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Second Nature 058 (Apr 2026)

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In this issue on 3rd April gas provides 5% of GB electricity, India announces its NDC under the Paris Agreement, first conference on transitioning away from fossil fuels, a new record for GB solar, 20 years since The Stern Report, too much about toilet paper (please make it stop), a new B Corp certification process, take your litter home, should we ban balloons?

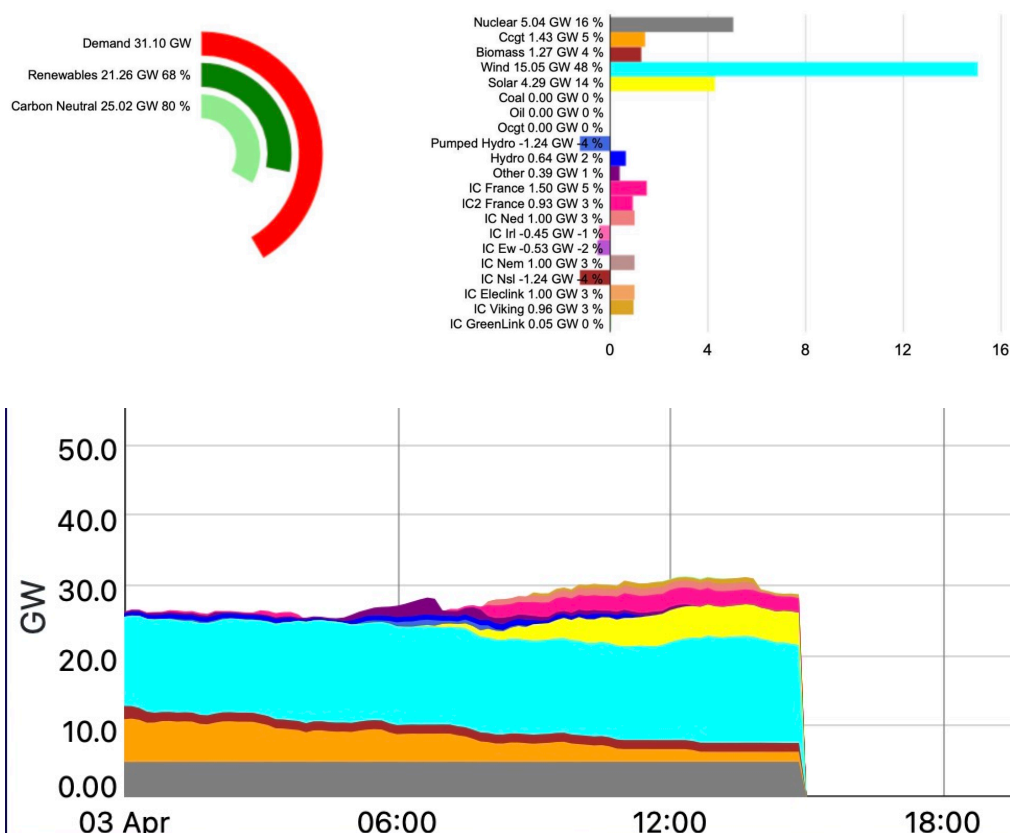
SN058 draws on material from gridwatch, Ethical Consumer, the Guardian, Covering Climate Now, The Conversation, the Nature Briefing newsletter, Nature, Wikipedia, and the Talking About My Generation website. All of it is gratefully acknowledged. I use sources that I believe to be credible and, in most cases, not behind paywalls. For some you may have to register.

Know your audience

Most used links in SN057: Polly Hudson's piece on the ['vegan but bacon' principle](#) has finally left the top five. Mark Maslin's [Four ways to tackle health and climate together – and lift millions of people out of poverty](#) has dropped down to third place. At the top of the list are these two:

[Why does gas set the price of electricity, and is there an alternative?](#) | Simon Evans for Carbon Brief, 13 March

This is clearly a hot topic. On Good Friday, when I happened to look at [gridwatch](#) (yes, I should get out more) gas (here Ccgt) was providing only 5% of GB electricity:



Grounds for optimism

Cautious optimism anyway. The world's third largest CO2 emitter, India, has announced its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. It had been due last year. The NDC contains a new target to reduce its emissions intensity to 47% below 2005 levels by 2035. India's emissions are still growing but grew by just 0.7% in 2025, the slowest rate in more than two decades. This is down from 4-11% in the preceding four years and is largely explained by falling emissions in the power sector.

Source: [What does India's new Paris Agreement pledge mean for climate action?](#) | Aruna Chandrasekhar for Carbon Brief, 27 March

A coalition of the willing

At Cop30 last November the Saudis led a group of petrostates in vetoing calls to develop a "roadmap" to phase out fossil fuels. The 85 countries on the losing end of that veto will gather in Colombia in April for a conference, co-sponsored by Colombia and the

Netherlands, to begin a transition away from oil, gas and coal. Organizers confirm that they have invited countries that endorsed the roadmap proposal at Cop30, as well as high-profile leaders of sub-national governments, including the California governor, Gavin Newsom, a likely 2028 US presidential candidate. Newsom has given every indication he supports phasing out fossil fuels and wants to be seen as a global climate leader.

The conference aims to begin drawing up the roadmap blocked at Cop30. Ministers of governments comprising a “coalition of the willing” will share plans to transition away from oil, gas and coal without leaving workers and communities behind. Joining them will be climate activists, leaders of Indigenous peoples, trade union representatives and other civil society voices. The goal of the conference is to agree on “actionable solutions” that follow-up meetings can refine and governments around the world can implement. One area of focus will be how to phase out the \$7tn a year governments spend subsidising fossil fuels – without punishing communities, workers and tax bases that rely on such subsidies.

The coalition has the potential to function as an economic superpower. At least 85 countries at Cop30 backed a roadmap to phase out fossil fuels, among them Germany, the UK, France, Spain, Brazil and Mexico. Combine the gross national products of those 85 countries and the total is \$33.3tn: larger than the \$30.6tn GNP of the US, the world’s biggest economy, and considerably larger than the \$19.4tn GNP of China, the world’s second-biggest economy.

That much economic heft gives those 85 countries enormous potential leverage. If the coalition can outline a credible roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels it could send shock waves through financial markets, government ministries and C-suites around the world ... private investors and government planners everywhere would have to question whether sinking new money into oil exploration, coal mining, or gas terminals makes sense or would instead leave them with virtually worthless stranded assets.

The scales could tilt even further if California joins. Adding its \$4.1tn GDP to the \$33.3tn of the 85 countries that backed a roadmap at Cop30 – and subtracting that \$4.1tn from the rest of the US economy – yields an economic superpower worth \$37.4tn.

Extracted from:

[A new economic superpower could spark a global retreat from fossil fuels](#) | Mark Hertsgaard and Kyle Pope, 7 April. This article is published as part of the global journalism collaboration Covering Climate Now.

The UK is reported to be a big supporter of the coalition, but [Ed Miliband will not be attending the Columbia conference](#).

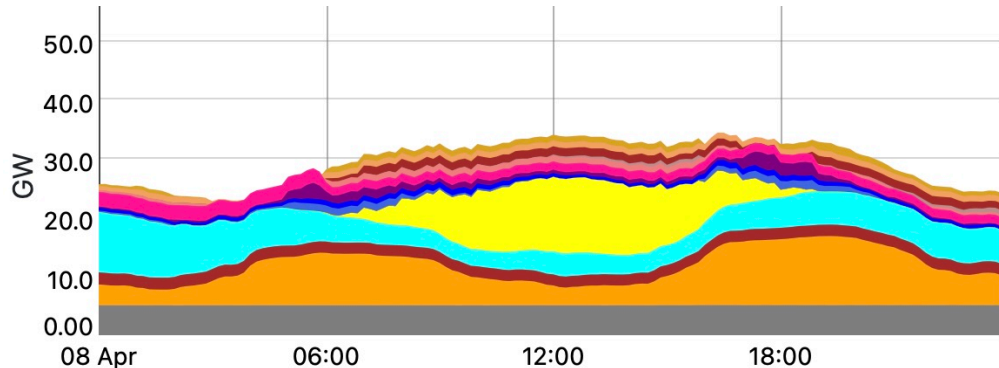
More about the conference [The first conference on transitioning away from fossil fuels](#).

A new record for GB solar

NESO announced a new record for GB solar generation - 14 414 GW at peak on 8th April

...has announced a new record for its solar generation. It hit 11.5 GW at peak on 8th April. This is equivalent 7 or 8 old coal-fired baseline power stations.

Again, chart from [gridwatch](#) (solar in yellow, wind light blue, gas light brown, nuclear in grey). It shows ten-minute averages.



Stern at 20

The Stern Review, published 20 years ago, is arguably the most influential work on the economic cost of climate change, says *Nature*. Led by economist Nicholas Stern and commissioned by the UK government, its findings now feel chillingly familiar: *the costs of stabilising the climate are significant but manageable; delay would be dangerous and much more costly*, it said. The report spurred action— not least the 2015 Paris agreement. *The Stern Review shows how strong research that integrates the natural and social sciences can make a tangible difference to policy when allied with political will*, says *Nature* in an editorial. *This is a mindset that the world must rediscover, and fast*. Source: Nature Briefing 8th April.

The landmark Stern Review, published 20 years ago, laid bare the economic cost of climate inaction. A fracturing political consensus now risks accruing even heftier bills for future generations.

[‘Net zero’ isn’t madness: the staggering economic costs of climate change](#) | Nature editorial, 7th April

Stern has a new book out:

[A blueprint for a clean economy and healthy society](#) (book review) | Andrew Macintosh in Nature, 6th April (paywall)

[Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change](#) (2006)

Too much information?

If achieving a clean economy and healthy society is too big an ask, we can always spend

time agonising over the best toilet paper to buy. I have taken out a subscription to [Ethical Consumer](#) magazine, after having it recommended to me. I'm still undecided as to whether this will prove to be money well spent - Issue 219 didn't lead me to change any of my consuming habits, but then I'm set in my ways. (Spoiler: the intriguingly-titled 'Palestinian dates for Ramadan' is about fruit.) Issue 220, just out, has eight pages of advice about toilet paper. Some readers may recall that in [SN054](#) I commented on the *Which?* review of toilet paper: the two magazines use different criteria and so not surprisingly have come up with very different recommendations, one almost the opposite of the other.

These kind of reviews have their place but I buy hundreds of different products every year, and I have neither time nor inclination to read eight pages on each of them, still less to hunt down greener options from different retailers. We need to move towards a world where we can buy mainstream brands and be confident that the manufacturers and retailers who take our money have taken due account of their environmental and social responsibilities. If this seems hopelessly idealistic, remember that at one time buyers could not be confident that flour was not cut with chalk. Early coops like the [Rochdale Pioneers](#) (founded in 1844) were very much about providing the unadulterated produce that we now take for granted.



When I was a boy the toilets at school were equipped with a paper called IZAL Medicated. On the [Talking About My Generation](#) website Chris Vickers reviews it thus: *the sheets were rough on one side and [had] a shiny, waterproof disinfectant on the other, and, which being non-absorbent, made the product not fit for purpose ... although IZAL was hateful to use as lavatory paper, particularly in an outside loo in the winter, it ... was pretty good to use as tracing paper, and it also doubled as a musical instrument when used with a comb and blown through the mouth.* Apparently you can still buy it on eBay. It is a Second Nature 'Don't Buy' recommendation.

In the press

An **updated B Corp certification process** is more rigorous: it requires companies to meet standards in each of seven categories, with verification by a third-party audit. Businesses must recertify every three years, and some will need to improve in order to retain B Corp status.

[Firms risk losing B Corp status after standards overhaul](#) | Rob Davies and Carmen Aguilar García in the Guardian, 6th April

Pictures looking for captions

I related looking for captions

An occasional series.



Dunstable Downs. What makes me despair about my fellow humans is not so much that they won't do the big things (like getting rid of the Range Rover), more that they won't do the small things like taking litter home after a picnic. Did nobody notice that this bin (which in any case is for dog mess) was full? The car park is a few yards away.





An article in the Guardian sets out the case for a balloon ban and, at the risk of being a killjoy, I'm inclined to support the idea. The kiddies may enjoy seeing the balloons soaring into the sky at the end of a party, but what goes up has to come down again. It is rare to complete a country walk without finding two or three of these things, often caught in trees like this specimen in Barnet. Some years ago the company I worked for celebrated the opening of a new office in The Netherlands by releasing 200 yellow balloons. I protested to the PR department, who didn't seem to understand why I might have a problem with what they had done. I think that now they would.

[The dark side of the balloon boom](#) | Leah Harper in the Guardian, 2 April

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