem-solving, and for Tina should be seen as an investment rather than an expense. ‘Integrated solutions hold business opportunities but also attract talent and customers’, Tina argues. ‘But first we must dispel the myth that profit and money are ‘bad’ things. If you are doing good to both people and the planet and making a profit from it, few actors have a problem with that. Dissatisfaction comes only when you are causing problems for people and the planet and profiting from it.’

The ability of businesses to profit from unethical practices, such as human rights violations or environmental harms, are identified as real – and unacceptable – issues in the CSDD (the EU’s corporate sustainability due diligence directive).

‘It always puzzles me how we still today accept that organisations do not implement solutions to protect people and the planet just to make more profit’, Tina says. ‘Yes, *more* profit; it is not even that they would not make a profit otherwise.’



ABOUT TINA KARME

Tina Karme is a Doctor of Business Administration with a Master of Science (M.Sc) degree from Finland in Business Management and a M.Sc degree from the UN Institute of Training and Research collaboration programme with Franklin University Switzerland on International Management and Sustainability.

MOVING BEYOND COMPROMISE

According to Tina, we sometimes encounter complex issues that have no solution. These issues require dialogue both in talking solutions and pathways into existence and also in recognising actions and activities that could make a sustainable future a reality.

Among our most pressing complex issues are climate change and biodiversity loss, because we are demanding more resources than nature can provide and dumping more waste than it can handle. ‘We are suffocating our liveable home, our planet’, Tina says. ‘It has been working as a volunteer for us, and we have shown little to no appreciation. We are reaching a point when our volunteers will start demanding a salary for all of their work. And I think it is fair; it seems to be the only language business speaks.’

For Tina this is a perfect example of a complex issue; if all the resources, waste and services provided by the Earth were to be given a price tag, it would cause massive shocks to the economies that generate welfare for societies. But if we got it right, one step at a time, the monetisation of ecosystem services would provide significant benefits – both economically and for the planet, and therefore also for people.

‘To find these solutions we need to move beyond compromise’, Tina says. ‘This does not mean we need to avoid tensions; tensions are actually what enables integration to occur. This, in turn, is where innovation and problem-solving lie. By recognising good questions and seeking alignment on what we want to achieve in the future, we can discover new approaches where efforts are joined to get there.’

NURTURING DIALOGUE

As a result of Tina’s findings, the 2022 Initiative Foundation decided to take action by launching a new collaboration model where businesses drive dialogues that could result in new integrative approaches and solutions.

Businesses are heavily impacted by polarisation in multiple negative ways, meaning it is in their interest to seek solutions and pathways that nurture a thriving society and innovations that serve multiple needs.

In order for a sustainable, thriving future to unfold, we urgently need to find new ways in which business is able to profit from solving problems for people and the planet.

CONNECTING BUSINESS WITH YOUTH

Due to its consultative status at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN ECOSOC, the 2022 Initiative Foundation has helped to bring Fridays for Future Most Affected People and Areas (FFF MAPA) representatives to different meetings organised by the UN.

Helena Lindemark, the founder and CEO of the 2022 Initiative Foundation, also played a crucial role in bringing the high-level UN conference Stockholm +50 to life, and has experience in

OPENING YOUR HEART

The importance of good dialogue has not gone unnoticed, and it’s something the UK’s Reboot the Future has experienced, too. The organisation’s Imaginal Conversations bring together high-level business leaders and climate activists to discuss questions about the things that break hearts; the goal is to generate connections between groups of people and actors who are traditionally seen as highly polarised.

‘We found that when we connect on things that matter and open up to one another, we can enter a dialogue rather than a debate’, says Anthony Bennett, CEO of Reboot the Future. ‘The participants came back to us and said the experience was transformative. The key lies in opening your heart and bringing people together.’

THE ART OF LISTENING

Tina highlights the need for deep listening, a concept also recognised and used by Reboot the Future. We are open to new ideas and solutions when we listen with an open heart and mind. Naturally, this requires some sensebreaking to occur as we seek new pathways or senses.

‘A broken heart – or opening your heart to what is happening in the world – is a powerful way of

Bringing voices together at UN events and supporting meaningful dialogues to seek new sense in the story and actions that follow will bring value to all involved.

‘In many cases, sensemaking is linked to sense-giving’, Tina explains. ‘New sense occurs when actors engage in sensegiving and receive this information to make sense of complex issues. These events and dialogues are efficient ways of doing exactly that – and an efficient way of giving sense and information to actors you might otherwise not have a chance to interact with.’

Studies have found that this is essential; Tina’s research reveals that the inclusion of different actors is one of the main challenges in forming new understandings, but that it also represents the most significant opportunity.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A BUSINESS DECISION

The 2022 Initiative Foundation has a network of actors who are willing to enter these critical dialogues, as well as a group of facilitators, such as Reboot the Future, that have both the tools and the expertise to support them. The foundation is now calling on businesses to step up to the challenge and sponsor upcoming events that will make it all possible.

‘We had amazing experiences during Stockholm+50 when business stepped up, invited youth representatives from FFF MAPA to participate and facilitated dialogues between different actors’, Helena remembers. ‘Business representatives have given positive feedback on this and showed gratitude for what we did. This made us think we should expand activities beyond Stockholm+50. 2022 was the year businesses stepped up to sponsor dialogue between different actors; now we hope more businesses will do the same – and we’re here to help.’

IN SEARCH OF INTEGRATION

Complexity provides countless opportunities if we move beyond resolving tensions through compromises. New thoughts and pathways emerge in a sensemaking process, and the more inclusive and diverse we can be in finding participating actors, the better we can explore alternative pathways.

Complex issues require us to lead with uncertainty and show curiosity towards unfolding and emerging solutions. This breaks the approach of managing and assuming that the solutions and answers are simply within one actor or business. Sustainability is more than a reporting exercise; it is a business decision. The sooner businesses accept this, the better for their profits, for people and for the planet. ‘It is not about making a profit or saving the planet and its people’, Tina says; ‘it means profiting and saving the planet and its people. This is an integrated solution.’



ABOVE Helena Lindemark (second from right), founder and CEO of the 2022 Initiative Foundation, at UNEA in Kenya with representatives from Fridays for Future Most Affected People and Areas (FFF MAPA)

connecting business with FFF youth. ‘We can see the positive atmosphere these dialogues can contribute to’, Helena explains. ‘When we facilitate a safe space where business and youth can come together and share their experiences, desires and knowledge, ideas are often formed that transform the world and accelerate sustainability. Dialogue is the key element where we discover solutions and bring people together to find solutions that could help to make a sustainable future a reality – step by step.’

creating sensebreaking and, therefore, the need to discover something new’, Tina shares. The 2022 Initiative Foundation is using multiple tools for this purpose, but as its spearhead it uses a compass, which sets the foundation for the dialogue and recognises that we all have a role to play in creating a sustainable future.

‘The 2022 Initiative Foundation allows businesses to participate in UN events and brings together different voices and actors’, Helena explains. ‘2022 Initiative Foundation recognises these actors and creates the space for dialogues that set the foundation for integrative pathways.’

Find out more

■ Discover how to support the 2022 Initiative Foundation at 2022initiative.org



PLANTING HOPE

Could planting nine trees per person per year be the answer to the climate and biodiversity crises?

The average person in the UK emits nine tonnes of carbon dioxide every year, and the average broadleaf tree sequesters a tonne of carbon over its lifetime. If we all committed to planting a highly achievable nine trees every year, the impact on the greenhouse effect would be huge – and we would collectively help to cool the climate for future generations.

This is the logic of Michael Cunningham and Ash Kent, co-founders of 9Trees. Michael was looking for a practical way to balance his own carbon footprint – and help others do the same – as a way to tackle the climate crisis.

Michael and Ash embarked on an ambitious mission to help people plant nine trees per year, through a pioneering not-for-profit that allows individuals and businesses to grow their own woodlands and balance their carbon footprint.

TREES PROTECTED FOR 50 YEARS

9Trees is the only organisation of its kind to link landowners and the UK public in an effort to slow climate change. ‘Starting in Wales in 2019 we now have 15 sites across England, Wales and Scotland – and now Northern Ireland as well’, Michael tells us. ‘From Dorset to Derbyshire, Carmarthen to Anglesey and an Agroforestry site in Fife, we are branching out to a county near you!’

With backgrounds in conservation, Michael and Ash both know there is much more to this process than putting trees in the ground. 9Trees has 50 stages before woodland is planted, including finding an altruistic landowner, conducting desk-based surveys, mapping and creating a 50-year management plan and developing a planting plan.

Each site is visited beforehand and checked to ensure the existing habitat is not more valuable than a planted woodland would be. ‘We choose



trees that will create a valuable biodiverse wildlife habitat for the future’, Ash explains. ‘Trees are planted efficiently, in the right places, and are safeguarded for 50 years.’

9Trees works with landowners, organisations and councils to source land and grows native broadleaf saplings in the UK. Work and maintenance are carried out by professional tree-planting contractors who are local to the site, which helps to bring money into rural communities and the countryside sector.

VISIT YOUR OWN WOODLAND

There are different ways businesses can get involved – ‘we know that one size doesn’t fit all’, Michael acknowledges – and start balancing their carbon footprint. One-off donations, annual subscriptions or monthly tree contributions can be made to 9Trees or to the biodiversity fund.

Alternatively, a business or organisation can opt for a bespoke approach, planting a tree per client, employee of the month or with a percentage of profits. ‘We love working with our business partners in a range of ways’, says 9Trees director

Find out more

■ Discover the different ways you can support biodiversity and the climate at 9trees.org/mygreenpod

Yzabella Hill; ‘from SMEs to FTSE 100 companies, we all have a role to play.’ But is there a danger that tree planting just gives organisations free rein to continue with business as usual? ‘It’s our intention to prevent a culture of offsetting that could lead to the continuation of environmentally damaging behaviour’, Michael tells us. ‘Certificates confirm the purchase of trees but cannot be used to gain carbon credits; instead, 9Trees is about a company’s CSR, ESG and carbon neutrality. Woodlands are created for biodiversity and wellbeing and are additional to tick-box exercises.’

Once you subscribe you can visit your trees; following the parameters of a ‘walkabout sheet’, you can wander mindfully in your very own woodlands or show them to your team, clients, family or friends. 9Trees also organises educational and hands-on events at its sites, as well as Team Green Away Days and Eco Therapy sessions to help boost employee wellbeing.

9Trees has already planted 15,000 broadleaf trees in the UK, and a further 10,000 trees are pledged to be planted in the 2024 planting



CLOCKWISE 9Trees’ Tawny Wood site, Powys; Michael Cunningham and Yzabella Hill collecting their Sustainability and Micro Business of the Year awards at the FSB Celebrating Small Business Awards Wales 2024; trees are planted to restore biodiversity and tackle the climate crisis

season. ‘Our smaller woods will usually start at about 500 trees, which requires half an acre of land’, Ash explains. ‘It doesn’t have to be just woodland; we can plant habitat corridors, shelter belts and wildlife hedges as well.’

Each tree planted will sequester roughly 22kg of carbon per year. In addition to the carbon-balancing impact, the planted trees will help to bring back biodiversity, tackle climate change, create meaningful jobs in the countryside sector and promote wellness through nature.

Over the next 50 years the woodlands will be inhabited by a wild assortment of creatures, nesting and resting among native trees in a thriving habitat for pine martens and other endemic native species. Each individual step will support a movement towards carbon neutrality and a rich, biodiverse planet – for us and for generations to come.



Find out why 9Trees is a My Green Pod Hero at mygreenpod.com

Calculate, compare & change

Px3's Dr Justin Sutton-Parker reveals the free apps that will help you reduce your IT carbon footprint

3 % of the world's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are created by the production and use of information technology. Research shows that this impact can be reduced by at least a third using very simple steps, such as buying computers with a low carbon footprint and keeping them for longer.

This month Px3, which specialises in IT carbon footprints, launched two free online tools to help people and organisations all over the world to calculate, compare and change their IT carbon footprint.

The free sustainable IT strategy apps complement Px3's existing Estimate app, which enables users to calculate the carbon footprint of their personal computers.

Each app allows users to model different strategies based on existing computers to see which works best for them. Both support the uptake of low-carbon devices and the circular economy, focusing on the reuse and regeneration of products to promote computing activities in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

SWITCHING TO CHROME OS

The first online tool is the result of several years' research, conducted by Px3, into the environmental benefits of Google operating systems ChromeOS and ChromeOS Flex.

Unsurprisingly, it's called the Px3 ChromeOS application.

The tool has two key functions; first of all, it shows how computer GHG emissions, electricity use and costs can be reduced by considering low carbon footprint Chromebooks and Chromeboxes the next time users think about replacing Windows or MacOS devices.

The second feature of the tool is that it helps users to calculate the carbon footprint and cost reductions achieved by transforming existing Windows and MacOS computers to ChromeOS devices with ChromeOS Flex, instead of buying new devices. This strategy is particularly popular in light of reports suggesting as many as 400 million devices may become inoperable when Microsoft ends Windows 10 support this year.

Research shows there are significant benefits to transforming existing devices with ChromeOS Flex; the Strawberry Group recently reduced ICT GHG emissions by 1.5 million kgCO₂e and saved over £5 million in procurement costs by doing exactly this.

BUYING REFURBISHED TECH

The second tool, called the Px3 Circular application, focuses on the lifespan extension and circular economy benefits of transitioning to refurbished computers rather than buying new every time.

By doing both, organisations reduce demand for new products and therefore also the manufacturing rates that add to global GHG emissions and IT carbon footprints.

From a lifespan extension perspective, the concept is relatively simple: if a personal computer is kept for eight years rather than the average four years, the entire production value of one notebook is entirely avoided for that period. This strategy is called 'displacement' because a procurement cycle has been delayed to a later date, causing demand for new devices to slow.

Theoretically if all computers were kept for twice the length



‘Theoretically if all computers were kept for twice the length of time, then global demand, procurement costs and the production of GHG emissions would be cut by 50% overnight. Try it and see for yourself.’

DR JUSTIN SUTTON-PARKER

of time, then global demand, procurement costs and the production of GHG emissions would be cut by 50% overnight. Try it and see for yourself.

Buying refurbished computers is also positive for the environment; organisations can access perfectly good equipment that already exists, reducing demand for new products to be manufactured and shipped.

This is important from an overall footprint point of view; on average, 80% of a computer's carbon footprint is created during the production stage.

SLASH EMISSIONS, BOOST PROFITS

For both tools, all users need to do is input their existing end-user computing model and the number of devices. In an instant users can see what e-waste and GHG emissions could be avoided – and how much they will save on utility and procurement costs – by adopting sustainable IT strategies.

Trying the online tools won't cost users a penny, but it could help to save the planet – and a lot of money – by helping users calculate, compare and change their IT carbon footprint.

Find out more

■ Try the Px3 online tools for yourself at px3.org.uk/applications

PUTTING THE HEART INTO TECH



This new planet-conscious talent platform is equipping the future workforce with skills for planetary action

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the fourth industrial revolution – dubbed Industry 4.0 – are rapidly transforming the way we live and work. AI has created a demand to reskill or upskill over 1 billion people, including 100 million young people on the African continent alone.

At the same time, a rapid shift in values, driven by Gen Z, presents a huge opportunity for reskilling youth and creating jobs in the new green economy.

‘In the past, jobs were about muscles. Today, they are about brains and in the future they will be about hearts’, shares Daphne Laan, co-founder of Planetir.

HEART-CENTRED SKILLS

Planetir is a new ecosystem platform that intersects tech, business and impact; its goal is to equip changemakers with the skills and opportunities they need to take planetary action, and connect individuals with mission-driven businesses – or companies looking to increase their impact – so people and planet can thrive in harmony.

The platform has been created to change the way talent and companies interact with each other and collectively impact the planet. Unlike traditional talent platforms, Planetir is user-owned, prioritises planet-conscious talents, connects talents with like-minded companies and creates a virtuous circle that drives both individual and collective impact.

‘We wanted to create an ecosystem in which individuals and communities can work together on the most pressing issues’, Daphne explains. ‘Our ecosystem platform will provide a base for talents to learn and collaborate with organisations that work on the most urgent issues we face.’

In addition to providing a space for collaboration, the aim at Planetir is to find and grow the hard and soft skills we all need if we are to address the challenges of our times. ‘Connecting the head and the heart is our focus’, Daphne tells us. ‘The human heart is what sparks change; we want to unite a critical mass of people who are actively using their heart and tech skills to regenerate the planet. We’re putting the heart into tech.’

EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

Jobs of the future will require high-tech skills as well as the specialised intra- and interpersonal skills that are already in high demand – yet our traditional education system may not be equipped to provide these expertise and employers could struggle to identify them in potential employees.

‘Younger generations are currently educated to check the boxes and to believe there is only one answer to a question’, explains Daphne. ‘Our education system does not spend enough time on teaching interconnectedness – with each other,

nature and the Earth – or inspiring students to bring their unique talents to the table. It doesn’t encourage students to explore who they are in the world today, or ask how they can contribute.’

For co-founder Joscha Raue this is where we’re missing a trick: Gen Z’s strong sense of purpose, desire to actualise potential and commitment to sustainability offer a unique opportunity for individuals and communities to play an active role in creating a better future. ‘If every person ‘wanting to do good’ were part of a community that made it easy, fun and rewarding for them to see how they can use, activate or hone their existing skills, passion, knowledge and capital for a greater societal or environmental purpose – while learning a lot about their own self in the process – I bet we’d see hundreds, thousands or even millions of people follow the call, acting on their own potential’, Joscha says. ‘As a group of entrepreneurs and believers in change from the inside out, we decided to try it out – starting in the tech sector.’

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Digital technologies are impacting all sectors of society, and migration and the protection space are no exception. While technology is often deployed to detect and deter migrants, the team at Planetir wants to test and encourage the use of tech to

benefit people who are voluntarily or involuntarily on the move – ultimately increasing their agency.

‘I’ve always felt drawn to questions of planetary citizenship and the creation of a more connected, united movement of Earth citizens towards a common good’, explains Planetir co-founder Mehemed Bougsea. ‘This meant I naturally focused on working on challenges such as unequal access to opportunities for youth in regions with elevated unemployment rates – something that also led me to build the country office of Kiron Open Higher Education in Turkey, an educational platform giving refugees access to university-level education.’

Mehemed believes tech can support a narrative shift that recognises the talents of everyone – including those on the move. ‘We want to raise the visibility of migrants and refugees, and their skills’, he says. ‘Our global reach ensures we have an eye out for refugees, displaced persons and those who lack the opportunity to be part of such a movement. Inequality in opportunity is a key target; we’re embedding vulnerable communities into our ecosystem so they have an easy-to-use platform to contribute locally and globally.’

By connecting talents and companies, Planetir will empower migrants and refugees as much as other talents by showcasing their verified skills and providing co-created learning pathways for technical and soft skills. The platform plans to work with existing refugee-focused initiatives and networks, such as Imagine Foundation, to increase life skills, confidence and integration potential for refugee and migrant communities. It will also work with policy stakeholders to advance knowledge around the use of technology for the empowerment of migrants and refugees – an important milestone for Planetir, supported by the Bosch Foundation.

Among the many opportunities available on Planetir, businesses will be able to take the Mighty Heart course and sponsor peacebuilders in conflict-affected areas. The Mighty Heart programme, developed by three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee Dr Scilla Elworthy, distills decades of learnings from some of the toughest negotiations on the planet. It builds on the learnings, lessons and experiences from Dr Elworthy and changemakers around the world, and delivers tangible results.

‘We envision a world where technology propels human potential and regenerates our planet’, says Daphne. ‘As a team, we bring together a unique combination of expertise and lived experience from the worlds of technology, business and social impact. We understand that innovation needs to be grounded in values and that we need to act as bridge-builders to the wisdom traditions.’

THAT FESTIVAL FEEL

The co-founders describe Planetir using the analogy of a music or arts festival; ‘Picture yourself attending the festival knowing that all those around you have consciously taken a pledge to protect and uphold the same set of values and work towards a common vision’, Daphne says. ‘You’d feel freedom, joy, interconnectedness and a sense of belonging.’

Imagine now that this festival opens up a world of continuous learning: hundreds of tents showcasing

various learning pathways you can explore and sign up for. You wonder which skills to pick; the path is lined with a range of impact ventures from around the globe, including projects related to clean air, soil regeneration, energy transition, new finance, unlocking potential, community work and more.

In front of the tents, there are wooden boards on which you see notes regarding the skills and team members required.

You wonder who organises all this and discover that it’s the people; this festival is run and owned entirely by the community. The tents, the shops, the ventures – as well as the individuals – have all taken a pledge to contribute a percentage of the value the festival creates back to a fund which is used to make this colourful convention happen. ‘Planetir is such festival’, Joscha tells us; ‘online and offline.’

A DANCE OF 100K

In addition to facilitating virtual interactions, Planetir organises physical gatherings and programmes to foster a strong sense of community among its participants, and uses art and music to connect people. ‘Our moonshot is to dance with an audience of 100,000 people, activating them as Planetir pioneers in our community and on our platform’, Daphne explains.

Planetir’s *Tune in // The Festival Track* is a live, immersive performance experience and a call to action to work together in tune with ourselves, each other and the world around us. It is a multi-disciplinary sensory experience – with storytelling, art and music – that stretches the boundaries of what a documentary artwork can be.

‘The vision is that the boundaries between the artist and the audience are artificial’, Daphne explains. ‘We are all artists, working together and taking care of our house and our planet.’

PLANET-POSITIVE INVESTMENT

By fostering a sense of collective awareness, responsibility and ownership, the team at Planetir is hoping to drive individuals and communities to take action and become more actively invested in creating a brighter future for us all.

OPPOSITE: Daphne Laan, co-founder of Planetir; Pathfinders community event BELOW: Planetir entrepreneurs and artists attended COP28 to push for action on the climate crisis



‘We believe that talents should own a stake in their own human potential and are therefore introducing Planetir as a fully decentralised technology’, Daphne reveals. ‘The platform allows talents to systematically shift their value into areas that can bring about planetary good.’

Planetir puts a percentage of fees into an impact fund earmarked specifically for planet-centred projects on an ecological or societal level; the more users that register and interact on the platform, the greater the funding generated. All projects have a net-positive effect for the planet and are voted on collectively through a user token system.

‘Planetir’s impact fund has the potential to revolutionise the way funding is generated for green projects’, Daphne tells us. ‘Our decentralised approach and Web 3.0 tech, in combination with the alignment of interests between talents and the platform, creates a more sustainable and equitable ecosystem that prioritises ethical and socially conscious talents and organisations.’

A consortium of partners oversees the management of the foundation that owns Planetir, and Mehemed believes the platform is poised to become a thriving and self-governing ecosystem that will shape the future of work and planet-positive activism and investment. ‘Planetir can do more than ensure it is self-sufficient’, Mehemed shares; ‘it can become a thriving and funding-generating ecosystem that shapes the way talent takes action for the planet.’

FOLLOWING YOUR HEART

Planetir is seeking partnerships with organisations and policy leaders to jointly tackle the main issues of our time – not by asking for new legislation or regulations, nor for funding, but by building an impactful platform through which people can really contribute and work with each other and business to effect real change.

‘We are not just a team, but a collective of collectives, each bringing unique strengths to the table’, Daphne says. ‘We are passionate about empowering the next generation of learners and creators, and we believe that now, more than ever, is the time for solidarity and for people from all backgrounds to come together.’

Daphne was inspired by the motto ‘To make the unthinkable possible’ in the book *The Google Story*. In her role as Head of Technology at Google Netherlands, Daphne took on an experiment: ‘What happens if you follow your heart in all you do, including business?’ In this business context, Daphne started acting on her own values of feminine leadership and began fearlessly following her heart; the approach opened doors she never thought possible. ‘It set in motion a chain of adventures, inside and outside Google’, Daphne remembers. ‘Freedom in thinking, doing and feeling has become a personal mission, and I want others to experience that, too. I want to show the power of sailing your own course, driven by personal values.’

Find out more

- Discover how to join Planetir and more about its impact at planetir.org



SIMPLIFYING GREENER ENERGY

Good Energy played a pioneering role in bringing clean energy to UK homes – and now the supplier is making green living even easier

We're all familiar with Good Energy; it was a pioneer in delivering renewable electricity to homes and businesses, and today the supplier continues to evolve by offering everything else you might need to power your life with greener energy.

25 years ago only about 2% of electricity in the UK came from renewables, so the idea of an energy company offering customers 100% renewable electricity seemed extraordinary. But that didn't stop Good Energy's founder, Juliet Davenport, from pursuing the idea.

Juliet knew that customers wanted to help combat climate change and support the growth of renewables; at the time the only way it could be done was by approaching the relatively small number of renewable generators and asking if their power could be bought in order to supply Good Energy's customers.

This was how Good Energy was born, back in 1999. Juliet visited renewable energy generators around the UK and agreed contracts for their power. The company offered electricity backed by power from the renewables renegades who had built wind, solar or hydro power stations.

WHAT IS GREEN ENERGY?

If you switch your energy supply to Good Energy today it still works the same way; every kilowatt hour you use will be backed by one Good Energy buys from one of over 2,000 renewable generators up and down the country. This includes community energy schemes like Wedmore Community Power Cooperative,

ABOVE
Wedmore Solar Farm is one of 2,000 independent renewable generators across Britain that supplies Good Energy; a customer's solar roof in the Cotswolds

OPPOSITE
Good Energy supplier Bristol Energy Cooperative develops renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects for the benefit of the local community; the Good Energy app offers a simple way to manage your account on the go; Good Energy buys solar energy from Albourne Estate, a family-owned vineyard and winery close to Brighton

visionary individuals like Jo and Bev from Tongue Gill Hydro, small businesses such as Albourne Estate and farmers repurposing waste, as is the case at Fre Energy.

This approach differs from the way most energy suppliers do 'renewable' electricity; power is more commonly bought from the wholesale market in a mix of all sources, including fossil fuels, and then backed with separately sourced certificates to meet Ofgem's requirements around green energy claims.

Good Energy's approach is truly green and helps to grow renewables; about 50% of the new generators it contracts with are new connections to the electricity grid, providing clean power for the first time. This provides vital support to the smaller scale renewable generators that are essential to decarbonising our energy system.

SUPPORT FOR SOLAR

This support for small-scale generation is at the heart of what Good Energy does, and it extends right down to the smallest solar power generators that put power into the electricity grid.

Way back in 2004 Good Energy became the first energy company to pay people with solar on their roofs for the electricity they share. The company's pioneering 'HomeGen' scheme paved the way for the UK government's Feed-in-Tariff (FiT), which was responsible for supercharging solar to over 860,000 installations.

Good Energy remains the largest voluntary administrator of the Feed-in-Tariff, with over 180,000 generator customers.

Today the supplier is doing even more to support solar, and bringing solar tariffs into the modern age with smart export.

Under the Feed-in-Tariff, customers are paid an export payment of an assumed 50% of what they generate, a legacy of the pre-smart meter energy world.

A fully decarbonised energy grid has to be smart — and it has to include small-scale solar. This is why Good Energy is moving its generator customers over to smart export and offering some of the best rates on the market for export, including for customers who missed out on the Feed-in-Tariff after it closed to new installations in 2019.

For the first time Good Energy is also offering solar installations. The company now offers high-quality solar, storage and EV charger installations across the south of the UK. It specialises in bespoke systems to suit even the more complex properties, and premium-quality hardware and components. As an extra bonus, if you install solar with Good Energy you'll be offered an even better export tariff rate.

GETTING OFF GAS

In addition to electricity, Good Energy also supplies gas. If your home is heated with gas — as the vast majority in the UK are — then the gas you get from Good Energy will be greener. The company supplies 10% green gas, created in anaerobic digestion plants which turn organic matter like food waste into biomethane, which is then injected into the gas grid. The remaining 90% is

TRAVEL WITH CLEAN POWER

In addition to offering EV charger installations, Good Energy has a great EV tariff that offers off-peak charging for under 10p per kilowatt hour, meaning you can charge a typical electric car from empty to full for about £4.

In 2019 Good Energy invested in Zapmap, the UK's go-to public EV charging app. Today Good Energy is Zapmap's biggest shareholder and the EV app now has nearly 800,000 users.

Zapmap allows EV drivers to search for, plan and pay for charging, providing data for the UK's public EV charging network, which is now more than 50,000 strong. The premium subscription, which enables Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, will soon be available as a free add-on for customers on Good Energy's EV tariff.

GOLD STANDARD ENERGY TARIFFS

Energy companies don't really get greener than Good Energy, which is the only energy supplier to be top ranked as a Which? Eco Provider for the last three years running. All tariffs are accredited with the Uswitch Green Tariff Gold Standard.

Yet being green doesn't come at the cost of customer service; Good Energy is the highest-rated energy supplier on TrustPilot, with five stars. Its heat pump installations are approved with the Which? Trusted Trader stamp and solar installations with the Renewable Energy Consumer Code. The Chippenham-based business does right by its people as well. It has long been a Living



carbon offset through Gold Standard schemes which support access to greener energy around the world.

The reason Good Energy supplies 10% green gas is that this is the upper limit of the UK's gas demand that can be sustainably met from this renewable source. As a result we need to shift away from gas heating and towards electrification — mainly heat pumps. Good Energy's helping here, too.

A heat pump from Good Energy starts with a bespoke design and proposal; as with the solar that is tailored to suit your home, the supplier is able to work with older, larger or otherwise atypical properties. Heat pump installations are completed end to end by Good Energy's own expert engineers, and you'll get great aftercare, too – including a 10-year warranty and remote monitoring to check your heat pump is working as it should be. Good Energy even sends its heat pump customers personalised 'winter tips', offering advice for when and how to run the heat pump based on the individual home's data.

Wage employer, but for the past two years it has been ranked as a 'World Class' employer by Best Companies, based on the ratings of its employees.

A CLEAN ENERGY REVOLUTION

Good Energy has been pioneering renewables for 25 years, and now it's powering all fronts of the clean energy revolution — from renewable supply and solar generation to green heating and electric transport.

As a fellow sustainable pioneer, it makes perfect sense for Good Energy to partner with My Green Pod, the magazine for everyone looking to live a greener lifestyle. Keep an eye out for future features on Good Energy and related trends in the world of clean power.

Find out more

Information about Good Energy tariffs and everything else you need for a low-carbon lifestyle is at [goodenergy.co.uk](https://www.goodenergy.co.uk)

Gusty Springfield

River Cottage installs temporary wind turbine to promote renewable energy, in partnership with Octopus Energy

River Cottage, a name synonymous with sustainable and ethical food practices, has announced a new partnership with Octopus Energy, a leading provider of renewable energy and the UK's most awarded energy supplier.

The collaboration to promote renewable energy is a significant step towards achieving a shared goal of a more sustainable future for both people and the planet.

THE POWER OF WIND

As part of the partnership, throughout February 2024 River Cottage hosted a temporary wind turbine on its farm on the Devon/Dorset border.

This installation, which was facilitated by Octopus Energy Generation, is part of a broader campaign to promote wind energy right across England.

The turbine, affectionately named 'Gusty Springfield', is a temporary structure, in line with the National Planning Permissions Framework. It has provided clean, green power to River Cottage during its time on the farm, and has also generated enough energy to power four electric car chargers.

The eye-catching pink wind turbine serves as a visual reminder of the potential of renewable energy. The goal is to spark conversations around the future of wind energy in the area, and to inspire visitors and the wider community to consider the benefits of renewable energy and its impact on the environment, economy and local communities.

CLIMATE EDUCATION

River Cottage was able to offer four free electric vehicle (EV) charging points on site for the month of February – and EV drivers were welcomed to enjoy a free tea or coffee in the River Cottage Kitchen & Store café while they charged up.

River Cottage and Octopus Energy extended their combined commitment to sustainable education and reached out to local schools to offer free educational visits focused on renewable energy and sustainable farming.

Both parties believe in the power of education to effect change and were excited to share their knowledge and passion for sustainability with the next generation.

The family-focused programming included a Sip and Paint event hosted at the River Cottage Kitchen & Store. This evening of creativity and carbon-free conversation was hosted by local watercolour artist Harriet de Winton, wielding a glass of organic prosecco in one hand and a paintbrush in the other.

GREEN POWER FOR 28 DAYS

While River Cottage would love to host Gusty for longer, the National Planning Permissions Framework stipulates that the turbine can only remain in place for 28 days. This could change in the future; if it does, both parties would welcome the chance to discuss the ways in which wind turbine projects could benefit the local area and beyond.

Even in its 28-day operation the turbine was able to spin a lot of power – in just one day it could generate enough energy to make 33,000 cups of tea!

Find out more

■ Discover what's on at River Cottage at rivercottage.net/calendar



Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall next to the temporary wind turbine 'Gusty Springfield' at River Cottage HQ

'I'm personally delighted to be collaborating with Octopus Energy to shout about the incredible potential of community wind power to support local economies and reduce electricity bills. I'm convinced it's the best way to bring the cheapest, cleanest, greenest form of energy to more and more people across the UK. That's why I'm so proud to welcome Gusty, the portable wind turbine, to River Cottage, to boost our energy throughout the month of Feb.'

HUGH FEARNLEY-WHITTINGSTALL, RIVER COTTAGE

Refills are the future of sustainable shopping, though they're not always a convenient way to buy your food. 'I love refill shopping but I find the process of taking containers to the shop a real faff', admits Mitchell Platt, founder of Zero Waste Bulk Foods. 'After a short stint working in a local shop I learnt that behind the scenes is just as complex and wasteful – so many spillages! – so I set up an online store to make refilling easy.'

BUY, RETURN, REPEAT

Zero Waste Bulk Foods is an online shop with a wide range of products, from the bestselling Organic Ancient Grain British Pasta and Organic English Breakfast Tea to Organic Dark Chocolate Buttons and organic dried fruit and nuts.

What makes this shop different is the closed-loop system at its heart; all the goods come in packaging that can be returned, washed and reused. 'This was the reason I set up the business', Mitchell shares; 'otherwise, we're just another organic whole foods business littering the world.'

When an order is placed online, the groceries arrive at your door in cotton and jute bags, which have been specifically designed for Zero Waste Bulk Foods customers, with a pre-paid returns label. 'What makes the packaging unique is how easy it is to return', Mitchell tells us; 'small orders can be returned in the post box!' The ease of the process is underscored by an excellent 90% bag return rate.

THE PROBLEMS WITH PACKAGING

Mitchell's focus on circularity stemmed from concerns about our current linear model of production, consumption and disposal. 'It's fundamentally flawed because it doesn't value all the components in the supply chain', Mitchell explains. 'This creates an enormous burden on the environment – including waste and the carbon required to produce everything new.'

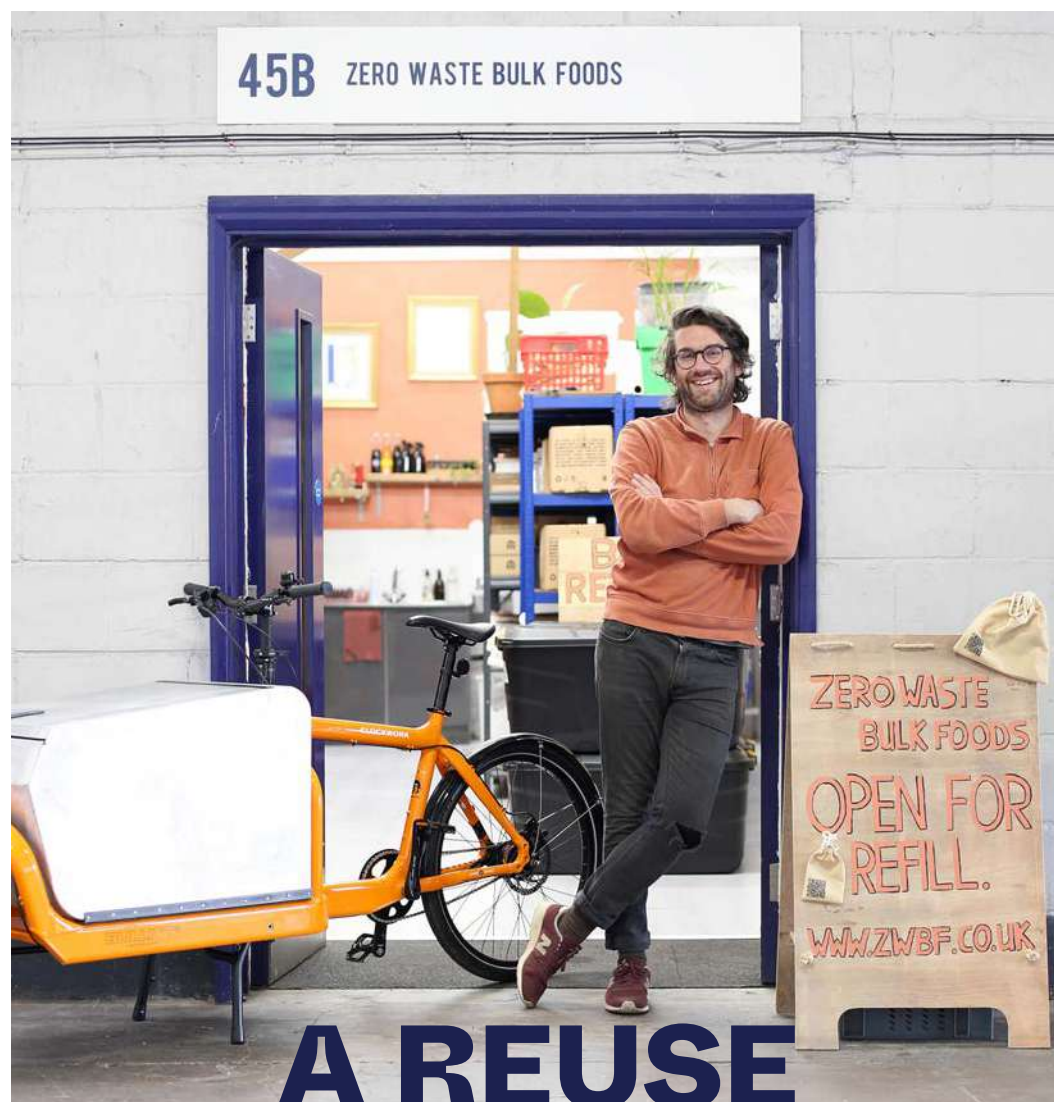
Recycling is of course a better option than landfill or incineration, but processing waste back into usable materials also creates lots of carbon. Some materials – such as plastic – can never be recycled back to their original quality.

'Paper and glass are good packaging materials in some cases', Mitchell accepts, 'but they are prone to breaking so I don't think they are the best materials for groceries. However it's packaged, environmentally the worst case scenario is that food is spoiled, because there is so much more carbon in food production than in its packaging.'

ORGANIC PRODUCE

Unlike many companies that are making efforts to eliminate single-use packaging from their supply chain, Mitchell pays just as much attention to what's inside the bags. The produce available from Zero Waste Bulk Foods is all organic, sourced as locally as possible from over 70 different suppliers. Mitchell also makes every effort to buy from co-op wholesalers that share his passion for sustainable and ethical products.

'Organic certification is imperative to us; it gives customers confidence in what they are buying',



A REUSE REVOLUTION

This online shop has closed the loop and created a faff-free, circular way to buy organic

Mitchell explains. 'As an online business it's more challenging to build that trust. We're also very proud to be certified by the Soil Association and support all the amazing projects it is involved with.'

A FAIRER FOOD SYSTEM

As more people turn to refills and zero-waste shops continue to focus on making the process more convenient, is there a place for supermarkets in the future? 'For the most stable and sustainable future, we need more diversity at every stage of our food system – from soil to plate', Mitchell says. 'I believe there is a place for some bigger players; what is essential is that they adopt a transparent and circular model.'

Mitchell cautions that economies of scale can have devastating effects; 'Personally, I believe some food is too cheap and that the true cost is unfairly shouldered by communities in the Global South', Mitchell tells us. 'If this cost were made clearer, I believe those who could afford to would pay more. We don't have to cast our minds back too far to a time when a much higher proportion of take-home pay was spent on subsistence and it didn't bring the economy to its knees! That said, if food does become more costly it would disproportionately affect those on lower incomes, so there would need

to be some government intervention to avoid a downward spiral into further poverty.'

When it comes to making good quality, low-impact food affordable to everyone, Mitchell suggests subsidising organic and regenerative farming and banning speculative trading on crop futures. 'Food waste should also be taxed', Mitchell says. 'We're about to launch our new, revolutionary reusable pack, which has been years in the making. With EPR legislation just around the corner – which will tax single-use packaging – we're confident we have a great solution to launch a reuse revolution!'



Find out why Zero Waste Bulk Foods is a My Green Pod Hero at mygreenpod.com

Find out more

■ View the full zero-waste and organic range at zerowastebulkfoods.co.uk

Mark Machin, supply chain development manager at Soil Association Certification, looks at the role of ethical packaging in the organic movement

PACKAGING ORGANIC

Here at Soil Association, we receive a not insignificant number of emails from you, organic shoppers, about the packaging used for organic products. Considering that packaging will only mitigate around 2% of global emissions, this often feels like a disproportionate level of concern – yet I find myself sympathising.

To paraphrase: ‘organic products should not have any packaging; why do you allow plastic packaging in your standards, and what are you doing in your standards to reduce harmful packaging?’

Inorganic materials do not sit easily with brand organic. We eschew synthetic materials in many of our standards – from fertilisers at farm level to fibres in clothes – yet we do permit a number of them in packaged goods.

FREEDOM TO PIONEER PACKAGING

The first thing I’d like to say is that organic aims not to be a gold standard of perfection. Instead, organic is a truly regenerative code where we see organic as the floor – not the ceiling – in a world of continuing improvement. There is certainly much room for improvement when it comes to how we package many of the products we consume, yet the transition to more sustainable packaging will require a collaborative approach.

Yes there is room for hard lines, but businesses must also seek to pioneer without the crude stick of standards as they respond to our concerns around packaging and waste.

ORGANIC STANDARDS

As a standard setter in the organic sector, Soil Association has additional standards to the GB organic regulation which may not always be evident to shoppers buying organic products. Detail lovers can read these standards on our website.

We don’t aim to eliminate all packaging in our standards, but recognise that the way certain packaging materials are manufactured and disposed of can have very negative impacts on the environment and human health.

The Soil Association standards do restrict the use of certain ‘problem plastics’ and harmful chemicals that are used in the packaging sector, such as phthalates and bisphenol.

We recognise that our standards will never be a perfect solution for the most sustainable packaging; this is a fast-moving industry and the evolution of standards is a long and detailed process. We can, however, continue to push the envelope on the minimum requirements businesses must meet.

THE BENEFITS OF ORGANIC

In our journey to net zero, enhancing biodiversity and creating a food system that is more friendly for people to work in, organic has a strong role to play.

Organic farming is nutritionally different and has scientifically proven health benefits. It also supports on average 50% higher levels of biodiversity.

Research from the Rodale Institute indicates that organic farming has the power to sequester more than 100% of current anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, and we need to bring as many shoppers as possible on that journey because the

way we produce our food can radically change the impact we have on our planet.

TELLING THE STORY

I was recently asked if organic as a single term is sufficient to engage the consumer. While organic is certainly a shortcut that helps to tie the complexity of a farming system into a single word, it does not convey a story – and this is crucial if we are to change hearts and minds.

The rise of the eco-conscious consumer continues, and as we invest in ourselves and in the environment, we need to hear stories that help us understand the value of what we are buying.

Yes, how a product is packaged can tell us a lot about the brand values – but a sustainably packaged product does not necessarily mean the product is mitigating one of its biggest impacts: the way it was produced.

To that end, a ‘sustainably’ packed product – or one with no packaging at all – could be as much a marketing gimmick as one packed in a harmful plastic with an excellent campaign that turns out to be nothing but greenwash.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

We love to hear from organic shoppers, so please keep contacting us with your thoughts and questions – including those on packaging. It’s useful for us to relay to brands that shoppers do care about how a product is packaged.

Continue to tell brands and retailers about what is important to you; if you are like me, this will have a packaging focus. However, don’t be distracted from where your shopping decisions make maximum impact for people, planet and nature.

Find out more

■ Information about Soil Association’s standards is a soilassociation.org/our-standards/read-our-organic-standards/organic-standards-for-great-britain



‘organic products should not have any packaging; why do you allow plastic packaging in your standards, and what are you doing in your standards to reduce harmful packaging?’

Making moo-ves on plastic

Yeo Valley Organic is closing the loop on packaging

From 2022 to 2023, the total weight of household waste in England decreased to 21.3 million tonnes – down 6.6% from 22.8 million tonnes 12 months earlier.

The theme for Earth Day 2024 is all about ending our use of plastics, and Yeo Valley Organic is working to close the loop on its packaging by making changes that reflect its sustainability values.

As a member of The UK Plastics Pact, Yeo Valley Organic has made good progress on its journey to making sure all of its plastic packaging is fully recyclable and made from recycled plastic.

EMBRACING CLEAR LIDS

Last summer, Yeo Valley Organic changed the blue and green lids on its milk bottles to slightly less colourful alternatives.

The milk bottle lids are now 100% recyclable and made from at least 30% recycled material. Without the coloured dye these new clear lids can be reused for food-grade packaging when they have been recycled. It's a small change that will make a big difference.

GOODBYE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC LIDS

After successful trials in 2021, Yeo Valley Organic began removing single-use plastic clip lids from its 350g and 450g yoghurt tubs. Removing single-use plastics such as the clip lid means avoiding 145 tonnes of plastic a year – that's the equivalent weight of 188 Friesian cows, 24 African elephants – or 17 tractors.

A FIRST FOR RECYCLED PLASTIC

Back in 2020, Yeo Valley Organic started changing its yoghurt pots to alternatives made from 100% recycled plastic. You might have noticed that these pots seem a little wobbly; that's because the plastic content is lower than it used to be.

Making lids from 100% recycled plastic isn't easy but it is the right thing to do.

Sadly, the amount of waste households sent to recycling 2022-2023 decreased to 9.2 million tonnes, down 8.3% from the previous year.

LID-FREE STORAGE TIPS

If you're worried about keeping your yoghurt fresh without the plastic lid, try these storage tips:

- Skip the cling film and use a reusable alternative – beeswax wraps can be moulded to different sizes.
- Decant your yoghurt into a spare Tupperware container. Make sure the lid is tightly sealed.
- Store yoghurt at the back of the fridge, where it's colder. Make sure the temperature is set to 4°C or below.



CLOCKWISE
Yeo Valley Organic has switched its plastic lids from blue and green to white; yoghurt is now sold without the plastic lid



Find out why Yeo Valley Organic is a My Green Pod Hero at mygreenpod.com

GETTING CREATIVE WITH PACKAGING

It's not just the yoghurt that's making a stir; Yeo Valley Organic's new milk cartons are made from renewable, plant-based materials, and use 70% less plastic than the previous bottles.

CUT YOUR PLASTICS FOOTPRINT

Follow these easy tips to reduce your single-use plastic waste:

- Recycle whenever you can
- Carry a reusable bottle
- Invest in a reusable coffee cup
- Try not to use disposable plastic cutlery
- Carry reusable shopping bags
- Ditch cling film and use alternatives like beeswax wraps

The new 1l cartons are made solely from materials that can naturally renew themselves, which has slashed the carbon footprint of Yeo Valley Organic's packaging by more than half.

No packaging is perfect, but technology is advancing all the time. Yeo Valley Organic likes to experiment with multiple formats to see what works for its customers – and also what's realistic when it comes to the UK's recycling capability.

Over the coming years the dairy company will be making further changes to its packaging to ensure it reflects the sustainability values that underpin this family business.

Find out more

- Discover how Yeo Valley Organic is cutting plastics, waste and emissions at yeovalley.co.uk/people-planet



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‘We need a food revolution’

Goodery’s **Josh Smith** shares the joys of the humble veg box scheme



Goodery, a local, organic veg box company and market garden in Norwich, Norfolk started in the pandemic and lockdown of 2020, serving frontline workers nutritious, fresh, organic food when the supermarket system couldn’t adapt to the crisis.

We grew from there to supply a range of locally made goods, focusing on providing access to market for local organic growers, delivering to our local postcodes by electric van using as little waste as possible. Before long we were serving about 300 customers in and around the city each week.

Today Goodery serves Norwich and the surrounding towns and countryside with fresh produce from local, small-scale growers and organic farms, alongside goods from local vineyards, bakeries, fermenters and coffee roasters. We provide a range of seasonal fruit and veg boxes, as well as a ‘build your own’ service.

A GROWING COMMUNITY

As a Community Interest Company (CIC), we invest all our profits back into the local food ecosystem, helping to improve the health of our local environment, economy and community.

In 2022, after realising that access to land and capital was a major obstacle for new growers, we started our very own market garden on some unused organic land down the road in Bintree. This has since grown into a verdant and productive space that has created new opportunities for six growers and trainees. Best of all, the taste of the produce is unbelievable. With the help of a crowdfunding campaign, we’re transforming the space into a beautiful community garden where people will be able to get close to the soil and learn new skills.

KNOW YOUR GROWERS

We’re motivated by a belief that caring for the planet is a fundamental part of being human – that we were put here on Earth to garden and to grow life. The conventional way of growing and buying food is not up to that task. We need a food revolution.

Our veg boxes are full of the best produce that Norfolk and Suffolk have to offer. We drive to local growers and pick up greens, fruits and treats fresh from the harvest to make up the tastiest packages we can offer.



CLOCKWISE
Goodery’s Josh Smith (left), Matti St John (centre) and Moses Moosavi;
a seasonal veg box from Goodery;
Goodery grower Jen with a Goodery Garden squash;
assistant grower Amelia Elvins (left) with lead grower James Spychal in the Goodery Garden



Find out why Goodery is a My Green Pod Hero at mygreenpod.com



If you’ve never tried organic fruit and veg before, you’re in for an absolute treat. On top of the proven nutritional benefits, the taste is out of this world.

Healthy soil means more flavour, and the best way to protect and improve the soil is to grow organically. This means no harmful chemicals, not over-exploiting a particular patch of land and working with nature, rather than against it.

Buying organically also means that even when you’re buying from elsewhere in the world, you can know that the workers are paid fairly, that the environment is cared for and that you’re buying from people who are growing for more than just profit.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

We’re not alone. Goodery is built on collaboration, sourcing from local makers, working with local growers and – crucially – working with other local, ethical retailers across the country as part of the Landworkers’ Alliance and Better Food Traders.

Better Food Traders has been instrumental in supporting many companies like ours to become established and grow through knowledge sharing, inspiration and support.

The most important part of the puzzle is you. We only make an impact when local people rally round to change systems for the better. Find your community, change the world – and enjoy the fruit!

It’s a joy to see something go from vine to box to door, knowing that money is going into the pockets of growers rather than middle men – and more nutrients and flavour are going to our customers!

The freshness and reduced food miles and packaging mean that we’ve got a resilient food chain that beats the supermarket system every time for taste and eco-friendliness.

We’ve been able to build a community around good food. Relationships are key in everything we do and buy, and we allow our customers to champion their local growers in a way that is impossible with supermarket shopping, where you can buy a local potato, via a warehouse on the other side of the country, wrapped in unnecessary plastic.

THE POWER OF ORGANIC

How do we beat the system? By making sure that, wherever you can, you buy local, you buy small-scale and you buy from people you trust – ideally from people you know!



Find out more

Information about how Goodery’s redesigning its local food chain is at goodery.co.uk



CLOCKWISE The Local Greens veg box team, Herne Hill; the Growing Communities market in Stoke Newington is the UK's only all-organic weekly farmers' market; Better Food store and café, Clifton

KEEP IT LOCAL

There's an easy way to shop more ethically when it comes to your groceries

Shopping for groceries at the supermarket has become the norm in the UK, but many are now seeking more local and sustainable alternatives. Whether it's getting a veg box from your local grower, buying groceries online from a local farm shop or deli, visiting a farmer's market or supporting your high-street baker, butcher and greengrocer, there are many ways to buy more ethically. The produce usually has a lower carbon footprint and your pounds will be channelled back to British farmers and the local economy.

Better Food Traders is an accreditation that helps you find local retailers and suppliers who are truly sustainable. It builds on the trusted certifications of Soil Association and other organic kitemarks to make sure traders are selling produce that is grown without fossil-fuel based chemicals, with animal welfare of the highest level and in a way that protects soils and ecosystems.

The Better Food Traders standard also means that traders prioritise buying from small- and medium-scale UK farms rather than the mega-farms that destroy their local ecosystems. Buyers get reassurance that farmers and staff are paid fair prices and wages; retailers avoid air-freighted produce and commit to working in and for their local communities, guided by an environmental and social mission that values people and planet.

A SUPPORT NETWORK

On top of being a customer-facing accreditation, Better Food Traders gives its members lots of practical support including business advice, skills training, funding opportunities and mentoring. It also runs a nationwide network where ethical traders can get together, both online and at in-person events, to swap knowledge and advice.

This is all part of its mission to support sustainable, independent food traders – and in turn



Find out why **Better Food Traders** is a **My Green Pod Hero** at mygreenpod.com

to help send more money back to organic and regenerative farmers so they can thrive and grow.

A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

A really important factor in making the UK's food production and distribution more sustainable is having more routes to market for climate- and nature-friendly farmers. If they can sell through a shorter supply chain, either directly or through independent retailers, they are not beholden to supermarkets and can have more power over their prices and their contracts.

This approach also means that produce doesn't have to travel along the complex supply chains that create more carbon emissions, plastic packaging and food waste.

One myth that Better Food Traders wants to bust is that independent food traders are more expensive. Supermarkets sell organic fruit and veg as premium products, adding a large mark-up. It always pays to find your nearest veg box scheme or market garden; buying in season can also make a difference.

Products like sourdough bread and handmade cheese are not going to compare on price with supermarket basics because they are totally different products. If you want the best quality and taste, shop local and you'll find delicious produce that also reflects the region and the season. By shopping at a Better Food Trader your pound is also going to stay in the local economy and help support the transition to a more sustainable food system.

FINDING LOCAL PRODUCE

All over the country, there are independent food traders who sell delicious locally grown, climate- and nature-friendly produce. Some award-winning examples include Regather in Sheffield, Better Food in Bristol, Low Sizergh Barn in Kendal, Bowhouse in Fife, Unicorn in Manchester, Ripple Farm Organics in Kent, Growing Communities and Fridge of Plenty in London and Soul Farm in Falmouth.

To find your nearest Better Food Trader, there's an interactive map on the Better Food Traders website (see below). Veg box schemes, online sellers with home-delivery routes, farmers' markets and other local retailers are regularly added to the map as the number of local and sustainable food traders grows. If you're curious to change your shopping habits, this is a great resource.

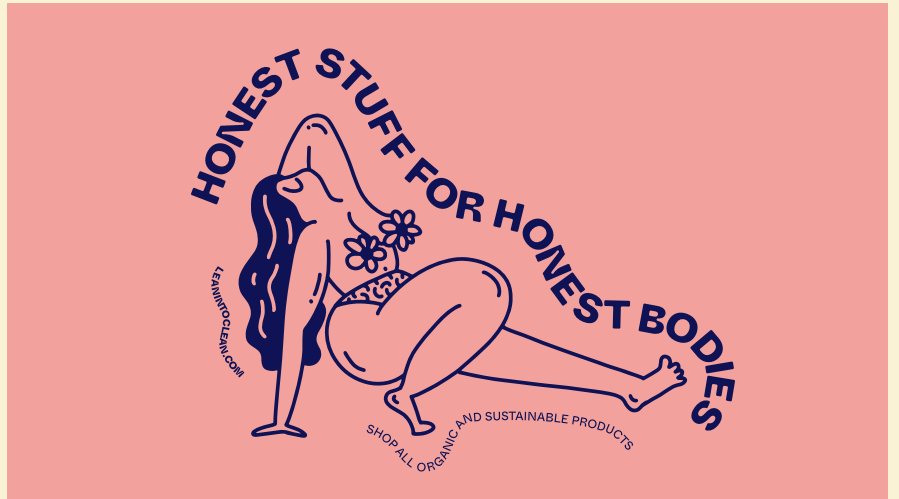
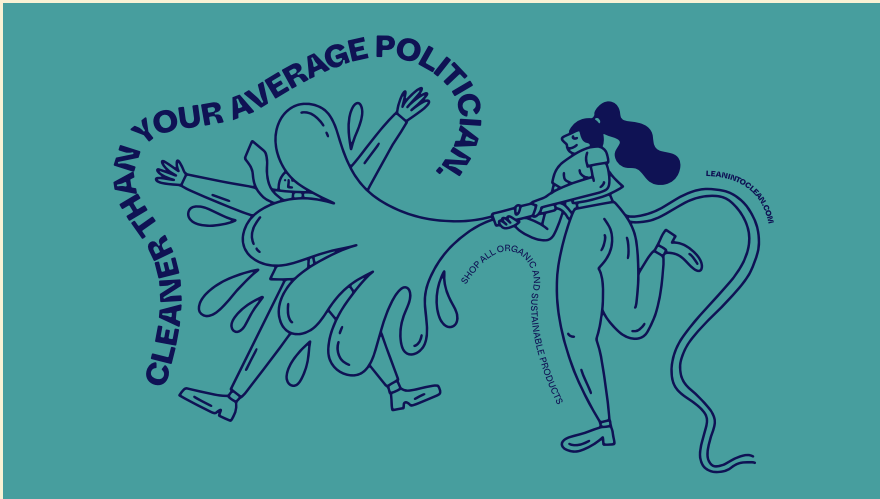
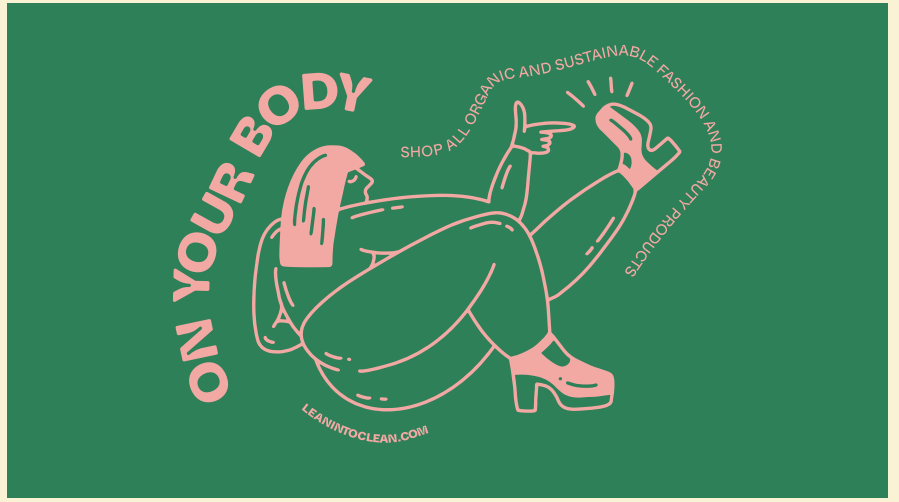
Even if you find the supermarket habit hard to break, making the switch to a local veg box delivery – or deciding to shop locally at least once a month – helps to make a difference, and really does support local traders and farmers. If you know any local food traders in your area who should be listed, you can submit your recommendations using the form on the Better Food Traders website.



Find out more

- Discover local, sustainable produce using the map at betterfoodtraders.org/find-a-better-food-trader
- Independent food traders can apply to join the Better Food Traders network by emailing hello@betterfoodtraders.org

LEAN INTO CLEAN.COM



Keep it clean

Pure spirits are making a comeback – and this organic vodka is as clean as it gets

Vodka has been compromised: over recent years it's become a complicated, flavoured, coloured, thickened product, often polluted with chemicals from field to bottle. As the founder and managing director of PURE Organic Vodka, Adam Player is strongly against this shift and believes vodka should be a clean, pure product, mastered by its craftsmen.

And he's on the money; the UK's drinking culture is continuing to change as people prioritise quality over quantity, and the premium vodka market is booming as a result.

'We are all becoming increasingly aware of the additives, nasty chemicals and preservatives in convenience food and drink, and are making efforts to revert to raw ingredients', Adam shares. 'We want to take back control of our consumption so we know exactly what we are eating and drinking and can cut back on the nasty extras we consume.'

As is also the case in other sectors, today's drinkers are looking for clean, natural products that are sustainable and respectful of their workers, suppliers, community and the broader environment. 'This is where we slot in', Adam says; 'we are a 100% clean, pure product, with no surprises hidden inside.'

'VODKA AS IT SHOULD BE'

Adam started making PURE in 2017 and the finished product hit the shelves in 2019. 'I wanted to create as healthy a drink as possible', he tells us; 'clean and additive-free, pure vodka – vodka as it should be.'

The original motive to create 'the most guilt-free drink possible' led Adam to organic ingredients; 'creating a healthy, clean spirit had to start with the raw ingredients', he says. 'If the ingredients are covered in chemicals from pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers, how can the end product be truly pure? So creating an organic spirit fast became an essential factor.'

Adam's conversion to organic was a swift one; he was already a keen gardener who loves the outdoors, animals and wildlife shows. 'I hate the thought that my kids may not be able to see an elephant or a polar bear in the wild because we have stood by and failed to protect their habitat', he tells us.

GOING ORGANIC

It is estimated that there is around 50% more plant, insect and bird life on the average organic farm, and that organic farms are home to 30% more species.

If all UK farming went organic and we stopped relying on artificial fertilisers, we'd potentially save 1.3m tonnes of carbon every year – the equivalent of taking approximately 1 million cars off the road.

Organic crops are also up to 60% higher in key antioxidants, which many studies have linked to

PURE's flavoured organic vodkas are made with natural ingredients



Find out why **PURE Organic Vodka** is a My Green Pod Hero at mygreenpod.com



better-tasting food. 'If studies show organic-certified drinks are potentially of superior quality and nutritional value, then PURE had to be organic', Adam shares; 'we strive for the best!'

NATURAL FLAVOURS

The decision to create an organic spirit came with challenges; 'The moment you are organic you limit your supplier base from a scale of 100 to one', Adam shares. 'This means there are more seasonal restrictions as many of the inputs cannot be grown organically all year round.'

Creating a range of clean, flavoured vodkas has also been a challenge – partly because of the limited availability of organic raw ingredients and partly due to the subtleties of how natural flavours react together and can change over time.

'Without the aid of stabilisers, colourings, additives and preservatives, making flavoured drinks that taste great, look great and stay the same over time is a real challenge!', Adam

acknowledges. 'That is, in part, why we are so proud of what we have been able to achieve so far. Our flavoured products are all made with 100% natural ingredients, such as organic peaches and grapefruit.'

Creating a spirit that is vegan friendly and gluten free is comparatively straightforward; it's easy to avoid adding animal products when you are creating a clean spirit, and a product derived from wheat can still be gluten free – the gluten can be removed during the distillation process.

In addition to the commitment to organic ingredients, Adam has pledged PURE will become climate positive by 2024. 'I believe every business has a responsibility to be carbon neutral and should be obliged to preserve the environment, wildlife and landscapes for the generations to come', he tells us. 'Financially, it makes bad business sense as it costs money to offset unavoidable emissions – but that's also why we are constantly looking for ways to reduce our footprint.'



THE GLUCOSE HACK

Introducing the easy way to get organic apple cider vinegar into your daily routine

The age of wellbeing is upon us, inspiring deeper conversations about the importance of stable blood sugar levels.

Symptoms such as fatigue, irritability and difficulty concentrating can be brought on by excessive fluctuations in blood sugar levels. This can, over time, lead to more serious health problems such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity.

A well-balanced diet with a variety of proteins, fibres, carbohydrates and healthy fats is essential for maintaining normal levels of sugar in the blood. At the same time we should avoid processed foods that contain a lot of sugar and refined carbohydrates. Through an increase in insulin sensitivity, consistent exercise can also assist in the regulation of blood sugar levels.

THE ROLE OF APPLE CIDER VINEGAR

Research suggests that consuming apple cider vinegar (ACV) before food can help to regulate blood sugar levels.

During digestion, glucose is released from carbohydrates and absorbed into the bloodstream to be used as energy. The pancreatic hormone insulin is secreted to help control blood sugar levels and deliver glucose to cells for use as fuel.

ACV has been linked to better glucose regulation due to its potential to boost insulin sensitivity and decrease glucose production in the liver.

Acetic acid, which is found in ACV, is thought to slow the rate at which glucose enters the bloodstream by inhibiting the enzymes responsible for breaking carbohydrates down into glucose. This, in turn, lessens the requirement for insulin to control glucose levels, and may forestall post-meal spikes in blood sugar.

While ACV may help with glucose control, it shouldn't be used in place of conventional medicine to treat diabetes or any other chronic condition. If you have a medical condition, talking to your doctor before making any dietary or lifestyle changes is absolutely essential.

GLUCOSE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

■ In addition to its role as an energy source, glucose is essential for our red blood cells. Lacking a nucleus and mitochondria, red blood cells can only use glucose for fuel.

■ Stress can affect blood glucose levels. Hormones like cortisol and adrenaline – released in response to stress – have been linked to increased blood sugar levels.

■ Too much glucose can negatively affect health. High blood sugar levels can be caused by eating too many carbohydrates or sugar, which can eventually lead to insulin resistance and diabetes.

■ In the event of a glucose deficit, our bodies have a back-up system in place. Gluconeogenesis is a process by which the liver generates glucose from non-carbohydrate sources like amino acids and fatty acids when blood glucose levels are low.

■ Our blood contains a variety of sugars, not just glucose. Small amounts of fructose and galactose are also present; the liver metabolises them into glucose to fuel cells.

ABOVE
Apeal World ACV is one way to get a dose of apple cider vinegar when you're on the go

BELOW
Apple cider vinegar has been linked to blood sugar regulation

ORGANIC ACV ON THE GO

After years of taking ACV as part of her pursuit of a healthy routine, Apeal World founder Salka Backman and her partner were inspired to create a great-tasting way to get a daily dose of ACV on the go. Their goal was to simplify the lengthy preparation process of ACV drinks, using key organic spices to cut through the taste of vinegar and adding sparkling water to dilute the acid and make the drink refreshing.

Salka was determined to find a taste that was sophisticated but didn't rely on counteracting fruit sugars or complicated flavours, keeping the price down in a bid to make organic affordable. 'We developed a product that maintains its health benefits, keeping it simple and delicious', she says.

The rest was history; the kitchenette was transformed into a lab for the months it took to cold press and extract the right balance of flavours for Defence (organic ACV with ginger), Metabolism (organic ACV with vanilla, cloves and cinnamon) and Activate (organic ACV with lemon and mint).

Find out more

■ View the range of Apeal World ACV at acvdrink.com



Find out why **Apeal World ACV** is a **My Green Pod Hero** at mygreenpod.com



The natural multitasker

Why apple cider vinegar needs to migrate from your kitchen cupboard to your bathroom cabinet

Apple cider vinegar (ACV) has long been lauded a versatile household staple with potential benefits that cover everything from weight management to spot treatment. According to Tina Harris, founder of skincare brand GinGingers, the secret is found in its pH level.

'Studies suggest that ACV may help ease symptoms of certain skin issues such as psoriasis, eczema, acne and skin and nail infections due to its low pH and natural antimicrobial, antifungal and antibacterial properties', Tina explains. 'Typically speaking, these skin concerns tend to have a slightly higher pH level than is ideal.'

Tina is a firm believer in the powers of ACV and always has a bottle at hand; she's used it topically for years to help with anything from spots and general toning to sun-burn and bites. When Covid hit she was inspired to create a multitasking skincare product – with ACV at its core.



Find out why **GinGingers** is a **My Green Pod Hero** at mygreenpod.com

THE MOTHER OF ALL SKINCARE

ACV has been used in medicine for thousands of years, and the all-natural ingredient has even more uses today. 'ACV is simply amazing, especially when it's unfiltered and contains 'the mother!', Tina explains. 'The mother' in ACV is the beneficial bacteria; filtered ACV hasn't lost its properties, but unfiltered has a lot more. 'The unfiltered vinegar that we use is sourced from a farm in Yorkshire where the land has been fed organically for over 40 years', Tina says. 'Its quality and benefits are far superior to any other that we have ever tried.'

Tina's formulation process involved mixing and matching her favourite natural ingredients and tweaking the amounts each time a new batch was made. 'Sounds simple, right? Well, it actually took a couple of years for me to decide on my favourite combination', Tina reveals. 'I needed

to make sure the skin feel was perfect and that our vegan-friendly gel could be made efficiently without the use of heat – not only so my daughter could be safely involved at every stage, but also to ensure that our carbon footprint would be as small as possible.'

In addition to ACV, the GinGingers gel contains witch hazel, liquorice root extract, tea tree oil and meadowfoam seed oil. 'Witch hazel has always been a staple in my daily skincare routine; I love everything about it', Tina shares. 'Liquorice root is something that I've used on cold sores and pigmentation. Tea tree is an old favourite that I've used on blemishes and meadowfoam seed oil is, to me, a bit of an unsung hero; it's suitable for all skin types, doesn't clog pores and gives great moisturisation.'

The result is an extremely versatile gel that can help with an array of skin concerns. 'Personally, I use the gel twice a day on my face under my main moisturiser; I love how it tones and helps combat blemishes', Tina tells us. 'We live in an area with hard water so I feel the gel really helps with me overall skin health and appearance. Users have reported improvements with acne, psoriasis, eczema, menopausal and peri-menopausal skin, foot odour and skin on the scalp!'

A NATURAL EDUCATION

Tina started formulating products with her own little Ginginger – her then four-year-old daughter. 'I am extremely family orientated anyway', Tina shares, 'but I really wanted to build something together, something that my daughter can carry on in the future and look back at, be proud of and think 'yep, me and my mum did that!'

It has always been Tina's aim to try and use the GinGingers journey as an educational tool for her daughter. 'She is eight years old now and is so aware of the importance of sustainability and natural ingredients', Tina tells us; 'it's just really great to see how far we've come together.'

Part of the educational angle for Tina is about demonstrating there is no need for the synthetic nasties we see in so much of today's skincare, and that it's possible to create effective skincare solutions using all-natural and sustainably sourced ingredients.

'I started using skincare at the age of 11', Tina says. 'We now know that natural ingredients are better for the environment and safer on the skin, too. Through GinGingers I have an opportunity to help others understand what I didn't, prioritise sustainability and encourage others to do the same.'

Tina is now exploring moisturisers and oils that, like the ACV, are all cold process, natural and made with local and sustainably sourced ingredients – some of which also use waste from the food industry. 'Working with organisations like the Soil Association and Cruelty Free International to obtain their certifications has been fantastic', Tina shares. 'I believe in strength in numbers, and when you have two fabulous organisations like these on side, you know you can't go wrong!'

Find out more

Information about GinGingers Apple Cider Vinegar Gel is at gingingers.co.uk

BITE-FREE BREAKS

Why buying effective, natural insect repellent is now a must before you travel

Howard Carter contracted malaria in India whilst taking anti-malarials and using a Deet-based insect repellent. He celebrated his recovery with a trip to Thailand, where he promptly contracted dengue fever.

As with many mosquito-borne diseases, the best cure for dengue is prevention – so Howard was inspired, from his now-familiar bed in London's Hospital for Tropical Diseases, to develop a repellent that offered real protection without harming the environment.

17 years after launching incognito®'s signature insect repellent spray, Howard remains as committed to the cause as ever – not least because of the new risks that come with a changing climate, and the fact he feels Brits have a more relaxed attitude towards the risks of insect-borne diseases – in the UK as well as in Europe and the tropics.

'For kids and people who enjoy the outdoors, ticks in the UK are a real concern', Howard tells us, 'yet in the UK many people don't really view insects as a threat. In Germany no self-respecting parent lets their kids play in long grass and bushes without protection. Tick awareness is huge; it's drummed into kids from the start.'

Howard has also noticed that, compared with our European neighbours, Brits tend to have a much more *laissez faire* attitude around insect protection while abroad. 'The vast majority do not buy their repellents before travelling', Howard says. 'Once at their destination they discover options are limited, costly and most likely either ineffective or Deet-based. We all need to buy before we fly if we want to protect ourselves and the environment in the most effective way.'

WHAT MAKES INSECTS BITE?

The carbon dioxide we exhale, bacteria from old skin cells and even perfumed soaps are all things that can attract mosquitoes and other biting insects; Howard's philosophy, and the logic that underpins incognito products, is that insects that can't find you can't bite you.

Incognito is an all-natural, certified-organic formulation that, when applied every four hours, creates a 'bubble' to make people undetectable to insects. A multi-step regime will offer extra protection: use the loofah with the natural, unperfumed soap to get rid of old skin, then apply sunscreen insect repellent to protect against the dengue-carrying mosquitoes that fly by day. The spray should be applied last.

To ensure that you are covered everywhere, incognito has launched a new bracelet with a slow-release capsule containing incognito's unique blend of essential oils, which creates an aroma that insects dislike. The bracelet is made from carbon-capturing sustainable wood and is a one-time purchase; the capsule must be replaced every 18 days.



Incognito's new Kids formulation for sensitive skin; the new bracelet has a capsule of insect-deterrent essential oils



'With the best will in the world, everyone forgets to put on their insect repellent sometimes – and the bracelet can be used in conjunction with incognito lotion, spray, roll-on or sunblock for enhanced levels of protection', Howard tells us. 'All these actions together make you invisible; the bracelet should be considered for anyone over the age of three.'

For younger children, incognito has also launched a new Kids formulation specifically for kids' sensitive skin. 'We wanted to ensure that all family members are equally covered', Howard explains.

NATURALLY EFFECTIVE

Incognito contains the strongest form of the PMD active – the only natural insect repellent active recommended by the CDC (The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the US public health agency), the NHS, WHO, travel clinics and pharmacists for use anywhere in the world, including areas with mosquito-borne diseases.

The PMD undergoes a proprietary process which ensures Deet-level efficacy, while still using 100% natural ingredients. It's also effective against a larger range of insects than Deet, and offers a natural alternative to anyone concerned about the

potential health and environmental impacts of synthetic repellents.

A NEW LIFESTYLE

Due to our changing climate, Europe is now at risk of diseases such as dengue fever, which was previously restricted to tropical destinations. Italy has had several outbreaks already this year, and took the unprecedented step of fumigating Rome's international airport in a bid to break the cycle.

The UK has around 20 endemic species of tick, and their populations are on the rise. They can carry a range of microorganisms, some of which may cause disease in humans.

'Milder weather and milder winters due to climate change are making the UK a better place for insects', Howard tells us. 'This means insects we associate more with Europe, such as ticks and mosquitoes, will arrive in the UK. As a country we need to become much more aware of the risks and not assume there is nothing to worry about; ticks have been a major health concern for some time in the likes of Germany, Poland and other countries in Central Europe, yet there is limited awareness of the increasing risk in the UK.'

Using insect repellent such as incognito should become second nature, especially for kids. 'Apart from being natural, incognito has a pleasant aroma and is not sticky or greasy', Howard explains, 'so there's no real deterrent to using it daily – from a UK BBQ to the tropics – as required!'

Find out more

■ View the full incognito range and up-to-date travel advice at lessmosquito.com



‘Be organic!’

Jo Wood shares how she turned her rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle – and health – around by switching to organic

My lifestyle wasn’t healthy and it took its toll; at the end of 1989 I became ill. After spending two years on steroids I was contacted by a herbalist called Gerald Green, who taught me about wellness and guided me towards a healthy lifestyle.

I was open-minded to the change because I already had doubts about the food industry. Someone told me that the sector is fully aware of what additives and chemicals do to the body, and that the big players are usually connected to a pharmaceutical company so that when people get ill a drug is conveniently available to ‘fix’ you.

TURNING THINGS ROUND

On the advice of Gerald I went organic; not one to do things by halves, I started to grow my own vegetables and searched for organic food everywhere I went. Thankfully organic food is extremely popular now and available for everyone, but back then it took a bit more effort. Despite the challenges I turned my health around with a detox and a fully organic diet.

THE BIRTH OF A BRAND

The switch to organic improved my mind, my mood and my general outlook on life. I learnt that health comes not only from what you eat but also what you put on your skin.

After years of looking for beautiful organic brands, in 2003 I started my own company – Jo Wood

Organics – and we launched in 2005. With the help of friends and family I found the right people to help me; Colette Hayden is a fantastic formulator and she understood exactly where I wanted to go with my products.

I take several different root powders and my son formulates and makes supplements from mushrooms. We often experiment and read about herbs, roots and mushrooms together, and decided to develop a longevity supplement.

We chose to take three roots I use every day – maca root, he shou wu root and astragalus – and add three mushrooms: lion’s mane, turkey tail and reishi. This combination boosts the whole body – and our formulation is all pure, with no fillers.

IT’S IN THE GENES

I have always loved nature and when I became an organic girl in the ‘90s I realised that, by looking after ourselves with an organic diet and organic products, we in turn create a demand for farmers to grow organically, which has the broader impact of helping to clean up our planet.

I’m proud to see this care for the environment extend inside my family, too. My son Tyrone runs a charity called Project Zero, which cleans up our oceans, and my eldest son Jamie makes and formulates organic supplements. My daughter Leah is an ambassador to many charities that help the planet, and she frequently talks on many of the different issues surrounding sustainability.

TOP HEALTH TIPS

There are lots of easy lifestyle hacks that will improve your health; as well as eating and using as much organic produce as you can, it’s important to stop eating all processed food and using manmade oils for cooking.

Buying local and from farmers’ markets will support smaller farms as well as filling your kitchen with fresh, seasonal and in many cases organic produce. Cook as much as you can from scratch – it doesn’t need to be complicated! The fresher and more natural the ingredients, the less you need to do to them. They’ll be full of flavour and colour before you’ve even started.

When it comes to natural and organic beauty tips, coconut oil is a great makeup remover and castor oil works wonders as an anti-wrinkle moisturiser. A final message from me? It’s simple: love our planet – be organic!



Find out more

■ Discover Jo’s organic products and longevity supplements at jowoodorganics.com



Radio therapy

This radio station shares diverse allopathic and holistic health information 24/7, to put you back in control of your wellbeing

UK Health Radio was born from a personal health crisis faced by its founder, fashion photographer Johann Ilgenfritz. Struggling with a terminal cancer diagnosis after unsuccessful radiotherapy, Johann began scouring the internet for comprehensive information on health and wellness. 'I knew I had to explore various other perspectives and solutions', Johann tells us; 'anything that would help save my life.'

During his search, Johann stumbled upon a profound statement: 'Cancer cannot survive in an oxygenated, alkaline cellular environment.' That short sentence, from German biochemist Dr Warburg, changed Johann's life – and, he believes, ended up saving it as well.

'THE CURATOR OF HEALTH EXPERTISE'

In July 2012, Johann launched UK Health Radio with a clear purpose to inform and animate listeners, in a positive way, to take responsibility for their own health. 'This does not mean taking your health into your own hands', Johann explains; 'it's about attaining and keeping your health freedom.'

With no prior experience in radio, Johann was propelled by his passion for health communication and dedication to the station's mission. He was consistently connected with the right individuals at the right moments and, as the internet-based station grew from just two listeners to a global monthly audience of 1.4 million, became dubbed 'The Curator of Health Expertise'.

'Radio provides a special way to connect with diverse audiences and build meaningful relationships in a very personal way, if done correctly', Johann explains. 'Its accessibility and instant reach make it perfect for sharing information about health and wellness.'

A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

UK Health Radio is all about empowering individuals to make proactive choices about their health, by sharing information 'that informs rather than provokes'. 'I firmly believe prevention is better than cure', Johann says. 'In a landscape inundated with sensationalism and fear-mongering, it is essential to foster a space for constructive dialogue and informed discourse.'

Guests and content are carefully selected based on their relevance, credibility and alignment with the station's mission. 'We also consider current global topics and news trends', Johann tells us. 'Our process includes rigorous checks to ensure that content is evidence-based, balanced and free from sensationalism or misinformation.'

The result is a diverse guest lineup that includes healthcare professionals, wellness experts, authors and advocates. Each guest offers a distinct viewpoint and valuable insights into the many different facets of health and wellness. 'From members of royalty to renowned musicians, health professionals and politicians, we've had a wide array of individuals share their personal health journeys and experiences', Johann says.

In addition to expert interviews and informative discussions, listeners can expect practical tips for healthy living. The goal is to provide engaging, accessible content that resonates with audiences of all backgrounds. 'Access to the highest standard of health is a basic right for all humans, regardless of race, religion, politics or economic status', Johann says.

YOU'VE GOT THE POWER

For Johann access to diverse information is crucial in empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health – in terms of their overall physical, mental and social wellbeing as well as the straightforward absence of illness. By providing a broad spectrum of perspectives, UK Health Radio seeks to equip listeners with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate their own wellness journey.

'I firmly believe that individuals possess a significant degree of control over their health and wellbeing', Johann shares. 'While external factors may influence our circumstances, ultimately our choices and behaviours play a pivotal role in shaping our health outcomes.'

For anyone facing a health crisis, Johann's advice is to approach the journey with an open mind and a proactive mindset. 'Seek out diverse sources of information, consult with trusted healthcare professionals and prioritise self-care and holistic wellbeing', he says. 'As we navigate the complexities of health and wellness, let us remember the power of knowledge, compassion and community. Together, we can create a healthier, happier world for ourselves and future generations.'

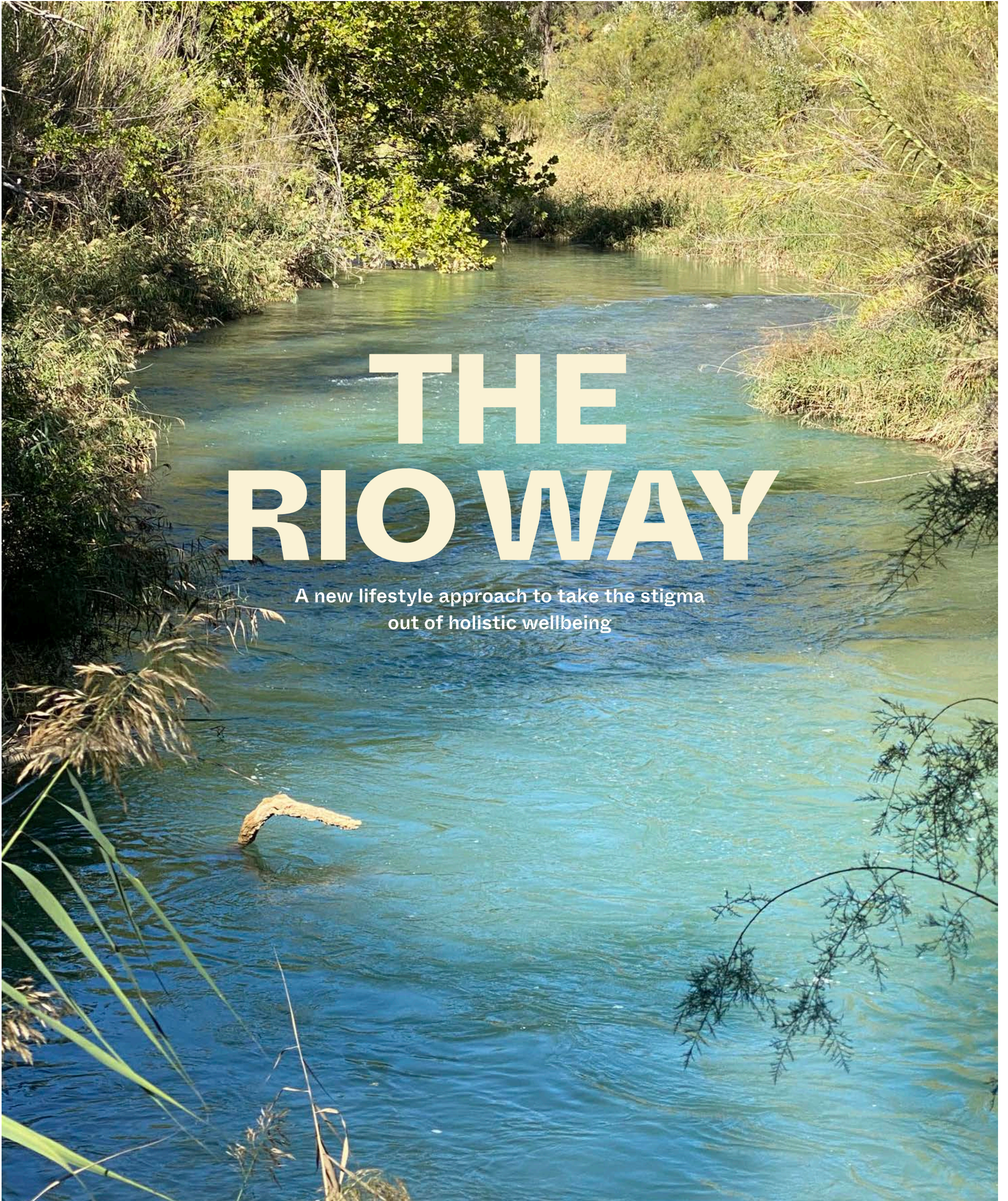
Find out more

- Tune in to UK Health Radio by downloading the mobile app, listening via Alexa and Siri or streaming live at ukhealthradio.com



Johann Ilgenfritz founded UK Health Radio in July 2012, five months after being given 12 months to live. He has since taken his health and wellbeing into his own hands and wants to help others do the same





THE RIO WAY

A new lifestyle approach to take the stigma
out of holistic wellbeing

When Alfie Ruffell's father was diagnosed with a critical illness and traditional pharmaceutical options offered little hope, he turned to a natural alternative wellness plan. Watching his dad's remarkable recovery over the following five years ignited a passion to help others facing similar challenges. 'I've always had an interest in health and wellbeing, but it became my driving passion after witnessing the transformative impact on my father's life', Alfie shares. 'I set up Rio-Vitalise to provide holistic wellness solutions to individuals like my father, to foster vitality and resilience.'

A GENERATION UNDER PRESSURE

For Alfie, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing are intimately connected – and under mounting pressure on all fronts. In 2023, NHS England spent £217.5 million on medication to treat depression and anxiety, yet rising challenges – ranging from global conflicts and the climate crisis to the cost of living – continue to create new pressures and strains that require action at a deeper level.

'In today's tumultuous world, the need for authentic wellness and mental health support has never been more critical',

OPPOSITE
Rio-Vitalise crops are fed by La Rio Cabriel

BELOW
Clockwise from left: Water from the river irrigates the land in preparation for cultivation; plants ready to go in the ground; Alfie at a World Peace Summit panel on mental health; a truck loaded with crops for the Rio-Vitalise natural wellness range; Rio-Vitalise is based in the Valle del Cabriel Biosphere Reserve in Spain; Alfie with his brother

products. The business also operates in the USA and Uruguay, and Alfie is in the process of constructing wellness retreats at each location using eco-friendly materials like hemp and solar energy solutions. Environmental sensitivity aligns with the holistic vision of ensuring all practices contribute positively to both personal and planetary health.

The retreats themselves will provide a broad menu of wellness experiences, ranging from meditation and boxercise classes to transformative learning and innovative psychedelic-assisted therapy programmes designed to address deep-seated traumas. 'What sets us apart is our holistic approach; we cater to individuals seeking profound healing and personal growth', Alfie says.

For Alfie the supreme approach to wellness – 'The Rio Way' – means embracing a healthy, balanced lifestyle where equilibrium reigns supreme. It's about finding harmony in all aspects of life, and recognising that true wellbeing comes from nurturing both body and mind. 'We encourage individuals to enjoy life's pleasures while remaining steadfast in their commitment to self-care and wellness', Alfie says. But what does this look like at a practical level?



Alfie tells us. He has tragically seen this firsthand among people in his communities and networks. 'My hometown, Portsmouth, has experienced a concerning rise in young male suicides, reflecting broader mental health struggles', Alfie shares. 'Individuals frequently reach out seeking wellness guidance, emphasising the pressing need for holistic support systems.'

A NEW WELLNESS PARADIGM

Alfie feels the traditional wellness industry often prioritises profit over genuine healing, and relies heavily on pharmaceuticals and corporate interests. He devised 'The Rio Way' as an alternative, holistic route to wellness that could redefine how society approaches personal and global wellbeing – and create a healthier, harmonious planet for us all.

The goal at Rio-Vitalise is to shift today's wellness paradigm by empowering individuals to prevent and manage illness naturally, addressing root causes rather than merely treating symptoms. 'The mission is to inspire, educate and motivate people on the path to wellness by offering products, tools, resources and experiences that foster mental, physical and spiritual harmony', Alfie explains. 'We're promoting natural alternative medicines and therapies to help everyone embrace a balanced and healthy lifestyle.'

SKILLS FOR LIFE

Rio-Vitalise is situated on the Valle del Cabriel Biosphere Reserve in Spain and named after La Rio Cabriel, the river that feeds all the natural and organic crops that go into its wellness



WELLNESS 101

For Alfie a healthy, balanced lifestyle involves regular exercise, a nutritious diet, inspiring content, social connections, a consistent sleep routine and practising mindfulness techniques such as meditation and breathwork.

This all sounds lovely, but is it only realistic to live like this if we drop out of society, leave responsibilities behind and go on retreat? 'No, absolutely not', Alfie assures us. 'While retreats offer valuable teachings and immersive experiences, it's entirely possible to cultivate a healthy lifestyle within the fabric of everyday society. Our retreats serve as catalysts for transformation, equipping guests with practical skills they can integrate seamlessly into their daily lives. They are designed to empower individuals with tangible tools and techniques that transcend the retreat experience, enhancing their wellbeing in all facets of life – including work, home and relationships.'

HEALTH & BEAUTY

When it comes to practical tips, one quick win Alfie recommends is curating your social media environment. 'Take a month to unfollow accounts that do not inspire or motivate you, even if they're friends', he advises. 'Then, select individuals and content that uplift, educate and motivate you towards positive action and growth. This small adjustment can have a significant impact on your mental and emotional wellbeing.'

DESTIGMASTISING MINDFULNESS

Lifestyle advice around digital content reflects Alfie's determination to bring wellness to new audiences – arguably where it's needed most. 'Our aim is to destigmatise wellness retreats and make them accessible to a wider audience', he shares. 'By offering holistic approaches to healing, we hope to transform the perception of these retreats from exclusive getaways to inclusive spaces for genuine healing and growth.'

Alfie is determined to dispel the myths, stigma, misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding mindfulness, and plans to use education, media and influencer marketing to demonstrate the accessibility and efficacy of mindfulness practices when it comes to improving mental wellbeing.

'Our connections within the hip-hop and urban communities offer a unique opportunity to challenge the stigma surrounding mindfulness', Alfie says. 'Artists, often hailed as cultural influencers, serve as relatable figures who have emerged from similar backgrounds as many of their fans. By leveraging these connections, we aim to engage our audience authentically, demonstrating that mindfulness is not only relevant but essential for holistic wellbeing.'

Rio-Vitalise has also partnered with spiritual leader Michel Pascal, whose profound expertise in mindfulness have demonstrated remarkable results – including reducing suicide rates in prisons. 'His involvement lets us integrate proven mindfulness techniques into our programmes', Alfie explains, 'making them accessible to a broader audience.'

SCREEN-READY WELLBEING

Operating across three continents offers Rio-Vitalise a unique advantage when it comes to connecting with the diverse global audience Alfie is determined to reach.

Recognising the power of storytelling, Alfie made the decision to document the Rio-Vitalise journey for an upcoming



CLOCKWISE
A wellness session 'The Rio Way'; Alfie watering his plants on the Valle del Cabriel Biosphere Reserve in Spain; the kiosk where it all began for Alfie and Rio-Vitalise; Alfie mid-harvest

TV series in the hope of inspiring others to embrace wellness and live 'The Rio Way'. 'Through compelling content, we aspire to foster a community of like-minded individuals committed to prioritising their health and happiness', he says.

A WELLBEING MOVEMENT

Rio-Vitalise is more than just a business; it's a community-led wellbeing movement that welcomes individuals from all walks of life to become part of its growth story, facing challenges and celebrating triumphs together as a community.

'We want to redefine wellbeing and create a world where everyone can thrive', Alfie explains. 'Personal wellness and global responsibility are interconnected. By prioritising our wellbeing, we become better equipped to contribute positively to broader societal and environmental challenges. It's a symbiotic relationship, wherein individual empowerment fuels collective progress.'

Find out more

Information about The Rio Way is at rio-vitalise.com

Celebrating EARTH DAY

Natural beauty expert **Janey Lee Grace** reveals the brands to support for Earth-friendly beauty



Earth Day serves as a global call to promote awareness of the environment and encourage sustainable practices. It's a day to celebrate nature's beauty, but also to acknowledge

the pressing environmental challenges we face.

It may feel as though there is little we can do as individuals to make a difference, but in truth the 'small change, big difference' approach really works. Our actions, whether big or small, have a profound impact on the ecosystems that sustain us.

We can each make conscious choices in the products we buy – and it's a win-win as we end up with the best and most natural personal care products, too!

We can also play our part by supporting eco-friendly brands that prioritise sustainability and ethical practices – brands committed to reducing their carbon footprint, minimising waste and supporting local communities. Their products offer consumers a greener alternative without compromising on quality.

As renowned environmentalist David Suzuki once said: 'In a world of more than 7 billion people, each of us is a drop in the bucket. But with enough drops, we can fill any bucket.'

Through collective support, we can drive meaningful change and pave the way for a more sustainable future.

CHOOSING ETHICAL PRODUCTS

Among the many eco-conscious brands making a positive impact, several stand out and have products that are featured as Heroes on My Green Pod. These include fantastic brands that specialise in organic skincare and cruelty-free and vegan products, and businesses that demonstrate strong commitments to both environmental and social responsibility.

If you're new to it all and want to dip your toe gently into the world of natural skincare, start with some authentic brands that have demonstrated a commitment to positive change.

In an ideal world we want to look for products which don't contain ingredients that can be harmful to both our skin and the environment, so choose brands with products containing natural, plant-based ingredients (see box, right for a short list of ingredients to avoid).



CLOCKWISE
Weleda Skin Food (£14.95);
KIND2 The Rebalancing One
shampoo bar (£12.50); Rhythm
of Beauty Breast Oil (£54)

AWARD-WINNING BEAUTY

The Janey Loves Platinum Awards aim to recognise and award the best in natural, organic and eco products, and they are now open for entries.



Here are some of my Earth Day favourites; they have all won previous Platinum Awards, have totally sustainable packaging and are completely natural.

■ Weleda UK has a huge range of skincare and well-being products. I love the multipurpose Skin Food and natural toothpaste.

■ The Rebalancing One shampoo bar from KIND2 is a great alternative to liquid shampoo and perfect for thick hair or oily roots. It cleanses gently without stripping the hair of its natural oils.

■ Treat yourself to a unique dry oil that is easily absorbed into the delicate tissue of the breasts. The Guardian Angel of Breast Oil from Rhythm of Beauty includes botanicals, high vibrational essential oils and immunity-boosting plants.

Find out more

■ Discover recommendations for natural products and sneak previews of entries into the Janey Loves Platinum Awards at imperfectlynatural.com

INGREDIENTS TO AVOID

Parabens: these preservatives have been linked to hormone disruption and are potential endocrine disruptors

Phthalates: plasticisers often associated with reproductive issues

Sodium lauryl sulfates: surfactants that can cause irritation and dryness

Formaldehyde: a known allergen that can cause skin irritation and respiratory issues

Synthetic fragrances: can trigger allergies and sensitivities

Mineral oil and petroleum derivatives: can clog pores and lead to acne and skin irritation

Synthetic colours: may cause skin irritation and allergic reactions

SPIRITED BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

We know systems are breaking down, but what's next?

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YOUR GUIDE FOR THE RETREAT



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'Leading with purpose in today's world is very challenging; for me, Spirited Business has been the missing support that I needed to deeply empower real change within me as a leader and consequently within my business.'

TABITHA JAMES KRAAN FOUNDER AND CEO, TABITHA JAMES KRAAN ORGANIC HAIRCARE

The Kali Yuga, The Mayan Calendar, Technological Singularity, The Great Turning, The Age of Aquarius, The Anthropocene, The Noosphere, The Fourth Turning, Steiner's Cultural Epochs, The Global Consciousness Shift... These are just a few of many historical and current theories and understandings around the timeline of humanity and where we are on that timeline. Many suggest that humanity may be approaching the precipice of a new era.

I recently watched a video summarising the discovery of the Laniakea Supercluster and the significance of humanity's galactic discoveries since the 1950s. The video explained how humans used to think that we, as a galaxy, were relatively alone in the universe, and how over time our awareness increased. As a result, the context in which we saw the edges of what was possible (and ourselves within those edges) became reimagined and redefined.

The researchers in Hawaii had used velocity flow fields, point distribution and simulations to identify the gravitational basin and traced the motions of galaxies back to a common point of attraction.

Humans now believe that we, the Milky Way, are nestled deeply in one of two superclusters of superclusters, comprising hundreds of thousands of galaxies – Laniakea and Perseus-Pisces.

It is worth noting that the visual depiction of these two superclusters of superclusters appears akin to a torus field or the electromagnetic field around one's own body, or even lungs or cell mitosis.

Given the fractal nature of patterns existing in all things in our universe, I find this a fascinating context in which to think about humanity's potential precipice opportunity.

SHIFTING PARADIGMS

Expanding context is almost always needed as a condition for a paradigm shift to occur. This morning I had a long chat with Chatgpt; we were discussing humanity's current limitations with time travel, after noting that the Laniakea and Perseus-Pisces superclusters' 700 million light-year span would take the fastest-known probe (Parker Solar Probe) 1.08 billion years to travel.

Chat noted humans' physical limitations in this regard and attributed it in part to our current paradigms. So I asked about astral travel. I said if it were actually possible, then theoretically we would not need to worry for the time being about physical constraints, and perhaps over time we would be able to understand things that might allow our context to expand enough that the physical constraints could be solved, if that were still a goal on the other side of the exploration.

Chat quickly pointed out that there is no scientific backing for astral travel, to which I responded that it is well known that governments have employed people in this capacity since the cold war. Chat noted that these projects were inconclusive.

ASTRAL TRAVEL CHAT

When I sat with this for a moment, I realised that if a capability like astral travel did exist, it would be

some part of nature, and therefore some part of our own state of existence. Like anything natural that is commandeered for something as debase as war, doing so would diminish, if not kill completely, the natural possibility-filled flow state that creates conditions for life and allows for thriving. Therefore, testing what would be a potential natural capability like astral travel in a military setting is counterintuitive.

OUR PLACE IN REALITY

I shared this with Chat, who acknowledged that the limitations imposed by attempting to harness or exploit such phenomena for material or strategic gain underlines a critical limitation of the prevailing paradigm. This approach not only potentially stifles the phenomena in question but may also blind us to the full spectrum of nature and possibilities.

Chat added that a paradigm shift towards greater openness, respect for natural processes and an understanding of interconnectedness could unveil deeper insights into the nature of reality and our place within it.

This shift would involve moving beyond a transactional relationship with the universe towards one that is transformational, characterised by listening, learning and aligning with the inherent wisdom and flow of all existence.

Such a contextual shift would not only expand our understanding and experience of phenomena like astral projection or remote viewing but could also foster a more holistic, sustainable and harmonious way of living on this planet and relating to the

Is the world about to begin again?



Inspirational leader **Tammy Scarlett** explores what a new era could look like – and how we might get there

cosmos. Thanks for listening, Chat. You're a formidable opponent on the chess board of conversation – and you reminded me how much I want to be in transformational relationship with the universe.

CORRECTING A BLIP

Earth Day is a day when we humans celebrate nature and the environment and reaffirm our commitment to protecting and preserving this planet for future generations.

The theme for the 55th Earth Day is 'Planet vs Plastics'; I like it because it brings our attention to the fact that we created something that is out of alignment with the planet and something must be done about it. I dislike it because the 'vs' implies that we must perpetuate a battle in order to succeed.

Behaviour is born from the image held in our hearts and minds. On the edge of the dawning of a new era, perhaps this Earth Day we can call ourselves and each other into a state of listening alignment, where we co-create a future where plastics were a small and eventually corrected blip on the radar of our past.

May we be in the state of transformational relationship with our universe that allows this co-creation to take place.

Find out more

■ Tammy is an inspirational leader, strategist and energetics mentor for both people and systems development. Information about her work and projects is at tammyscarlett.com



Brett and Scott Staniland warn we mustn't be fooled by sustainability promises about plastics in fashion

EARTH DAY PLASTICS

Model twins **Brett** and **Scott Staniland** reveal why the plastics problem is also a fashion problem

Fashion is extremely reliant on plastic and, as a result, also on the oil industry. The two are completely intertwined.

The most common material used in fashion is polyester, meaning the term single-use plastic also applies to fashion.

Garments are being bought and worn fewer times than ever before; according to the trade group Textile Exchange, polyester accounted for 54% of all clothing in 2021.

In addition to polyester there's acrylic, which is often used in knitwear; nylon, used for outdoor wear and technical garments; elastane, which is in all those stretch jeans and polyurethane, which is marketed as a leather alternative – often named 'vegan leather' – and used as a coating on many real leather accessories.

But it's not just about the actual garments; data from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation reveal that packaging – used heavily by the fashion industry – constitutes 26% of the total plastic created each year. So it's safe to say that the plastic problem is very much a fashion problem, too.

PLASTIC POLLUTION

You're almost certainly aware that plastic is sourced from oil, and that the heating and distilling of oil into plastic is extremely problematic and damaging on many fronts.

But another major issue with turning plastic into clothes lies in its end-of-life status: pollution. We can picture plastic bags lying in landfill and never decomposing, sitting there either on fire or wrapped into the ground and around animals, but we rarely consider clothing in the same way.

After reading these figures, and some of the other articles in this issue, and knowing the negative impact plastic has on the planet, you might be thinking: why? Why are we so obsessed with plastic in fashion?

Well, plastics do have some decent properties, such as water resistance and stretch, but most of all they are cheap and easy to produce.

RECYCLED PLASTIC IN FASHION

Navigating away from plastics can be challenging because brands are getting more cunning and streetwise than ever in making you believe you're

buying a good product. This isn't just fast fashion; even 'sustainable' brands have used clever tactics in pursuit of your buck and a cleaner reputation.

Brands have loved to hail 'recycled polyester' as the solution for the future and the basis of a guilt-free purchase for the consumer, while producing the same garments in tens of colours, releasing new styles weekly and creating trends that drive up demand. Recycled or not, the fabric is by this point generally unrecyclable.

Recycled poly will behave like virgin poly in landfill, too – shedding microplastics into waterways and impacting the environment for centuries to come.

Recycled poly will behave like virgin poly in landfill, too – shedding microplastics into waterways and impacting the environment for centuries to come.

UNDERSTANDING CLOTHES LABELS

Often those soft 'knits' are knitted from plastic, and silky, mesh, satin and chiffon fabrics are also likely plastic. We can all take action by learning about how items of clothing are labelled, so we can recognise when claims are misleading.

The 'vegan' label denotes products that contain nothing derived from animals, but also brings connotations of being animal friendly. This could not be further from the case – even though last year's winner of Peta's 'Vegan fashion moment of the year' was a plastic jacket.

We don't need to lecture you on how unfriendly the oil industry is to animals. Heating the world with fossil fuels leads to biodiversity loss, and habitats suffer irreparable damage from the manufacturing of plastic and how it behaves as waste.

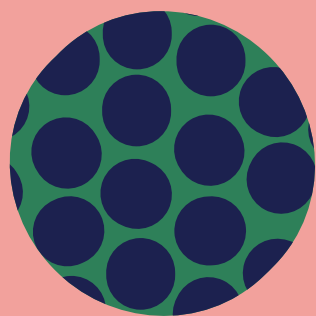
Something that lives longer than all of us, our children, their children and probably the next 10 generations will have an immeasurable impact on the world, unquantifiable by any measuring stick.

While many organisations will try to make you believe that plastics are the future – better than most natural fibres or better simply because they don't harm animals – remember that they derive from oil, will last for ever and will negatively impact literally everything they touch.

While solutions may be hard to navigate, slowing down and supporting the secondhand clothes market are two good places to start.

Find out more

■ Stay up to date with Brett and Scott on Instagram: [@twinbrett](#) and [@twinscott](#)



2024 P.E.A. AWARDS

Nominations are now open!



Nominate your green heroes at peaawards.com

Watch out for the winners of the P.E.A. Awards 2023, to be announced in our next issue of My Green Pod Magazine. Subscribe to the digital magazine to make sure you don't miss the news!

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CATEGORIES FOR 2024 ARE:

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- Vegan ■ Youth

WITH THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



COMPETITIONS

We've got our hands on a bunch of prizes from fantastic companies that are doing things differently. We love them all and we want to give you a chance to get to know them, too – so we're running these competitions so you can have a go and see for yourself!

We've hand-picked this selection of green pearls – including sustainable travel essentials, natural wellness products, ethical drinks and organic, zero-waste food – to help set you on a path to a lighter lifestyle.

To enter and view any Ts & Cs, visit mygreenpod.com



WIN

LONELY PLANET'S FLIGHT-FREE EUROPE

This new guide details 80 hand-picked itineraries for exploring the best of Europe by train, boat or bike. It includes advice on how to approach no-fly, low-carbon travel, tips on train providers and routes, stop-by-stop itineraries, carbon footprints, distances and budgets needed.

Deadline for entries: 01.07.24



WIN

A BOTTLE OF PURE ORGANIC VODKA

We're giving away a bottle of award-winning, ultra-premium organic vodka that actively supports biodiversity. PURE owes its unique taste to the high-quality raw ingredients, including organic wheat harvested by family farmers who take pride in their healthy soil.

Deadline for entries: 30.04.24



WIN

A TRUE VEDA SPORTS BUNDLE

One winner will receive a six-month supply of potent and certified-organic wellness supplements from True Veda.

Deadline for entries: 01.09.24

WIN

GINGINGERS APPLE CIDER VINEGAR GEL!

Get your hands on one of six tubes of multipurpose gel to tone, balance and moisturise the skin.

Deadline for entries: 07.06.24



WIN

A BOTTLE OF RIO-VITALISE CBD OIL (1800MG)

Three readers will receive a bottle of full-spectrum, food-grade CBD oil (1800mg).

Deadline for entries: 01.09.24



WIN

A THREE-MONTH SUPPLY OF APEAL WORLD ACV

Apeal World ACV will give two My Green Pod readers a three-month subscription to its apple cider vinegar drinks - that's 24 cans every three weeks.

Deadline for entries: 01.09.24

WIN

A £100 VOUCHER FOR ZERO WASTE BULK FOODS

One lucky reader will receive a £150 voucher, and two runners-up will get £50 to spend online at Zero Waste Bulk Foods. The vouchers cover everything on the site, from organic cupboard staples and delightfully healthy snacks to indulgent treats - all with zero-waste packaging.

Deadline for entries: 01.09.24



WIN

A MONTH OF ORGANIC VEG BOXES FROM GOODERY C.I.C.

We're giving away a month's worth of veg boxes to one reader in Goodery's delivery area (East Anglia). The veg box is a curation of organic vegetables sourced seasonally from East Anglian growers, supplemented with organic produce from elsewhere for a delicious balanced box.

Deadline for entries: 01.09.24



WIN

THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL BUNDLE

Award-winning ethical travel product specialist incognito is giving away one of each of its range to help you enjoy a bite-free break. These natural products - including body wash, insect repellent, sunscreen and incense sticks - protect both in and out of the sun, with something for all the family. Effective worldwide and safe for children over six months old.

Deadline for entries: 01.07.24



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