



Second Nature 066 (June 2026)

*Second Nature (SN) is a newsletter written by the u3a Subject Adviser on Climate Change & Environment. To **subscribe** click [here](#) (you don't need to be a u3a member); to **unsubscribe** use the link in the email footer. If you know someone who might like this newsletter please forward it to them.*

Welcome to new subscribers Graham, who doesn't say where he is from, Linda from N/A, and Leon from Chester.

In this issue: heatwaves – climate change, or just weather? Sunderland repeals its climate emergency declaration, Svalbard polar bears are fatter and healthier, Maldives are still there, it's not Big Oil's fault (or is it?), wind and solar overtake coal, 112GW of new battery storage worldwide, reprieve for Ocean Observatories Initiative, photosynthesis in trees does not always result in wood growth, UK household recycling rate "off track", households in London buy nearly twice as many electricals as they throw away.

Hot and bothered

*A heat wave was riding through town last week
She came from the island of Martinique
The can-can she dances will make you cry
The can-can is really the reason why.*

(Chorus)

*We're having a heat wave
A tropical heat wave*

*The temperature's rising
It isn't surprising
She certainly can can-can.*

We've had a heatwave - I won't try and tell you about it, you've just lived through it. But is it climate change, or is it just weather? A report from [World Weather Attribution](#) says:

In 1976, when some of the previous European records were set, it would have been virtually impossible the 2026 temperatures to occur in June, [and they would also be] highly unlikely at any time of the year. In 2003, the first major heatwave of this century, day-time heat like this would still have been very rare, about 10 times less likely than today, while night-time temperatures such as this June would have been more than a hundred times less likely in 2003.

Across large parts of Western Europe June is warming faster than any other month. In addition, daily maximum temperatures are warming faster than night-time temperatures, though both are warming much faster than global warming. The hottest daily temperatures are warming at about triple the rate of global warming and night-time temperatures at about twice the rate. Many capital cities are experiencing not only their hottest June three-day period but also the hottest three-day period since 1950 ... however, due to global warming these temperatures are now no longer unusual during the summer months in many capitals.

This means that a similar heatwave in June would have been about 3.5°C cooler during the day in 1976 and about 2°C cooler in 2003. The night-time temperatures would have been about 2.4°C cooler in June 1976 and about 1.3°C cooler in June 2003.

Keeping, T. et al. (2026): [Fossil fuel emissions have rapidly worsened European heatwaves in just a few decades](#) (WWA scientific report No. 85) World Weather Attribution

In France 55 people have drowned in separate incidents after jumping into open water to cool off. Make sure that your grandchildren (and great-grandchildren, if you have them) are aware how dangerous this can be.

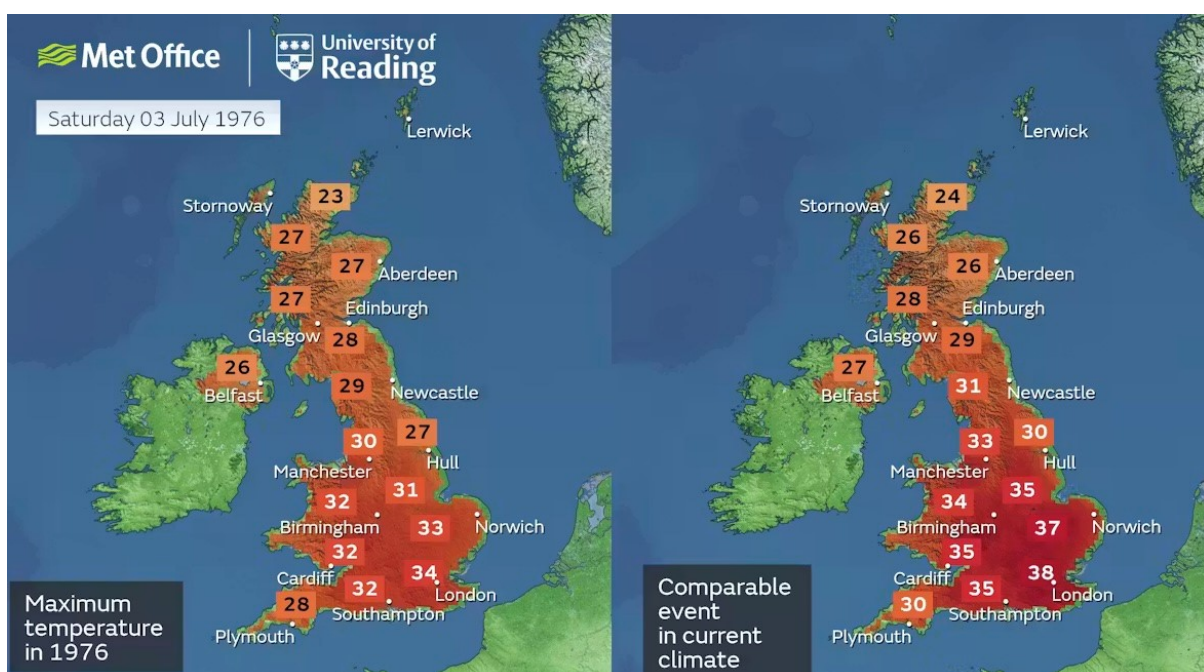
This is the least extreme weather you will experience in your lifetime.

- Prof Hayley Fowler, in [her talk to The National Emergency Briefing on Climate and Nature](#), 27 November 2025

Every year we delay in cutting emissions means a hotter and more extreme future climate.

- Profs Ed Hawkins and Hayley Fowler in The Conversation, 23 June 2026

You will have heard a lot of comparisons with the summer of 1976. Profs Ed Hawkins and Hayley Fowler modelled the UK heatwave of 1976 in today's climate and concluded that the peak temperatures would be about 3°C higher now. (A 1°C rise in global temperatures does not mean that heatwaves only become 1°C hotter; extreme heat is intensifying much faster than the average temperature,) Click on the map to read the original article.



In **Sunderland** the Council reacted decisively by repealing its 2019 climate emergency declaration. Cllr Bill Blackett, who proposed the motion, told a meeting that he was not a climate change denier, but that *polar bears are not extinct, their numbers are increasing. The Maldives hasn't sunk. In short, there is no climate emergency.* You sound like a denier to me Bill.

[Council rescinds climate emergency declaration](#) | Jason Arunn Murugesu for BBC News

There is no prize for guessing which party controls Sunderland City Council.

For more about **polar bears**, go to

[Polar bears on Norwegian islands fatter and healthier](#) | Victoria Gill for BBC News, 29 January 2026. Bears on Svalbard have adapted to loss of sea ice by preying more on reindeer and walrus; and walrus numbers have increased because human beings don't hunt them any more. If like me you are a fan of *His Dark Materials* you will know that the Svalbard bears are a tough lot. There are no polar bears as far south as Sunderland, although if the AMOC collapses there may well be in the foreseeable future (SN *passim*).

As for **The Maldives**, they are indeed still there. The World Bank published a Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR) for The Maldives in September 2024. The CCDR says that it is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. About 80% of its islands sit less than one meter above sea level. It warns that sea levels could rise by 0.5 to 0.9 meters by 2100, and this would cause severe flooding and damage to infrastructure and ecosystems.

[Key Highlights: Maldives CCDR](#) | World Bank 17 September 2024; [Full Report](#) | June 2024

Hot! Hot! Hot!

Alan emails *I've been listening to endless news items explaining that the present hot, hot, hot spell is due to 'man-made climate change'. I've also seen members of the public stopped in the street and asked what they thought about the blistering heat. Increasingly I hear them say that man-made climate change is causing the hot weather. The interviewer should point out to members of the public that they should call it 'my-made climate change'. **It is their individual daily activities causing climate change** - not some ethereal man!*
[My emphasis]

There is truth in what Alan says, but imho it's not the whole truth. Individual actions are clearly important - people who drive a Range Rover and take two or three foreign holidays a year can't really blame everybody else for climate change; on the other hand, if we allow houses to be built with gas-fired central heating, and often in areas poorly-served by public transport, we can't expect the people that live in them to have a small carbon footprint. The concept of 'climate footprint' itself was introduced by a PR company working for BP. Big Oil wanted to say "it's not our fault, we're only delivering the lifestyle that you want". There was

an even more cynical example in the 1980s when packaging producers in the US started the 'Keep America Beautiful' campaign with its famous ['crying Indian' ad](#) . Wikipedia says *the companies behind Keep America Beautiful did not want the government to pass laws that would cost them money. For example, they wanted to stop laws that would make them sell drinks in reusable bottles; throwaway bottles were cheaper. KAB wanted voters to look at the ad and think people made pollution one person at a time. It did not want people to think that big companies made pollution.* There are obvious parallels with what Big Oil is saying now. Once we're convinced that's all our fault we are less likely to campaign for government to pass laws that will cost them money.

Technology

From Katharine Hayhoe, in her [Talking Climate](#) newsletter (edited):

*Coal built the Industrial Revolution, **and now wind and solar are beating it.** The UK, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, **turned off its last coal-fired power plant in 2024** and now gets [nearly half](#) its power from sun and wind. China, long seen as the poster child for coal, now installs more wind and solar power annually than the rest of the world [combined](#), and is hitting its renewable energy targets [well ahead](#) of schedule.*

*Now, the US is starting to catch up. There's already more solar than coal on the [Texas grid](#), and last month for the first time on record **solar generated [more](#) electricity than coal across the whole US**—12.8% versus 12.2%. Just five years ago coal-generated power outweighed solar by a factor of three. **Solar is now the cheapest source of electricity in history.***

*In 2025 **112 GW of new grid battery storage** was installed across the planet. This is almost 50% growth from 2024, and a tenfold increase from 2021. Half of that capacity was installed in China, and 16% in the US. This year the world is expected to install 158 GW. Battery storage replaces gas-powered "peaking" plants that would otherwise be used to generate electricity when it's needed most, and their rapid response also helps to regulate grid frequency.*

Per capita, there's one country far out in the lead - Australia. There, "more big battery power has been injected into the grid on a per-capita basis over the past two years than in any other country on the planet," says Financial Review. Already, one in every 25 homes in Australia has a storage battery.

[How batteries transformed Australia's power grid \(in one year\)](#) | Ryan Cropp in Financial Review, 30 May (paywall)

[The household battery revolution](#) | Adam Morton and Petra Stock in Guardian Australia, 31 May

[Battery Storage Boom Brings Free Electricity To Australia](#) | Steve Hanley in CleanTechnica.

In other news ...

In a welcome outbreak of common sense, the US National Science Foundation announced that it would halt plans to dismantle the Ocean Observatories Initiative, stating *effective immediately, [it] will not proceed with further removal or descoping of equipment from the remaining arrays and will continue operations including planned maintenance.*

[Trump administration reverses decision to scrap ocean monitoring system](#) | Maya Yang in the Guardian, 18 June

Photosynthesis does not always result in wood growth, a key factor in CO2 sequestration. [Trees may store less planet-heating carbon than hoped](#) | Ajit Niranjana in the Guardian, 13 June

The UK's **household recycling rate** has been rated "off track" by the [Climate Change Committee](#) in its progress report to Parliament; it has been stuck between 44% and 46% for over a decade. Waste sector emissions were 28.9 MtCO₂e in 2024 and must fall to an annual average of 16.5 MtCO₂e by the Sixth Carbon Budget period (2033-2037) The CCC's Balanced Pathway assumes that the household recycling rate reaches 57% by 2035.

Biodegradable waste going to landfill remains the largest source of emissions in the waste sector. Volumes going to landfill have fallen in recent years, but the CCC attributes this largely to waste being diverted into energy from waste (EfW) rather than to reductions in waste arisings or improvements in recycling. Emissions reductions from landfill have been partially offset by increasing EfW emissions. The CCC is optimistic about progress on carbon capture at EfW sites.

Extracted from [CCC rates UK recycling progress 'off track'](#) | Charles Newman for resource, 25 June

An analysis of London's **electrical and electronic equipment** (EEE) traced 255,600 tonnes of new products into the capital and 134,500 tonnes out; households were responsible for 80% of items discarded. Around a quarter of those items were in a reusable or repairable condition. Passing these items on could meet close to 10% of London's total demand for new EEE.

[London households buy nearly twice as many electricals as they discard](#) | resource 23 June

Sources

SN066 uses or links to content from BBC News, Carbon Brief, The Conversation, the Guardian, [The National Emergency Briefing on Climate and Nature](#), resourcemedi, Talking Climate, The World Bank, World Weather Attribution, and subscriber Alan. All of this material is gratefully acknowledged.

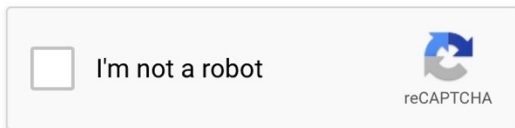
The song *Heat Wave* was written by Isiah Berlin for the 1933 Broadway musical of the same name. You can find the full lyric [here](#).

Feedback

At time of writing 377 people have opened SN065. If you are one of them, thank you; if not, you can always find it and other back issues [here](#). The most popular link in SN065 was the link to Greg Cooper's [The Elephant in the Room](#); in second place was the GOV.UK piece about people [being fined for fly tipping in Norfolk](#).

All feedback is welcome, if it is constructive (or instructive). Emails sent to 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.



I don't use AI tools to compile Second Nature, and I've found out how to switch off the AI summary in my Ecosia search engine. We can push back.

Readers who find this newsletter useful may also like the [u3a Climate Change & Environment website](#) and the [Climate Group Leaders Facebook Group](#).

Copyright © 2026 u3a Subject Adviser for Climate Change and Environment, All rights reserved (whatever that means).

You are receiving this email as a member of the u3a climate network.β

[unsubscribe from this list](#)

