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## Second Nature 063 (May 2026)

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### Since the last issue

Since the last issue of SN Tony Blair (remember him?) has described the net zero drive and the phasing out of oil and gas licences as key mistakes.

*We must prioritise cheaper energy and electrification over net zero and use what is left of our North Sea oil and gas resources. This is essential for our competitiveness and for taking advantage of AI.*

- Tony Blair; [Commentary](#) 26 May

[Blair tells Starmer: abandon net zero](#) | Jessica Elgot in the Guardian, 26 May

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The UK has had a **bank holiday heatwave** - temperatures hit 35.1C at Heathrow and Kew Gardens, a new record. The previous May highest temperature of 32.8C was reached in 1922. What is astonishing is not that we have a new record but that we have passed the old one by 2.3C.

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In New York **the UN** voted 141-8 to adopt a resolution brought by Vanuatu and backing an International Court of Justice (aka World Court) opinion that **countries have a legal obligation to address climate change**. Voting against were Saudi Arabia, Russia, Israel,

Iran, Yemen, Liberia, Belarus, and the US. I suppose it's good to see Iran and the US agreeing on something. India was one of 28 countries abstaining. The US Ambassador to the UN criticised the text for making “alarmist political statements, such as the idea that climate change is an unprecedented challenge of civilisational proportions”.

[World Court says countries are legally obligated to curb emissions, protect climate](#) | UN News 23 July

[Statement by US Ambassador to UN](#) | 20 May

[General Assembly backs historic World Court climate crisis ruling ...](#) | UN News 20 May  
... [despite US attempts to stop resolution](#) | Guardian 22 May

A Greenpeace spokesperson (inevitably described as 'an expert') said that the timing of the vote, after the coalition of the willing conference in Colombia (see [SN060](#)), showed that “political momentum is clearly growing”. “Governments must now translate this resolution into tangible roadmaps to equitably phase out fossil fuel exploitation, production and consumption,” she said. We can but hope. Few states have yet announced specific policies as a result of the court's opinion, and some of those voting in favour of the resolution have qualified their approval.

[UN climate crisis vote shows political momentum is growing](#) | Isabella Kaminski in the Guardian 22 May

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The Climate Change Committee ([CCC](#)) has published its Fourth Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk, titled '[A Well-Adapted UK](#)'. This is from the Executive Summary: *the UK was built for a climate that no longer exists today and will be increasingly distant in years to come. While efforts to keep global warming well below 2°C above preindustrial levels must remain a priority, the world is not yet on track for this. At a minimum, the UK should prepare for the weather extremes that will be experienced if global warming levels reach 2°C above preindustrial levels by 2050. At the high end of possibilities, reaching 4°C above preindustrial levels by the end of the century cannot yet be ruled out. This should be considered as part of effective adaptation planning.*

[A Well-Adapted UK](#) | Climate Change Committee, 20 May

There is a summary in the Guardian:

[UK 'built for climate that no longer exists'](#) | Fiona Harvey in the Guardian, 20 May

[Britain must think like a hot country](#) | Fiona Harvey in the Guardian, 20 May

## Elsewhere

The June 2026 edition of **Which?** leads with an article about the **Demand Flexibility Service** (DFS), a scheme which allows energy firms to incentivise customers to move their

electricity use to times when the grid has more renewable energy than it needs. British Gas, Scottish Power, and Octopus are participating. Savings are likely to be modest - in 2025 households saved £1-£5 per event.

[Time of use tariffs explained](#) | Sarah Ingrams in Which?

If you don't use enough electricity to be tempted by the DFS (good for you if you don't) you can still move your demand to 'greener' periods using [the NESO App](#). Using the app is one of the small actions listed on the website: I've recently broken up that page into a [set of posts](#), because this makes it a lot easier to add new ones. If you have actions to share please send them to me.

At this time of year electricity is likely to be greenest near the middle of the day, because GB now has around 14GW of solar generation.

Also in the June Which? is a longer article about home solar (including plug-in solar). You don't need a south-facing roof, apparently: a north-facing roof produces 70% of the power of a south-facing roof. I am surprised by that.

Which? also offers a review of heat pump tumble dryers.

[Best heat pump tumble dryers 2026](#) | Rebecca Jakeman in Which?, 7 May

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**Economic growth in low-income countries can reduce pressure on natural ecosystems**, according to Project Drawdown, which refers to a recent paper in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. *Combining accelerated economic development in lower-income countries with reduced crop demand in higher-income countries could dramatically shrink global cropland area by the year 2100 ... policies promoting agricultural innovation, economic opportunity, and more efficient food systems could produce an unusual combination of outcomes: less poverty, less habitat destruction, and lower climate emissions.*

Original work: [Reversing the great degradation of nature by reducing factors related to cropland expansion](#) | Polasky et al, PNAS May 18

[Economic growth in low-income countries can reduce pressure on natural ecosystems](#) | Project Drawdown May 19

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If you attended the Countdown to CoP (as was) Summer School in 2023 you will know the The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) in Machynlleth. According to Private Eye (No. 1675, p41) CAT is in deep trouble. The visitor centre closed early in 2024, and both of the joint CEOs departed earlier this year. To lose one CEO may be regarded as a misfortune, to lose two looks like carelessness. Many of the trustees have also gone, and the eco-cabins have been almost completely abandoned. The Centre has been awarded

nave been closed on electrical and fire safety grounds. The Centre has been awarded £13.5m from the Mid Wales Growth Deal, but must first secure £11.5m of private match funding. The Eye says "the queue is short of institutional investors willing to commit £11.5m to a charity on an emergency bridge loan ... having just mislaid both of its chief execs and half its board, and with buildings condemned on site". Let's hope that this cat lands on its feet.

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Worldwide, one in four new cars bought was an EV or a PHEV. The figure for the UK is 35%; in China it's 53%, in Norway 97%.

[One in four cars sold in 2025 was electric](#) | Hannah Ritchie for Our World in Data, 23 May

## Sources

SN063 uses or links to content from The Climate Change Committee, The Conversation, the Guardian, Our World in Data, Pollcheck, Private Eye, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Project Drawdown, The Tony Blair Foundation, UN News, The US Mission to the UN, and Which? All of these are gratefully acknowledged.

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## Feedback and Groups News

After the English local elections on 8 May S Ta emails to ask *Will the number of Greens elected actually lead to more Green policies though?*

I suspect not. In any case, councils are all skint and 70-85% of their spend goes into social care. That doesn't leave much for solar panels on the Town Hall. In any case actual 'green' policies seem to be getting a low profile in Green Party election communications these days. Rebecca Willis, a professor of Energy and Climate Governance, has written an interesting piece on what councils can do:

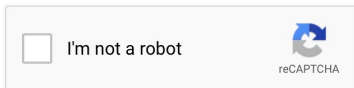
[What your local council can actually do to tackle the climate crisis](#) | Rebecca Willis in The Conversation, 11 May

Reform UK, not supporters of climate action, run 13 county councils: Derbyshire, Essex, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Suffolk (8 outright majorities); plus East Sussex, Leicestershire, Norfolk, Warwickshire and Worcestershire as minority administrations or hung councils where Reform is the largest party. There are Reform majors in Hull and East Yorkshire and in Lincolnshire. *Source: [Pollcheck](#).*

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All feedback is welcome, if it is constructive (or instructive). Emails sent to [u3asecondnature@gmail.com](mailto:u3asecondnature@gmail.com) may be used here or on the website, unless you make it clear when you email that you don't want me to use your content. I may edit the material to save space, but I take care not to change its meaning. I won't share your contact details. I keep your emails in a Gmail folder to which only I have access, and delete them when I don't need them any more.

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