

# climate actions for Earth Day under lockdown

Today is the 50th international Earth Day and the theme for 2020 is climate action. **Asher Minns**, executive director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia, says that, even under lockdown, climate action is easy and beneficial.

**B**efore face masks and social distancing, there was another global crisis that our planet faced – climate change.

The world's focus is, quite rightly, firmly on the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, but it's important that we don't lose the momentum of our response to the climate change emergency. Indeed, as we all spend more time at home, now is the perfect time to think about reducing our impact on the planet – and why not start today on Earth Day?

### Save energy at home

With most of us at home or working from home, carbon dioxide emissions have temporarily reduced, but your own energy bill has gone up. Domestic energy use has increased by around 30pc, the peak is when we are all cooking our lunch. Hot water and heating account for the biggest share of energy use in our homes at around 80pc. A few small changes can save you money and improve your comfort, while reducing your household's carbon footprint. The National Energy Foundation and the Energy Saving Trust offer helpful advice on saving energy in your home.

### Switch to a green energy supplier

Now is a great opportunity to search for better energy deal. And while you're at it, why not choose a renewable supplier? Green energy suppliers sell renewable electricity and there are many different options to choose from. What's more, you might even find they are much cheaper.

USwitch will compare green tariffs for you. You can still switch if you are prepayment or in a rented home. Furthermore, Norwich City Council has a new green and community energy scheme called Roar Power.

### Explore plant-based options

Some of us are already exploring new recipes and baking, proven by the fact that flour is now rarer than loo roll in the shops. Give some plant-based recipes a go.

Plant-based foods are grown and produced with lower greenhouse gas emissions than meat, fish and dairy, and have health benefits compared to a meat-heavy diet.

Vegetable box delivery companies and green grocers are affordable, they are sourced locally and they reduce emissions due to less food miles, while your council tax won't be spent on collecting all that supermarket plastic packaging.



Today is the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the theme this year is climate change - check out [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org) to get involved Inset, Asher Minns, executive director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia (UEA), Norwich Research Park, on a walk with his daughter Myrtle

Pictures: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO/ASHER MINNS

### Grow your own

Interesting, fun, healthy, educational, tasty, self-sufficient. What's not to like about growing yourself some veggies in a window box, tub or garden border? Even better when you use it in one of your new meat-free recipes.

And if you don't fancy growing some food, you can sow some wildflower seeds to grow pretty flowers to benefit pollinator insects. A third of bee and hoverfly species are in decline.

Only ever buy peat-free compost to grow in. Before it was dug-up, whether from mountain bog or Norfolk broad, peat compost accumulated over thousands of years as plant carbon which was safely locked away from the atmosphere.

### Keep the car in the garage

Norwich has very poor air quality and, lockdown or not, we all know how switching short journeys

to cycling or walking results in significant health benefits. Coronavirus cases appear higher where air pollution is bad.

Pollution monitoring at Norwich Lakenfields has recorded a beneficial 18pc reduction in exhaust nitrous dioxide, while the East of England overall has seen a 38pc drop. Because of the lack of traffic right now, our roads are safe, silent and clean.

Children are learning the lifelong skill of cycling, my daughter included (plus extra available parenting time). The past few weeks I've seen lots of families cycling together from my window. I've had a cargo bike for about a year and I now need to use my car so infrequently in the city that I worry the battery has gone dead. Electric bikes are a boon for future cyclists, too.

### Bring nature to your home

If you are lucky enough to live in the middle of a wood or at the

seaside, maybe your nature deficit is not quite as bad as mine. Or maybe you never quite realised how much you enjoy being outside before, whether in urban parks or rural countryside.

Nature is important for our mental wellbeing, among all its other essential benefits. To bring nature to your home, you can play nature detective on your daily exercise stroll; the air is fresh and the birds are singing.

Even better, join Norfolk Wildlife Trust or the RSPB. They will deliver magazines full of information and activities to your door and inbox. When the lockdown is over, you will have a huge choice of nature reserves and visitor centres for family trips. These organisations in their habitat management and education activities are protecting local wildlife against the impacts of climate change.

### Fly less

Air travel is one of the most carbon-intensive activities we engage in. This is because of the quantities of fuel burned over long distances. The current crisis has led to many of us becoming more familiar with attending



work meetings online, which will hopefully continue in future.

When holidays are a possibility again, staycations are a great option. Essential for the Norfolk and UK economy, they are also lots of fun – with no traffic jams or SatNav arguments necessary. There will undoubtedly be a resurgence as soon as lockdown is over.

### Time to talk

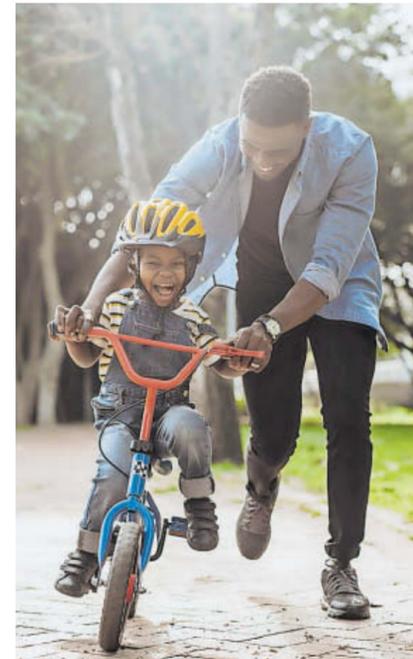
Public surveys show that around 90pc of UK citizens are worried about climate change, and now more than ever we all need to talk about our worries.

Recognising a crisis rather than denying it or thinking it's a problem in a far-away country – called psychological distancing – is essential to dealing with a crisis. Let your councillor and MP know your thoughts on how we can do things differently when economic restructuring begins.

The climate emergency will still be there when we emerge from our homes and visit our families and friends. We've had 50 years of Earth Days to act.

Enjoy your Earth Day at home.

**For more information on Earth Day and to be a part of the drive to flood the digital landscape with messages and action on climate change, visit [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org)**



Use this time to teach children the lifelong skill of cycling. Inset left, experiment with plant-based recipes, which have lower greenhouse gas emissions than those containing meat, fish and dairy



Use the time in lockdown to search and switch to a green energy supplier



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Going Green

# Day of action to change human

**E**arth Day is marked by more than one billion people every year as a day of action to change human behaviour and provoke policy changes.

The fight for a clean environment continues with increasing urgency, as the ravages of climate change become more and more apparent every day.

As the awareness of our climate crisis grows, so does society's action across the globe today.

Disillusioned by the low level of ambition following the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 and frustrated with international environmental lethargy, citizens of the world are demanding far greater action for our planet and its people.

The social and cultural environments seen when Earth Day was launched in 1970 are rising up again today.

A fresh and frustrated generation of young people are re-

20/20  
VISION

fusing to settle for platitudes, instead taking to the streets in their millions to demand a new way forward.

Digital and social media are bringing these conversations, protests, strikes and actions to a global audience, uniting concerned communities as never before and bringing generations together to take on the greatest challenge that humankind has faced.

By tapping into some of the learnings, outcomes, and legacy of the first Earth Day while also channeling the energy, excitement, and coordination of the youth climate strikes, the team behind Earth Day hope to build a movement that empowers individuals with the information, the tools, the messaging and the communities needed to make an impact and drive change.



Coming together to clean up the River Ganges in India.

Going Green

# behaviour around the world

## The Earth Day Vision



Our world needs transformational change.

It's time for the world to hold sectors accountable for their role in our environmental crisis while also calling for bold, creative, and innovative solutions

This will require action at all levels, from business and investment to city and national government.

That's where members of the public come in.

As an individual, you yield real power and influence as a consumer, a voter, and a member of a community that can unite for change.

Don't underestimate your power. When your voice and your actions are united with thousands

or millions of others around the world, we create a movement that is inclusive, impactful, and impossible to ignore.

The time is long overdue for a global outpouring of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to create a new plan of action for our planet. Earth Day 2020 can be the catalyst that galvanises an unparalleled global collaboration.



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