

Dear Committee members, I thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I speak as a father and a grandfather, and ex-Avon County employee.

The global climate emergency, ecological degradation, species loss – these are humanity's - our greatest challenges.

Although species extinction is a natural phenomenon (having a natural "background" rate of about one to five species lost per year) scientists estimate that we're now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times this background rate. That's literally dozens of species going extinct every day. Dozens! Gone! Never to return! Scientific evidence points indisputably to human industrial activity as the driver of climate change and ecological breakdown.

Now, I know I am speaking to intelligent and informed people. I would be greatly disappointed if you were not already very well acquainted with the facts of the current environmental catastrophe. You and I know this is real! This is happening! The house is burning down around our ears - but it often seems as if our collective response is to open a bottle of wine and see what's on Netflix. No! Now is the time to act decisively and responsibly!

On an individual level, I have "done my bit" for many decades - day-to-day choices - avoiding excess packing, choosing cleaner ways to travel, reusing, repairing, recycling - all of those things! Apart from these, there are overarching changes which we, as concerned citizens must unequivocally demand. One of these changes is the immediate closing down of the oil industry and its subsidiaries.

Each of us can do a little to lessen the impact of human activity on the planet - turning the thermostat down, walking into town rather than driving. Each individual action added together makes a difference.

But, there are human industries that individuals find it almost impossible to affect at the speed with which we need to act. This is both distressing and enormously frustrating.

And this is why I am addressing you today. Dear committee members. You can do this for me. You can do this for each one of us. You can take action in a powerful and effective way, on our behalf.

I ask you, Avon Pension Fund committee, please - stop investing our pension fund in the fossil fuel industry. Make this bold, moral decision, for us and with us, to preserve and serve the precious life of earth.

Thank you.