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I'm Brian Eno and you need to turn off the news and find the hope with these 3 ways to effect change

Musician, artist and activist Brian Eno sheds light on the hidden path to hope that's right in front of us.

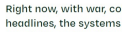


Eno by Gus Stewart/Redferns | Press handout

Brian Eno

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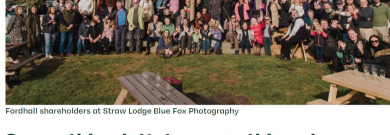
For some time now I have been living by a maxim that informs almost everything I do: that if we want a new world we have to start making it, together.

Right now, with war, collapse, climate and cost of living dominating our headlines, the systems we thought we could rely on seem completely unreliable and broken, and the governments we used to hope would sort it out for us aren't. This can feel worrying and daunting at face value, but in reality, it is also a thrilling opportunity.

Because while the headlines rage and rail, there's another story unfolding quietly across the UK - one that rarely reaches national attention. One where ordinary people are refusing to accept 'no' and are building solutions from the ground up. It's happening in housing estates, high streets, farms, and community halls. It's the story of ordinary people who looked at failing systems: food, energy, housing, democracy - and said we need to find another way.

And in trying, they're discovering something extraordinary: hope.

In our attention economy their stories are often sidelined or marginalised as unimportant, and given five minutes at the end of the so-called important news. But what we pay attention to grows. It's our attention that feeds it. So, is it time to reassess?



Fordhall shareholders at Straw Lodge Blue Fox Photography

Screw this... let's try something else

In the podcast **Screw This... let's try something else**, where hosts Maryam Pasha and Matt Golding tour the country to meet ordinary communities doing the extraordinary, I listened to stories of people taking matters into their own hands to create big, whopping change the narrative' change.

There's Mark Pepper and a group of residents from deprived neighbourhood Lawrence Weston who got sick of being ignored and knocked on 3,000 doors to ask, 'What matters to you most?' From that came answers many can relate to: our heating bills, living in a food desert, lack of access to green space.

Without money and skills they set about addressing these big things, forcing the council to get a supermarket built on a brownfield site, changing housing policy so that all new homes had to be energy efficient and cheap to run, and financing the construction of Britain's tallest wind turbine that generates enough electricity to power 3,000 homes, while making £100k a year for community projects.

That wind turbine is part of the inspiration for the government's £1 billion investment into community energy projects across the country. Energy for people, owned by the people.

And once you start to really think about that, what if there were 500 or more such wind turbines across the country, generating secure, resilient energy that no war could affect, that lowered bills and generated income for regular people? Is that the kind of world you would want to live in?

Another story that affected me deeply was that of Immy Kaur and Civic Square in Birmingham. Their ambitious aim is to build a resilient neighbourhood of the future. They, not our governments, are thinking about what a future that is three degrees warmer actually looks like, and in response are creating a dynamic neighbourhood hub, complete with community power station, microfactories and an ambitious retrofit program that puts the power of helping us into our own hands.

They are purposely thinking seven generations back and seven generations forward; how do we act as responsible ancestors who care for our children and grandchildren and the world they will live in.

On a neighbourhood level Civic Square is doing the learning and the practical experimentation for us so that, in the model of the NHS, its caring, inclusive neighbourhood can become a template that could spread. So I will ask the question again - what if there were a thousand such neighbourhoods across Britain?

Our power is in seeing ourselves as Citizens

When we hear examples like this, our tendency is to believe that we could never do the same, or that exceptional circumstances were at play to make the conditions exactly right for the impossible to become possible. But as Jon Alexander, says in his book *Citizens: Why the Key to Fixing Everything is All of Us*, the key to big change is often much smaller and more personal than that.

"I think there is a citizen in all of us, right? I think of it almost more like a verb than a noun. What is it to citizen? At the level of any given individual, there is a choice to make; do you succumb to this kind of politics of inevitability that people are basically bad, the world that we live in is horrible, but it's all humanity is capable of? Or do you choose to love humanity? And that's not a trivial thing. I'm not using those words lightly.

"On any given day, it might be easier to switch on the news and doom scroll and have your attention co-opted. It's an active choice to reject that, to go and look someone in the eye and see the best in them and invite them into something with me. It's as simple as that and as huge and difficult as that, but it is world changing."



Lee Robb Press Handout

When we choose to connect with each other and create something together, like Mark and the crew in Lawrence Weston and Immy and the rest of Civic Square have done, we are committing a radical act. We are taking back power from those we normally ask permission from, and saying we know what we need, here in our place. And when you start doing that, things begin to shift around you.

Take another story from Northern Ireland, where single mum Lee Robb got sick of the narrative around her broken town of Carrick Fergus. She asked her fellow residents what mattered to them and - like many of us - the answer was that they wanted to see a bustling and thriving local high street, something that had been lost over many years.

Lee and nine other residents crowdfunded a greengrocers that is supplied by a local market garden, bringing over 10,000 people a year to a previously dead part of the city centre. Lee now advises the Northern Ireland Government on food policy and creating resilience within our food systems:

"It feels really amazing... to have built something really concrete that you can actually touch. And it gives us a huge amount of credibility... because there's a lot of people... just sitting at desks doing research and writing papers and thinking that they're influencing change... And actually we just need people to build real stuff."

These are people who are living by the maxim: if we want a new world we have to start making it, right now. We have to 'live' the world we want to exist in.

What unites us is greater than what divides us

All around us we see the language and markers of division, both on the left and the right. All the stories that I have outlined so far focus on our essential needs, housing, food, energy and decision-making, all part and parcel of political conversations day in, day out, but interestingly, in these communities, traditional politics is rarely part of the conversation.

In Grimsby where local community group East Marsh United have crowdfunded to buy houses and become ethical landlords in an effort to knit their community back together, Billy Doesin says, "We'll talk to anybody."

A recent survey showed that while only 12 per cent of us still trust politicians, 70 per cent of us trust in each other. That is hugely, manifestly important. If we reject narrow, top-down leadership in favour of working together in our communities, the potential to effect change is not just a nice idea, but a generational opportunity. As Jon Alexander says, 'All of us are smarter than any of us.'

Podcast 'Screw This... let's try something else' shows that the mechanisms for creating a new kind of political engagement already exist in the citizens assembly in Paris that runs a 100 million euro budget, Scotland's Community Wealth building bill, and further afield in Zohran Mamdani's New York Office of Mass Engagement.



Screw This... Let's Try Something Else. Antidote

Slowly the zeitgeist is beginning to catch on. Rutger Bergman's BBC Reith Lectures laid out a vision of ordinary groups of people coming together to create meaningful societal change that challenges and redefines the status quo, pointing to clear historical precedents that prove it can be done.

What we pay attention to... grows

Practical demonstrations of hope in action show that the most fundamental way to meet the current moment is to come together, and there is a place for all of us within that, whatever our views. By coalescing around common-sense solutions to our basic needs like food, energy, housing and decision-making, we have the tools to bridge division and make real change that can create a better world.

But as an artist and a storyteller I see my responsibility going one step further. I talk a lot about what art is and what it can be, most recently in my book with co-writer Bette Adriaens, *What Art Does*. Anything from a hairstyle to a sweet wrapper can be art, and art and creativity are foundational to our lives and are pivotal in creating real, meaningful change.



Brian Eno with Jeremy Corbyn. Photo by Guy Smallman/Getty Images

In my mind, Lawrence Weston's Wind Turbine and Civic Square's neighbourhood hub are game-changing pieces of art, because they are both physical embodiments of the possibility for a very different kind of future: a future that rejects the dire picture that many of us imagine in our minds.

What we pay attention to grows, so when we look at the stories we are telling ourselves on the news, and in the slick television dramas we watch about the billionaire class, could spending more time focusing on real people doing incredible things help shift the needle to a better world?

So what can we do?

I asked Matt Golding, producer and host of 'Screw this... let's try something else' to give me his suggestions:

1. Notice & Listen

Take a walk in your neighbourhood, visit local shops, parks, or community spaces, and simply ask: what matters to people here? Listen to your neighbours' concerns, ideas and small frustrations. Often, the first step to change is understanding what already exists and what needs attention.

1. Start Small & Act

You don't need a big budget or a council mandate to begin. Plant a community garden, organise a litter pick, set up a local swap, or volunteer at a nearby project. Even small, consistent actions create momentum, build relationships, and inspire others to join.

1. Connect & Multiply

Change spreads through networks. Invite neighbours to help, partner with local groups, or join existing initiatives like community farms, renewable energy co-ops, or housing projects. Sharing ideas and working together multiplies your impact and makes hope contagious.

Remember: hope isn't something you wait for - it's something you create, right where you are.

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Explore your local initiatives: Use ANTIDOTE's AI postcode tool to find positive projects within five miles of your home. [Podcast - ANTIDOTE](#).

Take the Hope Survey: Share whether hearing these stories has made you feel more optimistic and capable of change. [Podcast - ANTIDOTE](#).

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Brian Eno

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