MARCH 2019 | ISSUE 13

THE GREEN SCENE

The University of Liverpool's Sustainability Newsletter

Page 2: No Planet B: Student Climate Strike
Page 3: Arrive Happy: The Surprising Benefits of Walking to Work
Page 4: Recycling: The Low Down
Page 6: International Women's Day: Reflections on Reduced Inequalities
Page 7: Decent Work & Economic Growth
Page 8: Modern Slavery, Transparency & Sustainability

Want to get our newsletter in your inbox? Just drop us an email!

Follow us on social media to learn more about Sustainability

🌐 SUSTAINABILITY@LIV.AC.UK
✨ @LIVUNISUSTAINABILITY
📸 @LIVUNISUSTAINABILITY
🐦 @LIUNISUSTAIN
What/Who Started This?

Greta Thunberg.
The teenager from Sweden has been protesting every Friday for the last three years, outside the Swedish parliament building. She has issued multiple inspirational speeches worldwide, addressing politicians and world leaders, helping to develop a global movement of youth climate action.

Liverpool Youth Climate Strikes

The climate strikes have now spread across the globe and are strongly supported in Liverpool. Over 2,000 people attended the climate strike on the 15th of March, organised by Liverpool's young people. The march began with a rally at St George's Square, proceeding through the city and concluding with a final rally in the city centre.

Future

The impact of the strikes across the globe is significant, showing young citizens advocating control over their future. There is much work to be done, however, as parliamentary debates have not honoured the scale of the movement. It seems future marches need even greater support. The next march will be taking place in April and will hopefully build on progress already made; from one girl striking from school to a protest of thousands.

YOU SAY YOU LOVE YOUR CHILDREN ABOVE ALL ELSE, AND YET YOU ARE STEALING THEIR FUTURE IN FRONT OF THEIR VERY EYES - Greta Thunburg
In December, when I started my new role promoting sustainable travel, I started to think about my own commute to work; its impact on the environment and my health.

January quickly came around and inspired by Liverpool City Region's Arrive Happy campaign, I decided on a New Year’s ‘Intention’ to walk to work... resolutions never seemed to stick. Previously, driving was the only feasible option for me and out of habit, I continued to drive to work despite living two miles away and having the option to use public transport- it was simply cheaper to do so on a tight budget.

On paper, walking to work simply seemed to be a great option to lower my carbon footprint and eradicate travel costs. Health wise, it can improve fitness, mental health and lower your risk of chronic disease, but it only took a day to convince me that walking, rather than sitting in traffic, made me happier. Leaving the house at the same time every day, I knew exactly when I would arrive.

I no longer worried about being late when traffic lights turned red or if I got stuck behind a bus. With my eyes off the road, I was free to look around and really take in the city I love. I couldn’t believe how many buildings and streets I’d never noticed before.

It’s been two months since I started walking to work and I’ve not looked back. I have even taken my car off the road for a while as I was hardly using it. I'm happy to say, I'm now putting that money in to a savings account to go towards my dream of going travelling where I plan to do a lot of....walking!

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE ARRIVE HAPPY CAMPAIGN VISIT WWW.ARRIVEHAPPY.ORG
If the environmental side of recycling doesn’t appeal to you, what about the economic one? Not only is recycling considerably cheaper than waste collection and disposal (precisely 6 times cheaper than general refuse), but if we can reach our recycling target 70% by 2025, we would create at least 50,000 new jobs for UK citizens.

If recycling is so important, why do some people seldom participate in this practice? It seems the number one reason people don’t recycle is simply because they perceive it to be an inconvenience, closely followed by the excuses “it’s just too complicated to know what I can actually recycle” and “how much of a difference does recycling really make?” It is true recycling can be confusing, with rules changing from community to community. However, considering the rewards, are these reasons for not recycling good enough?

“THE SOLUTION TO ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL & URGENT PROBLEMS CURRENTLY FACING OUR PLANET IS RIGHT ON OUR DOORSTOP”

- GLOBAL RECYCLING FOUNDATION
The UoL Sustainability team is making a big push to improve recycling protocol in the next few years. Whilst the introduction of the ‘Bin the Bin’ scheme in 2010 triggered a tremendous increase in recycling, recycling rates have started to plateau again. Watch out for some new introductions at UoL to improve our recycling efforts!

Psychologists have also shown that recycling can be classed as a behaviour, perhaps explaining the lack of enthusiasm seen in individuals. Much like engaging in physical activity or following healthy eating guidelines, individuals do not engage in this positive behaviour as much as they could. Comparing exercise to recycling, the rewards of exercise aren’t immediately reaped by the individual; recycling is the same. The rewards of recycling are immeasurable, but these rewards are not seen when you place your plastic bottles in the wheelie bin.

“THE SOLUTION TO ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL & URGENT PROBLEMS CURRENTLY FACING OUR PLANET IS RIGHT ON OUR DOORSTOP”
- GLOBAL RECYCLING FOUNDATION

Recycling rates for UK households stood at 45.2% in 2016, rising to 45.7% in 2017. However, with the UK target set to be at least 50% of household waste by 2020, a significant shift in individuals attitudes needs to occur. Waste is a precious tool in securing the future of our planet. Get into the mindset of recycling, or even better get into the mindset of reduce, re-use, recycle, repair, refuse, ensuring the resources we have left available are utilised in the most sustainable manner.

UPCOMING EVENTS

LIVE A BETTER LIFE VEGAN FAIR - 23RD MARCH
Liverpool’s 100% vegan & ethical living event at St. George’s Hall, showcasing vegan bars, cookery demonstrations & an opportunity to taste some of the finest vegan food Liverpool has to offer

#LOVEDCLOTHESLAST - 7TH APRIL
Writing workshop & brunch @One Fine Day in support of Fashion Revolution week-network with like-minded souls, learn about conscious fashion and practice your creative writing
This year, Friday 8th March marked International Women’s Day 2019; a chance to celebrate the progress towards women’s equality so far and raise awareness of the issues surrounding gender inequality that we are yet to overcome. The UN theme for this year’s International Women’s Day was ‘Think equal, build smart, innovate for change’. A key challenge for achieving sustainable development within countries is the role of women; only in raising the status of women can between-country inequalities be significantly reduced.

Income inequality in developing countries is currently increasing; rising by 11% over the last two decades – in part this is due to women not fully participating in the economy. Not only does inequality restrict women’s access to education and healthcare, significantly impacting their own well-being, but having such a large group excluded from the economy is problematic in terms of a country’s wider aims towards achieving sustainable development. Working towards raising the status of women is a massive part of reducing inequality both within and among countries.

"ONLY IN RAISING THE STATUS OF WOMEN CAN BETWEEN-COUNTRY INEQUALITIES BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED."
Despite this somewhat positive framing, the existence of a gender pay gap means women earn far less than men employed in jobs at the equivalent level, which has wider implications for income inequality. Additionally, the women who do work may only have the flexibility to take casual roles in the informal sector, where wages tend to be lower – widening the gender pay gap further. Furthermore, there are underlying barriers to women earning decent incomes in comparison to men such as inequality of access to education and healthcare.

Many countries are now making great progress in advancing the position of women and therefore making a great deal of progress in working towards reducing inequality both within countries and between countries. For example, in 1980 only 20% of women in Mali participated in the workforce; this figure is now up near 60% representing a great deal of progress in removing barriers to participation in the workforce. Gender pay gaps have been narrowing globally. For many countries, including the UK there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of narrowing gender inequality and the associated gender pay gap – this will be an essential contribution to reducing overall inequalities within and between countries.

“IN 1980 ONLY 20% OF WOMEN IN MALI PARTICIPATED IN THE WORKFORCE; THIS FIGURE IS NOW UP NEAR 60% REPRESENTING A GREAT DEAL OF PROGRESS IN REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE.”

The world is becoming more advanced by the second. New technology is developing faster than the environment around us can keep up with. Fossil fuels (buried combustible deposits converted to oil/coals/gas) are being combusted at an alarming rate, causing a large number of harmful air pollutants and potentially irreversible effects to both the environment and public health.

Big businesses are looking at more efficient and renewable energy sources in order to reduce the harmful effects of development, so we – as individuals – should too. Economic growth is rapidly increasing. However, efficient energy sources compliment this growth even further with no nasty bi-products. Some of the things we can do to reduce our ‘carbon footprint’ is to turn off lights and electronics when leaving a room, using reusable/recycled materials and public transportation or purchasing goods manufactured with recycled materials.

Whilst many argue the effects of an individual switching off a light is minimal, 80% of the world’s population have access to electricity and can therefore make informed decisions on helping improve economic growth not only from an individual standpoint, but on a global scale.
The UK’s Modern Slavery Act (2015) has generated a lot of interest around the role of business in addressing the UN’s sustainable development goals (SDG’s). The Act’s ‘Transparency in Supply Chains’ clause (54) introduced a requirement for businesses operating in the UK over a certain size to publish a slavery and human trafficking statement. This has to set out what steps they have taken to ensure modern slavery is not taking place in their business or supply chains.

It connects with SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth) and in particular Target 8.7: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”.

Research by the University of Liverpool funded by the British Academy asked how this new requirement on businesses impacts on the well-being of workers and their families in low and middle-income countries.

The project ‘Clothes, Chocolate and Children: realising the transparency dividend’ (CCC) addressed these questions by focusing on how improved transparency might affect the lives of children, and how it connects with other development initiatives relating to sustainable, equitable and ethical supply chains.

The CCC team was led by the University of Liverpool with team members from FLEX (Focus on Labour Exploitation), the University of Bristol and DeMontfort University. The project was supported by the British Academy and Department for International Development (DFID) and ran for 16-months (starting in November 2017 and finishing in March 2019). The research focused on supply chains for one commodity (cocoa) and one manufactured good (garments).

We explored working conditions in these sectors in four low and middle-income countries of Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Ghana and Myanmar. Our countries were selected as case studies on the basis that they represent a mix of both established and emerging production.
Among the many challenges in establishing the added value of supply chain transparency requirements under the UK’s Modern Slavery Act for working conditions, is the wide variety of interpretations regarding what constitutes ‘the supply chain’ in addition to different understandings of what constitutes ‘modern slavery’ (MS).

Our starting position for the research was informed by two key observations. The first is that while most definitions of MS refer to severe and criminal forms of labour exploitation, focusing on these forms may obscure other negative labour practices from our vision. The second relates to transparency as a concept applied to supply chains. Evidence suggests that illegal activities involving MS are often connected to legally produced products and services in the private sector through certain informality and business models, including the use of low-cost and flexible labour; outsourcing and subcontracting and long, complex supply chains. Therefore, making supply chains more transparent – improving the visibility of who is involved in the supply of goods and products to businesses, where they are and how they practice – may prove central to tackling labour abuses.

Together, these two observations mean that, if transparency in supply chains is to play a role in meeting SDG 8.7, businesses need to understand, report - and respond to – a wide range of abusive and exploitative forms of employment as they affect workers, children and their families. In other words, for its transformative potential to be realised, transparency must be more than simply increasing the availability of accurate information about which suppliers they are working with; it must become an instrument to improve accountability through the identification and tracing of negative consequences of practices within supply chains as part of efforts to address causal factors.

You can find out more about the project here: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/politics/research/research-projects/ccc/