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NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS TO HELP SAVE THE PLANET

At this time of year, many of us make plans about how we're going to look after our own well-being over the next 12 months – from taking more exercise to eating more healthily to learning a foreign language.


But what about resolutions to look after the health of the planet?

What changes can we each make this year that genuinely can make a difference to tackling climate change and to restoring nature?

On the following panels, we've gleaned expert sources to come up with 10 personal actions considered to have the greatest impact for cutting carbon emissions, helping nature, and simply causing less damage to our world.

But our list isn't exhaustive!

If you've got other actions in mind – do share them on our display. And hopefully we can go some way to turning over a new leaf - and leaving the world in better shape by the end of this year.



1 GREEN YOUR PENSION

Do you have or are you thinking of getting a pension plan to help you save and invest for retirement? If so – now could be a good time to check what it's invested in.

According to campaigners 'Make My Money Matter', making sure you're invested in a 'green' pension is 21 times more powerful at cutting your carbon footprint than giving up flying, going veggie and switching energy provider combined.

That's because UK pensions have invested £88 billion into oil and gas despite making environmental commitments – that's over £3,000 per scheme member.

It's not just about fossil fuels. For every £10 you put in your pension, £2 is linked to deforestation.*

TAKING ACTION

If you're in a public-sector or employer scheme, you can put pressure on the scheme to move out of – or 'divest' from – fossil fuels.

If you're in a personal pension, or a workplace pension where you can choose your own investments, ask what ethical, responsible and sustainable investment funds are on offer.

Go to makemymoneymatter.co.uk for lots more on moving fossil fuels and other nasties out of your pension.

*Make My Money Matter
** UK Divest

Our pensions have the potential to invest £1 trillion in climate solutions – like renewable energy – by 2035*

As at 2024, only five UK local authority pension funds have fully committed to 'divest' out of fossil fuels**

Read the Make My Money Matter's Green Pensions Guide here:



2 FLY LESS



Flying devastates the climate like no other form of travel, generating the highest impact per passenger kilometre of any form of transport. Although airlines have doubled the efficiency of jet fuel use, the rise in passenger numbers has more than outstripped these savings.

Also – as the graph shows below – CO₂ emissions are only one part of the story. Aeroplanes also harm the climate through other emissions like water vapour, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and soot particles being released at altitude.

As a result, studies estimate aviation is responsible for 4% of global temperature rise since pre-industrial times.* Quite simply, air travel is one of the most damaging things we do to the environment.

Flight-Free Pledge

Committing to a year of no flights can be a great way to cut your personal carbon emissions. But even committing to taking fewer flights a year (both long-haul and short-haul) can have a big impact.

See the Flight Free UK site for lots of ideas and resources for short and longer-distance travel without flying.

Did you know?

- A return flight to New York generates as much carbon as driving a car for a year.
- Taking the train from London to Barcelona instead of flying would cut your journey's carbon emissions by 91%
- In the UK, 15% of the population take 70% of all flights.

Sources: Flight Free UK, Hopkinson, L., Cairns, S., 2021. Elite Status. Global inequalities in flying. * 'Quantifying aviation's contribution to global warming' M Klöwer et al 2021 Environmental Research

What about 'sustainable' aviation fuel?

Lots of people are pinning their hopes on 'sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)' to power planes without generating greenhouse emissions. But:

- SAF is generated from plant-based bio-fuels – which divert valuable cropland away from food production.
- 1.7 gallons of corn ethanol are needed to make 1 gallon of sustainable aviation fuel.
- If the US alone were to reach its stated goal of 35 billion gallons of SAF using ethanol, that would require 114 million acres of corn. That's 20% more than the total area currently planted with corn in the United States for all purposes.

... and other green flying options?

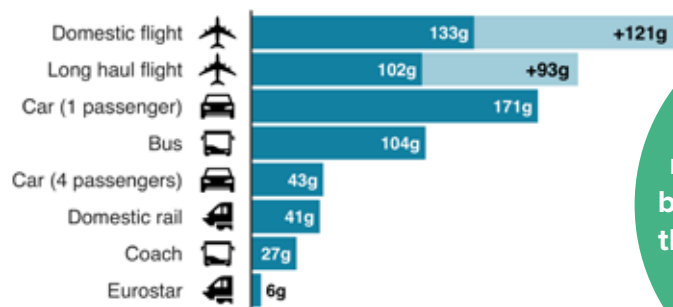
Battery-powered flights using solar energy are becoming more viable – but only for flights of 100-150 miles. Hydrogen fuel cells are being developed for short to medium-haul flights but are unlikely to be introduced for commercial flights before 2035.

Source: World Resources Institute

Emissions from different modes of transport

Emissions per passenger per km travelled

■ CO₂ emissions ■ Secondary effects from high altitude, non-CO₂ emissions



Note: Car refers to average diesel car

Source: BEIS/Defra Greenhouse Gas Conversion Factors 2019

BBC

If there isn't a train to where you need to go, driving will be more climate-friendly than flying provided you travel with at least one other person



Get ideas and tips at Flight Free UK here:



3 EAT MORE PLANTS

Meat and dairy are estimated to account for around a seventh (14.5%) of global greenhouse gas emissions*. While some argue these foods still have a role to play in a nutritious diet (especially in countries suffering from food scarcity), many scientists urge for a shift in the developed world's diet – both to limit global warming and reduce stress on water supply and land use.

PLANT POWER

Of course, intensive, large-scale farming of crops, such as nuts and soy, can be environmentally damaging too.

But plant-based diets are shown to produce 75% less greenhouse gas, 75% less water pollution, and use 75% less land than meat-rich diets.**

Even a partial move to replacing some meat with plants can be positive. Skipping one serving of beef a week for a year saves the equivalent emissions to driving 348 miles in a car, according to the Meat-Free Mondays campaign.

* UN Food and Agricultural Organization ** Scarborough, P., Clark, M., Cobiac, L. et al. Vegans, vegetarians, fish-eaters and meat-eaters in the UK show discrepant environmental impacts. Nat Food 4, 565–574 (2023).

Livestock globally produce more direct greenhouse gas emissions than the world's entire transport sector

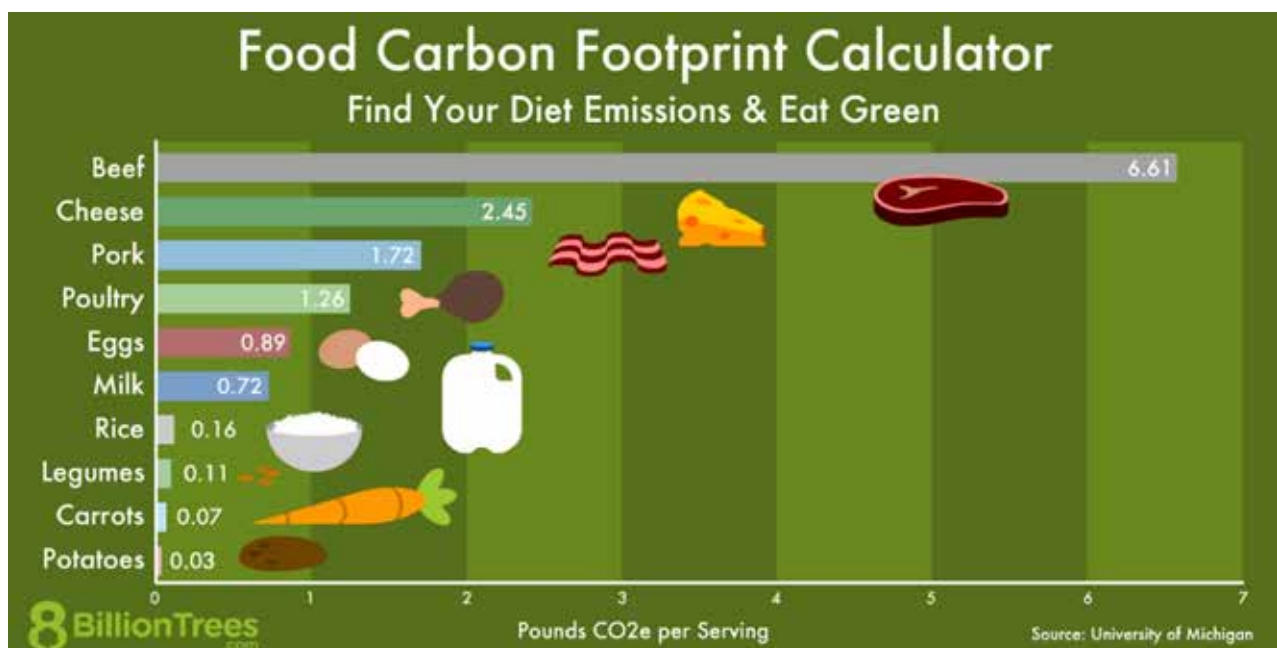
(Source: UN FAO)

How do meat and dairy contribute to climate change?

Methane – Cows and sheep are ruminants – their digestive process causes them to belch out methane, a greenhouse gas that is around 28-34 times more powerful than CO₂ over a 100-year period.

Land use – Conversion of land for beef production and animal feed is a leading cause of deforestation, including in the Amazon. This both releases carbon stored in those trees and means fewer trees available to absorb carbon.

Fertiliser usage – Cattle need plentiful supplies of grass and other feed, so farmers often use nitrogen fertiliser to stimulate plant growth. This generates both CO₂ and nitrous oxide (N₂O) – another potent greenhouse gas.



4 SWITCH YOUR BANK

The majority of people in the UK continue to use the 'Big Five' banks – Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds, Santander and NatWest/RBS – for everyday banking, despite their billion-pound financing of fossil fuels, deforestation and other planet-threatening activities.

Switching your current account allows you to support banks and building societies with a commitment not to fund such activities. It also puts pressure on the big banks to change.

Plus the **Current Account Switch Guarantee** now makes moving easy: your new bank will switch your payments and transfer your balance, and your old bank will take care of closing your old account.

Check how
your bank rates at
'Switch it Green'



CURRENT ACCOUNT PROVIDERS THAT REGULARLY RANK TOP IN SURVEYS FOR ETHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The **co-operative bank**



Triodos Bank

nationwide

COVENTRY
Building Society 

YORKSHIRE
BUILDING
SOCIETY

SKIPTON
BUILDING SOCIETY 

Leeds
Building
Society

monzo

Starling
Bank

5 GREEN YOUR ENERGY

Switching your home from oil, gas or coal-powered energy to renewable sources of energy, such as wind or solar, can reduce your carbon footprint by up to 1.5 tons of CO₂ per year.

If you can afford the upfront costs, you could install solar panels on your roof to generate energy for your home – or a heat pump to help heat it. Community energy company OVESCO is available at Lewes Climate Hub to provide help and guidance.

Affordable Home Retrofit

Watch how to make your home warmer and more energy efficient for less than £1,000



Energy Advice

Speak to an Ovesco Energy Champion at Lewes Climate Hub on any aspect of home energy. Go to www.ovesco.co.uk or drop in 11am-3pm, Wed-Fri.

If you're not yet ready to install renewable energy yourself, check out where your utility company gets its energy from. A number of companies now provide energy from 100% renewable resources.

Below are the top 5 energy suppliers as rated by Which? for sustainability, including buying enough energy from renewable sources to cover all their customers' use.

TOP 5 ENERGY SUPPLIERS FOR SUSTAINABILITY



octopus energy

No.1

ecotricity

No.2



good energy

No.3



No.4

Did you know?
The amount of sunlight hitting the Earth's surface in about 90 minutes is enough to power the world for a year.*

e-on next

No.5

*US Department for Energy

6 PLANT NATIVES

If you have a garden or even just a plant or two outside your home, check for native species – a plant ID app can help. And then think about replacing non-natives, especially any considered invasive.

Plants, animals and insects depend on each other. Many insects rely on particular native species for food and breeding. Even planting just a small tree or hedge can make a difference. Whatever native species you do plant, avoid using insecticides and other chemicals.

EXAMPLES OF BRITISH NATIVE SPECIES



Blackthorn blossom provides a valuable source of nectar and pollen for bees in early spring and sloe fruits for birds in autumn. The red-listed Brown Hairstreak butterfly only lays its eggs on young Blackthorn shoots.

Our Sussex chalky soils are perfect for wildflowers such as **Kidney Vetch**, which is the sole food plant of larvae of the Small Blue butterfly.



Other native species good for wildlife

- * Betony
- * Common Knapweed
- * Dog Rose
- * Forget-me-not
- * Foxglove
- * Hemp agrimony
- * Honeysuckle
- * Primrose

A plant identification app like 'iNaturalist' can help you spot native vs non-native plants in your garden



The flowers of **Ivy** are an essential source of food for insects during winter. Mature Ivy makes a good hibernation spot. Ivy is also popular as a nesting place for birds.

Like more guidance on native planting? Speak to Lewes Urban Arboretum or Wildflower Lewes. Contact details in the Climate Hub.

7 BUY LESS

The goods we buy create carbon emissions at every stage of production – from the extraction of raw materials to manufacturing to transportation. But that’s only half the story: getting rid of “stuff” when it breaks or we no longer want things creates huge environmental challenges – adding to landfill and pollution.

Choosing alternatives to ‘buying new’ can save money and lots more.

WAYS TO BUY LESS

Borrow

Use Lewes Library of Things for items you only need once or twice a year – from camping equipment to cleaning appliances.
leweslibraryofthings.org.uk

Swap

Watch out for clothes and toy swaps in and around Lewes. Charity shops can also be a great source of toys and baby clothes at low prices.

Repair

Lewes Repair Café is open the first Saturday of every month to help mend electricals, toys, clothes and lots more.
lewesrepaircafe.org.uk

Freegle

Freegle is online dating – for stuff! Find and give away an amazing array of items for free.
ilovefreegle.org

Declutter

Take time to see what you already have before buying – or ask around friends and family to borrow items you only need for a short while.

Research

If you do need to buy an item, research its green credentials. Ethical Consumer rates household products on their sustainability – read it at Lewes Climate Hub.

Did you know?
UK wardrobes hold 1.6 billion items of unworn clothes - 31 items for each adult.

Source: WRAP

Lewes Repair Café sewists are at Lewes Climate Hub the 3rd Friday each month to darn and repair your loved items of clothes

8 USE THE CAR LESS

Yes – there are some journeys (and some times of day) where the car seems the only practical transport option. And cars can be a lifeline for the less-abled. But for those who can, making a conscious decision to try to drive less can have big benefits for the environment, for our streets and for our health.

Transport accounts for close to 30% of the UK's total domestic greenhouse gas emissions, with half of those emissions come from passenger cars, according to the Department for Transport.

We think of cars mostly being used for longer journeys. But in the UK, around 60% of 1-2-mile trips are made by car, adding to pollution, road congestion and of course carbon emissions. So resolving to make at least these shorter trips by walking, cycling or public transport can be massively beneficial in lots of ways.

If SUVs were a country, they would be the world's fifth-largest emitter of CO₂***

The average person in England spends about 80 mins a week travelling by walking – but only 6 mins cycling.**

LEWES CYCLE MAP

Cycle Lewes has updated its map of routes for cycling in and around Lewes, highlighting paths and short cuts that can make cycling more fun for all ages. Copies at Lewes Climate Hub, Lewes Tourist Info or download at www.cyclelewes.org.uk



Replacing one car trip per day with a bike ride can reduce your carbon footprint by about 0.5 tonnes per year*

*The climate change mitigation impacts of active travel: Evidence from a longitudinal panel study in seven European cities, Brand et al, 2021

**Walking and cycling statistics, England: Introduction and main findings (National Travel Survey), August 2024, Department for Transport

*** International Energy Agency

GET BIKERY

Don't forget that if you need to transport heavy stuff a short distance – including for business deliveries – Lewes has its own fleet of e-cargo bikes to hire. Being electric takes the effort out of driving a heavy load (including up hilly Lewes streets). You can choose from a range of bike models – including ones ideal for carrying kids. More at www.getbikery.org.



9 LOBBY BUSINESS



We can take steps in our own lives to reduce our climate impact. But for change at the scale and pace now required, it's business that has to step up. As we've said, pressing your bank and pension provider to act for the planet are two important steps, but every business interaction is an opportunity to lobby for action.

Vote with your wallet

Every time we buy – whether for food, clothing or an energy supplier, there's an opportunity to ask if the business we're buying from shares our values and can positively benefit the world or not. The more we ALL refuse to fund major culprits in the climate emergency, the faster things can change.

"Every time you spend money you're casting a vote for the kind of world you want"

Anna Lappé, sustainable food advocate

Write to CEOs

Don't like what a company is doing? Write to the person at the top and get friends and associates to do so too. Social media has made it easier to call companies to account publicly. There are also a range of campaigns co-ordinated by Greenpeace, Campaign Against Climate, Friends of the Earth and others targeting business on specific environmental issues.

ZeroTracker

Track how the world's 2,000 largest public companies are doing on their climate promises on the ZeroTracker website:



Become a ShareAction activist

ShareAction lobbys major public companies by buying their shares, giving it the right to vote at companies' annual general meetings on a range of issues. You can join its network

of AGM Activists, who have secured major wins such as making Tesco using 100% renewable energy across its operations. Learn more at www.shareaction.org

Friends of the Earth is calling for a Business, Human Rights & Environment Act to hold companies robustly to account. Add your support for the proposed act:



Research who's best on sustainability

You can assess consumer goods and services on how ethical and environmentally friendly they are. Ethical Consumer Magazine (copies available to browse at Lewes Climate Hub) rates over 100 items – from baked beans to jeans, from broad band to travel companies. More at ethicalconsumer.org



Supported by



10 USE YOUR VOICE

For climate change to be tackled – we need government at every level to take it seriously and put it at the forefront of policy. With climate often taking a back seat to other issues at the ballot box, lots more of us need to speak out.

Speak to friends and family – Have a conversation about climate with those nearest to you. Ask how much climate and nature figure in their priorities when voting in local or national elections.

Petition your MP – Even if you have an MP who backs climate action, keep urging them to support legislation that can make a difference – such as the Climate and Nature Bill that’s currently making its way through Parliament.

Be a Climate Voter – The next UK general election may be years away, but it’s never too soon to start campaigning to get voters and candidates to make climate a priority issue. ‘VoteClimate’ and Greenpeace’s Project Climate Vote are two great initiatives to get involved in – and Project Climate Vote keeps the pressure on MPs to act for the planet between elections too.

See what Bills relating to climate and nature are currently going through Parliament here



But what about the rest of the world?

One comment we often get at Lewes Climate Hub is: “There’s no point the UK taking action on climate if major polluters like the USA and India don’t as well.”

Our best hope of co-ordinated global climate action is still the annual “COP” climate meeting convened by the United Nations – so we need to keep pressure on our politicians to demand ambitious action at COP every autumn. There are also a number of influential organisations lobbying for action globally that you can get involved in – see just a few below.

Climate Action Network

World’s largest climate network of 1,900+ civil society organisations in over 130 countries
climatenetwork.org



Extinction Rebellion

Decentralised movement using non-violent protest to demand government action on the climate and nature crisis
rebellion.global



350.org

Campaigns globally to end fossil fuels and make renewable energy accessible to all
350.org

