

How Many Net-Zeroes Can We Achieve

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Weep for those killed and injured by earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. That disaster was not caused by actions of humans. More buildings around the world where there are faults in the earth's mantle could be built to resist devastating shocks.

The approach to carbon net zero rightly gains constant attention with growing agreement that achieving the target matters. Many other zero targets matter too.

Good news: the campaign to achieve a polio-free world is close to success. This paralysing condition affected older friends. Now it only exists in the world's poorest, marginalised communities, hitting the most vulnerable children.

The global polio eradication initiative is the largest private-public partnership for health. Every child has to be reached for vaccination. The disease can follow smallpox into history. Misinformation about vaccines combined with conflict and refugee migration slowed progress. UNICEF works with vaccine manufacturers for routine and outbreak efforts.

1979 was the year Rotary International started to vaccinate children in the Philippines. Rotary groups in West Sussex have helped protect three billion children in 122 countries. If eradication efforts stopped, within 10 years polio could paralyse up to 200,000 children each year.

This week I volunteered to take a test for HIV as a public demonstration that no one should be embarrassed to help and treat the infected, working for an HIV-free future. My status was known because I give blood when I can.

In the UK, HIV medication and medical care is free for everyone. If you have HIV, the sooner treatment is started the better it is for your health and for any person with whom you are intimate. Testing is easy, free and confidential. With treatment, transmission can stop when a few thousand undetected cases are found.

The countryside charity CPRE speaks sense on planning policies for solar electricity. They campaign to promote, enhance and protect the countryside for everyone's benefit, sustaining, enchanting and inspiring future generations. This was in my mind on Saturday. After meeting the community at Ferring Village Hall, I joined the Hands Off Our Gaps demonstration on the A259 below Highdown by Ferring between Goring and East Preston.

Responding to the net zero review by Chris Skidmore MP, CPRE endorse the call for a 'rooftop revolution' because solar panels and solar energy can be transforming with minor change to planning rules. Panels can lift the value of homes, factories and farms. They plug in on top of existing buildings; they save money and reduce carbon emission.

Do not cover valued open fields against local opposition. Panels can be placed out-of-sight, with mass popular support. The onshore renewables strategy should start with rooftops, surface car parks and brownfield sites. Cut energy bills; speed the progress to net zero. Countryside can be dedicated to farming, recreation and nature restoration.

On Monday I chaired the Commons meeting of how to achieve net zero for residential leasehold apartments. The law is complicated and out-of-date; the funding systems are yet to be developed – and predictably, the housing minister changes. Here we go again. I am glad to have the opportunity to champion leaseholders.

An exhibition at parliament has been dedicated to Holocaust education. Sadly, that horror was not the last. This week I witnessed the announcement of Srebrenica Memorial Week 2023. The planned genocide in 1995 led to the murder of nearly 100,000 Muslims, displacement of two million people and the death at Srebrenica alone of over 8,000 men and boys. The International Criminal Tribunal description: 'truly scenes from hell, written in the darkest pages of human history'. The official day of remembrance will be 11 July. When will senseless massacres cease?

Let us illuminate the darkness with hope.