

The **NO-NONSENSE GUIDE** to

CLIMATE CHANGE

THE SCIENCE, THE SOLUTIONS, THE WAY FORWARD

‘Publishers have created lists of short books that discuss the questions that your average [electoral] candidate will only ever touch if armed with a slogan and a soundbite. Together [such books] hint at a resurgence of the grand educational tradition... Closest to the hot headline issues are *The No-Nonsense Guides*. These target those topics that a large army of voters care about, but that politicians evade. Arguments, figures and documents combine to prove that good journalism is far too important to be left to (most) journalists.’

Boyd Tonkin,
The Independent,
London

About the author

Danny Chivers is an environmental writer, researcher, professional carbon footprint analyst, activist and performance poet. He holds a BSc in Environmental Biology, an MSc in Nature, Science and Environmental Policy and an MProf in Leadership for Sustainable Development. He has carried out studies into the climate impact of electrical product manufacture, agriculture, food processing, international development NGOs, local authority carbon monitoring, retailers, offices and the UK government. Most recently, he has created an interactive emissions model of the UK economy for *The Guardian* website, co-founded 'Cyc du Soleil' (Britain's first mobile solar-and-cycle-powered performance stage), taken part in the Climate Camps at Heathrow, Kingsnorth and central London, and reached the semi-finals of the BBC Radio 4 National Poetry Slam.

Acknowledgements

I'm very grateful to everyone who helped and supported me through the writing process – the friends who commented on early drafts, our 'expert reader' Dr Chris Jardine, Nicola Bullard for the Foreword, my editor Chris Brazier for allowing me a few extra pages to explain the science properly while also keeping in the jokes, and Jess for being endlessly supportive despite my increasingly ridiculous working hours. You're all great.

About the New Internationalist

New Internationalist is an independent, not-for-profit publishing co-operative that reports on issues of global justice. We publish informative current affairs and popular reference titles, complemented by multicultural recipe books, photography and fiction from the Global South, as well as calendars, diaries and cards – all with a global justice world view.

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THE WAY FORWARD**

Danny Chivers

New Internationalist

The No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change: The Science, the Solutions,
the Way Forward.

Published in the UK in 2010 by New Internationalist™ Publications Ltd

55 Rectory Road
Oxford OX4 1BW, UK

www.newint.org

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Cover image: Ho New/Reuters.

Series editor: Chris Brazier

Design by New Internationalist Publications Ltd.

Printed in UK by Bell and Bain Ltd

who hold environmental accreditation ISO 14001.



Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed
forests and other controlled sources
www.fsc.org Cert no. TI-COC-002769
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

A catalogue for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-906523-85-5

Foreword

Most books on climate change focus on the science, usually getting so caught up in the complexities and catastrophes that they lose sight of the fact that climate change is the result of economic and energy systems based in societies, politics and power.

In this small book, Danny Chivers goes beyond the scary stuff and gets to grips with some big and complex ideas about climate change, science, economics, power, politics and history. In fact, he pins them down and makes them squirm, using wit, outrageous metaphors, lots of numbers and good, plain language. What's more, he does it wearing his heart on his sleeve, unashamedly arguing for justice over expediency, and with an optimist's eye, showing us the many ways in which life could actually be better for almost everyone if we do the right thing.

Many of the ideas and analyses that Danny rattles through at a clipping pace are known – at least at an intuitive level – to most climate justice activists: that economic growth based on the destruction of forests, land, rivers and ecosystems is a catastrophe for people and the planet; that corporate greed and entrenched power are major obstacles to action to halt climate change; that false ideas of progress founded on the endless consumption and production of 'stuff' is not the same as happiness and living well.

Fishers and farmers facing the Titans of agribusiness, communities ousted by mining companies, and indigenous peoples whose forests have been destroyed by logging and palm-oil plantations: all of these need no convincing that the system is broken and needs fixing.

But what Danny is trying to do – and in this I sincerely hope he succeeds for the sake of us all – is to convince comfortable consumers in the North that we have nothing to lose but our chains, so to speak. He challenges us to re-imagine the meaning of life without

Foreword

a 56-inch plasma television screen and a private car. He knows, though, that it's more than just a question of composting and bicycles: in the poem 'Lifestyle Choice' (page 124) he amusingly mocks those who believe that cotton shopping bags and low-energy light bulbs can do the trick. What if, he asks

*... the abolitionists, instead of fighting slavery,
Just stayed at home and put a bit less sugar in
their tea.*

The urgent message of this book is not the gathering science showing that things are much worse than we thought (even though that's pretty scary) but the compelling argument that the only way we're going to get out of the fine mess we are in, is by building a vast, diverse and radical movement for climate justice, joining together frontline communities in the North and in the South to change the system. And, to change the system, we have to start by turning off the fossil-fuel tap. As Danny says:

All the renewable technology in the world won't help us if we're still digging up fossil fuels and ripping down the rainforests. We need to tackle both ends of this problem, and find ways to keep the oil in the soil, the coal in the hole, the gas in the crevasse and the trees...er...swaying gently in the breeze.

In this small, excellent book, we have plenty of ammunition to take on the corporate lobbyists, the climate deniers, the carbon traders and the nay-sayers.

Nicola Bullard,
Focus on the Global South, Bangkok, Thailand

CONTENTS

Foreword by Nicola Bullard	5
Introduction	8
Part A: The Science	10
1 How do we know that climate change is happening?	11
2 How bad could it get?	46
3 Why is climate denial on the rise?	56
Part B: The Solutions	69
4 Where are all the emissions coming from?	71
5 How much do we need to cut?	92
6 What are the solutions?	102
Part C: The Way Forward	
7 What is the political history of climate change?	127
8 Why haven't we fixed it yet?	140
9 What is it going to take?	170
10 What might a zero-carbon future look like?	185
11 Ten top tips to save the climate	189
Bibliography and Useful Contacts	197
Index	201

Introduction

THANKS FOR PICKING up this book. You may be here because:

1. You want to know more about climate change (or need to know more, for your work or studies);
2. You don't want to read a big book on climate change;
3. This is a small book.

Welcome – this could well be the book for you. The aim of this little guide is to provide an overview of all the most important elements of climate change – the science, the politics, the economics, the solutions, and the possible ways forward. It is concise and accessible, but also offers a host of references and pointers that can lead you to more detailed information. So if you think you already know about climate change but want a pocket guide for looking things up from time to time, this could also be the book you're after.

Some books claim to provide a balanced, unbiased view of the issue of climate change. This is a nice idea, but impossible. Climate change is something that affects, and is affected by, almost everything in our lives. There's no way for anyone to write about it without their own perspectives, beliefs and preferences creeping in.

So I'm going to be honest and tell you upfront where I'm coming from. These are my starting points:

- Climate change is a serious issue and will affect, or is already affecting, everyone (if you're not yet convinced about this, Chapter 1 will explain in more detail).
- There are many other vital issues in the world apart from climate change, such as poverty, inequality, war and oppression – or just the day-to-day struggle to get by that so many people face. It's important that the solutions to climate change don't make these problems worse. In fact, we should really try to find ways to tackle climate change that help with these other problems at the same time.

- The solutions to climate change should be as fair as possible, with the people who are most responsible for the problem having to put the most time, energy and money into the solutions. The people most affected by climate change should also have a big say in how to solve it. This just seems like basic fairness, really.
- Climate change isn't just a technical issue to do with putting the wrong amount of certain gases into the air. It's tangled up with politics, lifestyles, economics, power structures, culture and belief. This is why it's proving so difficult to solve, and also why it's simultaneously disastrous, frustrating, fascinating, heart-breaking, and utterly relevant to everyone in the world.

I hope that all sounds reasonable. If it doesn't – if you think that everything's just hunky-dory in the world, or that climate change is just a side issue that hasn't got much to do with anything else – I urge you to read this book anyway. Let me try to persuade you. It'll be fun.

A bit more about me, for the record: I carry out research into climate change for a living, and also spend a lot of time campaigning, speaking and performing on the topic. I don't earn very much money from this and probably never will.

This book is published by New Internationalist, which also produces an excellent magazine on international issues and the ongoing struggle for global justice. It's well worth checking out for the latest news and analysis on climate change (and other global issues) – www.newint.org.

OK – I think that's everything. Let's go.

Danny Chivers
Oxford