



# THE ENVIRONMENTAL EAGLE

## The Sustainability Newsletter of Boston College

October 2019

### FEATURED

Harvest Week Promotes Green Practices and Local Produce

Students Flood the Streets of Boston at Global Climate Strike

Green2Go to Expand to Lower

Ecosia Revenue Plants Trees

Mary Robinson Encourages BC to Take Action on Sustainability

Lessons from the Red Solo Cup

Norway Takes Charge as Global Leader on Electric Cars

### OUR TEAM

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Harvest Fest featured student groups and local vendors providing local produce and treats, while activities such as pumpkin painting and live music were available at the Night Market.

## Fresh Donuts and Hot Chocolate Fill the Air at Annual Harvest Week

By Alex Capozziello

The scent of fresh donuts and hot chocolate coupled with live music set the aura of the Night Market held in the Vandy Cabaret Room as a part of EcoPledge's annual Harvest Week. Every fall, Harvest Fest offers students a week of fun and sustainability awareness, featuring festive events like pumpkin painting, free local food demos, and documentary screenings as a means of encouraging environmentally friendly behavior and fall amusement.

Hundreds of students stopped by the Stokes Lawn on the final afternoon of Harvest Week

for the main event, the Harvest Fest. Local vendors and student groups lined the quad to promote their missions, products, and sustainability, giving away free demos and fun craft activities for students to de-stress amid a hectic exam period.

As always, Harvest Fest flew by like the leaves falling from the auburn and tangerine-tinted trees but not before leaving students with a renewed sense of fall enjoyment and environmental awareness. Sustainable initiatives continue to sprout on campus, and EcoPledge hopes that Harvest Week could help set the scene.

## Students Protest at Climate Strike

By Cosette Patterson

Braving the heat and crowds, hundreds of protesters gathered in City Hall Plaza on September 20 for the youth-led Global Climate Strike to demand action on the climate crisis. The strike was a global initiative which took place in over 185 countries with over 7.6 million people, 3024 businesses, and 820 organizations participating. Over 50 Boston College students were in attendance, including BC's student groups EcoPledge and Climate Justice. According to the Global Climate Strike's website, it was the biggest climate mobilization in history.

Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist who began school striking by herself in August 2018, is now the figurehead and leader of the movement. Due to their high level of carbon emissions, Thunberg no longer uses planes as a method of transportation. As a result, she was offered the chance to travel to the United States on a zero-emissions sailboat that used solar panels and underwater turbines. After a two week journey across the Atlantic, she landed in New York City on August 28, ahead of the strikes and the United Nations Climate Summit that was held on September 23 in New York. She has been traveling throughout the US since her arrival, striking with fellow activists, inspiring demands for more action from governments, and especially encouraging the younger generation to get involved.

Boston's strike was organized by Massachusetts Climate

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# Boston's Youth Flood the Streets & City Hall Plaza at Global Climate Strike

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Strike, a group of young activists, many of whom are affiliated with the Sunrise Movement, a national grassroots organization demanding climate action specifically through the Green New Deal. Among the event's speakers were government officials and lawmakers committed to climate justice, including mayor Marty Walsh, the Reverend Mariama White Hammond with the Ministry for Ecological Justice, and Boston city councillor Michelle Wu. However, as a youth driven movement, many significant speeches were made by those who organized the strike: 17-year-old Saya Ameli Hajebi with the Sunrise Movement, 17-year-old Jeremy Ornstein, also with the Sunrise Movement, and 18-year-old Ahria Ilyas, a Youth-On-Board representative.

Through the Sunrise Movement, students published a list of local and national demands. In Massachusetts, they emphasized three points in particular: (1) for Governor Charlie Baker to declare a climate emergency, (2) for the Legislature to pass policies that "prioritize workers and communities on the front-lines of poverty and pollution," and (3) for the state to cease using fossil fuels and infrastructure that promotes it, and for politicians to commit to the No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge. This pledge holds lawmakers to the agreement of refusing to take more than \$200 from oil, gas, and coal industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs, and to turn their focus toward the climate crisis.

For Katelyn Buckley and Alicia Romano, two high school seniors from Shrewsbury, one of the most pressing issues regarding the environment is peoples' unawareness, especially surrounding animal agriculture, overfishing, and industrialization.

"I feel like it's just a large amount of lack of knowledge," Romano said. "I think people should just educate themselves. I

feel like nowadays, it's a trend to save the turtles, and people are just getting metal straws, and ... posting a casual Instagram post, but it's a lot more than ... buying just one metal straw."

Buckley emphasized that this in no way meant the pair did not see the value in the actions of individuals, however.

"Everyone doesn't have to join the EPA, or be climate front runners," Buckley said. "It's more about raising awareness about how you treat the environment around you and your carbon footprint."

Although the climate strike was packed with advocates of the younger generation, from high schoolers like Buckley and Romano, to children sitting on their parents' backs to see over the multitude of signs, to Boston's vast population of college students, many older activists were in attendance as well, carrying colorful homemade posters like the rest of the crowd.

Gary Bean and Carl Offner were among that bunch, both participating in the strike with the Congregation Beth El in Sudbury. When asked why they were choosing to participate in the strike, they seemed puzzled at the question. "Grandchildren" was Bean's answer, to which Offner added, "how could we not be here?" Although the climate strike emphasized the importance of individual action, it was clear that it takes collective movements to cause change.

"I recycle, [but] I don't kid myself that it's solving any big problems," Offner said. "It's going to take sustained, mass action, government action to do that. And that's something that needs organization."

Bean referred to his sign, which read, 'it's too late for us to do too little,' reiterating the need for legislature to acknowledge the severity of the situation and establish policies that are proportional to the immensity of the climate crisis. To the younger generation,



Students marching through campus while making their way to the Global Climate Strike in downtown Boston.

Bean underscored the importance of voting, apologized for his generation's mistakes, and imparted several words of advice.

"Persist," Bean began. "And stay in trouble."

At the Climate Summit, some hopeful strides were made, with 65 countries announcing their efforts to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. However, with

the "business as usual" mindset still evident, Thunberg's voice rang out amidst worries over China's incomppliance with climate negotiations and the United States' remaining vow to pull out of the Paris Agreement.

"The eyes of all future generations are upon you," Thunberg said. "If you choose to fail us, I say we will never forgive you."

## Green2Go Program to Expand from Stuart to Lower Campus Dining Halls

by Hannah Murphy

BC Dining is expanding its Green2Go program to both Lower Live at Corcoran Commons and Addie's later this semester. The reusable to-go containers were first introduced in Stuart Dining Hall last year in an effort to give more sustainable options to students who are looking to bring their food on the go. The success of the pilot has led to the program's expansion in order to reach a greater number of students.

The program will be based out of the new market in Corcoran Commons which is currently under construction but is set to be finished this semester. Students will be able to buy into the program for \$9 from their meal plan, and will then receive a Green2Go container. The Green2Go containers can be used just as the other to-go options by either getting hot food or filling them at the salad bar. The containers do not need to be cleaned, but should be empty of food when they are returned to the market. Once returned, students will receive a carabiner, which serves as a token that can then be exchanged for a reusable container moving forward.

"Green2Go is a great option for students or faculty who need to take food to go but don't want to use a disposable container, because reuse is more environmentally-conscious than single-use disposables," Anne Marie Green,

BC Dining Sustainability Intern and MCAS '20, said. "BC Dining is trying to make the program as convenient as possible, as the container is BPA free, microwave safe, and students won't have to clean it before bringing it back at their convenience."

The success of the program is dependent on students returning their containers after use. The carabiners should help increase the overall success of the program, as they are a simple way to track whether a student has a container out or not. If a student forgets or loses their carabiner, they would need to buy into the program again for \$9.

The Green2Go containers are manufactured by Preserve, a local Massachusetts company that specializes in recycling #5 plas-

*"The utensils are not recyclable through single-stream recycling and need to be thrown away into the trash."*

tic—the plastic commonly used in yogurt and margarine containers, plastic bottle tops, and straws and which is also one of the least recycled plastics. Preserve collects #5 plastics and repurposes them into other products.

BC Dining partnered with Preserve for both the Green2Go containers and the new plastic utensils in the dining halls. Green2Go containers are made



Courtesy of BC Dining and Alinda Dersjant

out of 50 percent recycled plastic and are BPA-free, microwave-safe, and extremely durable. The new plastic utensils are made out of 100 percent recycled #5 plastic; however, the utensils are not recyclable through single-stream recycling and need to be thrown away into the trash. So, the most sustainable option for cutlery is still using the metal silverware, if the student is eating in the dining hall.

As a college campus, Boston College has a unique opportunity to take advantage of being a closed loop, meaning that the majority of items bought on campus are also thrown away on campus. There is the potential to explore more specialized sustainability and recycling programs, especially as the student body becomes more environmentally aware and demands more sustainable options. Schools such as University of New Hampshire can serve as an example, as they have implemented a similar

reusable to-go container program, however, they have limited all disposable containers so that the reusable option is the only option for taking food to-go.

Depending on the success of this program, BC Dining is open to exploring the addition of more sustainable programs. Possibilities include expanding Green2Go to other dining halls and more specialized recycling programs so that more difficult plastics such as the new plastic utensils could be recycled.

BC Dining is responding to demands for more sustainable options without sacrificing convenience through the expansion of the Green2Go program to Corcoran Commons and Addie's. The goal of the program is for students to take advantage of this opportunity to be sustainable, as the more students who participate, the more the program can expand and other environmentally conscious programs can be explored.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

## Boston College to Host SSLS Conference in November

#### Public Hearing on Webster Woods

Wednesday, November 6 (7pm - 9pm)

Location: Newton City Hall

The city of Newton is looking for the approval of the Community Preservation Committee to purchase 17.4 acres of the Webster Woods from Boston College. The hearing is open to all students and community members alike.

#### Documentary Screening: "The True Cost"

Thursday, November 7 (7pm - 9pm)

Location: Fulton 245

Ever wonder who pays the price for our clothes? Award-winning documentary "The True Cost" reveals the growing human and environmental costs of fashion while the value of clothing itself has plummeted.

#### Sustainability Student Leadership Symposium

Sunday, November 10 (11:30 am)

Location: Connors Center, Dover, MA

Boston College will host this year's SSLS conference, a day-long program bringing together student and adult sustainability leaders for roundtable discussions, a career panel and presentations by non-profits.

## Ecosia Reduces Carbon Dioxide Emissions with a Click of Your Keyboard

By Alex Levine

Imagine being able to plant a tree simply by searching up a book summary for a class or even looking for goofy cat videos online. With Ecosia, a German-based search engine that uses its ad revenues to plant trees, internet users can do just that.

As of October 2019, Ecosia has planted over 70 million trees across 16 countries, including Brazil, Burkina Faso, and Ethiopia. Roughly 80 percent of Ecosia's profits go to planting trees. As for the rest, the company, which values transparency, has released their financial reports online so that users can follow their revenue stream. No

dividends are paid to any of Ecosia's owners—all profits are invested back into the company to expand their mission.

Ecosia considers itself a “carbon negative” company, going beyond carbon neutral by planting trees and actually removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In 2017, the company built their first solar energy plant to ensure that their servers would run on 100 percent renewable energy, and plans to build more solar plants as their user base expands. According to Ecosia, if their search engine were to grow as large as Google, the company would be able to absorb 15 percent of global carbon emissions.

The company is also work-

ing to aid the African Union in their efforts to build the “Great Green Wall,” which is an initiative to plant trees in Northern Africa to mitigate the effects of both climate change and desertification.

Users will also notice a green leaf icon alongside search results of planet-friendly organizations while placing a coal icon next to companies which support fossil fuels. These search highlights are not paid ad results, but rather serve the sole purpose of helping users make more sustainable search choices, the company adds. The search engine also does not sell personal data to advertisers nor uses third party trackers, effectively keeping all user data private and safe.



*Courtesy of Ecosia*

Easily downloadable as a default browser or as an extension on most platforms, all internet users should consider Ecosia as an easy means of going green and making the world a slightly more sustainable place.

## Former President Mary Robinson Encourages Move Toward Divestment

By Stevie Walker

“Time is of the essence,” Mary Robinson, the first female president of Ireland and human and environmental rights activist, told the crowd. She reverberated words that the audience has heard before: there is a climate crisis here and now. To combat greenhouse gas emissions and keep global temperature warming below two degrees Celsius, Robinson asserted that a “moonshot approach” is necessary to make meaningful change before it truly is too late.

Robinson spoke at Boston College in September as the first speaker of the fall Lowell Humanitarian Speaker Series, which was titled after her recent book, *Climate Justice — Hope, Resilience and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*. Besides serving as president, Robinson has held distinguished roles as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Climate Change, and founded the Mary Robinson Foundation — Climate Justice, which focuses on advocacy of sustainable development in the world's poorest communities. Robinson currently sits as chair of The Elders, an

organization of world leaders founded by Nelson Mandela that seeks to promote world peace, justice, and human rights.

Robinson outlined three key steps anyone and everyone can take to mitigate the climate crisis on the ground level. (1) Make the climate crisis personal. Tell stories—stories are the best way to reach people. (2) Get angry and take action. (3) Imagine the world that everyone must be hurrying towards.

Robinson also applauded the efforts of Greta Thunberg and her Fridays for Future movement and other activist organizations like the Extinction Rebellion. She believes that the climate justice movement is just picking up, and that disruption is the first and best means of changing the global political mindset about climate change to make it the number one priority.

Prior to Robinson's speech, student leaders from several sustainability-minded groups including EcoPledge, Climate Justice of Boston College, Real Food, the Geology Association, and the Office of Sustainability had the chance to meet her for a private discussion on the crisis and how to best approach it moving forward.



**Robinson posing for a group photo with students from her private pre-talk event.**

“I was really grateful to former president Robinson for giving us the opportunity to speak with her in a more intimate environment,” Ellen Kang, EcoPledge Co-President and MCAS '20, said. “She acknowledged our frustrations with the lack of action towards sustainability at BC and provided a lot of practical solutions to potentially resolve a lot of our school's issues.”

In both her private conversations with students and in

her keynote speech, Robinson encouraged students to fight loudly for climate justice. In response to a question about divestment at BC, Robinson stated that she would like to “encourage Boston College to head in that direction, as quickly as possible” and suggested the administration look into the Wallace Global Fund, an organization that helps universities divest from fossil fuels and reinvest into sustainable energy sources.

## Four Lessons on Recycling We Can Learn from the Red Solo Cup

By Anne Marie Green

When the party winds down, do you consider yourself a recycling “champion” when you collect Red Solo Cups and place them in the recycling bin? If so, I understand. I am a concerned student, studying environmental issues, and am writing my senior thesis on recycling. One would think that’s enough to confidently know how to recycle. Yet, I learned this summer while working at Boston City Hall on Boston’s Zero Waste Initiative that the cups are not recyclable.

**Lesson #1: Everything is theoretically “recyclable,” little is actually “recyclable.”** But what does “recyclable” even mean? All plastics, in theory, are recyclable given adequate funds, appropriate collection means and re-manufacturing facilities. This is why retailers can recycle your plastic bags, or why Preserve can recycle your No. 5 plastics, while neither of these items would be recycled if you tossed them in any old recycling bin. Recyclability depends strictly on supply and demand—if there is a stable market in which the raw material is in healthy enough demand to justify the cost of its municipal collection, an item can be recyclable. However, there are few markets for No. 6 plastic—it’s hard to break down, has dyes, and contains complicating additives. Manufacturers don’t want it, so it’s not recyclable. Truly, the only plastics you can feel mildly comfortable recycling are plastics No. 1 and 2, and usually clear No. 5, like Starbucks cold cups. Although every municipality has different standards of what is recyclable, this is typically where plastic recycling ends.

**Lesson #2: The triangle does not mean “recyclable.”** This is partly why the case of the Red Solo Cup is amply confusing. It is plastic and it has the three arrows that form a triangle on the bottom—clear signs that it’s recy-

clable, right? Although producers of plastic would like you to believe that everything they make is “recyclable,” these arrows mean nothing of the sort. Flip your cup and take a closer look inside the triangle and you’ll see a “6” in the middle—this number indicates what plastic polymer the product was made of, which in this case is polystyrene. It can be expanded into what we know as Styrofoam (think Dunkin’ Donuts hot cups, which MA is trying to ban). But polystyrene can also be rigid, and its rigid form is prolific in commonplace products. Think plastic utensils, black takeout containers, and now, think Red Solo Cups.

**Lesson #3: Something is wrong with recycling.** Oftentimes, my friends’ parents will tell me that they recycle everything—chip bags, plastic utensils, and Red Solo Cups. The confusion spreads to our generation, which is commonly coined as more environmentally aware. I texted my friends about the Red Solo Cups phenomenon immediately after finding out: “This is a disgrace,” said one, “I always recycle those,” said another, “Large frowny face emoji,” said Dad. I think the shock is centered on one pivotal, unspoken query: how could a cup so culturally celebrated and so ubiquitous be so bad for us? Something is wrong with plastic recycling, as a commonly held environmentally beneficial activity, if a plastic so prolific that it has its own song is unable to be recycled anywhere except California.

**Lesson #4: Reuse is better than recycling.** Given this uncomfortable information, what should you do? You could buy an alternative, one that is recyclable. However, without having done a full life-cycle analysis on the alternatives, I predict that reusing your cups is a better solution. This way, you don’t have to deviate from the familiar and socially acceptable aesthetic of the Red Solo Cup. Clean them by hand or dishwasher and continue to reuse



Graphic by Alinda Dersjant

them. Indeed, reuse is a much surer environmental solution than recycling in most matters.

But the day will come when the Red Solo Cup breaks because it’s designed to be disposable. When that day comes, do not put it in the recycling bin—it will make things worse. Ideally, the solution to this problem would be to regulate production so that difficult-to-recycle products like the Red Solo Cup don’t exist. But how, up against petro-chemical interests, are we to go about this? You may be thinking, “let’s

demand that it gets recycled!” and I hear you. But this will only burden the local government with the additional cost of collecting, sorting, and finding an end of life market for the Red Solo Cup’s re-manufacture when there is none.

What the Red Solo Cup teaches us is that plastics recycling is a confusing-as-anything system, and the manufacturers of your partying vessel want it to stay that way. Although we all wish it were, it’s never as simple as “proceed to party.”

## POLITICAL SPOTLIGHT

## Norway Paves Way for Electric Vehicles &amp; Sustainable Future

By Alinda Dersjant

The scenic roads that curve along the Norwegian fjords provide the ultimate space for environmentally friendly electric vehicles. They made up no less than 50 percent of the new cars sold in 2018—a percentage that has been rising ever since. This starkly contrasts with the United States' efforts, where electric vehicles were only responsible for 2 percent of the market share in the same year. The power of this Scandinavian country lies in its dedication to sustainability and its courage to be at the forefront of a global movement.

From the early 1990s onward, the Norwegian government has been promoting zero-emission vehicles—electric and hydrogen—and plans to only sell zero-emission cars by 2025. Norway follows a “polluter pays” principle, in which customers pay extra if they choose to drive gasoline or diesel cars to account for the external environmental costs.

“In the winter pollution is so bad that you are only allowed to drive your car on certain days of the week, dictated by your registration plate,” said one resident from Bergen to *The Guardian*. “It is society overall that benefits.”

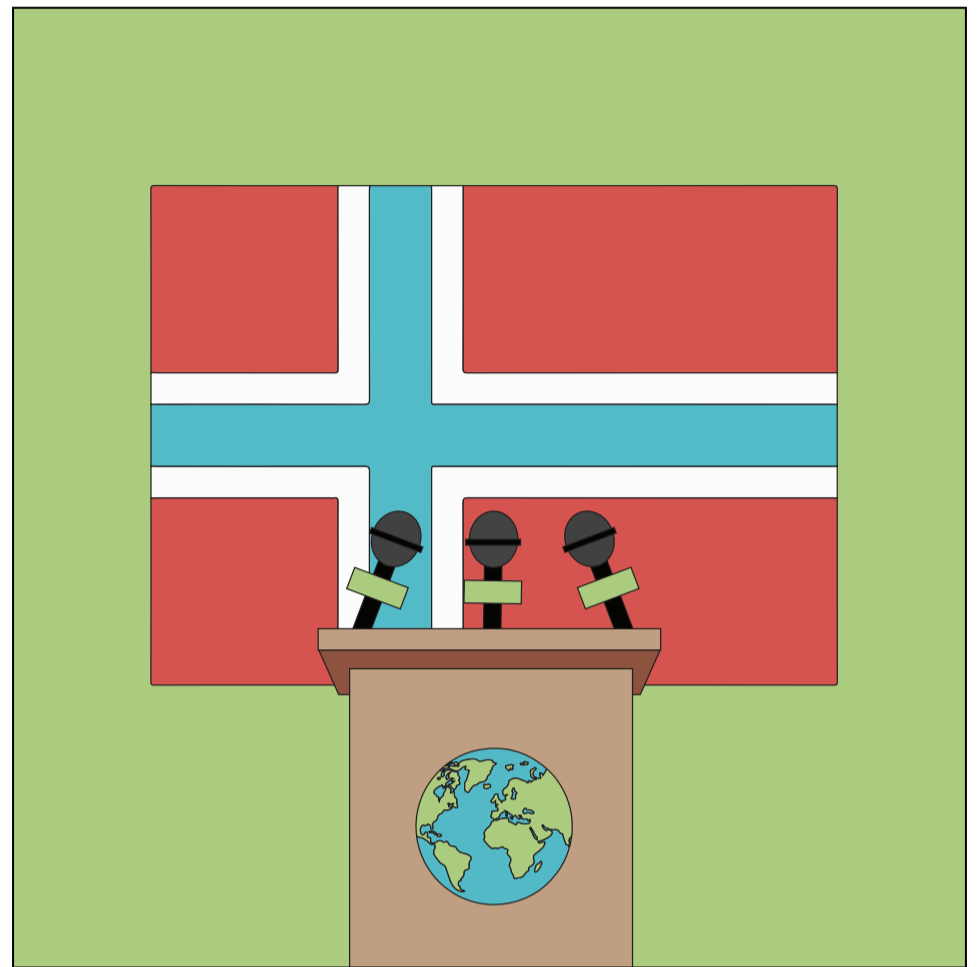
Norway uses what it calls the “50 percent rule,” which states that municipalities can only charge drivers of electric vehicles half the price for ferries, parking, and toll roads. With one of the longest coastlines in the world and millions of fjords separating landmasses, ferries are as common as traffic lights. The mountainous landscape also requires tunnels and winding roads, for which drivers pay significant

amounts in tolls. Together with tax cuts on the purchase of electric vehicles, these cost reductions enable most Norwegians to switch from fossil fuels to electricity with ease.

Alongside reduced purchase and utilization costs for electric cars, Norway has also invested on a large scale in its charging infrastructure, which enables cars to get to the remote parts of Norway without running out of power. The Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association reported that Norway has over 10,000 publicly available charging points and 1500 fast charging points, in addition to privately owned points. The fast charging points enable long distance drives, as drivers can fuel up almost as quickly as drivers of gasoline and diesel cars can. Realizing the importance of mobility, Norway started providing at least two fast charging points for every 50 kilometers of main road in 2017.

All this effort would be in vain if electric vehicles were not powered by renewable energy. If fossil fuels power a power plant generating electricity for a “zero-emission vehicle,” the environmental footprint of this vehicle would be no better than that of a diesel or gasoline vehicle. Luckily, renewable resources provide 98 percent of Norway's electricity, according to the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. Hydropower makes up the vast majority as a result of Norway's vast supply of lakes and streams across the country's various altitudes.

Yet there is one major flaw in this success story. Norway's sustainable initiatives are built on profits from oil and gas. The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy reported that Norway is now right behind



Graphic by Alinda Dersjant

Russia on the oil market, becoming the second largest oil exporter after it overtook Qatar in 2017. But while Russia's population is about half the size of the total US population, the Norwegian population of 5.2 million is significantly less than that of just the state of Massachusetts.

So while very little of the oil drilled from the Norwegian shores actually finds its way into Norwegian car engines, it does provide money to facilitate the transition. Hypocritical as this may seem, few countries with oil reserves have made a deliberate decision not to profit off of their oil reserves. In the global fossil-fuel based economy, petroleum is simply too valuable to leave in the Earth's core. To

change this, countries would need to pursue the “polluter pays” principle so that the price of fossil fuels would reflect their external environmental and social costs.

Despite still generating revenue from fossil fuels, Norway is standing at the forefront of sustainability, whether through its extensive hydropower use or its prioritization of zero-emission vehicles. Through regulations like the 50 percent rule and its extensive charging station network, Norway and its politicians have paved the road for increased sales of electric vehicles. As a leader in this transition, Norway dares to be the first country to invest in a future many politicians are only talking about.

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