

Covid and Creation

Marcus Zipperlen, Diocesan Creation Care and Sustainability Officer, considers what the long term impacts of the pandemic on the health of our planet might be.



When the UK went into lockdown our environment changed overnight. Aviation and car journeys reduced to 1950s levels, carbon emissions fell and air pollution plummeted. People moved indoors and wildlife moved into public spaces. Alongside this breathing space afforded to our pressured planet, people began experiencing the natural world in new ways as an antidote to confinement, enjoying the beauty and restorative effects of Creation.

As lockdowns ease and normal life gradually returns will our temporary appreciation of the natural world and less pollution inspire us to care more for Creation?

Many people, clergy included, are adapting to working from home, meeting remotely over the internet. It seems likely that many will continue, having discovered the pleasures of commuting less, so carbon emissions from business transport should reduce. Also, people have come to re-appreciate the core priorities of health and wellbeing for themselves and community, and the value of access to open space.

Nonetheless, many companies will be keen to resume business as normal and forget all about this temporary blip in profit-making. And the desire of governments to re-ignite economies is tempting some to let commerce operate free from responsibility for environmental protection.

What this crisis clearly shows is what we can achieve when we feel threatened, as we do by this virus. Priorities can change overnight, with colossal reallocation of energy and financial resources. The sums western governments have recently spent are a fraction of that needed to re-order our economies, reduce carbon emissions to sustainable levels and protect the natural world.

The trouble is we don't routinely see damage to Creation as a threat to ourselves. There's an interesting link here with coronavirus, the emergence of which was likely aided by the effects of global-warming and habitat loss, weakening the health of the wild animals in which the virus first got a foothold.

Interestingly, another effect of the Covid crisis has been a rediscovery of the importance of (health) facts over mere opinion, which may encourage more public openness to experts in the spheres of climate science and biodiversity.

There are certainly positive currents for change emerging from the coronavirus crisis if we can keep before us the overriding importance of health and wellbeing for all, and the vital part a healthy Creation plays in that, and so demand of ourselves and our politicians that care for Creation be at the heart of everything when rebuilding our economic and social life.