

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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There are many websites to prompt personal thinking and actions. A helpful American is www.greenandgrowing.org with simple examples for more sustainable living.

Paper made from recycled material saves thousands of gallons of water, lots of air pollution as well as trees; all but a quarter of our waste is recyclable; and recycling a soft drink can saves the energy to power a TV for hours.

Most of us can make progress. Together we have. During the past thirty years, the economy has doubled while the carbon dioxide emitted has halved. An extreme 'green' would want the economic standard of living to be reduced; the rest of us would like one version or another of levelling-up to be associated with much less waste, a lighter impact on the natural environment and even greater degrees of worthwhile recycling.

When creaking bones allow, I am happy sailing in the Channel or paddling an old open canoe in the Solent. I gain some exercise; the exhaust gases are minimal.

When choosing a home, I try to be able to walk to work or to the station. Not everyone can do that. We can try to build new homes where shared transport is available. I always thought it odd that the City of London, the financial centre, should have been redeveloped in a way that required so many to commute.

People with long memories will recall the large employers, Woolwich Equitable building society, the successive names of the insurance companies off Grove Lodge roundabout, the Lloyds registrars amongst them. Local jobs for local people.

When having the choice of changing place of occupation or of home, how about seeing if it is possible to halve the time between them, saving money and time in a way that is friendlier to our shared planet. That is a practical example of Reduction.

Another is becoming conscious of the spread of plastics in so much of what we now take for granted. Some may come from recycled material; much does not. When will all food packaging be easily recycled – and can my Marmite or Bovril jars and their lids go on the recycling journey?

When I was young, few teachers drove to school. Now many children are driven, rather than walking, biking or taking a bus or train. We can influence the proportions, identifying safe possible alternatives.

Children learn what needs to happen: prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycling, energy recovery, best practice disposal. We can aim to gain the greatest practical benefit from products, created with the least waste. We should aim to cut greenhouse gases, cut pollutants, conserve energy.

Committees on climate change gain headlines occasionally, Children and professional experts want our group and individual decisions to be compatible with reducing the adverse impact of our lives, our habits and our economies on the planet we share for future generations.

When tempted to point a finger at someone else, I know three more are pointing back at me. Even so, I state my views on those who gather as Extinction Rebellion. Do not have extended blockages of roads or public transport. That adds to pollution and it prevents the work and the travel arrangements of others who do not have the option of camping on a highway or gluing themselves to a train used by commuters.

When hundreds gathered around parliament, I asked where they were from. Two had flown from Vancouver, 4,700 miles or 7,500 km. Saving the planet by flying around the world to a demonstration?

More practical is the interest of Campbell Muirhead, Worthing Green Taxis. He is keen on reducing pollution from vehicle tyres and brakes.