



How Can We Follow Climate Scientists' Lead to Slow Climate Change?

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The Australian bushfires at the end of 2019 served as the latest stark reminder that climate change is happening — and happening fast.

Earth is now the warmest it has been in more than 120,000 years, with 19 of the 20 warmest years on record all occurring since 2001. Calls for action on climate change had fallen on deaf ears for almost 20 years, but now it looks like may be reaching a turning point thanks to the fact the UK legislated for Net Zero in 2019 and the Paris Agreement has been set worldwide. So, can we still save our planet?

In the UK, the court of appeals has ruled plans for a third runway at Heathrow Airport as illegal, in the wake of the British Government's target in law for a net zero emissions by 2050.

Such is the escalating nature of climate change that many scientists have started to practice what they preach and are implementing their lessons at home. So, which of these measures can we learn from to reduce our carbon footprint?

Ditch the plane

Air traffic is one of the highest contributors to carbon in our atmosphere, a one hour 20 minutes return flight emits 0.24 tonnes of carbon. Experts have said travellers should restrict themselves to just one short haul flight every two to three years.

The alternative for many would be to consider a car-ferry-car journey or taking the Eurostar to the continent. The argument for travelling by plane collapses when the same trip by car and boat would produce 0.08 tonnes of carbon — less than a third of the emissions produced by a plane for the same journey.

Newcastle to Belfast Round Trip: Car-Ferry-Car vs Plane				
Mode of Transport	Distance	Time	Emissions per km/hr	Total
Car-Ferry-Car	734 km	13 hours	120g per km	88,080g (0.08 tonnes)
Plane	584 km	1hr 20 mins	90g per hour	240,000g (0.24 tonnes)

With the stats stacking up, some experts are taking a stand. Professor Dave Reay from the University of Edinburgh is setting the best example for his children. He gave up flying in 2004 and has opted for the staycation, taking his family on trips around the British Isles instead of jet setting to the other side of the world.

They even took the ferry to Amsterdam, proving that a lack of flying doesn't have to prevent you exploring other cultures.

Go plastic free

One of the biggest concerns around climate change come from the plastics being dumped into our oceans. Almost eight million tonnes of plastic enter the ocean every year, which consequently destroys the environment, as well as the animal and plant life to which they play home.

More than 250 million people have engaged with Plastic Free July since 2011 to help clean up the streets and oceans, and there is plenty you can do at home too. Carbon specialist Siobhán Pereira chose to go plastic-free in her bathroom and is encouraging others to do the same. Switch your plastic toothbrush for a bamboo or biodegradable alternative for starters, as well as choosing an eco-friendly soap.

Advising people of her lifestyle change, Pereira wrote: "We've got so used to going into the supermarket, putting something into our baskets and coming home, but we haven't considered what happens at the end of its life." Supermarkets are working to reduce plastics in the fruit and veg aisle but with higher costs associated with eco choices, are we being priced out of saving the earth?

Take yourself off the grid

In a world where material possessions dominate social media channels, we often moan about intrusions into our life and crave an opportunity to put everything on hold. With everything available at the touch of a button, from switching your heating on at home before you have left the office for the day, to ordering clothes through your smart phone, technology is making everything more convenient for consumers.

Switch your oil heating for the more environmentally friendly liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). LPG produces less carbon emissions and can be used for heating your home, cooking, and heating hot water. LPG's carbon footprint, for example is 30-40 per cent lower than coal. Therefore, choose an off grid gas supply and you will strip back the factors that contribute to a rising carbon footprint to have a telling impact on the planet.

If you really want to, you can make change happen. Take a leaf out of Dr Alison Green's book. The national director at Scientists Warning has opted to put her house on the market to downsize her carbon footprint. She plans to grow her own food and make a commitment to running an eco-friendly house.

After years of warnings and a lack of reaction, scientists are really pushing the boat out to demonstrate the changes we need to make to save our planet. Governments are finally starting to wake up to climate change, but until the everyday person is sold on the idea that life will be better for them, it seems we may be having the same conversations in 10 to 15 years' time.

The options are out there, but affordability and human convenience mean we have been slow to react to climate change. Will you make the change today and give our planet the chance to survive?

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