

A CLIMATE OF TRUTH

We have most of the technology we need to combat the climate crisis – and most people want to see more action.

But after three decades of climate COPs, our global emissions are worse than ever. And we are accelerating into a *Polycrisis* of climate, food security, biodiversity, pollution, inequality and more. What, exactly, has been holding us back?

What will it take for us to do better?

In the search for answers that have been so elusive to date, Mike Berners-Lee looks at the challenge from new angles. He *stands further back* to gain perspective; he *digs deeper* under the surface to see the root causes; he *joins up* every element of the challenge; and he *learns lessons* from our failures of the past. He uses all these insights to identify the single point of greatest leverage for those seeking the systemic change we so desperately need. *A Climate of Truth* spells out why, if humanity is to thrive in the decades ahead, the most critical step is to raise standards of *honesty* in our politics, our media and our businesses. Not only is this possible, but each of us can have radically more impact on the issues we care about by turning our attention to this simple principle.

Anyone asking, ‘What can each of us do *right now* to help?’ will find inspiration in this practical and important book.

Mike Berners-Lee is a leading thinker, researcher, best-selling author and consultant on the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. About his first book – *How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything* – Bill Bryson wrote, ‘I can’t remember the last time I read a book that was more fascinating, useful and enjoyable all at the same time.’ His book *There Is No Planet B* was described by the *Financial Times* as ‘a handbook for how humanity can thrive’. He founded and directs Small World Consulting, which helps organisations of every size and type to have a positive role in our world. Mike is a professor at Lancaster University, where his research includes emissions modelling, sustainable food systems and the impact of information and communication technologies.

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‘I was engrossed. It’s now my go-to book. A hopeful and empowering book raising the challenges humans face and offering clear and straightforward actions for individuals, organisations and governments alike to take to reduce the worst effects of our planetary impact – all in bite-size chunks. A must-read for – well – everyone.’

Deborah Meaden, entrepreneur

‘Reading this book is like diving into a freezing lake: it’s bracing, lucid, and leaves you buzzing. Packing a life’s worth of wisdom into every chapter, Mike Berners-Lee sets out the hard facts while holding the consequences with deep care. Dive in.’

Kate Raworth, author of *Doughnut Economics*

‘Mike Berners-Lee’s book is persuasive and informative. He is rightly dismayed at the lack of urgency in global efforts to limit climate change. This book will energise campaigners, and offer them, in compact and highly readable format, the information that citizens need.’

Martin Rees, Astronomer Royal

‘The focus on truth-telling is crucial here. The author is right: if we can’t cut to the heart of our dilemma, our chances of solving it are small.’

Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*

‘This is an astonishing, essential and radical book. I’ve never read anything that digs so deep and ties things up so completely. The brilliance of *A Climate of Truth* is that it cuts through the layers of mistruths to reveal the starker realities of the polycrisis we are facing. Everything that we do is entangled – and heading in a dangerous direction. Mike Berners-Lee provides effective solutions, but they are going to demand enormous changes in human behaviour, replacing our constant desire for growth with a genuine sustainable approach to living.’

Rosie Boycott, crossbench peer and climate campaigner

‘Much has been written on the climate crisis and solutions to it, but few books are as comprehensive, readable and engaging as this one. Even fewer have something truly original to say.’

This book is different. Here, climate, social and political science meet behavioural economics, and more. The book covers values and value; expediency and honesty; law and lore; lying hard, lying down and taking a stand. A conversational style combined with serious erudition makes for ready reading, but this book is much more than just words. *A Climate of Truth* provides a real action plan that goes beyond the conventional list around the climate crisis with which many are already familiar. Far more than a moral sermon, it is a rallying call to action. Read this book.'

Hugh Montgomery OBE, University College London

'This is a book we all need to read – a humane, honest and intelligent approach to why we are where we are and how we can still make impactful change. Mike makes hope a generative action.'

Mary Portas OBE

'Mike's new book is a fabulous read, offering up tangible actions for every one of us and I thoroughly recommend it.'

Dale Vince, founder of Ecotricity

'Mike documents clearly why business-more-or-less-as-usual is not working and won't work. We need a Plan B. Mike provides the key components that we need for such a plan. Let's collaborate to co-create and implement such a plan.'

Pooran Desai OBE, founder OnePlanet.com and
originator of *One Planet Living*

'The first half of the so-called "critical decade" was wasted on more of the same: denial, empty rhetoric and unrealistic technical fantasies about the future. This "age of lies" wasn't just driven by leaders incapable of addressing the climate and ecological crises, but also by deeply compromised experts and a compliant media. As we enter the second half of the decade, we've never been more in need of shedding the illusion that "others" will solve these existential problems for us. This is where *A Climate of Truth* comes in. In his unique style, Mike Berners-Lee dissects the challenges we face, explains why they remain unaddressed, and offers guidance for a new "age of truth". Crucially, Mike's contribution aims to empower us

all with the tools to drive change ourselves. It's not about admiring the expertise of others but about equipping the reader to play their part in sparking a bottom-up transformation. Mike strikes a careful balance between opportunity and hope, without falling into the trap of ungrounded optimism. While I sense a greater urgency and need for social change than Mike suggests, I still wholeheartedly recommend *A Climate of Truth* to anyone looking to channel their concerns about the future into informed and meaningful action.'

Kevin Anderson, Tyndall Centre, Universities of Manchester and Uppsala

'Truth is an increasingly scarce commodity in a world of alternative facts and weaponised obfuscation. In the context of the climate and ecological emergency, this is more than frustrating – quite literally, a matter of life and death. As planetary breakdown spirals out of control, we are staring a grim, hot-house future full in the face, and only hearing and taking on board the truth will ensure we have any chance of spurring the wholesale action needed to stymie looming cataclysm. In this marvellous, inspiring and heart-felt narrative, Mike Berners-Lee reveals how embracing truth, honesty and plain speaking can not only transform every aspect of how we live our lives on planet Earth, but also ensure that our kids and their kids inherit a world worth living in.'

Bill McGuire, author of *Hothouse Earth: An Inhabitant's Guide*

'A tonic for our reality-avoidant political culture. Meticulous, measured and meaningful. You'll have heard of the audacity of hope: this is the audacity of truth.'

Jonathan Rowson, co-founder and CEO of Perspectiva, and author of *The Moves that Matter: A Chess Grandmaster on the Game of Life*

'This is Mike Berners-Lee's magnificent magnum opus. An excellent book distilling his work so far on the climate crisis and leading to the key issue of honesty, with chapters on how we can get truth into business, media and politics. This is all the more relevant given recent election results.'

John Bowers KC, Principal, Brasenose College, Oxford, and barrister

‘Mike Berners-Lee shows us how the world’s environmental problems – including the loss of biodiversity and climate breakdown – are all interlinked. He goes on to demonstrate that the obstacles to remedying these crises are not technological. Instead, he conclusively demonstrates that we need substantial social and political changes to cope with the growing threats. I was particularly struck by the emphasis he places on improving the standards of honesty in public life as a prerequisite for addressing the many challenges we face. As in all his writing, Mike is clear, forthright and compellingly persuasive.’

Chris Goodall, author of *Possible: Ways to Net Zero*

‘Do you want to understand the “polycrisis”? Mike Berners-Lee takes you *inside* it. The crucial demand saturating this book is that – hard as it sometimes is – we have no alternative but to tell and face the truth. This book will provide you with crucial help in accepting this, and gives you vital information on what we all might do about it.’

Rupert Read, Co-director of the Climate Majority Project and
author of *Why Climate Breakdown Matters*

‘This is an extraordinary book that needs to become ordinary as soon as possible. Mike has developed a roadmap to take action in a polycrisis featuring nature and climate collapse. The care and respect he shows to both our psychological health and the science in developing his programme is outstanding. It doesn’t matter if you’ve never done eco stuff before, this is what you do now. Thank you, Mike.’

Lucy Siegle, writer and producer

‘This book contains both optimistic and uncomfortable messages. Climate change *can* be confronted. But for that to happen there’s an urgent need to demand change in our dishonest public culture.’

Peter Osborne, author of *The Rise of Political Lying*

‘A searing indictment of the disastrous impact that the calamitous decline in standards of truth and integrity in public life has had on our capacity to tackle the climate crisis.’

Richard Sanders, filmmaker

‘This is a sobering yet compelling exploration of how politicians, media and industry have practised serial dishonesty about the crisis enfolding our planet. Unless we’re truly honest about the irrefutable data we have, then the critical changes the world needs will never happen. Mike Berners-Lee makes an apocalyptic warning that profit and self-advancement is the most sinister pollutant of all.’

Quentin Wilson, motoring journalist and transport campaigner

‘Provocative, challenging, insightful and wise, *A Climate of Truth* is an essential handbook setting out the urgent changes we need to make. And chief among those isn’t technological or even economic change: it’s raising standards of honesty and integrity in public life. Berners-Lee’s case is powerful and compelling: it is dishonesty that has been the biggest block to progress on climate for decades. And the most effective way to radically improve our chances of thriving in the years to come is by demanding honesty from business, from media and – most of all – from our politicians.’

Caroline Lucas, former MP and former Leader, Green Party
of England and Wales

‘In a world in turmoil, besieged by war and threatened by climate change, Mike Berners-Lee demands that we reclaim this world for decency. *A Climate of Truth* is a call to arm ourselves against the liars and manipulators. It tears away the pretence and challenges us to respond. It is fundamentally disturbing because it is unrepentantly honest. Yet it is optimistic because Berners-Lee believes that we can and must stop the rot.’

The Rt Hon Lord Deben, John Gummer

‘Mike’s rigorously detailed expertise is evident throughout ... an honest and insightful delve into how we must all strive to understand the reality of the climate crisis.’

Tim Farron, MP

**Mike
Berners-Lee**

**A
Climate
of
Truth**

Why We Need It And How To Get It



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***For all those who think about the rest of the world when they
vote, or are ready to start doing so.***

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