



For someone who has been banging on about the rain for the past two and some years I suppose I’ve been a little quiet now that large swathes of the country have been under water for some considerable time. Large swathes of the country nowhere near where I am, you may be cynically thinking. It’s not that I have been avoiding the issue – I’ve been occupied with other things.

When I last had something to say on the subject it was to nearly sympathise with Owen Paterson over his treatment at the hands of the people of the Somerset Levels – which are still flooded! Money, however, is no object when it comes to tackling the crisis – now it has engulfed the South East and Oxfordshire, where PM Dave has his constituency. With even parts of London seeing waters rising, the chequebook came out.

Don’t get me wrong: a flood is a flood is a flood and the people affected are affected no matter where they are. My heart goes out to them for what they have suffered and lost. It does seem a bit rich, though, to leave it until the water is lapping at the doors of your own constituents to suddenly decide that “money is no object”. Tell that to the burghers of Somerset.

Although, of course money is an object. It reminds me of Stanley Holloway’s monologue that sees Noah and a timber merchant from Bury in Lancashire (where, co-incidentally, I spent my childhood) arguing over the price of bird’s eye maple for Noah’s bunk on board the Ark.

- The beginning of March sees the first in a series of major environmental exhibitions and shows when Ecobuild takes place at London’s ExCeL. Running from 4-6 March, it is the 10th anniversary show. A packed seminar programme includes presentations from Gerard Evenden, senior partner at Foster + Partners and one of four anniversary seminars from Janet Street Porter.

The show is followed by Sustainability Live and IWEX at the NEC from 1-3 April and then Greenbuild EXPO at Manchester Central on 7-8 May.

- ‘Unconventional fossil fuels’ is how they have been described. In Canada the oil is coming from tar sand, while the rush to frack is the UK’s version. New research suggests that these harder-to-reach sources, which are now extractable because of advances in technology, may emit more greenhouse gases than conventional oil production – particularly during extraction. That, say the researchers from University College London, means it is even harder to limit global warming to the two degrees agreed in the UN Framework on Climate Change.

In fact the researchers, led by Professors Christophe McGlade and Paul Ekins, say that around 45% of the world’s known oil reserves would have to remain ‘unused’ to meet the target. That’s according to a report in The Carbon Brief newsletter.

Meanwhile the Government stands accused of over-egging the financial benefits of shale gas, even by its own figures, and the Scottish independence vote has prompted a renewed commitment to North Sea oil investment. When there is political capital or hard cash to be had, it seems carbon targets don’t stand a chance.

Chris Stokes