

## **Matthew Shaw – Written Evidence (LBC0077)**

Here is a summary of what I lay out below:

- A need to move beyond compound growth forever.
- A need to urgently address future looming crises.
- Practicable steps we can do immediately to get there.

### **Beyond Covid**

I work as an Emergency Planning Officer and wrote the Covid plan for my organisation, the pandemic flu plan and the recovery plan. I could spend 3000 words going into all the things that need to change specifically to responding to and preparing for these crises. However, it is clear much of what needs to be done depends on a far deeper foundation for our society and the world as a whole.

I expect what I will write won't be anything new to you, but it's time we took it seriously and took steps to get there. I will write it as summarised as possible.

Covid-19 has really exposed how reliant we are on consuming things to keep the economy going. And why keep the economy going? Because we rely on it to get jobs, to have the means for which to pay for our existence. Without this consumption there is no economy. However, not only that, we rely on our economy growing every single year, otherwise we hit crises from recessions and suchlike as we saw in 2008. The government is now trying to reopen things not based on public health matters relating to Covid, but because without opening up the entire system fails.

This means we have to go through compound growth every single year to get there. This system has done miraculous things – the rate of innovation and progress for most, the alleviation of poverty for many, the sheer choice of goods available to people. Technology, monetising more and more of our lives, new markets emerging all over the world, etc, has kept this rate going. But consider this – to keep this going, we need to keep growing at (ideally) something close to 2-3% each year globally. That's 2% more iron mined, that's 2% more oil, that's more copper used, etc etc.

This is quite simply unachievable on a planet of finite resources. There is no getting around that. Yes – we can make things more efficient. We can get growth from things like digital services that may not require masses more resources. We could even turn the whole planet 100% renewable energy. However, we cant get away from the fact we need resources such as copper, all the resources that go into building houses, cars, trains...everything.

This month has seen unbelievable temperatures in the arctic. Close to 40 degrees c in Siberia, with wildfires spreading across melting the permafrost and unlocking Co2 into the atmosphere. This of course creates a feedback loop so that more Co2 means warmer atmosphere, warmer atmosphere means wilder weather, wilder weather means more wildfires, more wildfires melt more permafrost.

This is happening at an incredible rate of knots. It is therefore not long until we will see massive crop failure all over the planet, hugely more "natural" disasters, amongst other things. We cannot spend the next 5 years paying lip service to it, maybe putting some cycle lanes down, maybe recycling a bit more. We need to move much more radically.

One thing that Covid has really cemented is the academic research that shows how much good people do when faced in adversity and in emergencies. This common enemy binds us together and cooperation, kindness, etc, increase greatly. It gives me great hope that we can tackle climate change and this system head on, sensibly and realistically.

This isn't the cry of a Marxist. This isn't the cry of an eco-warrior – you will not find me hugging trees and petitioning to stop house building. This is just a rational analysis, greatly summarised and boiled down, for what we need to move beyond of. We don't have another choice – we simply must do it, otherwise humanity as we know it is really going to struggle in my lifetime (I am 31), let alone in my children's lifetime.

The immediate steps out of Covid. Some ideas:

- Huge investment in green energy. And consider putting these energy projects in the ownership of the communities where they are! If a community of 1000 own their local energy company evenly between them – they can choose how to invest the money whether solar, wind, etc, and use any profits to put back into it. It makes people more empowered and it makes it more of their business. It helps loneliness, gives skills to people, and encourages working together.
- Every new build is carbon neutral.
- We replace every government vehicle where practicable with an electric car, with a goal to go hydrogen as the technology develops. This investment will cause a tumbling of economies of scale and make electric cars much more affordable for everyone.
- A complete review of how we plan towns. They need to be good for getting around primarily by bike, foot, and public transport, powered by renewables.
- We need massive rewilding projects in this country. The UK is massively depleted – look around you for example in the Peak District, or Wales, or so many other areas. What happened to the wildlife? Where did the trees go? Why are we protecting so much space devoted to sheep farming and other grass fields? Lets get real – we can rewild these areas, provide amazing spaces for people to go, children to learn, tourism opportunities, while being great for the environment and helping flood risk greatly.
- Take a look at some cities pledging to be a "Doughnut" city. Learn.
- Encourage working from home for those who can forever. People can still go to an office or wherever to meet up in person, but many jobs can be done at home and should be an option for at least a few days a week.
- Encourage staff of firms that are going bust all over the country to set their own up as a cooperative. The government can help with initial capital, training, etc, then these people can run the business themselves.

Why? Because cooperatively run businesses are proven to be more resilient in crises and have more investment in their communities in every sense. They are more likely to remain in this country, as people who depend on that business are not likely to send their jobs away overseas and are more likely to consider things like environment impacts to their local areas.

These are just some of the things we need to look at immediately.

*6 August 2020*