

Are we going to save the world?

Every week, Maddyness looks at the good, the bad and the ugly in climate change news.

Today, we look into the UN's Pledge for Nature, circular economy solutions for plastic, and a new pollution initiative in Bangkok.

Did you know that climate change received only 10 out of 2,000 minutes of answers in all US presidential debates combined since 1988? Tuesday saw the first 2020 presidential debate – and an opportunity to change this. But climate change was nowhere to be seen on the list of six pre-announced topics.

Meanwhile, a new report has been released suggesting that the doubling of carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere will most likely increase the Earth's global average temperature by between 2.3 and 4.5 degrees Celsius, not between 1.5 and 4.5 degrees as was previously thought. Better get on with it then...!

In good news, 64 leaders from five continents signed a 'pledge for nature', emphasising their commitment 'to taking the necessary actions to achieve the vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050'. The Leaders' Pledge for Nature includes plans to get to net zero, ensure a sustainable food production system, and work towards circular economies.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who affirmed that 30% of the UK's land will be protected for the sake of nature by 2030, said:

“We must act now – right now. We cannot afford to dither and delay because biodiversity loss is happening today and it is happening at a frightening rate. Left unchecked, the consequences will be catastrophic for us all. Extinction is forever – so our action must be immediate.”

Though noticeably absent from the signatories, China has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060 in a major climate milestone. The country is responsible for a quarter of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, and it also doesn’t tend to make targets unless it plans to reach them. It met its 2020 emissions goal three years ahead of schedule.

The big ideas

New analysis commissioned by PwC has found that VC investment into climate tech is growing five times faster than average growth. I wrote about some very cool climate startups this week – Tumelo and HumanForest to name a couple.

Here are some major climate-crisis-confronting ideas from across the spectrum of politics, social justice and big business that caught my eye this week:

Amazon’s Climate Pledge has been signed by five more companies, and the retailer has created a new ‘Climate Pledge Friendly’ section on its website.

Austria’s Borealis has been given €250M to develop circular economy solutions for plastic; it will be developing polyolefins-based solutions to packaging, construction materials and more at innovation centres across Europe.

Through the Thai Programme for Green Transport, the city of Bangkok will be introducing a road toll to discourage commuters from driving and make air cleaner. All proceeds will go towards bettering public transport.

Tel Aviv designer Anai Green has won the Women4Climate Tech Challenge for Lumiweave – a fabric containing solar cells.

Could a new Civilian Conservation Corps, like the one Roosevelt established

during the Great Depression to plant trees and manage land, help protect the US's environment and economy in light of current wildfires?

Wangari Muchiri, who sits on the board of the Kenya Green Building Society as a renewable planning and innovation expert for off-grid communities, has won the Global Wind Energy Council REvolutionary award.

Brazil's BeGreen – which is setting up indoor farms across the country's shopping malls – has raised \$3M to expand. While we're on the topic of innovative farming, Mestizo de Indios are creating jobs and caring for crops in a previously barren region of Mexico.

The UK government's £3B Green Homes grant scheme has launched. Chancellor Rishi Sunak said,

“We’re giving homeowners, landlords and local authorities the funding they need to hire local tradespeople and make our homes more energy efficient. By supporting the green van men and women, we’ll save money, save jobs and save the planet.”

Scientists at Resolve have created a blueprint for a ‘biological safety net’ – delineating specific areas of the globe which, if conserved, will stall biodiversity loss.

Further reading

If you're still reading, here's even more reading:

5 burning questions about China's carbon neutrality pledge, via *Climate Home News*.

Everything you need to know about Trump, Biden and climate policy, via

Ours to Save.

An investigation into BP and Shell's backing of anti-climate lobby groups despite pledges to the contrary, via *Unearthed*.

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