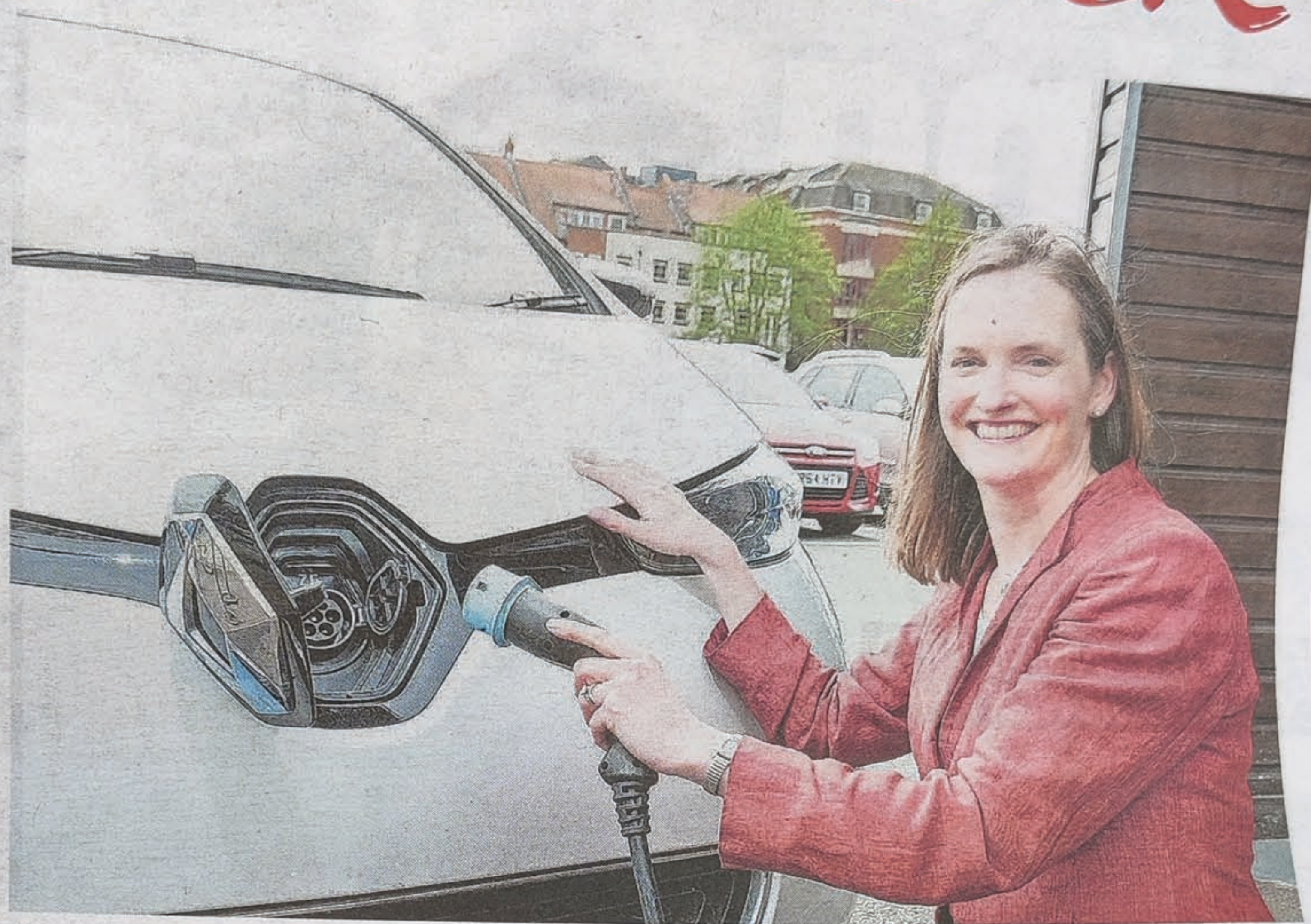


SPEAKERS CORNER

Angela Terry, environmental scientist and founder of climate action website One Home, explains how a new climate change report gives us the starkest warning yet on what is happening to our planet but offers hope and ideas for simple actions we can all take



Angela Terry says making changes such as choosing sustainable transport can help fight the climate emergency
Jon Craig

Local effects of climate change

» WHILE some parts of the world are undoubtedly feeling the effects more dramatically, nowhere is escaping - and that includes our little corner of the world in the south west of England. Here, we are at the forefront of the super storms coming from the Atlantic, so flooding from high tides and intense downpours are increasing. Coastal areas are especially vulnerable as are low-lying areas, such as the Somerset Levels, which is in the top three areas in England at risk from sea level rise.

In Bristol, one of the biggest problems is water. Certain parts of the city, including Ashton, Bedminster, Stapleton, Eastville and St George, are particularly vulnerable to flooding, along with areas near the River Avon and harbour. Bristol City Council estimates that there are around 1,100 properties in the city at risk if there was a severe flood from the River Avon.

At the same time, water supply in the city is also under stress as the climate changes bringing heatwaves and droughts. Water scarcity is a growing problem for the area.

Bristol's biodiversity and wildlife are also under threat as finely balanced, rich habitats, such as the limestone grassland of the Downs and Gorge, are affected by climate change. These are home to all sorts of species from water voles and otters to skylarks, peregrine falcons and rare wildflowers. Climate change means that new species will come to thrive in the city, with potentially negative consequences, while other species rapidly decline. Migration patterns are changing, affecting winter populations on the Severn Estuary. Certain tree species have become more susceptible to disease and sea level rise threatens estuary biodiversity and low-lying habitats.

Everyday choices can save the world

WE face a perilous future if we ignore the weather-related alarm bells that continue to blare out across the world. This summer alone, we've seen blistering heatwaves across the US, Canada and parts of Europe, killing hundreds of people. Floods have obliterated parts of Germany, China and Japan and wildfires have raged in Siberia, Turkey and Greece.

We have a much clearer picture of what is happening and how to avoid the most deadly outcomes, in the form of a new report published by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - the most authoritative body on global warming.

It reveals that atmospheric carbon dioxide is at a two-million-year peak, and the last decade was hotter than any period in 125,000 years.

Scientists know categorically that all the warming is caused by human influence - essentially the burning of fossil fuels: coal, oil and gas. It also finds that, by the latter decades of this century, the full extent of heat-driven climate change, such as sea level rise, will be felt in force and will be devastating and irreversible.

We are talking about our own lives and, more importantly, the lives of our children and grandchildren who will be worst affected. Climate change isn't a future problem - it's happening here and now.

We have a short window of opportunity to intervene and prevent the worst outcomes. The next decade is a defining point for our planet and all who inhabit it.

There are messages of hope in the report too. Almost as soon as harmful greenhouse gas emissions cease, temperatures will stabilise within a couple of decades. Also, the cost of clean energy has plummeted.

Humankind has already developed much of the armoury to fight this battle, such as renewable energy, electric vehicles and energy efficiency measures, but much more is needed. It's going to require unprecedented commitment and investment from Government and a massive mental shift from us all as individuals.

So where do we start on this journey towards a cleaner future? One of the most powerful things we can all do as individuals is raise our voices. There is still a big job to be done around education and con-

vincing people that this is an urgent but surmountable issue. Talk to your children, grandchildren, friends and family. But more importantly, write to the decision-makers - your MP, the Mayor, local councillors. The more we tell politicians that this matters to us, the more they will listen and act.

Secondly, we must cut our carbon footprint. That means consuming less and consuming better. Scrutinise your purchases - can products be rented or bought second hand? Where has it been manufactured and how far has it travelled to reach you? Can it be made from sustainable materials? And, most importantly, do you really need this thing?

Taking action on your transport choices is crucial. In the UK, transport is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. In Bristol, we see the real health problems of toxic air caused by the huge number of vehicles on the road. We can opt for sustainable travel choices

instead, such as the bus, walking, cycling, all-electric cars and, with the advent of Voi in Bristol, e-scooters which are a great option for some people.

Making your home warmer and eliminating draughts means less energy is wasted. Draught proofing doors and windows, and blocking up unused chimneys is fairly simple. As much as a quarter of a home's heat is lost through the roof of an uninsulated house, so there are big savings to be made by tackling your loft to start with.

Make a personal commitment to reducing your air miles. The pandemic has inspired us to holiday closer to home. If you don't feel ready to wave goodbye to foreign holidays altogether, stick to short haul and think about going every other year - or even less. Air travel and cruise holidays are highly polluting and burn huge amounts of fossil fuels.

Choose foods which are less carbon intensive. Low carbon diets are also healthier, as they have more fruit and vegetables and fewer saturated fats. You don't have to become vegan or vegetarian, but consuming fewer meat and dairy products is essential in the fight against climate change. Go easy on the packaging too. UK supermarkets churn out at least 59 billion pieces of plastic every year. That's a whole lot of energy consumed in manufacturing the stuff before we even start thinking about how it is

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disposed of.

We need to start putting the health of our world at the heart of the everyday decisions we make. We all need to change the way we think and act because not only is it a warming world but we can benefit from a greener life. The world is issuing us with a weather warning and we are at our peril. We can take action and we must.

Find out more about the actions you can take to prevent climate change at www.onehome.org.uk