

Changing the System: the challenge for Servant-Leaders

Paper for the UK Robert Greenleaf Servant Leadership Conference

31st October to 1st November 2007

Collectively, we face the biggest crisis in recent human history.

It is a wonderful world. For many of us in developed countries, things have never been better. However there always is an upside and a downside. The world faces what looks like the biggest crisis in recent history. Recent floods in England have brought it home to us. In an economy heavily dependent on fossil fuels, there are already signs of emerging fuel and food shortages and rising costs. Every day there is more news about the potentially devastating effects of climate change. People, especially poor people, and business will be affected everywhere.

The Stern Review, commissioned by the UK government, sets out devastating consequences and warns that the global economic cost of climate change to business and governments could eventually reach 20% of world GDP if nothing is done.

The scientific consensus is that the environmental crisis is a man-made, largely caused by CO₂ and methane. Even if, as some argue, it's mainly down to solar activity, we still face a crisis.

However, it's much more **complex** than climate change.

The two big issues are:

- a) The effects of continuing economic growth on the planet
- b) Poverty.

Ecological harm and poverty are inseparably linked.

A cynic might say we, in the "West," are only waking up as climate change starts to threaten us, no longer just other people! Climate change is a symptom of a malaise that is broader and deeper. We need a moral and spiritual re-awakening. As Meg Wheatley says, *It's our turn to help the world* (Nixon, B, 2006, Foreword).

- 1) ***We are consuming and destroying the planet's resources at a rapidly growing rate that is unsustainable.*** Putting it bluntly, it's greed, taking more than our fair share. London's "footprint" is huge: London requires 125 times its surface area to provide its needs. If everyone consumed like Londoners, we would need three planets, five at the Los Angeles rate of consumption! Yet most countries aspire to this unsustainable "Western" way of life.

We face degradation of the earth, increasing pollution, and growing shortages of fossil fuels, food, land and water, already leading to conflicts. We need to abandon the idea that we are the masters, everything is there for us to exploit and other peoples and species are relatively unimportant. The West has exported much of its manufacturing with all the pollution problems, to poorer, developing countries less able to operate sustainably.

Human beings are part of an intricate, interconnected relationship between Planet Earth and all living things upon it. If we want a sustainable future, we need to treasure and protect this ecological diversity of which we are a part. Satish Kumar (Kumar, S, 2004), like Gandhi, says the whole of nature is holy; all life has intrinsic value. Everything is inter-connected and we are who we are in relationship to others. We need to respect different peoples, cultures and religions – and abandon violence in every form – thought, word and deed – including violence towards other animals and the planet of which we are a part.

- 2) ***Sustainability must include global economic and social justice.*** As we learn from the media and travel more, we become more aware of how fortunate we are and that it is very different for the majority of people in the world, who are relatively or very poor. If we want a secure and peaceful world, in which people and business can flourish, it means tackling extreme poverty. We know the facts: millions live in poverty and face starvation; they are afflicted with disease much of

which could easily be prevented or cured. Millions of children die. If they survive, their lives are stunted by lack of education and opportunity. Many live in fear and insecurity generated by violence.

There can be no peace or security without global economic justice and respect for difference. The big powers are largely unaware of their violence, militarism and the extent and effects of their huge military economies. They created nuclear weapons, leading to proliferation and the threat of nuclear annihilation. Unfair, colonialist foreign policies create hostility and contribute to growing international "terrorism." Other countries see clearly the contradictions between our postures and actions. State violence, imposing our way, looking for a quick dollar, and bullying are not the answers to these problems.

We need a total change of awareness and consciousness.

"Problems cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness that created them." Albert Einstein.

Growth isn't working well as a means of reducing poverty. Vandana Shiva (Shiva, V, 2005) calls it *mono-thinking* and *mono-culture* – the idea that one size fits all – an unproven approach that flies in the face of economic history (Ha-Joon Chang, 2007). It is rapidly fuelling climate change, global warming and degradation of the soil and ecological system. Rapid economic growth is inefficient and far too slow in reducing poverty. Between 1990 and 2001, for every \$100 of growth in the World's per person income, only \$0.60 contributed to reducing poverty below the \$1-a-day level (New Economics Foundation report, June, 2007). In the UK, growth benefits the richest 10 percent of the population 10 times as much as the poorest 10 percent. In India, well over 100,000 farmers have committed suicide since 1993, largely as a result of debt and failed GM crops.

Instead of reducing poverty effectively, rapid economic development is making a growing elite of super rich people vastly richer, raising the incomes of middle classes and wealthier nations. We see this most graphically in Mumbai where, despite rapidly growing prosperity, 55% of the population live in slums. It is creating problems everywhere, most of all in poor countries and poor areas of rich countries, like northern England. Certainly some countries, like Singapore have been lifted out of poverty, but in many cases, like our own, **not through free trade**. (Ha-Joon Chang, 2007). They enjoyed protection whilst developing their own economies. Adam Smith (1776) is misquoted by advocates of unrestrained free-market capitalism.

Although Britain is the 4th or 5th largest economy, this success comes at a cost. This success is partly based on London's attractiveness as a place for billionaires to live and make money and the City's financial expertise including tax avoidance and evasion, off shore tax havens and money laundering. The already wealthy are best able to benefit from this expertise and ingenuity in getting richer. Taxes are "perverse" in the sense that rich people pay least proportionately and can pay for the best advice on avoidance. Disproportionate wealth contributes to the problem of unaffordable housing in London and similar problems in the countryside.

Average total pay for a chief executive to £2,875,000, is more than 11 times the increase in average earnings and nearly 20 times the rate of inflation as measured by the consumer price index. The ratio between bosses' rewards and employees' pay has risen to 98:1, up from 93:1 a year ago - meaning the pay of a chief executive is almost 100 times more than that of a typical employee. Ten years ago the pay differential was 39 times that of the average worker. Women bosses are left behind. (Guardian 29-08-07).

There is a sharp contrast between the pension schemes of top directors and employees many of whom face uncertainty. 26 top directors will retire on annual incomes between £500,000 and £1m plus; over 100 more can look forward to retiring on at least £200,000 a year and 80 FTSE firms retain final salary schemes for all or some of their directors whilst axing them for staff (Labour Research Department).

The happiest countries tend to have more equal income distribution. Like the USA, UK ranks low amongst countries with advanced economies on many measures of wellbeing and happiness:

prison population, crime, child poverty, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, literacy, political alienation and upward social mobility. Social mobility in Britain is worse than in other advanced countries and declining – educational attainment is strongly related to family income (London School of Economics and Sutton Trust).

There is an escalating gap between rich and poor in UK and between North and South. The wealth gap is the widest in 40 years. There is a polarisation between the wealthy in Southern suburbs and the poor elsewhere (Joseph Rowntree Foundation). In the seventies, incomes were getting more equal; now the reverse is happening. There is growing poverty in the countryside; rural services are declining; the rural population is ageing, as the young people cannot afford to stay there and migrate to towns. We now produce only 60% of our food (Commission for Rural Communities). Fresh food production needs to be local and we are destroying its source.

Sourcing for “lowest cost” externalises and does not count social, health and environmental costs. It destroys communities and affects wellbeing. Low prices are an illusion when we, the taxpayers pay for “cleaning up” and our wellbeing suffers.

What we need to do as individuals, organisations and governments.

We are drifting. The disastrous Iraq war has diverted attention and vast resources from the biggest issues we face, namely the environment and poverty.

We need to stop being in denial or behaving as if we are powerless to make any difference.

Reversing climate change We need to rapidly cut rising global CO2 emissions, largely resulting from using fossil fuels, to a sustainable world average of 3 tonnes per person. Methane emissions, mainly coming from cattle and refuse dumps, and emissions from high-flying aircraft, especially damaging, are also rising. Wealthy people and countries pollute most; poor countries and people are worst affected. . People in UK and EU account for 12.5 tonnes (average) greenhouse gases per capita per year and rising; US and Canada some 20; China 4; India 2 and sub Saharan Africa less than 1 ton. (Goodall, C, 2007)

EU and UK, by 2050, need to get down to 3 tonnes, perhaps aiming for 2, an 80% reduction, some argue 90%. UK's Climate Change Bill plans a 60% reduction, which many experts regard both as inadequate and unlikely to be met, given current plans. Rich countries bear the heaviest responsibility; we have the technological capability and the means. The “West,” seen by other nations to have created the problems, needs to show the way, set an example and help poorer nations develop their own ways out of poverty and into sustainability.

Individuals are directly responsible for 44% of CO2 emissions – indirectly far more. Our houses consume 25% of our electricity. Ultimately the fairest solution may be a personal CO2 or footprint limit for every person on the planet.

We all need to take action The momentum is gathering. Large business is responding and new enterprises providing sustainable technology and housing are starting up. But people, business and government are doing too little, too slowly to avoid catastrophe. UK government strategy is not joined up. Transport policy and strategy seems extraordinarily inconsistent with sustainability. Government schemes are too timid and its relatively cautious targets are unlikely to be met. International aviation and shipping emissions should be included in targets. Government needs to set mandatory standards for new homes that they are carbon neutral. Government has ample scope to make an impact and set a good example – the way it operates its buildings, its investments in infrastructure, sourcing decisions and the influence it can bring to bear on suppliers. The individual behaviour of ministers and civil servants such as how they travel is another opportunity. Enabling measures are needed to remove obstacles. Government needs to take bold measures to reward the sustainable, penalise the unsustainable, make sustainability affordable for everyone, nurture nascent green technology, help make “going green” profitable and give local communities more responsibility and more say. Governments also need to bring about level playing fields internationally, global and regional frameworks, so that nations and corporations can act more responsibly without severely disadvantaging themselves (SIMPOL).

Everyone has to take personal responsibility and use their purchasing and “people” power. It is no good waiting for or blaming others – like government or business. Both will respond to a groundswell of opinion, consumer demand, purchasing power, lobbying and the political pressure of citizens. Governments and political parties want to gain or stay in power and not alienate powerful vested interests. Without understanding the full implications, political leaders sometimes jump at big, easy solutions like bio-diesel or nuclear power. They want to avoid actions that may harm the economies or competitive advantage of their nations, alienate big business, deter investment or affect employment. Corporations face similar difficulties. These are complex problems, not easy to resolve.

We also need to press for changes in the unsustainable economic system in order to remove the obstacles to change.

Why are we, our governments and corporations so slow to respond to this crisis, when effective action is urgently needed?

Why do we continue to produce and drive heavily polluting cars, fly as usual when there is an emergency comparable to WW2? Why do years of successive summits and concerts, Live Aid and now Live Earth, produce so little action? Putting vested interests before global welfare, denial and resistance to change are part of being human. It is hard to admit that a mindset in which so much has been invested is not working.

It's the system! The root of the crisis is an unsustainable economic system and its underlying values. Most people have good intentions and care about less fortunate people and the world our children and grandchildren will grow up in. But businesses cannot respond sufficiently and survive in the current system. We need ***whole system*** thinking. It is little use trying to change things by addressing *symptoms*. Problem solving rarely works except in the context of the whole system, as the history of New Labour may be said to demonstrate. Instead, we need to try to see the “whole system” and address the key *underlying* issues.

We are part of a ***living system***, which cannot be controlled like a machine. Living systems are unpredictable and hit back hard if not respected, as climate change and “*the war on terror*” show. We need to transform the way we live and how we try to solve our problems. We need more humility and a spiritual perspective (Gandhi, M and Kumar, S). We also need a better balance of male and female energies.

We are caught up in an unsustainable system driven by powerful elites, large corporations, militarism and a military economy and global institutions not sufficiently representative of all countries. The World Bank, World Trade Organisation and IMF are dominated by governments too much influenced by big business interests and uncritical belief in global sourcing and globalisation as the way to alleviate poverty and GDP as the measure of progress.

The current global system was developed by politicians and economists committed to a free-market system (unlike their predecessors, such as John Maynard Keynes, Kenneth Galbraith and, today, Jeffery Sachs).

Consumerism was created in the forties alongside easy credit and built-in obsolescence, to keep US factories producing. It is a major obstacle to sustainable enterprise and sustainable living. Have we been duped? Are we “slaves” to a system working largely for the benefit of corporations and wealthy elites?

A key part of the present system is debt, the debt money system, out of control financial markets, perverse taxation and massive tax avoidance that puts up the burden of personal taxation. Only 3% percent of money is issued by government or central banks. The rest is debt money created by banks, which thus make large profits. This, it is argued, fuels consumption, needlessly puts up the cost of public infrastructure, creates a large burden of debt and hardship – both for poor people and poor countries. For the first time, it is predicted that Briton’s personal debt, £1.35trn, will exceed UK’s £1.131 GDP (Grant Thornton). Financial markets cause instability for businesses, create a focus on the short term, share values and short-term profitability and thus diverting attention away from the long term and stewardship. Taxes are “perverse” in the sense that rich people pay least proportionately and they do not sufficiently encourage sustainability and enterprise. Taxes are also complicated and relatively inaccessible without expensive advice. Because

almost all of us have a stake in this system, we need to look at it with an open mind. Also, to avoid damaging legitimate interests, changes need to be carefully considered, moderate and gradual, starting with the those that would make most difference and do least harm.

We keep talking about these issues but do not take action. James Robertson (Robertson, J, 1998 and James Robertson – *working for a sane alternative*) puts forward comprehensive proposals for reform of the money system, taxation, including sustainable taxation and tax based on common resources – such as land whose value may increase enormously as a result of public investments and un-extracted fossil-fuel energy - and a citizen's income that would replace current complicated, expensive and inefficient measures to alleviate poverty.

We need a new economic system. If we are to avoid disaster and enjoy sustainable lives and sustainable enterprises, we need to create a sustainable global economic system and reformed global institutions, focussed on the key priorities: - meeting human needs: protecting the planet; tackling poverty, disease and violence worldwide; giving everyone the chance to enjoy meaningful work and healthy and fulfilling lives. These aspirations are expressed in the UN Millennium Goals. There is a growing consensus that to achieve them, **Fair**, not **free, trade** is needed, giving each country, with support from richer ones, the freedom to develop its own unique way.

It may seem a daunting but human beings created the system and we can change it. People change the world.

Gandhi's thinking can help us in the 21st Century.

Arguably, a real servant leader, he was also the most successful and influential change agent of the 20th Century. He got the British out of India and has influenced some of the greatest leaders of our time! He called his campaign "All rise" meaning everyone gains; everyone takes responsibility. He understood the need to find out what it was like for ordinary people and created a growing groundswell before embarking on change. His key principles are truth and non-violence. If only our politicians, journalists and business leaders would try them! It takes courage. **Truth** means diligently seeking and speaking the truth. He called his life an experiment with truth.

Non-violence applies to all life on the planet, non-violence in thought, word and deed. For him it meant resisting oppression non-violently through love. He understood that ends do not justify means: it is no use trying to end violence with violence. Today, especially 60 years after Hiroshima, we need non-violence as a worldview – non-violence in bringing about change; dealing with international conflicts; non-violence towards nature and women.

The World Council of Elders is a step in this direction.

Gandhi would argue that the imposition of factory agriculture and inhuman conditions in factories is violence. He would regard nuclear energy as violence towards nature.

He was also a strong advocate of modest consumption, local food and the primacy of localisation, especially devolving power to local communities to determine their futures. (Gandhi, M K, 1938; Nixon, B, 2007).

What we need to do.

"The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for anyone's greed." **Mahatma Gandhi**

Principles for sustainability:

- **Reduce**
- **Reuse**
- **Recycle**
- **Repair**

Individuals need to transform the way we work and live. It means consuming less; minimising use of non-renewable and non-biodegradable resources; avoiding toxic substances and products that

cannot be recycled. That rules out UPVC and nuclear power both of which use toxic processes and produce non-biodegradable waste. Obviously, we need to be flexible and make balanced decisions (Friends of the Earth and Centre for Alternative Technology provide advice).

For business, a prudent “going green” strategy can make money, but you may want to do it anyway for ethical reasons. Businesses that respond to the challenge and growing customer awareness can enhance profitability and competitive position.

A model for sustainable businesses is Interface, a worldwide company producing floor coverings, fabrics for airliner seats, speciality chemicals and interior architectural products. Interface’s principle is “do well by doing good,” says, septuagenarian, Ray Anderson, Chairman and founder of Interface. Companies like this are a minority but their number is growing, often from small beginnings. Sustainability is at the heart of Interface. Interface aims for a “zero footprint” and is more than half way there. It has helped create a host of sustainable companies in its supply chain. Go to Interface’s website to find out what they have done.

In bringing about innovations, small companies are often in the lead

A brilliant example is Sherwood Energy Village, created on a former colliery site, providing a site for industry, housing, recreation and education. It exemplifies energy efficiency, promotion of renewable energy and biodiversity in all its developments. Another is Remarkable <http://www.remarkable.co.uk> They make all kinds of office supplies out of recycled materials and have grown from strength to strength despite bucking the trend and manufacturing in UK.

A good national model is Sweden which aims to be nuclear free by 2010 and oil-free by 2020 (Ecologist, March 2007pp 42-45). New Zealand’s prime minister, Helen Clark plans to make government bodies carbon neutral. Germany offers the *Passivhaus* that requires only the heat from sunlight coming through the windows and the bodies of people in the house.

In USA states and cities are signing up to Kyoto targets, regardless of Bush’s reluctance to accept the inevitable. California leading the way in tackling climate change in the US. The state - the sixth largest economy in the world - signed a law last year, which set a target of cutting its greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2020. “Successful movements aren’t built on guilt, they are built on passion,” State Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger said. He believes the environmental movement is approaching a “tipping point” where it will enter the mainstream, galvanising business and individuals.

How does radical change come about in complex systems?

We are part of a complex interacting system. How do complex systems change?

Transformation comes about in a multitude of ways. To find our way in a complex, uncertain world, we need the collective creative intelligence of everyone in organisations and communities. If global institutions are to succeed, they need to adopt the same principle and be inclusive. The *heroic leader*, alone, or a small elite group, cannot possibly know what needs to be done. Transformation requires everyone to take leadership. Meg Wheatley defines leaders as “anyone willing to help” (Berkana Institute). To facilitate this process requires a different kind of leadership that both inspires and enables.

Change occurs through increased awareness, new understanding, realisation of a vital need. Ultimately a change of consciousness leads to decision and action. Then the inherent creativity and inventiveness of human beings comes into play. There is a tipping point; an “epidemic” begins. Change comes about through evolution and revolution. Change happens, as we are beginning to see, through the small actions of millions of “ordinary” people. It comes about through relationships and conversations. Transformation *also* comes about through totally new ways of thinking (Albert Einstein), chance discoveries, (Charles Darwin, Sir Alexander Fleming), and inventions of geniuses, (Sir Timothy John Berners-Lee, inventor of the world wide web). Extraordinary, visionary leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King junior, Nelson Mandela and Winston Churchill, give expression to the hopes of millions and change the course of history.

This may be seen as a somewhat optimistic view. Human behaviour is complicated. Lessons from changing organisations may be relevant but changing society is much more challenging. People say one thing and do another as polls reveal. Consumer behaviour is influenced by the desire to flaunt ones wealth and make a statement about who one is. So people may put photovoltaic panels or turbines on their roofs, sited where they can be seen, to display their affluence. Yet they may continue to live an unsustainable life style in most other respects – consuming, flying and driving as usual. On the whole, it is poorer people who actually live most sustainably! They simply consume less.

Then there is the **“cool factor”**. According to some recent research, young women actually prefer young men who flout the green mantras. How can we make being green “cool,” or get people above that superficiality, is the big question?

There is much debate about how to do this: *carrot* or *stick* or communications as they were used in WW2 or maybe all three? But clearly governments will have to intervene by much more effective means if there is to be sufficient change in a world where affluence and aspirations are rising rapidly all over the world. (BBC Radio 4, Analysis 19-7-2007).

Can we really create a spiritual renewal?

It would be a tragedy if things had to get very much worse before we acted sufficiently.

In case you become discouraged by the seeming impossibility of radical changes, the key thing to remember is that **everyone** changes the world and that

“Whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it is most important that you do it.” Mahatma Gandhi.

I also find this quotation encouraging.

“Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.” Martin Luther King

How can an individual help bring about a sustainable system?

The need for systemic change will be recognised as it becomes more apparent that efforts to solve the major problems are not working.

The right way to do things is not to persuade people you’re right but to challenge them to think it through for themselves. Noam Chomsky

There are five spheres in which we need to work: in **ourselves**, the source from which change begins; our **family and home**; our **community**; our **workplace**; the **world**.

“Be the change you want to see in the world.” Mahatma Gandhi.

1. **First, be the change** Start by deciding who you are; what really matters to you, your values, purpose and beliefs. Why are you on this earth? Feel your embarrassment about being thought soft. Trust your instincts. Follow your energy and do what you feel passionate about. Be clear about what is most important to you and prioritise. Own up to your deficiencies and take responsibility for them. It all takes courage.
2. **Be a leader of transformation** in your workplace, whatever it is. This means being an agent of change.
3. **Finally, we all need to be global citizens!** Lobby big business, national government, regional and global institutions. Play a constructive part in your community. Press for local, national and global change. It is our responsibility is to be fully aware and informed, continuously.

“Activism is my rent for living on the planet.” Alice Walker

Getting sustainability it into the heart of your workplace and society – an approach that works

Here is an approach that works. It applies to your workplace or community however large including changing the world. Base your approach on what you know about how complex systems change. Change comes about in emergent as well as structured, planned and designed ways. It comes about informally through relationships and conversations.

- **Prepare the ground for change.** Change will come about when the time is right, when there is widespread recognition of the need and a groundswell has begun.
- **Have a philosophy of seeing the opportunities in the big issues** – personal opportunity, business opportunity and opportunity to learn. Spread a philosophy of seeing the opportunities. The most successful people and enterprises are adept at seeing and grasping opportunities.
- **Build trusting relationships.** See the best in everyone. Make friendships; get alongside the CEO; build partnership and alliances; have conversations; learn and inform yourself – be open hearted and open to contrary views. Be a trustworthy mentor. By listening to people, you will support and empower them.
- **Network, connect** with people. This opens you up to synchronicity, the benign, unpredictable forces in the universe that will support you and give you what you most need. Start conversations. Connect people with one another. Be an enabler. This helps them to make things happen.
- **Work with the energy for change:** with like-minded, “crusading forces” in the organisation but also with resistance; respect and listen to the “restraining forces.”
- **Co-create.** Adopt a whole system approach to change. Get the whole system into the room. Bring together key stakeholders, the full diversity of the system or your part of it. Help people articulate dreams and hopes. Help them identify and address the key issues that are getting in the way. Through engaging diversity, the most appropriate strategies for change will emerge and the successful implementation is more likely.
- **Develop leaders of leaders** who know how to enable. Help people articulate their dreams, and be clear about purpose and outcomes.
- **Take inspiration from positive models.** Every day there is exciting news about new initiatives. Study what works and enlarge it; find good models inside and outside your organisation. Interface, the international carpet company, and Sherwood Eco Village have already been mentioned example. Another example is steps Eurostar is taking to go green (Rail, 2007).
- **Review progress regularly.** Help people, evaluate and learn from what is working and not working, key issues in the system that need to be addressed and what needs to be done differently. Celebration, giving and receiving appreciation, fuels good energy and supports people in recovering and learning from setbacks and difficulties. Include yourself.
- **Sustain yourself.** Seek balance and prioritise your own wellbeing. Do things with mindfulness. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999) Give yourself time for renewal and reflection. Surround yourself with supportive friends *who will tell you the truth* – even if you may not like it.

For articles on processes you can use to facilitate change, go to *Writings* at www.bruce-nixon.com

Go radical. Here are some key campaigns that may help bring about *system* change. Google to get their websites:

1. **Agriculture instead of agribusiness.** Local food; food diversity; ending the degradation of planet earth and bio-piracy. (Soil Association, Vandana Shiva, Garden Organic)
2. **Company law reform;** enabling alternative forms of company ownership; widening the duties of directors to embrace the interests of all stakeholders, the environment, society as a whole (Centre for Tomorrow’s Company, Rabbi Michael Lerner).
3. **Ending poverty - a radically new framework for global trade.** Reforming unrepresentative global institutions like the World Bank, World Trade Organisation and International Monetary Fund and the unfair, unsustainable trading system they impose. (World Development Movement, NEF, Christian Aid, Oxfam, War on Want, Action Aid)
4. **Ending violence as a way of resolving conflict** - personal, national and international. Strengthening nuclear non-proliferation, ending nuclear armament, abandoning nuclear power generation and a Peace Council replacing the Security Council (CND, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Oxfam, Oxford Research Group, Peace Pledge Union. RoadPeace aims to end violence on roads).

5. **Localisation**, particularly giving power to localising communities and the production of local healthy food production and distribution; restoring high streets and village communities. (New Economics Foundation, Local Works, the Soil Association, Friends of the Earth, Garden Organic, Slow City, Slow Food and Transition Towns)
6. **Reforming democracy** – making it work better, decentralizing, unlocking local democracy, giving more power to local communities, making parliament more representative; giving greater power to parliament to scrutinize, inquire and prevent the executive withholding information and over-riding the wishes of citizens – eg going to war on a flawed premise, nuclear power and weapons. (One World Trust, Pressure Works, Charter 88 and New Politics Network’s “*Power to the People*”, WriteToThem.com)
7. **Sustainable buildings, cities, communities and transport.** (Herbert Girardet’s book *CitiesPeoplePlanet - Liveable Cities for a Sustainable World* and website www.underthesky.org.uk, Transition Towns and Campaign for Better Transport (Transport 2000).
8. **New Economics, Money and Tax:** Reforming the debt money system; perverse and unsustainable taxation and the power of financial markets. (James Robertson – *working for a sane alternative* www.jamesrobertson.com, New Economics Foundation, Tax Justice Network, Tobin Tax, SP Worldwide International Simultaneous Policy Organisation and Christian Council for Monetary Justice).
9. **Wellbeing - better measures of progress** than GDP and continuing, unsustainable economic growth. (New Economics Foundation, UN Development Programme and Millennium Development Goals).

Predictions

I don’t like making predictions. I am sure to be wrong. Scaremongering is not constructive. Human beings are too creative to let total disaster happen. However, if we do not act decisively these consequences are likely, the first five predicted by Stern:

- As he estimated, the global economic cost of climate change to business and governments could eventually reach 20% of world GDP if nothing is done.
- A more than 75% chance of global temperatures rising by 2-3 % over the next 50 years and a 50% chance they will rise by 5%.
- Rising sea levels could leave 200 million people permanently displaced
- Up to 40% wild life species could face extinction
- By 2080 sea levels round Britain are expected to rise 26 to 86 cm; flooding in coastal areas will be 10-20 times more likely; rain will decline by 50% leading to drought though wetter winters.
- A world economy based on fossil fuel may be severely damaged leading to unemployment and possible collapse.
- Soon, everywhere, there may be mounting fuel, energy, water and food shortages and rising prices.
- Increasing social conflict, violence, war and terrorism.
- Rising numbers of refugees fleeing from countries where people are desperate, starving and sick.
- Diseases are likely to spread from other continents.

If we take the necessary action now, we may become a little less affluent, but all of us, the poor majority on the planet, ourselves, our children and our children’s children are likely to be a lot happier. Maybe, the universe is trying to teach us a lesson. Maybe too, we need to pay more attention to the lessons of history.

To sum up: what you can do.

1. “*Be the change*” – get your own “house” in order.
2. See the crisis as an opportunity and grasp it.
3. Make your own life sustainable – that includes YOU – save yourself as well as the planet!
4. Follow the mantra - reduce, reuse, recycle, repair.
5. Aim to make your business and home carbon neutral
6. Reduce your “footprint”
7. Buy sustainable goods; choose sustainable, ethical suppliers or help them become so.

8. Get well informed and fully aware. Eg read George Monbiot and look at the New Economics Foundation and use the www.
9. Lobby political and business leaders and influence others.

References and further reading.

Berkana Institute, www.berkana.org
 Council of Elders <http://www.theelders.org/elders/>
 El Diwany, T, 2003, *The Problem with interest* Kreatoc Ltd and www.theproblemwithinterest.com/index.html
 Gandhi, M K, 1938, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Jitendra T Desai, Ahmehdabad, India.
 Gandhi, M K, *Eleven Vows*, National Gandhi Museum & Library, New Delhi.
 Goodall, C 2007, *How to live a low-carbon life*, Earthscan.
 Guardian 29-08-07 www.guardian.co.uk/executivepay
 Ha-Joon Chang, *Protecting the global poor*, Prospect magazine, issue 136, July 2007.
 Kumar, S, 2004, *No Destination – an autobiography*, Green Books.
 Labour Research Department, 5-7-07, www.lrd.org.uk
 Monbiot, 2006, *Heat- how to stop the planet burning*, Penguin and Allen Lane.
 NEF report, *Growth isn't working*, June, 2007
 Nixon, B, 2007, *All Rise: -- How Gandhi's thinking can help us in the 21st Century*, Schumacher Institute Challenge Paper.
 Nixon, B, 2006, *Living System – Making sense of sustainability*, Management Books 2000.
Rail Magazine, July 4-17 2007, pp 35-37.
 Robertson, J, 1998, *Transforming Economic Life – a Millennial Challenge*, Green Books.
 James Robertson – *working for a sane alternative* www.jamesrobertson.com
 Sherwood Energy Village www.sev.org.uk/about-us/energy-village-concept
 Shiva, V, 2005, *Earth Democracy*, Zed Books.
 SIMPOL Simultaneous Policy - globalising peace, justice, sustainability and prosperity
www.simpol.org.uk
 Tobin Tax, www.waronwant.org/About%20Us+10631.twl
 Smith, A, 1776, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.
 Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, Beacon Press.

For more resources, go to **Writings** at www.bruce-nixon.com

Useful sources of help

- **Getting your house in order**
http://www.imc.co.uk/news/professional_consultancy_article.php?item_id=654&issue=18
 (scroll down to the bit on 'getting your house in order').
- **Envirowise - waste and water** - <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/>
- **The Carbon Trust** - energy and carbon - www.carbontrust.co.uk
- **Global Action Plan** - <http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/>
- **ACORN** - <http://www.iema.net/acorn> (first steps to an environmental management system)
- **Good Corporation** - wider than just environment, an audit-type assessment - <http://www.goodcorporation.com/>

Bruce Nixon is a veteran change agent and author. His latest book **"Living System – Making sense of sustainability"**, forewords by Anita Roddick and Meg Wheatley, is published by Management Books 2000. **Special conference price** of £13.50 per copy (postage and packaging free) instead of the usual £14-99 plus p&p from: tel 01285-771441/2; e-mail: mb2000@btconnect.com; web: www.mb2000.com or bookshops and www.amazon.co.uk

BCN 5th December 2007