



# BRITISH POLITICS REVIEW

*Newsletter of the British Politics Society, Norway*

Volume 3, No. 3 Summer 2008



Still "this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England"? View across the valley of the River Lea at East Hyde, Bedfordshire.

Quote taken from William Shakespeare's *Richard II*, 2.1, 40-51. Photograph: Creative commons - some rights reserved. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>

## A greener Britain?

### Visions and prospects for British environmentalism

**Thorbjørn Berntsen:** Environmental policy: past, present, future

**Martin Horwood:** A Liberal vision for a greener Britain

**Hans Andreas Starheim:** The offshore adventure has only just begun

**Ellen Svendsen:** A joint battle for the world's forests

*British Politics Society, Norway*, established in June 2006, is politically neutral and has no collective agenda apart from raising the interest and knowledge of British politics among the informed Norwegian public.

Board Members: **Øivind Bratberg** (President), **Kristin M. Haugevik** (Vice President), **Atle L. Wold** (Scholarly Responsible), **John-Ivar S. Olsen** (Secretary)  
Postal address: P.O. Box 6 Blindern, N-0313 Oslo, Norway ▪ E-mail: [mail@britishpoliticssociety.no](mailto:mail@britishpoliticssociety.no) ▪ Website: [www.britishpoliticssociety.no](http://www.britishpoliticssociety.no).

*British Politics Review* is a quarterly newsletter issued by the British Politics Society, Norway. With contributions from academic and journalistic sources, the *British Politics Review* is aimed at everyone with a general interest in political developments in Britain.

## Contents

Environmental policy: past, present, future <i>Thorbjørn Berntsen</i>	p. 3
A Liberal vision for a greener Britain <i>Martin Horwood</i>	p. 4
Environmentalism in Britain is the politics of delay <i>Martin White</i>	p. 5
Fit for purpose? <i>David J. Hutchinson</i>	pp. 6-7
The offshore adventure has only just begun <i>Hans Andreas Starheim</i>	p. 8
Anone for the moon? <i>John-Ivar S. Olsen</i>	p. 9
A joint battle for the world's forests <i>Ellen Svendsen</i>	p. 10
The environmental dimension: a new political cleavage? <i>Øivind Bratberg</i>	p. 11
Climate, environment and the British agenda <i>Tiina Ruohonen</i>	p. 12
Environmentalism and the press <i>Christian Bjørnæs</i>	p. 13
Green business in Britain means a managed nature <i>Mark Brown</i>	pp. 14-15
Friends, rivals and the run for environmental esteem <i>Lars Mediaas</i>	p. 16

## The case for the environment

*Few would disagree that environmental policy has ascended on the political agenda over the last few years. How does it fit into a broader political picture, and what status has environmental policy acquired as a political issue in Britain? An evaluation of the political dynamic of environment policy seems appropriate at a time when carbon emissions, energy supplies and environmental degradation have entered the political debate at full steam.*

*The present issue of British Politics Review includes articles on a range of topics under the broad umbrella of environmental policy. Former minister for the environment **Thorbjørn Berntsen** offers some timely reflections on longer trends in the policy area, with particular emphasis on relations across the North Sea where acid rain and Sellafield are important keywords. **Martin Horwood**, Liberal Democrat shadow minister for the environment, discusses some of the current challenges in British environmental policy and presents the party's own perspective. **Martin White** sums up some of the paradoxes in how the environment has been handled by successive British governments.*

*An important dimension to political debates on the environment has been the scope for innovation, particularly with regard to carbon emissions and cleaner energy supplies. **Hans Andreas Starheim** elaborates on the potential for wind power in the North Sea, while **John-Ivar S. Olsen** discusses carbon storage, where Britain and Norway together represent a cutting edge with political implications. **Ellen Svendsen** accounts for a very different area where the two countries also interact: rain forest conservation in Congo.*

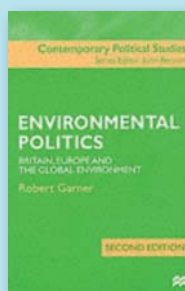
*Does environmentalism amount to a new political conflict dimension, a new cleavage? This question is discussed by **Øivind Bratberg** in light of the changing status of the policy area and the positions entertained by the three dominant parties in Britain. **Tiina Ruohonen** presents the perspective of the British Council, where environmental policy has become a prioritised area.*

*Finally, how the environment fits into a wider political debate is discussed in two articles: **Christian Bjørnæs** presents differences in emphasis between the Independent and the Financial Times, while **Mark Brown** analyzes the way British business makes reference to environmental values. **Lars Mediaas** concludes humorously with a comparative view of Britain and Norway in the international run for environmental esteem.*

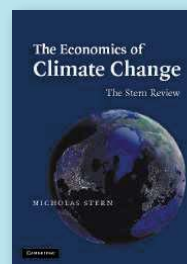
## Environment and climate change: a brief bibliography

Environmental issues from a political perspective do not subscribe to a long academic tradition. Below are a few contributions.

Chris Rose's *The Dirty Man of Europe: The Great British Pollution Scandal* (Simon and Schuster, (1990) was a wake-up-call about the lack of environmental policy in Britain. A more up-to-date overview of the policy area is found in *Environmental Politics: Britain, Europe and the Global Environment* (Palgrave, 2000) by Robert Garner. The focus here is on the current state of environmental policy in Britain, the main actors in the debate and the ethical and philosophical basis for green politics. Neil Carter's *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) discusses similar topics and is slightly more comprehensive. *Green Political Thought* (Routledge,



2007) by Andrew Dobson relates environmental and ecological issues to political ideology and investigates the idea of sustainable development.



In later years, as the focus has turned towards climate change, the much-discussed report commissioned by the British government has set the tone for political debates. This is *The Economics of Climate Change: the Stern Review* (Nicholas Stern, Cambridge University Press, 2007) which presents estimated economic effects of global warming.

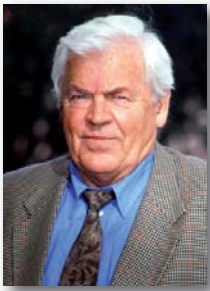
Finally, two reviews of politics and the environment are *The Science and Politics of Climate Change. A Guide to the Debate* (Andrew E. Dessler and Edward A. Parson, Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *Politics and the Environment: from Theory to Practice* (James Connelly and Graham Smith, Routledge, 2002).



# Environmental policy: past, present, future

By *British Politics Review* Guest Writer Thorbjørn Berntsen,  
former Secretary of State for the Environment

**Thorbjørn Berntsen has a long and distinguished career in Norwegian politics. Representing the Labour Party in Stortinget from 1977 to 1997 (a deputy member from 1973 to 1977), Berntsen sat as member of the select committee for local government and the environment. From 1990 to 1997 he served as secretary of state for the environment. Berntsen was deputy leader of the Labour Party from 1989 to 1992.**



The winter issue of *British Politics Review* had a number of articles on British and Norwegian relations with the EU. The question of membership in the then European Community was also my first encounter with British politics in the early 1960s when membership had arrived on the agenda in both countries. The annual conference of the Norwegian Labour Party supported negotiations under the premise that Britain became a member as well.

As we remember the French President, Charles de Gaulle, closed the door on British membership. This was repeated a few years later and the issue passed into the dark for some time. During these early years I took part in directing the popular movement against Norwegian membership. Since then I have changed opinion and would today contend that Norway should be fully integrated. In the long run it is to little avail to reject a community which now covers almost all of Europe. The EU is today a venue to discuss some of the greater political challenges we face.

Many years after the first EU debates I encountered British politics again from my position as secretary of state. The issue was about pollution from the reprocessing plant for uranium at Sellafield. The Nordic Council had debated the issue in the early 1990s. There were concerns about leakages and increasing radioactive emissions.

Sellafield has a history which dates back to the early post-war period. Through the years there had been several leakages, and in the 1970s emissions were three times as large as today. Consequently, countries affected by sea currents from the British Isles were worried, even if over time pollution had been reduced. In the Nordic Council, the Icelandic minister for the environment was particularly concerned about Sellafield and he submitted our views to the British government.

In 1994, emissions of technetium from Sellafield increased as a new cleansing system was introduced. The installment removed most of the dangerous contents but not technetium 99 which went straight into the sea. Heightened concentrations of the isotope was registered in our seawaters. Norwegian worries related to Sellafield have through the years been raised a number of times by successive prime ministers, foreign secretaries and environment secretaries. This shows the gravity of the concerns on the side of the Norwegian government. However, with new cleansing technology introduced at Sellafield in 2004, technetium emissions have been reduced by more than 90% and the emissions problem is regarded as solved.

Another dominant environment issue affecting Norwegian-British relations has been airborne pollution in the form of acid rain which has affected large shares of southern Norway. Airborne pollution is still among the gravest threats to biological diversity in Norway. Fresh water fish in southern Norway have been particularly exposed and hundreds of ponds, lakes, streams and rivers were laid bare as large numbers of fish perished. This has improved considerably in later years, with water quality, vegetation and the natural biodiversity returning to normal standards.

With 90% of acid rain over Norway arriving from emissions abroad, it was obvious that the problem could only be resolved through international agreement. In the late 1980s, a protocol was developed and signed by a number of countries with Britain, as one of the most important countries in this respect, did not sign. As far as I can remember the stated reason on the British side was that a protocol was unnecessary. This was particularly worrying to Norway as almost half of the long-distance airborne pollution had its source in Britain. Sweden also had similar problems.

At a conference of environment secretaries held in the UN headquarters in New York I raised this issue with my British colleague John Gummer – according to my memory, this was in 1993. He did not wish to discuss the problems of acid rain but riposted by stating that Norway had no credibility on environmental issues due to our minke whale hunting, conducted for research purposes. I reacted strongly to this statement and turned hot. Between the ministries, a visit to London to meet Mr. Gummer had originally been scheduled to discuss the issue of airborne pollution. This plan was abolished during our talk in the Delegates' Lounge in the UN building.

The meeting with Mr. Gummer in New York would lead to a rather comical event soon afterwards. At an electoral rally in a small town in southern Norway during the campaign in 1994, acid rain was raised as an issue. All parties were represented. I was criticised for not being sufficiently proactive to solve the

problem. My reply was that all that could be done in Norway had been done but that 90 % of the pollution came abroad, almost half of it from Britain. I referred to the conversation I had had with Mr. Gummer in the UN and added, in a sub-clause "...who, by the way, is the largest shitbag I have ever met". The statement was heard, some laughed, but that was it: in the setting we were in such a statement would not be taken too seriously. That was also why I allowed myself to say what I did. However, a journalist from a local newspaper scented that something big could be made of this. He had recorded my comments and delivered them to NRK, the Norwegian national broadcast. On my way to the office the next day I nearly went off the road when I heard myself on the radio describing the British environment secretary as a shitbag.

Now, this had become a big issue indeed. At a stroke I was Norway's most internationally renowned politician after the prime minister herself, Gro Harlem Brundtland. She called me by the way as soon as I had arrived in my office, asking: Thorbjørn, what have you done this time? The Norwegian embassy in London was called for and told to report if anything unpleasant was to emerge in the wake of the events in Norway. The Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs received regular reports but in the end the issue died quietly away.

The comical side to the affair was enhanced by a number of letters which I received, not the least from people in Britain. One letter, signed simply "Scottish Nationalists", stated: "Keep going, Mr. Berntsen, there are nineteen more in the British Cabinet". Another one, signed by the secretary of the British TUC, stated that they would consider nominating me for the Nobel Prize in Literature for introducing a word which the English language had strongly missed: *shitbag*.

Although most people found all this amusing, I was of course unhappy with regard to Mr. Gummer, knowing that I would never have uttered this comment about him had I known if would take such proportions in public. Mr. Gummer and I were secretaries of state for the environment in our two countries for many years and we met repeatedly at international conferences on environmental issues and climate change. Even though we had different views on some important political issues I had the impression that we were on common ground with regard to the environment.

Britain has signed the acid rain protocol a long time ago and has taken its part towards resolution of this problem. At Sellafield, while the technetium emissions have been largely resolved, uncertainties remain with regard to reprocessing and storage of nuclear waste. Environmental policy, as these issues show, is about combining concrete action with a longer time perspective.

# A Liberal vision for a greener Britain

By British Politics Review Guest Writer Martin Horwood,  
MP for Cheltenham

**Martin Horwood is the Liberal Democrat shadow minister for the environment, a position he has held since 2006. Since entering Parliament for Cheltenham in 2005, he has also been shadow minister for home affairs. In the House of Commons, Horwood is a member of the select committee on environmental audit.**



A commitment to the protection of the environment has long been at the heart of British Liberal Democrat thinking and policy. One of the main reasons I became and remained a member of the Liberal Democrats was our early awareness of the issues raised by influential leaders like Gro Harlem Brundtland in her landmark report in 1987. And with other British political parties and indeed the whole world finally waking up to climate change and the importance of this area of policy, it is with some pride and a great deal more frustration that I remember our 1991 policy paper *Costing the Earth* in which we proposed:

*"First, a reduction from current levels in emissions of carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas) of 5% by 1996. Our longer-term aims include a target of 30% by 2005."*

If the UK's Labour and Conservative governments had showed leadership by adopting these sorts of policies back in the 1990s, we might not today have found ourselves in a situation of quite the same urgency and danger. Our transition to a low carbon economy should have been started in earnest long ago; instead the UK remains far behind most comparable European nations in its adoption of low carbon technologies.

2005 has long since been and gone, and the percentage decrease of greenhouse gases from 1990 levels at that time was just 15.6%. But in fact we have actually seen emissions rise since Labour came into power in 1997, exposing the main reason behind the fall since 1990. The economic decision by power companies to switch from coal to gas for electricity generation – the so-called 'dash for gas' – has allowed the UK government to boast about comfortably meeting its international Kyoto target. In reality we are still far behind in making the long term and significant changes like sustainable building, renewable energy and recycling. These are the steps which are going vital if we are to make the necessary transition to

a low carbon economy, and which the UK has to take quickly if it is going to make up ground.

Of course climate change is not the only area of environmental policy. Protection of our natural environment, for its own sake as well as the services it provides, runs the risk of being ignored among the urgency of our climate change concerns. Some of the threats facing our natural environment, wildlife and countryside are no less urgent, which is why the party is currently undertaking a thorough review of policies in this area also.

Now that the Labour the Conservative parties are finally taking the environment seriously, there is some progress. The Climate Change Bill – as we are so often told by Labour ministers – is to be the first of its kind. It will set out legally binding targets for emissions reduction leading up to 2050. But it has a number of weaknesses, such as the 60% reduction target for 2050 so far backed by the government and Conservative leaderships, when all the latest science is agreed that an 80% cut is a much more realistic figure. Even more seriously, the bill is only a framework. The legislation sets out the targets but it does not set out how the government will go about achieving them.

It is in this area that the Liberal Democrats really distinguish themselves from the other main political parties. We are the only party to have set out details of the sorts of policies we would introduce to deliver the huge cuts in carbon emissions we need to achieve. Our policy paper *Zero Carbon Britain – Taking a Global Lead*, which was formally adopted in September 2007, forms the basis of our approach. It acknowledges that being a global leader on the environment involves potential risks and financial commitment. But we accept that Britain has a moral duty not only to pay for its previous excesses, but to set an example in its actions, and to show other nations that the cost of acting now will pale in comparison to the cost of doing nothing.

If we are to seriously tackle emissions, we will need to act at all levels. Not only government, but business and individuals need to change their behaviour and abandon the tendency to pass the buck or make the excuse that their actions alone will not make a dent in an effort of the scale needed to tackle climate change. Information and education will be important in persuading people to act together, but that will not be enough. We also need clear price signals to differentiate

between good and bad behaviour.

That is why we have included a Green Tax Switch in our plans, which aims to increase taxes on polluting activities, such as the use of gas-guzzling cars and internal flights, and using these revenues to cut taxes for people on low incomes. Such changes also have a progressive affect, penalising activities that would usually only be the preserve of the wealthy in any case, and decreasing the tax burden on activities we want to encourage, such as work and employment.

But we must be careful in applying this pricing principle. For example we have recognised that although it would be desirable to adopt a carbon tax, similar to that in Norway, which would be levied on energy sources which emit carbon dioxide, there are a number of obstacles that need to be overcome first. These obstacles are generally connected to the principle that a green tax should be there to promote behavioural change rather than to penalise people or generate government income. To levy them on behaviour or actions that

**"Britain has a moral duty not only to pay for its previous excesses, but to set an example in its actions, and to show other nations that the cost of acting now will pale in comparison to the cost of doing nothing."**

many people – in particular the most vulnerable – will find very difficult to change is not fair and risks undermining support for green policy.

The most obvious example of this is energy use in the home which represents the largest share of each person's individual emissions. But many people find it difficult to reduce

these emissions because they lack the capital to pay for measures like insulation. Present circumstances, where the price of energy is increasing without any mitigating measures, are a good example, with the rapid escalation of 'fuel poverty'. To impose taxes that would just have the effect of increasing bills and placing the greatest burden on the poorest would not only be regressive, it would also be counter-productive by rapidly leading to the collapse of the immense public enthusiasm which environmentalism has won in recent years.

I have only begun to explain the wealth of policies we have developed on emissions reduction, looking at areas across government, from energy to transport to housing. It is this breadth which the government has also been lacking. Its tendency to see environmentalism as an add-on, the concern of a single government department, rather than at the heart of all policy, has led to a series of half measures and policies pulling in different directions. Britain still needs a revolution in our thinking on the environment.



# Environmentalism in Britain is the politics of delay

By Michael White

**Power prevails.** Wealth from oil or gas, wealth from diamonds, it is not only the citizens of impoverished developing countries who know the perils of being blessed - and cursed - with possession of such natural resources. The British people have enjoyed the ambiguous benefits of being energy-rich for centuries, with plentiful timber, vast quantities of coal once the forests were gone, then the discovery of extractable North Sea oil and gas just as coal was becoming technically and politically difficult in the 1970s.



Michael White writes about politics for the Guardian. A reporter, foreign correspondent and columnist, he was the Guardian's political editor from 1990 to 2006.

and trade Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). But ten years on the prospect exists of serious energy shortages in the coming decade as well as growing difficulties in meeting EU targets like the commitment to 20% of national energy coming from renewables by 2020. The current level is barely 2% - though rising.

Why? Much criticized for timidity by both business and - from the opposite direction - the British green lobby Tony Blair's government issued an energy white paper in 1998 which placed a moratorium on gas-fired power stations in the doomed hope of helping coal. Another in 2003 stressed the need for diversification of energy sources, for greater efficiency in its use as well as greater security of supply: the Russians had begun throwing their weight around. But the 2003 white paper ducked the nuclear dimension. Labour MPs and activists share the Greens cultural hostility to nuclear power, civil as well as military. Yet everyone knew that 8 of Britain's 9 existing nuclear power stations were due to close as obsolete by 2023. Older coal and gas-fired stations will close on environmental grounds in parallel.

By the 2005 UK general election Blair and his chancellor-successor, Gordon Brown, were more willing to grasp the nettle, as the risk of an energy gap became unavoidably obvious. During the campaign Blair signaled his support for a new generation of nuclear plants - and called for a wider public debate. But he muddled already-muddy waters by also endorsing a new generation of nuclear-powered and armed submarines.

Since when the pace of change has gathered some momentum. The UK government has moved to reform the planning laws, well aware that Sizewell B nuclear plant on the North Sea coast of Suffolk opened in 1995 12 years after first being proposed and after an inquiry lasting two years. Strategic issues of national importance will now be decided by an independent commission. And the 2007 energy white paper formally endorsed the nuclear option, but persisted in asserting that the markets must fund and build such plant. The contradiction is obvious. Brown and his chancellor, Alistair Darling believe nuclear is an urgent part of the mix, but appear to expect the private sector to provide them, against unenthusiastic evidence that they will.

At the same time approvals for more ambitious wind farms, reflecting better technology, have grown. A novel use of wave power - a form of submerged inverted windmill is being installed in Northern Ireland's tidal Strangford Loch. Intense debate is underway as to where best to build a barrage across the estuary of the

River Severn - between Bristol and Cardiff - to capture its powerful tidal bore. Britain's coastline and high tides provide many such opportunities, not least in the fierce seas between Scotland and Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands.

Few such proposals are uncontroversial. Green groups, themselves divided on the nuclear issue, contest some proposals as inappropriate to the site or deploying the wrong technology. Business demands action, but does not offer solutions. Britain's energy market, famously liberalized in the Conservative years to stimulate competition,

has re-solidified into six major players - some foreign-owned - and consumers protest about high prices and, in the winter months, uncertain supplies of gas. Britain has only 11 days of storage capacity - far fewer than its neighbours - and is vulnerable to the spot market when demand is high.

Assorted contradictory threads are being pulled hard in different directions in

"The British people have enjoyed the ambiguous benefits of being energy-rich for centuries, with plentiful timber, vast quantities of coal once the forests were gone, then the discovery of extractable North Sea oil and gas..."

North Kent this summer. With government blessing E.ON - one of the bigger players - hopes to build the first coal-fired power station for many years, on an assumption that clean coal carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology will eventually work and that plant be carbon capture-ready when built. Officials say that without such plant there may be power "brown-outs" by the middle of the next decade. If we do not pioneer such clean coal technology how can we expect the coal-dependent Chinese to act against their own worsening pollution? Green protesters trying to besiege the site say the CCS technology is unproven, that renewables and energy efficiency are the only safe way forward if the planet is to avoid disaster.

David Cameron, young leader of Britain's resurgent Conservative party, 20% ahead in the polls and set to win the 2009-10 general election, has installed a windmill on his roof at home and cycles to the Palace of Westminster where MPs work. He makes speeches about micro-generation and the need for an attractive tariff for those who embrace it. He opposes a third runway at London's Heathrow airport.

Opposition is always easier than the hard choices that have to be made in government. But as the effects of climate change on British weather and the harsh facts of energy shortages start to impact on UK voters a sharp politician who correctly judges a changing public mood may prosper. Economic gloom is no excuse for ducking the challenge, says Cameron. Brave words, but in a country still hurt by the ravages of the world's first industrialization, they may be centuries overdue.

But have they enjoyed them wisely? North Sea oil production is now 44% below its 2000 peak, gas 32%, neither now sufficient to make Britain self-reliant - at a time when world prices are both high and supplies uncertain. The country finds itself late in the race to secure a more diverse energy mix that will include renewables, but may also require clean coal and nuclear. It feels surprised, yet should not be. Worse than that, Britain lags behind many of its European neighbours in reducing demand through the more efficient use of energy at work and in the home. Geography, like history, has not been entirely helpful. A small island surrounded by relatively warm water from the Gulf Stream it is neither cold enough to warrant proper home insulation during the winter months, not hot enough to need the precautions which hot, dry countries to the south take in summer.

To her credit Margaret Thatcher, a scientist by training, made one of the first speeches identifying the threat from climate change shortly before she fell from power in 1990. But as prime minister she had also closed down the UK deep mining industry and endorsed the "dash for gas" - then cheap as well as clean - to fire power stations. She favoured market solutions to problems not always best-suited to them. Labour would inherit and only partly modify her prejudice.

The years since 1990 have been dominated by official caution in the face of public hostility to nuclear power - reflecting worldwide reaction to the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl accidents, themselves echoes of Britain's Windscale problems in the 50s - and a reluctance to address new technologies which would ease or diversify demand. Tony Blair took power in 1997 keen to impress. Britain played a significant role in helping draft the compromises which ensured agreement on emissions reductions at Kyoto later that year. Blair's ministers were able to claim that they had "decoupled pollution from economic growth" as the economy thrived and Kyoto targets - initially - met. Britain also actively supported the EU's push towards its own cap

# Fit for purpose? Government agencies for refuse collection, disposal and recycling in the UK

By David J. Hutchinson

**All a waste.** Responsibility for primary legislation on waste collection, disposal and recycling in the UK rests with the Westminster Parliament. The process of waste regulation began with the Public Health Acts of 1848 and 1875, the latter of which required local authorities to collect waste from domestic dwellings on a weekly basis. In 1972, the government was moved to pass a Deposit of Poisonous Waste Act in the aftermath of a cyanide dumping scandal. A Control of Pollution Act of 1974 led to the creation of Waste Collection Authorities and the licensing of waste disposal facilities such as landfill sites.



David J. Hutchinson is a former Senior Lecturer in English and British Civilization at the University of Portsmouth, and a member of the executive of the European Network for British Area Studies.

in 2002, cut the use of them by 90% within three months.

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the devolved administrations are responsible for the implementation of government policies and for supervising the processes of waste collection, disposal and recycling practices. This article therefore confines itself largely to English issues. Collection, disposal, composting, reclamation and recycling practices are the responsibility of district, borough and county councils, information on whose varied practices can be obtained from the relevant websites.

A virtual civil war has broken out between householders and local authorities over recent reductions in the frequency and practices of rubbish collection. Its progress is reported daily in the newspapers – ugly and unpleasant confrontations over unemptied bins containing wrong items, fines levied on people because they have overfilled their bins or have even emptied their uncollected bins in the local council offices. During 2006, local authorities issued some 20,000 tickets for breach of rubbish collection rules demanding on-the-spot fines of between £75 and £110. The higher figure is the guidance figure for local authorities which has been set by DEFRA. Worse is yet to come. In addition to increased surveillance of bins and fines for infractions, charges of £50 are likely to be levied on those who produce excessive waste.

Fly tipping – the illegal depositing of rubbish – is relentlessly increasing everywhere. The Highways Agency of the Ministry of Transport, responsible for clearing rubbish dumped on England's motorways, can provide no totals for the country – either of rubbish dumped or of the costs of clearing it but its website and press releases do provide some alarming figures for specific areas.

The Institute of Public Policy Research estimated that the cost to local authorities, responsible for main roads and all other public places, of cleaning up from fly tipping was nearly £1m during the year April 2005 – March 2006. Black bags full of domestic rubbish accounted for 63% of all fly tipping. Only 1/100 fly tippers is ever prosecuted

although the Public Health Act, 1935 empowered the authorities to prosecute people for both

dumping and scavenging. The Environmental Protection Act, 1990 specifically prohibits fly tipping for which fines as high as £20,000 and up to six months' custodial sentences can be imposed.

Since 1875, refuse had been collected weekly. Relations between householders and those who emptied their bins were generally very good. "Dustbin men" were well-known, generally liked and often received tips at Christmas because their work was valued. Local authorities traditionally had employed

"Although fortnightly collections of recyclable materials [...] have been started in most parts of the country, the fundamental problem is that there is no consistent practice or policy across England. Recycling practices vary considerably and confuse householders."

their own direct labour organisations and had operated their own fleets of refuse collection vehicles. Margaret Thatcher's legislative measures in the 1980s effectively required local councils to privatize waste collection services which resulted in a massive increase in costs and consequent reductions in the frequency of collections, now often only once every fortnight for non-recyclable wastes – a practice which

is rapidly spreading throughout England with obvious health hazards. Disposable nappies and kitchen wastes are just two refuse categories that increasingly have to wait two weeks for collection in the warm temperatures of the English summer.

When the Victorians opted in 1875 for weekly collections, they had considered the life cycle of domestic flies and its implications for the spreading of diseases. Although fortnightly collections of recyclable materials – paper, cardboard, plastics, glass, metal cans and garden waste have been started in most parts of the country. The fundamental problem is that there is no consistent practice or policy across England. Recycling practices vary considerably and confuse householders. This situation results directly from central government failure to control local government practices and require them to recycle certain materials.

Britain produces annually about 30m tonnes of household waste, 64% of which is buried – a process known as landfill. The quantities of methane gas produced by the breakdown of organic materials (40% of UK emissions) and the contamination of underground water courses are simply two factors which make this an environmentally unacceptable disposal method. Holes are in short supply and many will be full within eight years! In 1966 to discourage landfill disposal, the British government introduced a progressively increasing Landfill Tax payable by local authorities. Initially £7 per tonne, it is now £24 and will rise incrementally to £35. Many local authorities, far from changing their landfill policies, have simply passed on this tax to householders who have seen massive increases in their Council Tax.

In recent years, most acts passed by Parliament have been to ensure that Britain complies with the increasing volume of European Community Directives. Recent examples of central government intervention are the Recycling of Household Waste Bill (1999) which requires local authorities to provide receptacles for the collection of recyclable and non-recyclable waste on demand and the Waste & Emissions Trading Act of 2003.

Governments have tended to be reactive rather than pro-active particularly in their approach to recycling issues. Information on British government primary and secondary legislation and policies appears on the website of DEFRA, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. In January 2008, Minister Joan Ruddock, informed parliament that "decisions on the best way to collect waste are a matter for local authorities, not central government". It is this type of laissez-faire attitude which has led to a proliferation of different approaches to refuse collection and disposal and to some deplorably poor local authority recycling records.

Plastic bags urgently need a national initiative. Of the 13 billion issued annually, 80% are used only once before being sent for landfill, incineration or simply discarded as litter because they contain inappropriate items. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that legislation to reduce the quantities could come into force as early as 2009 unless supermarkets make sufficient progress on a voluntary basis. Compare the case of the Republic of Ireland, where a 15 cent tax on plastic bags, introduced



**Heated debate.** Halloween protester at a Wrexham council meeting to discuss waste disposal proposals. Creative commons - some rights reserved. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>



## continued: Fit for purpose? Government agencies...

By David J. Hutchinson

In the London Borough of Brent alone with its disgraceful recycling record of 11.25%, landfill disposal costs are currently running at £5 million a year and are rising at a rate of £700,000 per annum. Another London Borough, Tower Hamlets whose recycling rate is 11.64%, disposes of tens of thousands of tonnes of rubbish annually to an Essex landfill site. What is not disposed of in landfill is incinerated and the wastes landfilled. Only a relatively small percentage of Britain's waste is recycled. Britain has one of the worst recycling records in Europe. Clearly, little has changed since Chris Rose famously castigated Britain as "the dirty man of Europe."

In the 1930s, incineration was positively encouraged. "Burn your refuse - reduce your rates" was painted on most refuse vehicles. After 1945 Britain's cities were surrounded by burning rubbish tips. During World War II the Ministry of Salvage caused severe visual environmental damage by collecting some 1.5m tonnes of metal railings and gates from around parks, gardens of private homes, churches and even cemeteries. Government propaganda informed people that these were required by the war effort for manufacturing tanks and munitions but the unsuitability of the metals meant that most of them were never used. After the war ended, many of them in the London area were simply dumped at sea in the Thames Estuary. In other parts of the country they ended up in landfill sites.

However, other metals in short supply such as copper and aluminium (for use in aircraft manufacture) were also collected from the population. Glass bottles and jars were recycled. Domestic food refuse was collected in special bins for feeding to pigs. This practice ceased after 1945 and what is not composted is now sent to landfill - a huge amount since 18% of food purchased in the UK is thrown away. WRAP claims that 6.7 million tonnes of waste food are thrown away annually.

The English of course have always had a refreshingly pragmatic approach to the disposal of their rubbish. Britain generally supplies some quite stunning examples of appalling practice in waste disposal. Two in particular, perhaps, deserve special mention: Beaufort's Dyke between Scotland and N. Ireland and the Dounreay Shaft.

Take the case of Birmingham with over 1m residents "a global city with a local heart" to quote its own website and ever anxious to project itself as a progressive, modern and forward-looking place. Birmingham's

refuse recycling rate is a shocking 18%. Of the 500,000 tonnes of refuse which it collects annually, 60% goes to the Energy from Waste incineration plant at Tyseley and 20% goes to landfill.

Refuse is collected weekly through a primitive system of black plastic bags. Households receive free deliveries of one bag per week for the year. Further bags may be purchased but collections are limited to two per household per week. Bags may be left outside only from the evening of the day before they are due to be collected to discourage rats and foxes from examining the contents. These predators, together with cats and magpies frequently do examine the contents during the night before collection thereby leaving a considerable cleaning up problem for both householders and refuse collection operatives. In some parts of the city,

fortnightly collections of recyclables such as cans and plastic bottles, papers and cardboard and even garden waste are organised but the provision is very patchy. Plastic crates are made available for these. Full provision of these additional services should be made by December 2008. Bins are more robust than plastic sacks but Birmingham has no plans to introduce them.

Most authorities in England have managed to purchase ranges of wheelie bins of varying colours for different types of waste. Naturally, there is no national system of colour coding for the bins. Mostly, they are provided free but Bournemouth, for example, charges £40 for a 240 litre recycling bin and £28 for a 140 litre domestic refuse bin.

Practices in other major English cities are also wildly inconsistent. For the removal of large "white goods" such as freezers, fridges, washing machines and tumble dryers, some authorities such as Manchester provide a free collection service. Newcastle-on-Tyne makes a charge of £15 per item. Sheffield charges private householders £31 per item but provides a free collection service to council tenants. Westminster will collect three items free of charge. Bristol will collect three items for £15 and is also one of the few authorities that has special bins for the collection of food waste which is sent off for composting.

A cursory examination of local authority websites will reveal extensive and very varied lists of items that will not be collected

such as tree trunks, builders' rubble mattresses, sofas, boilers. It all depends on where you live but these are some of the objects which increasingly are being fly-tipped across England by householders desperate to dispose of them.

Until the 1960s, most domestic waste consisted of dust and ashes, paper, glass and metal cans which were easily contained in the galvanised dustbins that had appeared in the 1930s. After the smogs in London and the larger industrial cities in the 1950s the Clean Air Act, 1956 led to progressively to fewer open fires. Many people switched to gas and electricity as a means heating and central heating systems. The poor often used paraffin heaters which posed pollution problems of their own. Major changes took place to the content of domestic refuse.

The increasing use of disposable nappies from the mid-1960s, plastic bottles and other throw-away items from the early 1970s, the huge increase in convenience foods and their packaging during the 1990s and the growing use by supermarkets of tetrapacks and other mixed material wrapping have changed the nature of our rubbish and set new challenges to its recycling and disposal. Many of these challenges have not been adequately responded to. If certain materials cannot be recycled or safely disposed of, legislation is clearly required to prevent their manufacture and use in the first place.

What needs to be done? Governments certainly do not lack policies but there is an enormous gap still to be bridged between their rhetoric and their willingness to engage in positive action. In December 2007, Scotland opened its first and only Waste Reclamation Plant. Few exist elsewhere



**Progressive values.** Recycling in Terminal 5, Heathrow Airport. Creative commons - some rights reserved. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>

in the UK yet these facilities could, by separating household refuse, enable more of it to be recycled and less to be buried or burned. Perhaps, in Francis Urquhart's immortal phrase, it is time for governments to "put a bit of stick about".

# The offshore adventure has only just begun

By Hans Andreas Starheim

**Innovation to come.** In the future of offshore wind power, Norway and Britain may soon find each other to be competitors, but on the grander scale we have many interests in common.



Hans Andreas Starheim is Director of Communications at the Norwegian environmental foundation Zero Emissions Resource Organization (ZERO). He has worked with environmental issues for more than a decade.

With growing concerns over local environmental impacts and a widespread *I'm all for it, but not in my neighbourhood* attitude towards wind turbines, offshore alternatives are becoming increasingly attractive to wind power developers. In 2007 barely three percent of the wind parks installed in Europe were built off shore, but by the year 2012 this share is expected to soar to almost a quarter of all new installations.

The development of offshore wind power is truly a European endeavour. Of the approximately 1,100MW of offshore wind in commercial operation today, all of it can be found off European coasts. While Denmark was the first country out of the starting block, having established the world's very first offshore wind park in 1991, Britain has been catching up fast. With the recent completion of two offshore wind parks with a combined capacity of 100MW, the UK has inched its way past Denmark to become the largest offshore wind power producer in the world.

Norway, on the other hand, is still far behind. Not a single offshore wind turbine has yet been installed, and the onshore wind power production is not that impressive either. Held back by stiff regulations and up until recently highly insufficient government funding, wind power has really never gotten off the ground in Norway, let alone gone offshore.

The potential is there, though. A recent survey made by the Norwegian environmental agency Enova estimates the offshore wind power generation potential for Norway to be a mind-boggling 13,790 TWh, or approximately a hundred times more than all power generated in Norway today. No reason for British wind developers to worry too much about the competition yet though – it isn't likely that more than a small fraction of this potential

will ever be developed, and even a moderate boom in Norwegian wind power development should not be expected soon. The technology which is being explored on the Norwegian continental shelf is still in its infancy.

This is the first point where Norwegian and British interests converge. While the Norwegian offshore wind potential is huge, the British potential is not very far behind. The problem, however, is that the strongest winds blow too far off the coast, where the waters are too deep for the current wind turbine solutions to be practical.

Today, offshore wind turbines are installed on towers raised on the ocean floor. This is all fine in shallow waters, but at greater depths the towers must be impractically tall to reach the surface. Therefore, Norwegian efforts are geared towards developing floating wind mills that can be installed at any depth. The Norway based companies Hywind and Sway are at the forefront of floating wind mill development and both are ready to build their first full scale test turbines in the near future. When the technologies developed by these companies and others become commercially available, the UK will stand to benefit greatly from it. Just like Norway, the UK has a huge continental shelf in the North Sea perfectly suited for floating wind parks.

"When the technologies [...] become commercially available, the UK will stand to benefit greatly from it. Just like Norway, the UK has a huge continental shelf in the North Sea perfectly suited for floating wind parks."

Another common interest is cables. As wind power takes a larger share of the British power production, the need to be plugged into the rest of the European power market increases. The difference between peaks and lows in power generation increases as weather becomes a greater factor, and the peaks in production will not always match the peaks in consumption. Connecting to other markets with other consumption profiles and different weather patterns will become more and more important.

The Irish wind power company Airtricity recently proposed building a power super highway under the sea, to even out differences in production and consumption in coastal Europe, all the way from Portugal to the Baltics. Conveniently, connecting Britain and Norway to this system, called the Supergrid, will mean laying down high capacity cables through areas of the North Sea well suited for future floating wind

parks. This clearly makes building more offshore wind power far more attractive, as the output from these installations can be fed straight into the main supply lines for the European power market.

And there is more. Enter Norwegian hydropower. While wind power generation is regulated mostly by the mischievous weather gods, hydropower is far more predictable.



**Renewable.** Offshore wind turbine in the Thames Estuary. Creative commons - some rights reserved. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>

Starting and stopping production at hydropower plants is amazingly simple. It takes but a flick of a switch, and seconds later water starts pouring through the turbines, producing at full capacity. Another flick, and the gates are closed and production stops.

Norway produces more than a third of the hydropower in Europe, and the potential may still be double that, according to estimates by the Norwegian energy regulatory agency NVE. This will become an invaluable resource for all of Europe when the continent turns to wind power. It's quite simple – when the strong winds off the coasts of Europe go limp and weak on a fine summer day, the gates of dozens of Norwegian hydropower plants may open at a moments notice, pouring their megawatts into the refrigerators of Brits, French and Germans alike. Thus the summer day stays fine for millions of Europeans who may continue to enjoy their chilled drinks, the alternative being blackouts and warm beer.

Norway and Britain have a long history of cooperation in the North Sea. We are sharing much of the same continental shelf that so far has been very generous in providing our countries with energy from its depths. But there is more than oil offshore. We may some day harvest as much energy from the winds as we have so far garnered from oil. The offshore adventures of Norway and Britain have only just begun.



# Anyone for the moon? Carbon storage and entrepreneurship in the North Sea

By John-Ivar S. Olsen

**Vision meets realities.** In his annual speech to the Norwegian people on New Year's Day 2007, the prime minister, Jens Stoltenberg, announced that he was considering a trip to the moon. Now, given this choice of coalition partners, not to mention his latest opinion polls, that might sound as a reasonable and sound choice. But of course, he wasn't really off to the moon: the message the PM really wanted to convey was that Norway would embark upon a technological journey that would present industries and countries worldwide with a new and revolutionizing way of capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, providing for what could possibly become a breakthrough in the fight against global warming. Some time later, his Labour-led government agreed a plan with main opposition parties to make Norway carbon neutral by 2030, which would require annual reductions of 15-17 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, of which Norway emitted around 54 million tonnes in 2006.



John-Ivar S. Olsen is executive director of the Norwegian Chamber of Commerce in Japan and Secretary of British Politics Society, Norway.

Meanwhile, the British government have made it clear that this is a journey on which they would like to tag along and have announced their intention to work together with Norway on the issue of carbon capture and storage (CCS). In his pre-budget report of 6th December 2006, Gordon Brown (then a chancellor) commented that the UK government would continue "to work with the Norwegian Government through the North Sea Basin Task Force to develop a common set of principles to regulate the transport and storage of carbon dioxide beneath the North Sea. The Task Force will submit a report to the UK and Norwegian energy ministers early in 2007, which will lay the foundations for a regularity framework to enable CCS to develop effectively, safely and in line with the Government's environmental principles. As a next step, the UK and Norway have agreed terms of reference for a joint study of the infrastructure needed to transport and store carbon dioxide below the North Sea".

Though the best of friends in most things political, the two countries make for an odd couple when it comes to environmental issues. Norwegian politicians have never been afraid of using the grandest of words when it comes to matters of the environment, while the country's role as an exporter of oil and gas has left much to be desired. Britain has been a regular target of criticism (acid rain over Norwegian lakes and forests in the 1980s, fears of nuclear pollution from the Sellafield plant and enduring complaints of British fishermen dumping fish in the North Sea) but have preferred actions to do the talking. Today, Britain is one of very few nations to fulfil the targets set by the Kyoto protocol. As of 2005, the emission level is estimated to be about 15% below the 1990 threshold set by the Kyoto Protocol, and in many ways Britain has

already fulfilled its commitments under Kyoto. Cynics will of course contend that the British reduction figures are a result of Thatcher and the Conservatives doing away with the coal industry and buying increasing amounts of energy from abroad, but the fact remains; The British government are way ahead of Norway when it comes to obligations under the Kyoto agreements.

With regard to carbon storage, the then prime minister, Tony Blair, raised the importance of CCS to the global leaders at the Gleneagles summit in 2005, and Britain has taken up a position as frontrunner in the European Union project "The Zero Emission Fossil Fuel Plant (ZEP) Technology Platform", launched in November 2005. Together with Norway, the country is one of the few with a track record of commercial application of CCS and is also a vital contributor to the European CO<sub>2</sub> test centre at Mongstad in Southern Norway. In this respect, the British government is not only in for the co-operation with Norway on CCS, but also for the competition, perhaps aiming at beating Mr. Stoltenberg to the moon.

The CCS technology has already been in use for some years at large industrial plants, such as natural gas processing plants and ammonium producing facilities. The brand new idea thrown into the equation is to transport the separated CO<sub>2</sub> away from the plant to a place of safe storage. Carbon capture applies only to large point sources, such as power plants and large industrial facilities. Typically found in major industrial and urban centres, around 7500 large point emissions sources have been identified as suitable for carbon capture. Today, most of these places are located in the USA, Western Europe, South East and Southern Asia, but increasingly more and more of these large point sources will also be found in the developing world. Coal is the dominant fuel worldwide, accounting for a total of 38% of all electricity produced in 2000 and is projected to remain so for decades to come. Should no alternative to clean coal become available in the very near future, the prospects for countries close to China, not to mention the Chinese themselves, look very bleak indeed.

But if the technology of separating carbon dioxide is tried and tested, what is the problem? Having separated the carbon dioxide, the CO<sub>2</sub> needs to be transported to a place of safe and durable storage. Globally, there are only three examples of plants that manage this in a commercially viable manner. One of these is StatoilHydro's project at Sleipner, which has a track record of more than 10 years of safe storage without any leaks. Sitting on top of depleted oil fields, the stored CO<sub>2</sub> is simply being re-injected back

into a deep and large saline formation some 800 meters below the seabed. From large CO<sub>2</sub> sources on land, two possibilities are available. For distances up to 1,000 km, pipelines would be the preferred means of transport. Anything over that distance makes transport by ship more attractive economically. But then again, even ship transport requires that you have found a safe place of storage for the CO<sub>2</sub>. Scientists are currently undertaking research on three possible methods of storage.

The first and most tested option would be **storage in a geological formation** onshore or offshore. Already a proven technique offshore at Sleipner in the North Sea, Sonatrach, British

"Together with Norway, Britain is one of few with a track record of commercial application of carbon storage... In this respect, the British government is not only in for the co-operation with Norway on CCS, but also for the competition, perhaps aiming at beating Mr. Stoltenberg to the moon."

Petroleum and StatoilHydro have been operating a joint-venture project in the Algerian part of Sahara since 2004. Here, stored gas is being re-injected onshore into a sandstone reservoir at a depth of 1800 metres. The two other storage options available are currently some distance from becoming commercially viable. **Mineral carbonation** involves converting CO<sub>2</sub> to inorganic carbonates using chemical reactions. This would not involve any release of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Still, work with mineral carbonation could best be described to be

at a "demonstration phase" with industrial applications years away. **Ocean Storage**, finally, would involve injecting and dissolving CO<sub>2</sub> into the water under depths of 1000 meters, either by a stationary platform or from a ship. Below 3,000 meters, CO<sub>2</sub> becomes denser than water and would form a "lake", thus delaying dissolution into the surrounding environment. This is also a technology at an early research phase where years remain before any industrial application can be hoped for.

So, in effect, we are currently left with geological storage as the only viable option for CCS, which perhaps explains why the pessimists outnumber the optimists on its future. "Expensive at the best" writes *the Economist*, and adds "at worst, it may not work". They are right of course, as some studies indicate that CO<sub>2</sub> capture increases the cost of production of electricity with anything between 35-70%. With energy prices rising and governments adding tax on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, it is still too early to make any rash judgment of the future of CCS. Should *the Economist* be right, however, countries like Norway and the UK will have invested heavily in research in mitigation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that could have been spent more wisely elsewhere. And even if Mr. Stoltenberg should be right and *the Economist* wrong, CCS if successful would only account for 15-55% of the requested cumulative mitigation effect on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Beyond the moon, would there be other planets to aim for?

# A joint battle for the world's forests: the Norwegian-British cooperation on the Congo Basin Forest Fund

By Ellen Svendsen

**Forest horrors.** First, Prince Charles of Wales pleaded for international support to save the world's rainforests. Then the Norwegian government decided to scale up its support to prevent deforestation with up to around 300 million pounds a year. Now, the Norwegian and British governments have joined forces to combat the destruction of our planet's tropical treasures through a hugely important forest protection fund.



Ellen Svendsen works in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is engaged by the British Council as a Challenge Europe Climate Advocate.

It was on 17 June this year that the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg presented a historic joint initiative to avoid deforestation. The Ministers each committed GBP 50 million to preserve the Congo Basin forests, and will supply satellite imaging technology to monitor the area. This unique joint effort is not only the result of the long standing close political ties between the two countries, but also brings to the fore an agenda that too long has been neglected by the international community. The support will be channelled through the newly established Congo Basin Forest Fund, launched in June to "support innovative proposals to make the forest worth more as a living resource than it would be cut down." The fund will be run by a governing council chaired by professor Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Laureate and Rt. Hon. Paul Martin, former Prime Minister of Canada, with the mandate of providing a source of accessible funding aimed at encouraging both governments, civil society, NGOs and the private sector to work together to avoid deforestation.

According to both the Stern Review and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), preventing deforestation is a time-efficient measure that can be taken at an acceptable price. Yet although it may appear easy not to cut down trees, there are many different and strong driving forces behind deforestation. The identification of these forces, which may include agriculture, biofuel production and logging to mention a few is in itself a considerable challenge.

Furthermore, there is the problem of *how* to compensate the rainforest countries for not making use of the valuable sources of income from forestry. What is avoiding building up a forest industry worth? So far, nobody seems to have any clear cut answers to these questions. At the launch of the joint initiative, the Norwegian Prime Minister Stoltenberg underlined in this regard the need for international coordinated efforts combined with the development of international standards for measuring forest carbon stocks, as well as for monitoring and verifying changes in forest density.

Some critics may see in this type of initiative just a new way for the West to both have the cake and eat it. First the West exploited the natural resources of these vulnerable countries, of which Kurtz' pitiless ivory trade stands out as a classic example: now they will refuse these countries to pursue economic growth by the same means as the industrialised countries themselves made use of. Both the British and the Norwegian governments agree that the industrialised cannot deny the same economic development to developing countries as industrialised countries have enjoyed for centuries, and that the latter do have a special responsibility for the current

climate changes. Yet sustainable growth is not possible unless we tackle the devastating consequences of climate changes, consequences which have already hit many vulnerable countries, in particular African, hard. Hence developing innovative global mechanisms which can pave the way for sustainable growth is of key importance, and avoiding deforestation is a crucial part of the solution.

But the politics of what has become known as "avoided deforestation" (AD) are still heavily debated, torn between amongst others market-based approaches, giving credits for avoiding deforestation and establishing a global carbon trade scheme, and international funding - based approaches through international funds. Many would also claim it is our moral duty to compensate for a global good like rainforests without getting emission quotas in return.

Now as the objective of establishing a fund like the Congo Basin Forest Fund is to compensate duly those countries not cutting down their forests, this is a step in the direction of the second approach mentioned above. The idea is, as the fund's slogan goes, to "support innovative proposals to make the forest worth more as a living resource than it would be cut down". Still in its inception phase, the fund has already called for proposals from both governments and civil society organisations which will be assessed by the temporary secretariat handled by the UK government. But the way forward - or should one say the wood - may be hard to see for the trees. The challenges are multiple, and teams in both Norway and the UK have a tremendous organisational task before them.

Some of these challenges are rooted in the political history of the region. Indeed, Kurtz's outcry may also encapsulate the history of suffering of the natives of the Congo Basin region through war and oppression. Poor state structures, a devastating level of corruption and a weak protection of human rights and minorities, combined with investors eagerly contemplating the huge profits to be made from deforestation, makes not to cut down a tree rather complicated. As Conrad's reminds us: it is easy to act destructively in a place that has no law. The challenge is not only to compensate the loss of income from avoided deforestation, but to secure the local population's rights to their share of the economic growth. Therefore, good governance at the local level and protection of minority rights is a first priority on both the British and Norwegian agenda. In this regard, the protection of pygmies' rights and women empowerment is of special concern.

Many tragic chapters in history have been written in the Congo Basin region: let us hope that this joint British-Norwegian initiative will lay the foundation for a positive chapter, both for the region, and for our common future climate. As one of the fund's slogan goes: "It is a huge challenge, but for all our futures it is one that we must meet".

"The horror! The horror!" These are the famous last words uttered by the corrupted ivory trader Kurtz as he, fever-ridden and trapped in the midst of Congo Basin jungle, faces his certain death in Joseph Conrad's masterpiece on the horror of European colonialism, *Heart of Darkness*.

This classic work in British literature is first and foremost a deeply disturbing analysis of the dark corners of the human mind, not on environmental protection. Yet, the nerve of the novel strikes me as a suitable backcloth to the global climate challenge that is currently looming large. Kurtz' last apocalyptic cries of horror could, some important historic and psychological considerations apart, just as well stand out as reminding echoes from the future climate apocalypse that may be in store if the international community, and in particular the industrialised countries, fail to reduce global emissions and stagger the consequences of climate changes through new effective and innovative climate adaptation mechanisms.

Furthermore, a potential "climatic horror" is indeed coined to the Congo Basin and its forests in a special way, given the fact that a fifth of the global greenhouse gas emissions are caused by deforestation and forest degradation. The Congo Basin Forest is the second largest tropical forest in the world after the Amazon, covering an area twice the size of France. The nearly 500 million acre landmass covers almost half of Central Africa. It is the home to more than 50 million people, 10000 species of plants, 1000 species of birds and 400 species of mammals.

This enormous basin may alone contain more than over 90 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, roughly the same as of two years of global emissions at the current rate. In addition, the danger of spread and increase in outbreaks of infectious diseases such as SARS, yellow fever, malaria and many more is the likely result of a destruction of these forests. Again, the image of Kurtz' feverish desperation springs to mind.

"[A]lthough it may appear easy not to cut down trees, there are many different and strong driving forces behind deforestation. The identification of these forces, which may include agriculture, biofuel production and logging to mention a few is in itself a considerable challenge."



# The environmental dimension: a new political cleavage?

By Øivind Bratberg

**Ideological terrain?** What does environmental policy add to the existing political landscape in Britain? The question is well worth addressing at a time when the issues of energy supply, pollution and climate change are mixed together, with important and often unpredictable effects.



Øivind Bratberg is a PhD fellow at the Dept. of Political Science, University of Oslo and President of British Politics Society, Norway.

A first question to clarify is whether environmentalism in itself is a new political cleavage.

The concept of cleavage refers to a conflict dimension differentiating the main political parties and dominating voter choice and public debate. Political sociologists Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan applied three criteria for the existence of a cleavage: it should *separate voters* along a key social characteristic such as class, religion or ethnicity; these groups should be conscious of their *collective identity* and be willing to act on it; and the cleavage should have a distinct *organisational presence*, preferably through political parties.

In Europe, Britain has historically been one of the clearest cases of class-based politics, where the left/right dimension predominates. Voting could thus largely be predicted on social position and other structural variables. As class has waned in political importance over time, this has also spilled over to the political parties. Left and right are no longer as clearly discernible, and new political conflicts have arrived on the agenda. Territorial politics in Scotland and Wales is one example, which could be defined as a political cleavage (admittedly with limited geographical scope). Is environmental policy a cleavage as well?

Clearly, on the basis of the structural definition, environmentalism does not amount to a political cleavage, neither in Britain nor in the Scandinavian countries for that matter. What would the collective identity be like of people *opposed* to environmental protection – and how would their views be reflected in the parties? On the environmental-friendly side, no significant green party has arrived either in Britain or in the Scandinavian countries, and environmental policy has been taken up by traditional parties with various degrees of “issue ownership” and credibility on environmental policy.

At its roots, it seems, environmentalism is a *valence issue*, an ambition to which most people would lend some support while differing on the priorities to be made and the methods to be applied to get there. In this respect, supporting a better environment is much like valuing public health care: it makes little sense to disagree on the value of the goal, but different views will coexist with regard to instruments as well as its

priority relative to other political aspirations. The article by Christian Bjørnæs (page 13, this issue) illustrates how such balancing between ecological and financial concerns is reflected in newspaper reporting. The much-discussed Stern Report, on the other hand, seems to *unite* ecology and finance by showing how future climate change would have devastating consequences, not only in environmental terms, but also for the livelihood of people in many quarters of the world and, most decisively, for the world economy. Perceiving environmental protection as a worthwhile investment gives added weight to the argument for a change of policy, even if costly in the short term.

Rather than look for a distinct environmental cleavage, perhaps it would be wiser to consider environmental policy in the light of the traditional left-right conflict after all? From an ideological perspective, it could at least bring out a few hypotheses on how parties should respond. A social democrat should be favourable to market regulation, but will traditionally be cautious not to hamper productivity and employment. A conservative should be concerned with limiting environmental degradation but will often oppose radical measures to do so. A liberal should be sceptical, not towards radicalism, but towards infringement by the state. Depending on the blend of liberalism, the liberal will accept some degree of intervention to ensure equal rights and opportunities but beyond the marginal adjustment the market will prevail.

Looking at left vs. right, in the sense of public planning vs. the market, certainly provides some understanding of party positions on environmental policy. Take the question of energy supply, driven by rising oil prices during the last few months. Here, liberals often expect more energy-efficient technology to emerge through competition, while consumers on their side will be “incentivised” to drive smaller and more modest vehicles. The left often looks more towards state subsidies to support innovation and to taxes and levies to change consumption patterns.

But this is only part of the picture. In Britain, rising fuel costs seem most of all to stimulate a non-ideological response consisting in placating the voters by any means affordable while hoping that prices will fall and things fall back to normalcy. An ideological compass gives limited explanatory value if we wish to understand political action in this area. The rather limited help from traditional ideology is all the more evident in the area of nuclear policy, where the prime minister, Gordon

Brown, earlier this summer commissioned the construction of a range of new nuclear plants, at least eight over the next decade-and-a-half. These will replace older reactors and help amend the expected energy deficit which Britain might face over the next decades. In an unforeseen twist to the climate debate, nuclear energy has turned from being a threat to becoming a potential saviour as alternative to oil or coal-fired power plants. As late as 2003, a government white paper considered nuclear power an “unattractive option”: today, the picture is utterly different. While government nuclear policy has changed in Britain, this issue cuts across the parties and can hardly be described as an ideological debate. Pressures to cut

carbon dioxide emissions and the parallel rise in the cost of oil have made nuclear energy the preferred option. Meanwhile, problems related to storage of the nuclear waste, incurring huge difficulties and cost, have yet to be resolved.

Perhaps the most compelling insight from the last few years is that political stability prevails despite the apocalyptic visions of environmental

degradation. This may be particularly characteristic to Britain, where radicals throughout its political history have been absorbed by conservative political institutions. The underlying consensus also implies a precondition of economic growth which champions expansion, consumption and growth.

To move beyond the paradigm of material growth is certainly not in the ideology of the dominant parties today, and it would take a profound culture change to achieve so. It is intriguing here to evoke Anthony Crosland's views in *The Future of Socialism* in 1956, where he predicted that “it will really not much matter a decade from now whether we plan to produce rather more of this and less of that, or exactly what prices are charged... The level of material welfare will soon be such that marginal changes in the allocation of resources will make little difference to anyone's contentment.”

More than five decades later, we discern sustained material growth, but rather less of the alternative quality of life issues Crosland addressed – and perhaps even less of the sustainable development principle as a guideline. Seeing the environment issue take the lead in public policy (with the ministry occupying the role the Treasury holds today?) is still very far from political reality. Environmentalism must mix with different ideologies and short-sighted political gains to succeed – even if its ambition goes beyond the everyday politics.

“[P]olitical stability prevails despite the apocalyptic visions of environmental degradation. This may be particularly characteristic to Britain, where radicals throughout its political history have been absorbed by conservative political institutions.”

# Climate, environment and the British agenda: the voice of the British Council

By Tiina Ruohonen

*What has the rise of environmental politics meant for Britain's cultural relations abroad? The British Council has made "energy, climate change and consumption" part of its global strategy for the coming years, with the aim to deepen relations between the UK and host countries, and to raise environmental awareness and to spur positive action among future leaders and the public. Behind is the Challenge Europe project, which engages a set of young "influencers" in a range of European countries to develop new ideas on countering climate change. Below, Tiina Ruohonen of the British Council gives a summary account of Challenge Europe. The current Review also includes articles by three Norwegians engaged by the programme.*

The British Council is the UK's international cultural relations organization. We work in 110 countries and territories worldwide to promote the exchange of knowledge and ideas between the UK and other countries through arts, education and training, science and technology, sport and governance. In Norway, the British Council currently works with partners through three pan-European projects themed around the complex issues of climate change, intercultural living and urban innovation.



*Tiina Ruohonen holds an international master's degree in cultural understandings of sustainability and the environment. She has previously worked at the University of Oslo and is currently a project manager at the British Council for Challenge Europe.*

and cultural issues surrounding climate change. Climate change is a cross-cutting issue that requires a multifaceted approach, something that puts the British Council in a unique position to provide a compelling society-wide, international platform to tackle climate change.

As Viner continues: "Through our focus on climate change the British Council aims to increase understanding of the issue, and support the development of sustainable solutions and increase awareness and support for the achievement and implementation of international agreements. In this regard one of our top priorities is to strengthen relationships and build an international network of Climate Advocates that lead to positive action on climate change mitigation and adaptation".

British Council has recently launched its biggest climate programme in Europe so far: Challenge Europe, a pan-European project to engage and motivate hundreds of dynamic young people to take action to tackle climate change. The Challenge Europe initiative is part of the British Council's Low Carbon Futures climate change programme which provides an international platform for young people, local partners and leaders around the world to build an international consensus around positive action on climate change.

Supported by a network of partner organisations and affiliated experts,

Climate Advocates – 19 of them in Norway – are being given the freedom to develop ideas that will bring about positive changes in the ways we use carbon today. These Climate Advocates will be supported in their work to turn their ideas into reality by working with organisations, businesses and the public in an effort to make a definite impact by stimulating innovation and generating workable ideas.

The British Council wants to give the younger generation the opportunity and network to make a tangible difference to current and future international activities. As British Council Chief Executive Martin Davidson says: "Climate change is an unprecedented challenge and

**"British Council has recently launched its biggest climate programme in Europe so far: Challenge Europe, a pan-European project to engage and motivate hundreds of dynamic young people to take action to tackle climate change."**

*one that affects us all. Unfortunately, it is the youth of today and future generations who will inherit its potentially devastating impact for decades to come. The British Council has a long history through our work in cultural relations of promoting commitment among young people to address shared challenges such as those posed by climate change".*

The aim of Challenge Europe is to create momentum towards change through collaboration, creativity, energy, drive, can-do attitude, passion, hard work, understanding, and knowledge-sharing. After all, the young Climate Advocates are to help drive the changes required for a low carbon future – and who wouldn't want to be a changemaker?

Climate change is not traditionally deemed the domain of cultural relations organisations, so why is British Council working in this area?

As David Viner, British Council's Programme Leader for climate change initiatives explains: "It is vital that the British Council's work in cultural relations addresses the great global challenges we are facing today. Cultural relations is about building international engagement and understanding through the exchange of ideas and knowledge. Our approach harnesses the power in areas we already work in – education, the arts and creativity, science, English and governance – to address global issues, such as the threat of climate change".

We now have high levels of confidence in the science that explains how the climate system is changing. With this increased knowledge we are starting to understand the need to concentrate the global community's efforts in addressing the societal, economic



**New power.** Wind turbines in Cornwall, a modern facet of electric power production in Britain.

Creative commons - some rights reserved. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>



# Environmentalism and the press: how global warming is seen to impact the economy and the environment

By Christian Bjørnæs

**The presentational dimension.** "In my view, climate change is the most severe problem that we are facing today – more serious even than the threat of terrorism", the then UK government's chief scientific adviser, Professor Sir David King, wrote in *Science* a few years ago. King attacked the US government for not taking a leading role in the curbing of carbon dioxide emissions. The statement was bold and controversial. Downing Street tried to gag Sir King, on the grounds that such remarks would not help the UK to achieve future policy aims.



Christian Bjørnæs is an adviser at CICERO, Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research at the Univ. of Oslo and is currently writing a book on the impact of climate change. He is engaged by the British Council as a Challenge Europe Climate Advocate.

the *Financial Times* and *The Independent* have chosen differently. Although it cannot be said that the *Financial Times* **only** focuses on damage to business and *The Independent* **only** focuses on damage to the environment, it is clear that their balance of the conflicting threats of environmental versus financial consequences is discordant. *The Independent* was 2.8 times more likely to publish a story with emphasis on the consequences on global warming. In contrast, the *Financial Times* has a higher focus on solutions and their associated costs. This attained almost a quarter of the newspaper's coverage while it only dominated 9.2 percent of *The Independent*'s stories.

By placing a much stronger emphasis on the consequences of global warming and current weather, *The Independent* frames global warming as an environmental issue. They also give more prominence to stories about scientific discoveries and allow scientists to speak more often. Compared to the *Financial Times*, they give little attention to the economic aspects of the issue and focus more on domestic politics. Thus *The Independent* frames global warming as an environmental issue which can be acted on locally.

The *Financial Times* frames global warming as an economic issue, the solutions of which having primarily financial implications. And they do this consistently over time. The paper also places a much stronger emphasis on international relations, as opposed to *The Independent*. Business today is global, while lawmaking is still a matter for the national state. Four of the top twelve sources in the *Financial Times* sample was a US politician, three were politicians from the UK. US policies regarding, for example, the Kyoto agreement, have

equally important implications for multinational companies as some new piece of legislations about global warming passed by the British Parliament.

The representation of different stakeholder groups strengthen the impression that the *Financial Times* frame global warming as an economic issue and *The Independent* frames it as an environmental issue.

Not all readers will read all stories in a newspaper, and quite often they'll stop reading after two or three paragraphs. The further down the list of sources, the less likely readers are to register its point

of view. In newsroom and PR jargon this is known as burying a quote towards the end of the story, often for the purpose of creating a veneer of balance. Therefore the top two sources are considered to be more important than source three and four.

Generally, politicians and business people rank higher in the *Financial Times* while scientists and NGOs rank higher in *The Independent*. The primary and secondary source in the *Financial Times* is most often a politician, then a scientist and then a representative for a commercial interest. In *The Independent*, scientists figure at the very top as a primary source, while of all the secondary sources, politicians are the most quoted. NGOs come in third as both the primary and the secondary source. Looking at source three and four, the picture is slightly different. In both newspapers, NGOs and commercial interests increase their presence further out in the line of sources.

Why this difference in reporting? Few journalists will want to alienate or deliberately anger their

readers. That is an ancient journalistic principle. As a journalist, you work for the public, and especially for those who choose to buy your publication. As Fiona Harvey, environment correspondent at *The Financial Times* put it:

"We are a business paper so our reader are either business people or hold positions within government. They tend to have a serious interest in the issue. When you write for them you need to be very aware of that. (...) We write for people at work, so we tend to see everything through a business lens."

I found that the media's reporting on global warming is in part influenced by what their readers want to read, their worldview, special interests and preconceptions. This is of course a complex feedback loop, as the newspaper, in return, is likely to influence their readers and their wants.

Could our failure to reduce carbon dioxide be explained by the fact that we cannot seem to agree on what global warming is? Is it an economic issue with potentially severe impact on our economy, or is it an environmental issue with potentially severe impact on our planet? How do we balance the threat it poses to our economy with the threat it poses to our environment? Are we capable of sacrificing short-term prosperity for long-term security? These huge questions are too big for this short article, but I find them both timely and intriguing.

This incident beautifully illustrates that global warming is much more than a scientific or environmental issue. It is also one of today's most complicated international political issues, engaging a prime minister to stifle his own scientific adviser in order to avoid upsetting the trans-Atlantic relations with the US.

Much of the public's understanding of issues related to global warming comes from newspapers and other types of media. Subsequently, the media plays an important role in forming the public opinion on these issues. Journalists too frequently use the media as a source when reporting on climate change. Hence, the way media describes global warming is important for the public's understanding of the issue.

On one hand, global warming poses a significant threat to a number of species, including humans. On the other hand, actions to resolve the problem can threaten continued economic growth and result in financial crises.

The realities of both of these risks are contested. But whether they are real or not is of little interest, as long as they are perceived to be real and significant.

In 2006 I investigated the coverage of global warming in two UK quality dailies – the *Financial Times* and *The Independent* to establish the differences in reporting and how they align with the two risks outlined above. I sampled 1,025 news stories over four years, starting in 1990 and ending in 2005.

Which is more important? Ecology or economy? This is a value judgement, and

"Which is more important? Ecology or economy? This is a value judgement, and the *Financial Times* and *The Independent* have chosen differently."

"The *Financial Times* frames global warming as an economic issue, the solutions of which having primarily financial implications. And they do this consistently over time."

# Green business in Britain means a managed nature

By Mark Brown

**Environmentalism and public profile.** From any government's point of view, the greening of business is politically attractive; it directs negative public concern over degradation of the environment towards a group of social actors whose reputation with the voters is already dubious.



Mark Brown is a Senior Lecturer at the Norwegian School of Management (BI), Oslo. He successfully defended his PhD at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo, in June 2008.

Photo: Alf T. Øksdal

But these green corporations do not provide the solution to a greener Britain. What they are delivering is an ever more intensively-managed landscape in which the natural world becomes steadily less evident.

Using the green corporations as

environmental whipping dogs is a political expedient and obscures the real solution to a sustainable future; the necessary changes that we, the voters need to make in the way we live our lives. Such changes are, however, unwelcome

and politically unattractive. A democracy is only as strong as its citizens and the British people have not yet demonstrated that they are willing to support tough environmental measures. In this article I outline my doctoral dissertation recently defended at the University of Oslo and review the political implications of my findings.

My project began as an attempt to test a claim made by a British academic in the field of the greening of business, Professor Richard Welford. The claim he made in his book, *Hijacking Environmentalism: Corporate Responses to Sustainable Development*, published in 1997 was that "the discourse of the radical environment" had been "hijacked" by green business and contextualised within, what he described as a "liberal-productivist discourse." I set up my project to compare the language of (i) the radical environment and (ii) the language of green business and to find evidence that might support or refute Welford's hijack hypothesis.

"Using the green corporations as environmental whipping dogs is a political expedient and obscures the real solution to a sustainable future; the necessary changes that we, the voters need to make in the way we live our lives."

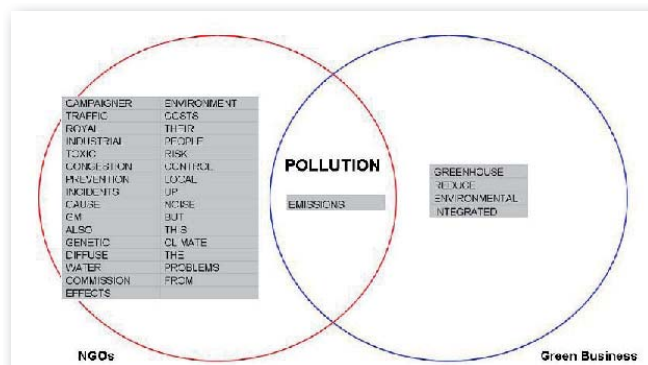
I constructed a very large database of the language of British 'green' corporations in which they write about their environmental ambitions, commitments and activity. Similarly, I constructed a very large database of the language of a group of environmental organisations, which I called the radical NGOs, in which they describe the activities of business and their impact on the natural landscape.

I then compared these two databases using one tool available within corpus linguistics. This is a branch of linguistics which studies language in use in extremely large quantities. Using such large quantities, it is possible to identify patterns in the way words are used by language communities. Some corpus linguists theorise that such patterns provide an indication of the way in which concepts are understood by political communities and contribute to an understanding of their 'cultural' leanings. In order to see these patterns in the usage of language one needs very large quantities of text - my two objects of study were 3 million and 6 million words in size.

My interpretive analysis of Welford's hijack hypothesis led me to the view that he had used the wrong metaphor to describe what is happening. Rather than a hijack, I advanced two interpretive modifications (i) the appropriation claim and (ii) the incorporation claim.

**(i) The appropriation claim**  
The appropriation claim argues that green business has first adopted the language

of the environment in order to describe its green ambitions, i.e. it uses some of the same environmental words as the radical NGOs. But having adopted these 'markings on the page' it has used the words in its own texts in new ways which meet the representational needs of business. The corpus linguistic tool is able to show the variation in the spatial contextualisation of key words that both players use in their linguistic discourse. In the diagram below, for example, we can see which other words appear with great statistical significance in the



physical proximity of POLLUTION - a word which both groups use.

The fact that there are very few markings in the green business circle tells us that POLLUTION is used in the texts of green business in a broadly similar way to the patterns of contextualisation that are found in the 'typical' written English which I used as a benchmark. The radical NGOs, on the other hand, appear to contextualise POLLUTION in their texts in statistically very different ways - there are a lot more words in the left hand circle.

The Venn diagram presents a view of the contextualisation of a word which is based on the whole of an enormous 'database' of language. But the corpus linguistics tool then enables the researcher to examine actual usages of a particular word that are representative of the macro-level impression. By generating lines of usage of the particular word it was possible to make an interpretation of the distinctive way in which green business and the radical NGOs use the same word. In the figure below I present two reports which illustrate the difference in usage of a single word: *risk* by these two groups.

The report from the radical NGO language database is above and the green business report below it. Each report contains

"The findings suggest that there is, as yet, no productive political discourse of meaning between the radical environmental movement in the UK and green corporations. For the time being these two groups are projecting their own political representations into the public sphere..."

twenty lines in which the word *risk* appears roughly in the middle of each line. In my reading of the context of usage I shaded with red the representations of causes of risk, if they appeared in the text. Similarly, I shaded with grey the possible consequences of the risk if they were represented in the text. Finally, I shaded in yellow any representations of ways of managing or controlling the risk in

order to ensure that, whatever the risk was, it wouldn't happen. The differences in shading reveal that the two different groups use the same word very differently.



*continued: Green business in Britain means a managed nature*

*By Mark Brown*

First, the radical NGOs have nineteen out of nineteen effects (highlighted in grey shading) and they are detailed: “irreversible genetic pollution of the environment, feather pecking, cancer, testicular and breast cancer, the lives of 1500 local fishermen” and “rising flood risk.” By contrast, the green business effects are few: six of eighteen, and they are general: “environmental risk, health risk, contaminated land” and “a migration of talent.” Second, in nineteen of nineteen lines the radical NGOs identify a clear agent (highlighted with red shading) which is the source of the risk. Examples include “such chemicals, radon, farm-scale trials, this kind of pollution” and “the transfer of GM genes.”

The green business concordance lines are almost without agents. In all the twenty lines I found (i) some guidelines for operation in line eight which identify “substances introduced for use,” (ii) “smoking” (line ten), and (iii) “without adequate funding” (line 13). Compared with the radical NGOs, green

content of the common vocabulary of words they are using is very different. The findings suggest that there is, as yet, no productive political discourse of meaning between the radical environmental movement in the UK and green corporations. For the time being these two groups are projecting their own political representations into the public sphere regardless of the other. Where, then, is green business's project of sustainable development leading Britain?

(ii) **The incorporation claim**  
The incorporation claim suggests that green business is incorporating its knowledge of the natural landscape within its

Welsh, most of the inhabitants of the British Isles have grown up and live exclusively in a managed landscape. Unlike these fortunate few and the majority of Norwegians, most British people have never experienced anything remotely approaching a natural landscape; it is several hundred years since the great forests dissappeared and the sheep took over on the upland. But, as many visitors to the isles will testify, some of these managed landscapes are quite exquisite. So whereas the loss of the wilderness would strike a typical Norwegian as catastrophic, one cannot expect the same response from a British public presented with the prospect of a diminishing natural element in an increasingly managed landscape.

This is the form of "sustainable development" that is in prospect if the British continue to live as they like to live, exercising their freedom of consumer choice countless times every day. In order to restrain the intensification of the managed landscape and thereby create more room to breathe for the natural, British consumers will have to manage themselves with rather more restraint.

To date, however, there are few grounds for optimism in believing that they are ready and willing to take those necessary steps. Any government, blue or red, which ignored the signals of public protests over petrol prices would be committing political suicide. *Consumer choice* rather than *ecological citizenship* is still the ruling political discourse. For the time being it suits government and public alike to leave the responsibility for a green Britain in the hands of green business and to give them a good whipping when the bad news of environmental degradation makes headline news. As the old political saying goes, "never make a decision today which you can put off until tomorrow" – political good sense, environmental nonsense!

Mark Brown successfully defended his PhD: **Managing Nature – Business as Usual: Patterns of wording and patterns of meaning in corporate environmental discourse**, in June 2008. The project was funded entirely by the Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo. His PhD thesis may be accessed at <http://home.bi.no/fgl100083/>. The author would be pleased to receive enquiries at [mark.brown@bi.no](mailto:mark.brown@bi.no) and would welcome invitations to present his work in other forums.

business is very vague on the specific causes and effects of the relationships. But it turns the tables on them when it comes to the process of managing the relationship. The agent is mostly unclear, the consequences are similarly uncertain, and the connection between them is, as yet, unproven.

But the linguistic discourse of green business makes representations to the reader of a comprehensive corporate apparatus for ensuring that, whatever the risk may turn out to be, it is under control. In its report for RISK, seventeen of eighteen concordance lines include some representation of the process of management (highlighted with yellow shading). The examples include "assessments and audits, analysis, review, identification and control, assessing risk and designing controls, Maintain the ... Risk Matrix and conduct further survey work" and "minimise the risk."

In my empirical examination of the language of the environment I found similar examples to the one above. They illustrate clearly how two ideological political actors can seemingly be talking the same language while the respective semantic

its own productive landscapes and this socially-constructed natural landscape.

The great advantage which this language offers to green business is that it provides corporate headquarters with the means to construct models, and, by the manipulation of these models, to construct a bridge between the two landscapes across which it can manage. First, it can measure the business processes within its own productive landscapes. Second, it can measure the emissions from these productive landscapes. Third, it can measure the impacts of these emissions on the real natural landscape. Fourth, it can measure the biological processes of the natural landscape. Through the accumulation of all this knowledge, it becomes possible to manage nature by managing its own productive landscapes: *Managing Nature: Business as Usual.*

The geographic consequences of leaving business alone to manage the environmental challenges that Britain faces are clear; we move into a future in which the landscape around us becomes increasingly managed by more or less successful processes. With the exception of a few fortunate Scots and

[illegible]

# Friends, rivals and the run for environmental esteem

By Lars Mediaas

**A race among old friends.** In the 1990s, Thorbjørn Berntsen got international coverage on his harsh criticism of the British Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer. The dispute was about the Sellafield plant and acid rain in Norway. At the time most Norwegians thought pollution was something that happened elsewhere, but occasionally reached Norway and destroyed our pristine nature. Algae killed the seals, Chernobyl had spread radioactivity, spray cans dispersed greenhouse gases - and then it was Sellafield. But it was "typisk norsk å være god", typical for Norwegians to be good", and Berntsen probably captured the mood in Norway.



Lars Mediaas heads the Oslo section of the European Movement and is active in the Norwegian Labour Party. He is engaged by the British Council as a Challenge Europe Climate Advocate.

Yale and Columbia look at it from a different angle. Their Environmental Performance Index (EPI) ranks, according to their website, "149 countries on 25 indicators tracked across six established policy categories: Environmental Health, Air Pollution, Water Resources, Biodiversity and Habitat, Productive Natural Resources, and Climate Change Change." By these measures, the EPI "identifies broadly-accepted targets for environmental performance and measures how close each country comes to these goals. As a quantitative gauge of pollution control and natural resource management results, the Index provides a powerful tool for improving policymaking and shifting environmental decisionmaking onto firmer analytic foundations."

*Newsweek* makes the claim that the lack of such an environmental index until

now can be compared with the lack of Gross National Product as an indicator during the Great Depression, and that all policies must rely on feeble and co-incidental data. The Yale team chose EU in general and Germany in particular as the overall winner because of an impressive turn around the last few years. But when they count the scores, Norway is on 2nd place with 93,1 points the United Kingdom merely number 14 with a score of 86,3. It is not a clear win, however. On environmental health, Britain is actually ahead by a mere 0,1 point. Using the two reports, it is impossible to draw a conclusion.

But is Norway still setting the agenda? Though the Brundtland report was not Norwegian, it is undoubted that it shaped policies in many countries. How has our "Lavutslippsutvalg" or Low Emission Committee fared against its British competitors? According to the Norwegian research institute CICERO,

"hardly any document has had the same impact on the climate debate last year as the report written by Sir Nicholas Stern and his team and presented to the then chancellor of the exchequer, Gordon Brown. That would give the lead to Britain.

But are the British following up on their policies? *The Guardian* reported in May that "a study by the centre-right thinktank, Policy

Exchange, said 60% of green aims laid out by Labour have been missed, are unlikely to be achieved or are so vaguely worded as to make analysis of whether they've been met impossible." But they have as much credibility as Civita mocking the red-green Norwegian government, we do know that they have an agenda. That does not mean they do not have a point, of course.

"Given that scientific findings contradict each other, but that the British are setting the global agenda, it might seem fair to declare that Britain is the winner and we have now become the bad guys."

So, who's the sh—bag now? Given that scientific findings contradict each other, but that the British are setting the global agenda, it might seem fair to declare that Britain is the winner and we have now become the bad guys. The *BBC Wildlife Magazine* in 2007 described Gummer as the "Environment Secretary against which all others are judged", putting him in the top ten environmental heroes', according to Wikipedia. Certainly a more positive evaluation than the one directed to him by Thorbjørn Berntsen.

Should Norway then admit defeat? No, never! In a competition between friends, defeat is not an option. Allowing for personal judgement while admiring the ample space and clean air in Oslo, we therefore declare Norway the winner of this competition in environmental policies and standards.

## Membership

Would you like to become a member of the British Politics Society, Norway? Membership is open to everyone and includes

- Subscription to four editions of *British Politics Review*
- Access to any event organised by the society
- The right to vote at our annual general meetings

Your membership comes into force as soon as the membership fee, NKR 100,- for one year, has been registered at our account 6094.05.67788.

For more information see our website at [www.britishpoliticssociety.no](http://www.britishpoliticssociety.no)

## Forthcoming edition of British Politics Review

The British-American special relationship, much emphasised in British foreign policy, has (at least rhetorically) been maintained across different governments and shifting political priorities on both sides of the Atlantic.

The next issue of *British Politics Review* reflects upon the relationship between Britain and the United States in a historical as well

as a contemporary perspective. What is the basis for the British claim to exclusive terms with the United States even in the twentyfirst century? What are the essential domains of British-American cooperation and how are these likely to develop? What has been the impact of the Thatcher and Blair eras on Britain's relations across the Atlantic? Can Britain's metaphorical position as a bridge

between the United States and Europe be maintained? And, not the least, what is the likely impact of the change of presidency in the United States?

Articles from readers are very welcome. Please get in touch with the editors for further details.

The autumn edition of *British Politics Review* is due to arrive in November 2008.