

What Have I Done? Choosing Green Energy.

Richard Millwood

Brentwood Climate Action
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richardmillwood.net
richard_millwood@mac.com

Leviathan is a giant sea serpent noted in theology and mythology.

Leviathan is often **an embodiment of chaos**, threatening to eat the damned when their lives are over.

In Gnosis, **it encompasses the world like a sphere** and incorporates the souls of those who are too attached to material things, so they cannot reach the realm of God's fullness beyond, from which all good emanates.

In Hobbes, Leviathan becomes **a metaphor for the omnipotence of the state**, which maintains itself by educating children in its favour, generation after generation. This **idea of eternal power that 'feeds' on its constantly self-produced citizens** is based on a concept of conditioning that imprints the human conscience in a mechanical manner.

Wikipedia



I presented this diagram as a metaphor of the overwhelm I feel from the world around me: the greed in capitalism, the threat of the climate crisis, the wars in the Middle East, the rise of the evangelical right and the destruction of 'truth'.

I have determined to focus on the actions I can take locally and in my gift.

The far west of Ireland...



But sometimes events take their own course.

In this case, I was in the far west of Ireland, meeting friends, and as you may know it sometimes rains there.

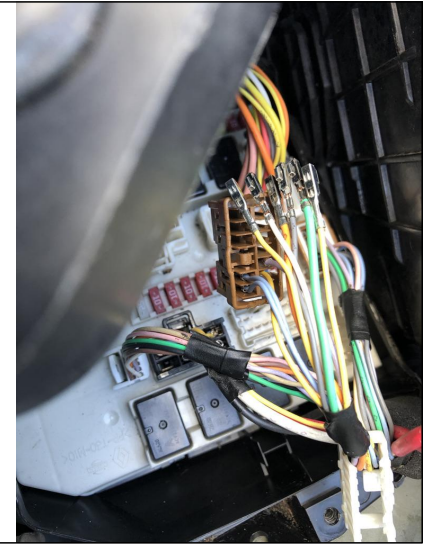
21 November 2021

My 15 year old car
breaks down.

Water in the electrics.

Not economic to fix.

I travel home to
Brentwood by train,
ferry, and train...



This crisis set me thinking: did I need a car?



**At home,
my bus pass awaits!**

Once home, I found my new bus pass on the mat.



**I had a folding bike,
no need to book on a train or tube**

I already had a good bike that could be folded taken on trains on the tube so really useful for even long journeys. And of course it would keep me fit.



And although train journeys could be expensive, I had a third off.

BUT, I was volunteering, delivering, collecting...

daily bread

We warmly invite you to come to your Community Kitchen if you could use a little help in providing for yourself or your family the delicious, nutritious food that everyone deserves

Fresh ingredients * Satisfying snacks
* Prepared meals FREE to pick up

FOOD HUB
MON-SAT
10-12 NOON

CAFE
TUES-FRI
10-1 PM

CAFE | **VOLUNTEER** | **FOOD HUB**

But the Covid crisis had led me into Brentwood Mutual Aid, helping people who were afraid to go out to get their shopping to get their prescription, and in some cases, helping them with free food, since they had lost their jobs.

SO, I chose to get a car

1. It was the middle of COVID
2. I was helping folk through Brentwood Mutual Aid
3. I was collecting food for Daily Bread
4. I wanted to travel independently and camp in my car!

In conclusion, I felt I needed a car to carry on helping with all the labour and time I could give now, as a retired, well semi-retired academic.

Which?

Search

My saved items

My account

Tech Appliances Home & garden Money Family Health Cars Travel Consumer rights & campaigns Services

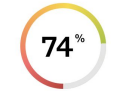
BEST BUY **ECO BUY**



Kia
Soul EV (2019-2024)



Test score 



Used only

Compact/Crossover SUV Electric

£7,632 Typical price

☐ Compare

All my life I had had hand me down cars, and secondhand would be normal so the prospect of considering an electric vehicle with their high prices was quite daunting. But reading the Which? article about this recommended car, and also following YouTube videos, that warts-and-all told people's experiences in using an EV themselves, made me consider that I could use my life savings to give me not only a vehicle to continue my work but also to enjoy driving.



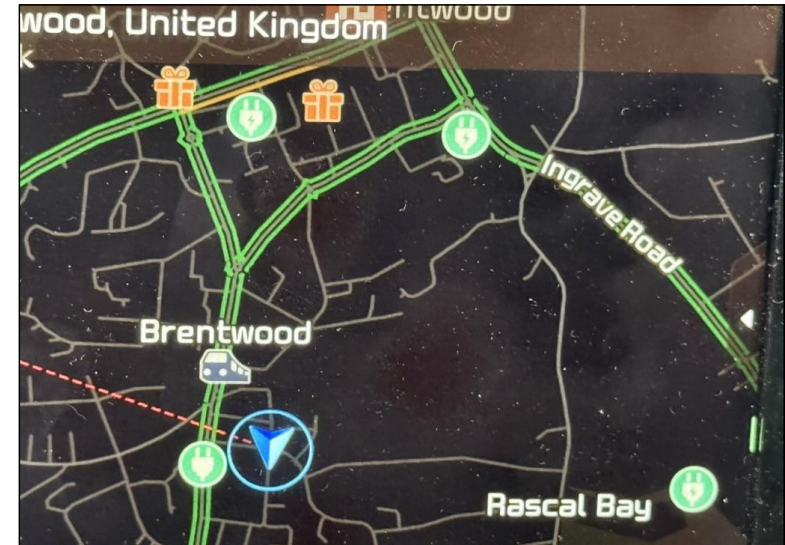
New Kia Soul's weren't available for six months. And, it was hard to find one secondhand anywhere in the UK. But I finally found one on sale in Northern Ireland, which suited me because I had to go back to Ireland anyway to collect all my things, after the old car broke down in the west. The test drive absolutely sealed it - I was in love. It drove like my childhood dream Rolls-Royce!



That night I drove on to meet my friends again in the west of Ireland and collect my things. On the way, in Carrick on Shannon, I found myself needing to charge the car for the first time. This exciting moment was only slightly spoiled by having to pay a penalty of €10 for the two minutes over the standard 45 permitted on the charging device.



So that was the start of a great adventure.
 My car worked well, until one day, I decided to stop and camp up a mountain in the middle of Ireland.
 The morning after, I could not start, despite having a full battery.
 The 12 V battery, like you have in any car, had run down and all that power in the big battery that drove the car could not help me.
 I had to call out roadside recovery.



My main way of charging is by an ordinary three-pin socket.
 I am lucky that I can run a cable from my flat to the car safely.
 I don't mind it being slow, most driving is around town. But when I go on a journey I use fast chargers while I enjoy lunch or dinner.

Why did I do what I had done?

1. No exhaust
2. Low brake dust
3. Quietness (Hi-fi)
4. Low maintenance (20 vs 2000)
5. Cost of fuel

If you're driving 8,000 miles per year, "fuelling" (charging) can cost around **£157** (if you charge at home all of the time) **to £537 per year** (a typical mix of home, public and workplace charging).

Compare that to an **average £1,269 per year spent on petrol** and the savings potential becomes pretty obvious.

Octopus 2026

So my reasons for buying an expensive electric vehicle were:

- 1) No exhaust - I would not be making greenhouse gases (directly).
- 2) Low brake dust - I would not be polluting the air around the children that live in my block or elsewhere.
- 3) Quietness - I could hear music in the car with its super hi-fi including sub loudspeaker.
- 4) Low maintenance - in the drive-train they estimate 20 moving parts. Internal combustion engines may have as many as 20,000. No oil to replace, no spark plugs, no drive belts.
- 5) Cost of fuel - I charge at home using the mains electricity, slow, but so am I! It costs around 25p per kWh approx **8 pence per mile** about a third of the petrol / diesel cost. As of July 2026, average prices to charge an EV on the UK public network is 54p/kWh for standard chargers, and 80p/kWh for rapid chargers. That is approx 16 pence per mile and 24 pence per mile.

November 2024

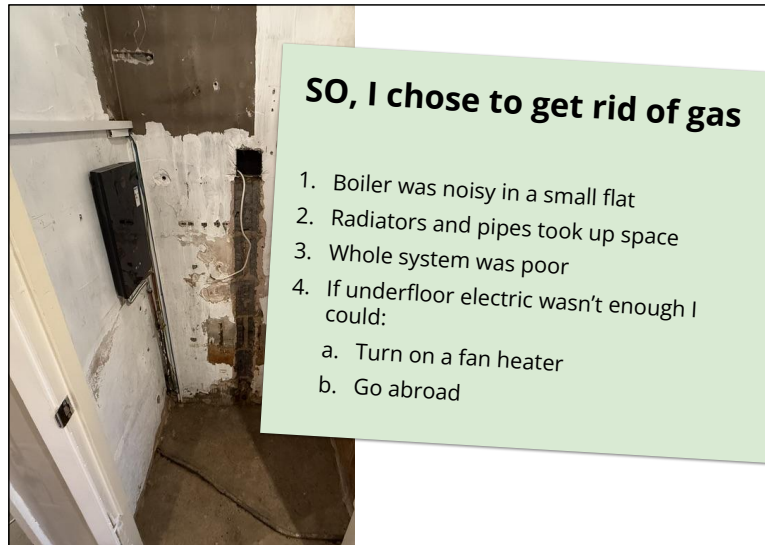
My gas boiler stops working.

The error code says repair not possible.

It is cold outside...



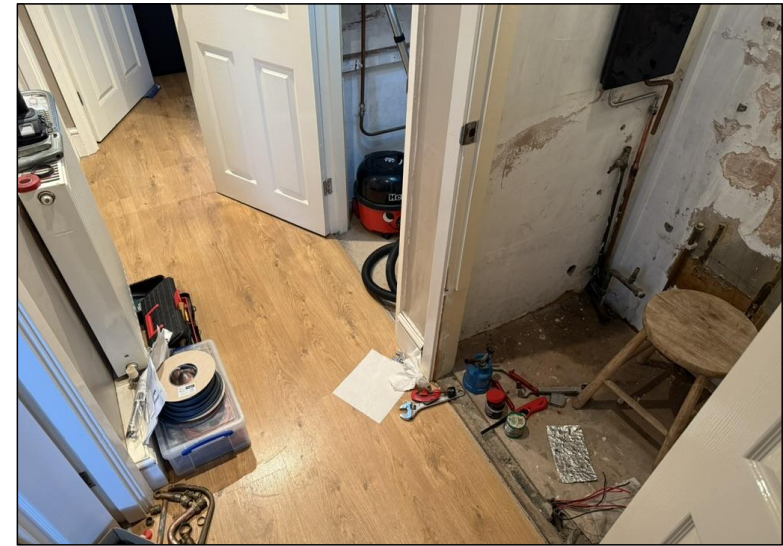
One day in the middle of winter, my gas boiler fails. Looking up the error code on the internet I find that I have to replace it.



I chose to get rid of all the gas in my flat and replace it with underfloor heating and an induction hob. I asked my supplier to remove the meter so that I had no standing charge.

My reasons were varied:

- 1) The boiler was noisy - I like peace and quiet.
- 2) The radiators and their pipes were taking a lot of space in a wide skirting all around the walls of each room.
- 3) The responsiveness and distribution of heat was not great.
- 4) If it got really cold, I had plans to use fan heaters or spend money abroad!



I got started straight away to clear out the old boiler and pipes and replaced (temporarily I thought) the boiler with an electric water heater (the black box top right) so I could wash. I had no previous idea how powerful gas boilers are in comparison to electric, so it was touch and go whether this relatively weak electric boiler would be adequate!



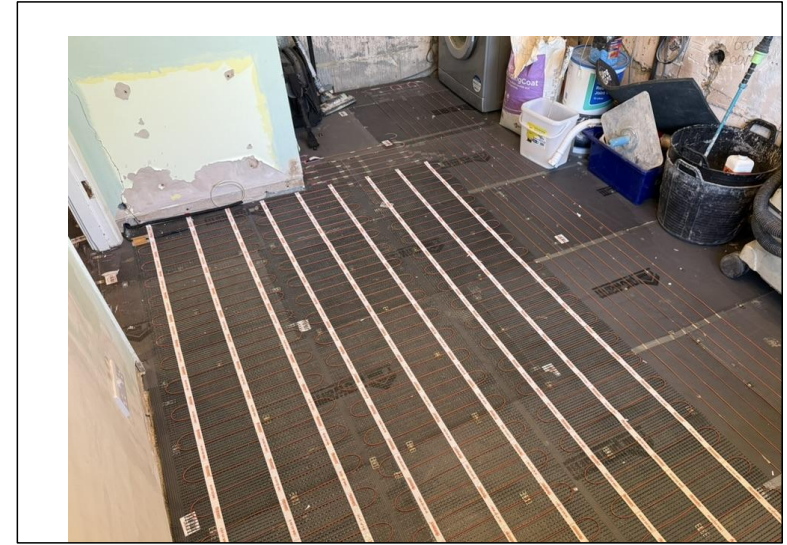
New tool for cutting out old pipes.



To put in the new underfloor heating, I needed to clear the old screed - a relatively unskilled job that I could do.



But the new floor needed a multi-skilled renovation by my fast-becoming friend Dan! The timbers here show how he levelled the floor and laid insulation below flooring.



Then another thin layer of protective insulation followed by wires to provide heat.



And finally tiling all over.



These are those layers!



And this is the new eclectic boiler, sunk into the wall, looking very high-tech!



I also raise my sofas to make it easier to clean underneath.



And had a new worktop and cupboards together with induction hob and 'boily tap' in the new sink. The cupboards above were unchanged.

Why did I do what I had done?

1. No fossil fuels in my name
2. Better insulation
3. High ratio of electricity turned into heat
4. Warm floor, cool air
5. Peace and quiet
6. Exploring control through automation and voice control (gadget freak)

The reasons had grown on me as the work proceeded:

- 1) I was no longer using any fossil fuels - although electricity is generated with gas, the direction of travel is towards renewables - wind and solar.
- 2) My home was better insulated to reduce costs.
- 3) Electric wires in the floor turn almost all of the electricity into heat in my home - with gas, a lot of heat went up the flue and out.
- 4) As an older man, circulation weakening, a warm floor is delightful for my feet and lower legs. Cooler air around my head was a pleasure.
- 5) No noise - I could listen to my music with a good hi-fi with fewer interruptions by a noisy boiler or pipes.
- 6) A new and interesting venture - how could automation and voice control help me?



The gateway drug -
an Amazon Echo.

I have four.

Wifi and Bluetooth,
can take voice
commands,
synchronise music
in my flat, detect
with ultrasound
when there is
someone present,
report the
temperature - and
thus control
everything else.

I have started this new venture with these items - Amazon Echo speakers.



An addiction to coloured lights

And soon started buying multi coloured, controllable bulbs.

Getting carried away!



And as I was replacing my toilet, I would have liked a bidet too, but too small a bathroom, I chose a Japanese automatic toilet with heated automatically lifting seat and cover, no cistern (less water used), automated washing of the 'bottoms' and flushing all without touching anything with my hands.

Floor heating and toilet



"High tech Japanese toilets incorporate dual-flush systems (0.8-1.28 GPF), conserving up to 4,000 gallons annually per household compared to 1.6 GPF standards. Tankless designs eliminate stagnant water reservoirs, lowering bacterial growth and energy use for heating. By cutting toilet paper consumption, these units decrease deforestation impacts and sewer clogs, with lifecycle analyses showing carbon footprint reductions over 10-15 years. Energy-efficient modes limit standby power to 1-5 watts, aligning with eco-conscious living."

The toilet is eco-conscious, but also a lot of fun. I also think it may have a major role to play as I age. The 'bottoms' cleaning is quite therapeutic!

Floor-cleaning robot, Steve Biko



Steve (Beko) is my robotic floor cleaner - reluctant to make an appearance for this film!

Boily tap & induction hob



The induction hob is a no-brainer - as versatile as gas, creating more kitchen space, make less mess and very easy to keep clean. If only I could control it with automation and voice command!

The jury is out on the boily tap - over time mine has become a bit sputtery, dangerous with very hot water, and more annoying, to turn it on and off I have to reach under the sink and cannot control it with a smart plug! Work in progress.

What Have I Done?

1. Increased joy
2. Kept my feet warm
3. Felt I have made a stand

What Next?

1. Balcony panels
2. Community energy

So in conclusion I have made my life more joyful with the nature of the car and with the delight from the renovation work, which also keeps my feet warm in the winter, and I feel morally I have made a stand by eradicating fossil fuels.

I look forward to adding solar power to my flat through DIY plug-in balcony panel technology, and more ambitiously, through organising a community energy project.