

The Zero Carbon Caravan: Sail and Bike to Copenhagen!

Contributed by Chris Keene
07 March 2009

The world stands at a crossroads. One way continues with business as usual and ends up with abrupt climate change causing the premature deaths of hundreds of millions, if not billions of people, and the extinction of many of the world's plant and animal species.

The other way leads to a future in which we do things in a radically different alternative way, and in so doing manage not only to avoid the worst outcomes of climate change, but also to make ourselves happier.

Contrary to much of the propaganda put out by the mainstream media, this alternative does not involve "sitting in a cave with a candle," but is instead one where technology becomes our servant not our master, where we have ample time for leisure and relationships with family and friends, which actually makes us happier, instead of living in the world we have now, being made perpetually unsatisfied by advertising selling us the latest consumer junk, which is programmed to break down as soon as the guarantee runs out so that it has to be replaced. And where we have to work harder than ever simply to keep a roof over our heads (unless we happen to be one of the wealthy minority that rules the world these days).

But many people simply do not believe that such a world is possible, so they need a good example giving a practical demonstration of what is possible. This is where the Zero Carbon Caravan comes in (here the word 'caravan' is used in the sense of a group of people traveling together, rather than a metal box towed behind a car.)

We will demonstrate how it is possible to travel, work and play all without generating any carbon emissions at all. We will provide a positive, inspiring vision of the future, where, instead of merely consuming, we lead fulfilling lives. A future where a conversation about the summer vacation goes something like "I spent a month as a volunteer crewing on a yacht bringing fair trade bananas over to Europe from the Caribbean" rather than "I flew off for a couple of weeks in Bali" (for in our alternative future people will have much longer holidays, fulfilling the promise we were made in the 1960s of a world where machines would do much of the work, and humans would be free to indulge their leisure pursuits).

The idea is to get to the Copenhagen climate talks this year without using any fossil fuels (that is going to be mainly cycling and sailing, but could include other methods such as sea kayaking too, as long as no fossil fuels are involved) to demand "a Zero Carbon World, as fast as we can" (because there is probably already too much carbon in the atmosphere -- the Arctic sea ice is melting, which could set off a chain of positive feedback effects leading to the Amazon burning and the global temperature rocketing 10C or more in a few decades, threatening the lives of billions). We hope to have people from all over the world, traveling in yachts from other continents as well as Europe.

We will begin in Machynlleth in mid-Wales, home to both the Centre for Alternative Technology, authors of the Zero Carbon Britain report and the Public Interest Research Centre, which produced the Climate Safety report in November 2008, and the theme of the journey will be "from Zero Carbon Britain to a Zero Carbon World." We will showcase positive solutions, such as the Green New Deal and visit inspiring places such as <http://transitiontowns.org/TransitionNetwork/TransitionNetwork> target="_blank">Transition Towns

On the way we will be holding media events and Zero Carbon Conferences (public meetings where we explain the need for zero carbon emissions in terms of the climate science, then discuss with the public the means of achieving it, ending up by encouraging them to get involved in the campaign for zero carbon by lobbying their politicians, and starting zero carbon initiatives in their own communities).

We will hold a "Zero Carbon World Conference for a Zero Carbon World" at the University of East Anglia in Norwich (this will be zero carbon because participants will get there without using fossil fuels -- most of them from the University, which has two world class institutions -- the Climate Research Unit and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research) and it will be a world conference because we will have some of the world's top climate scientists participating via video link, demonstrating the use of technology to save the world instead of destroy it, showing how we can work in a zero carbon way).

We can all look forward to Zero Carbon Concerts, which rely on a minimum of bicycle-generated electricity to power the PA for the band, and lots of audience participation, so we're using people power not fossil fuel power, showing how we can play without emitting carbon. The conferences and concerts will be broadcast over internet radio, and we will be in touch with national, regional and local media so that the Caravan attains the maximum possible visibility, thus maximising the pressure on the negotiators in Copenhagen.

The Caravan will be a relay, so people don't have to come all the way to Copenhagen, they can just join for a few days. The 'baton' for the relay will be a scroll of paper detailing the science behind the necessity for zero carbon emissions, and the solutions in terms of lifestyle change and technology such as renewable energy and home insulation. This will be backed up by a datastick, to which we will add material as we travel, all of the material being placed on our website.

When we arrive in Copenhagen, we will hold a "Zero Carbon World Concert for a Zero Carbon World," which will involve a Zero Carbon Concert being broadcast over internet radio (using renewable electricity) so that people can join in all over the world. This will end with the song "Ship in Distress" by Seize the Day, which concludes "Or can we change our ways forever, before those reckoning times arrive? If we act now, and we act together, our children's children may yet survive."

We are converging with other groups of activists from all over the world who are coming to Copenhagen, if not in a zero carbon manner, then at least using low carbon travel, getting buses and trains instead of planes. This international convergence is being led by Anna Keenan from the Australian Youth Climate Coalition who aims to bring over a large contingent traveling overland from Australia.

--

The Zero Carbon Caravan is organised entirely by volunteers, so if you can help in any way -- fundraising, media work, organising accommodation and meetings etc, but especially if you can offer us lifts on yachts, or you want to cycle with us -- please get in touch with the coordinator, Chris Keene. Email: [chris.keene "at" zerocarboncaravan "dot" net](mailto:chris.keene@zerocarboncaravan.net) Telephone: +44(0)1603 614535. Address: 33 Dell Crescent, Norwich NR5 8QB, UK. The website for Zero Carbon

Caravan is zerocarboncaravan.net.

* * * * *

Editor's note: Sail Transport Network -- of great interest to the author Chris Keene -- could do nothing more worthwhile than to have a high profile for getting activists to the U.N. Copenhagen climate convergence. The STN's initial demonstration projects will by then hopefully be broadly known and offer ways of booking transit on sail boats -- bound for Copenhagen or anywhere. Future trade and passenger service via sail will carry humanity forward on our fragile, fierce globe. See Sail Transport Network and Sail Transport Company, and stay tuned for SailTransportNetwork.com. Support STN by donating to Culture Change. - JL

This article's photos are published under Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. See the Fair Use Notice for more information.