



Second Nature 067 (July 2026)

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Welcome to new subscriber Patrick from Halstead.

You couldn't make it up: according to Private Eye (Eye 1679, p15) the June heatwave delayed a meeting where Cllr Austen Moore was to bring a motion to scrap King's Lynn and West Norfolk's climate emergency declaration. I won't tell you which party Cllr Moore represents, because that would be political. In the USA, whose President has said that climate change is a hoax, high temperatures caused the cancellation of 4th July events in Washington DC and in Pennsylvania.

In this issue: [177 countries ranked on environmental performance](#) (UK comes third, India comes 176th), [new GB hydropower projects](#), [opposition to carbon capture and storage](#), [more about ammonia](#), [recycling in Wales](#), [dynamic social norming is coming to North London](#), update on the [Recyclability Assessment Methodology](#), [recycling cars](#) and [tyres](#).

UK good, India 'shockingly bad'

A report from the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy ranks 177 countries on 47 environmental indicators such as reducing pollution, protecting biodiversity and addressing climate change. Of the top 20, 19 are from Europe: the UK is third with a score of 72%, behind Estonia (75%) and Luxembourg (73%). Of the world's six biggest emitters Japan (63%) is 16th, the US (59%) is 27th, Russia (41%) 89th, Iran (38%) 107th, China (34%) 129th, and India (23%) 176th, just above Laos (22%)

which is in bottom place. "India's performance is shockingly bad for a country that aspires to be a leader in global terms on the economy," says the director of the Yale Center. The Yale index uses data up to 2024, so the US score is based on the last part of Biden's presidency rather than Trump's; even then US emissions were falling far too slowly to reach net zero by 2050,

Source: *Nature Briefing Anthropocene*, 10 July

[European countries top 'scorecard' on climate progress while US slips to 27th](#) |

Oliver Milman in the Guardian, 8 July

[Environmental Performance Index 2026](#)

Technology

New large hydropower projects are expected to go ahead after the energy regulator gave a provisional green light to three proposals as part of a plan to reduce the country's reliance on energy imports. All three of the new pumped storage hydroelectric power station projects are to be built in northern Scotland, where the region's lochs will act as natural reservoirs. The Loch Kemp project plans to draw water from Loch Ness, and the Coire Glas project expects to draw from Loch Lochy between Fort William and Inverness. The Earba project will use Loch Leamhain and Loch Earba to create the UK's largest pumped storage hydro facility. They are expected to be built by the early 2030s and will be GB's first pumped hydro power projects since Dinorwig in north Wales in 1984.

Source: [First major hydropower projects in Great Britain in 40 years given go-ahead](#) | Mark Sweney and Jillian Ambrose in the Guardian, 26 July

[Why the announcement about long-duration storage matters](#) | Chris Goodall in his Carbon Commentary newsletter, 3 July

Not everybody is happy:

[Loch Ness hydropower project will damage shoreline and ancient woodland](#) | Neil Mackenzie in a letter to the Guardian, 1 July. The key phrase, as always, is "yes we need renewables, but ..."

Carbon Capture and Storage

Guardian correspondent George Monbiot is opposed to the government's plans for carbon capture and storage (CCS). There are better and cheaper ways to tackle climate breakdown, he says.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) claims that the role of CCS is “limited to sectors where there are few, or no, alternatives”. But this is simply untrue. Its own data shows that only between 5% and 6% of the CCS deployment in the UK will be used to address the emissions of industrial sectors such as chemicals and cement, whose impact is hard to abate (though even here there are partial alternatives).

The great majority of CCS will be attached to new fossil fuel-burning power stations, wood-burning power stations and hydrogen production from fossil gas. In fact, almost all the projects in the government’s first tranche are for fossil fuel-based schemes. But there are abundant alternatives to these highly destructive plans. Given the speed at which battery technology is evolving, enabling a balanced and reliable electricity supply without any use of fossil fuels, the CCC’s claim is bunkum.

Its insistence that we need hydrogen made from fossil gas is also baseless. Its own figures show that producing hydrogen from gas with CCS will cost twice as much by 2050 as producing it from the electrolysis of water, using renewable electricity. The new CCS plants will mean massively more gas use than the UK would otherwise have required. Ultimately, that means more imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG). We now know that, thanks to methane leakage along the production and transport chain, LNG has higher emissions than coal. Two-thirds of its greenhouse impact occurs before the gas arrives in this country. So that’s all right then – it doesn’t count towards our national figures.

[The great carbon capture con](#) | George Monbiot

ProPublica also argues that CCS can't solve climate change.

[Why carbon capture can't solve climate change](#) | ProPublica (aminated)}

Chris Goodall reports that what he calls "the world’s most important carbon capture site" at Brevik in Norway, whose operator Heidelberg Materials said would deliver

360,000 tonnes of CO2 into permanent storage in its first year - and 400,000 tonnes thereafter - seems to have achieved substantially less than a third of this amount. He concludes *the UK government has committed £22bn to supporting CCS sites around the UK. It may well be correct that CCS is a vital part of the Net Zero project but to commit this cash without a clear understanding of why Brevik is currently failing, and how the UK can avoid these failures, seems irresponsible.*

[The hidden failure of the world's most important carbon capture site](#) | Chris Goodall
in Carbon Commentary, 17 June

Ammonia

In [SN064](#) I included David's comments about green ammonia as a way of importing clean energy: *I believe that the UK will have to import around 60% of clean energy from the Middle East and Africa, in the form of liquid ammonia (the hydrogen carrier) produced from huge solar and some wind farms in those desert areas.* I've since come across the website of The [Green Ammonia Working Group](#) which has a lot of information on this. If I understand right, green ammonia has a thermal energy of around 5.2 MWh/tonne and takes around 10.6 MWh/tonne to produce - 91.5% of that goes into making the hydrogen, 6.1% into ammonia synthesis, and 2.3% into nitrogen separation. If desalination is required it is around 8kWh/tonne so is negligible. This implies that ammonia can be made using solar electricity in (say) Morocco and roughly 50% of that energy could be tankered to the UK.

Recycling

In the last issue I noted a comment from the CCC that the UK is not meeting its recycling targets. Rosey emails to say

Whilst the UK as a whole may not be doing too well with recycling I would like to sing about Wales's success in this area.

I live in Pembrokeshire and we have five different containers for sorting our recyclable waste into (collected weekly) plus a grey/black bag for general waste which is collected every three weeks. Batteries and small electrical items are also collected at the kerbside. When they introduced the system there were a lot of complaints but everyone has got used to it now.

There is an upcoming issue regarding a forthcoming deposit scheme due to be introduced next year as Wales wants to include glass which will add 50p to the initial deposit paid. I understand that the rest of the UK does not want to include glass.

Well done Pembrokeshire: local authority municipal waste figures released in January showed that the recycling rate in Wales has gone up from 66.6% in 2023-24 to 68.4% in 2024-25, with Pembrokeshire in the lead at 74%. These are the first data published since new workplace recycling measures were introduced requiring all businesses, public and third-sector workplaces and collectors to keep key recyclable materials separate. Since then, an extra 8,187 tonnes of recyclable material has been collected from workplaces by local authorities – up 42% on the previous year. Residual waste collected from workplaces dropped by 15.8%. Just 0.7% of waste was disposed of via landfill in 2024-25. Source: [Stats show increase in recycling in Wales](#) | GOV.Wales, [WRAP Cymru](#).

Wales is second in the world for recycling, leading the way in the UK and just behind Austria globally.

Wales is the only UK nation proposing to include glass beverage packaging in its deposit return scheme (DRS). In an [open letter](#) in March British Glass, supported by the Wine and Spirit Trade Association, the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates, Welsh wine body Gwin Cymru and glass insulation manufacturer Knauf, set out “significant concerns” about including glass in the DRS. The main issue seems to be that businesses may need to introduce Wales-only packaging and labelling.

Recycling is one of the tools that we have to reduce our environmental impact, but we shouldn't assume that it is an unqualified good: there has to be reduced emissions or resource use compared with alternative means of disposal. Setting targets is a fine idea, but it is easy to create perverse incentives - if targets are set in tonnes, for example, then councils may prefer to collect bricks rather than aluminium.

Resource

[Resource](#) is one of my favourite reads: this is recycling news for people who get their (gloved) hands dirty, or at least for their bosses. From the Weekly Digest w/e 10 July:

Dynamic Social Norming is coming to North London

Seventeen London boroughs, including Barnet where I live, are funding a food waste campaign [Food's Not Rubbish](#). It will use radio and digital advertising and a behavioural science technique called **dynamic social norming** to communicate that more people are recycling food waste. It contrasts with traditional social norm messages like "nine out of ten of your neighbours recycle" and is designed for situations where the target behaviour is not yet the majority behaviour: telling people they are in a minority can discourage participation. The campaign aims to persuade residents that more and more of us are recycling our food waste. The implication of this campaign of course is that we're not doing that.

[London boroughs launch joint food waste campaign](#) | Resource 1 July

The regulations on food waste recycling are intended (I presume) to keep biodegradable waste out of landfill. In Barnet we used to put food waste into the bin for residual waste and it went to an Energy from Waste plant, so the benefits of the new system are far from obvious, especially when you consider that there are more truck rolls every week and that thousands of new bins and caddys have been distributed.

RAM 2027 Update

In [SN047](#) I posted about Defra's Recyclability Assessment Methodology (RAM), used to calculate disposal fees for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging in the UK market. In Year 1 (2025/26), all packaging of a particular type pays the same base rate regardless of recyclability. From Year 2, red-rated packaging (difficult to recycle) pays 20% more than amber (the new base rate), while green-rated packaging (widely recyclable) gets a 9% discount. The premium imposed on red-rated material increases to 60% in Year 3 and 200% in Year 4.

Defra has now handed over running of RAM to an organisation, PackUK, which is tinkering with it, adding PFAS limits for the first time and restricting PET bottle colours to clear or translucent light blue. Packaging containing more than one part per million of PFAS now receives an automatic red rating; packaging in contact with food faces a tighter threshold of 25 parts per billion. Label adhesives that do not release during a standard 70C to 90C wash are now rated red. Single-use beverage

containers, including coffee cups, are red.

Source: [PackUK tightens chemical controls and colour rules in RAM 2027 update](#) | Charles Newman for Resource, 2 July
[RAM 2027 materials assessment guidance](#) | GOV.UK

All of this is very nerdy but this level of detail is needed to make EPR work I think. Three cheers for the bureaucrats who do this.

Recycling (bits of) cars

Car manufacturers selling vehicles in the EU will face recycling targets, take-back obligations and a ban on exporting unroadworthy cars under a regulation adopted by the EU Council in June. Under the new rules, plastics in each new vehicle type must contain at least 15% recycled material within six years, rising to 25% within ten. A fifth of that must come from closed-loop recycling - material recovered from end-of-life vehicles themselves. Next year the Commission plans to set targets for recycled steel, aluminium, magnesium and critical raw materials. Currently, the automotive sector in the region uses over seven million tonnes of steel, around two million tonnes of aluminium and six million tonnes of plastics annually, yet makes little use of recycled material. Only 19% of plastic from scrapped cars is recycled.

Source: [EU adopts regulation on vehicle circularity and end-of-life treatment](#) | Helen Gates for Resource, 1 July

Waste tyres

In [SN035](#) and [SN049](#) I wrote about export of waste tyres to India, another one of those unglamorous industries which need to be regulated. In Resource a chap from the Tyre Recovery Association argues that a requirement that tyres should be shredded before export would benefit the UK industry as well as limiting the environmental impact of the trade. The British waste tyre sector is at a crossroads, he says. Get a grip, I say.

[A thriving circular economy for British tyres](#) | Peter Taylor for Resource, 30 June

Sources

SN067 recycles or links to content from Carbon Commentary, The Conversation, GOV.UK, GOV.Wales, the Guardian, Nature Briefing Anthropocene, Private Eye, ProPublica, resourcemedi, WRAP Cymru, The Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, and subscriber Rosey M. All of this material is gratefully acknowledged.

At time of writing 391 people have opened the previous issue of this newsletter. 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 that issue was the Conversation article by Profs Hawkins and Fowler [We recreated the legendary heatwave summer of 1976 in today's climate – here's what we found](#).

Feedback

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.

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