

# Book Review

## How Bad Are Bananas? Mike Berners-Lee

How Bad Are Bananas? by Mike Berners-Lee is an engaging, accessible, and often surprising guide to understanding our everyday impact on the planet. In this cleverly written book, Berners-Lee uses familiar objects and activities—bananas, bikes, emails, flights, and even chocolate—to explain the idea of a **carbon footprint**. His approach is clear and relatable, making a complex topic understandable for readers of all ages.

The book breaks down how the things we do and use release different amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Berners-Lee introduces the concept of **Carbon Dioxide Equivalents**, a useful way of comparing the environmental impact of different actions—whether that’s travelling to school by car, bus, or on foot.

One of the most memorable examples in the book, and the one Simon shared with Year 5 pupils at Pilgrims’ Way School, is the humble **banana**. At first glance, bananas seem harmless, but Berners-Lee shows how even this everyday fruit has a carbon footprint. Grown in warm regions such as South America, Africa, and Asia, bananas must be picked, packed, and shipped across oceans before they arrive in our shops. All of this uses energy and contributes to carbon emissions.

However, the message is reassuring rather than alarming. Compared with many other foods—especially beef—bananas are still an environmentally friendly choice. Berners-Lee avoids creating fear or guilt; instead, he encourages readers to think critically about where their food comes from and how their choices add up.

Overall, How Bad Are Bananas? is informative without being overwhelming, and it empowers readers to understand and reduce their own impact on the climate. It invites us to pay attention to the hidden journeys behind the things we enjoy—but also reminds us that we can still appreciate bananas, chocolate, and even the occasional holiday flight. It’s a thoughtful, optimistic read that inspires awareness and action in equal measure.

Simon Haseltine

Chair of Trust Board

February 2026