

**Small Blue Planet
Asset Management - Only the lonely
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Investment Week**

With miserable singleton's piling on debt all over the land, the chairman scents an opportunity

"Have you ever considered 'greenshifting'?" I asked the chairman of the insignificantly-sized investment company SmallBlue Planet as we enjoyed a few pints of Five Beaming Hacks at The Debatable Need For Yet More Awards Won By The Same Old Faces. "I've no idea what you're on about, old boy," came the reply. "But, believe me, if it's green, we've considered it.

"We have an ethical fund for every taste and occasion, we recycle all the time - and I don't just mean marketing ideas - and I've even considered buying a bicycle." "That's impressive," I said. "But where will your chauffeuse sit?" "Steady on," replied the chairman. "I said I'd been considering getting a bike, not riding one. One thing at a time, eh--"

"Very wise," I nodded. "Anyway, this idea of 'greenshifting' isn't quite that centred in the world of socially responsible investment. It's more to do with quitting the rat race and moving out of the UK's towns and cities. According to a survey from something called Locallife - which I think is a network of local internet directories - it's a dream shared by 27% of the country and is also known as 'zenployment'."

"Of course it is," said the chairman. "However, in common it would appear with 73% of the country, I prefer moving out of town on a less permanent basis every now and again to enjoy what is known as a 'holiday' and then coming back after two or three weeks to continue making what I like to call a 'fortune'. Also, I can't help but feel I'd find that sort of life a tad lonely - even with Mrs Chairman in the vicinity."

"Interesting you should say that," I said. "For I also have new - well, new-ish - research that suggests the main cause of misery and stress in people's lives is loneliness and the prospect of never meeting someone to share their life with."

"Crikey," said the chairman. "You've become a barrel of laughs all of a sudden. Anyway, I thought debt was supposed to be the biggest cause of misery or stress."

"You've been watching too much daytime TV," I said. "For the good, good people of Parship, who I'm told are the UK's leading online scientific dating service, believe loneliness is the main cause of misery for many people - particularly singles - while debt is more an underlying symptom. So, to make themselves feel more adequate and appealing to the opposite sex, people are splashing out on lifestyles they can't afford in the belief money can buy them love.

"Instead, of course, their debt just spirals out of control. And so, say the Parshippers, while preaching the virtues of living within one's means is sound advice, for many, following a strict financial regime is as unrealistic as an alcoholic or obese person being told not to drink or eat. To solve the problem one must treat the cause - only then, it seems, will the symptoms reduce.

"As it happens, Parship's survey suggests about half of the UK's 13 million singles lose an average of 28 nights sleep a year through worry about loneliness. By comparison, only one fifth of singles cited financial problems, including credit card debt, as a cause of stress, while the same percentage put the blame on work pressures. Only 7% mentioned family problems and 3% illness.

"And did you know scientific studies have shown married men live longer than their single counterparts, which apparently may be due in part to lower stress levels and the comfort being in a long-term relationship can bring--" "That's not an argument I've heard made very often," said

the chairman. "Are you sure it doesn't just feel as if they live longer--"

"Boom, boom," I replied. "My final interesting fact of the day - especially bearing in mind how many SRI funds are now on offer from SmallBlue Planet - is that not a single person among the 500 questioned in this survey saw global warming as a cause for stress. Out of interest, do you see that as... er... a cause for stress."

"Absolutely not," said the chairman, shaking his head. "It's more a reason to launch a new green fund aimed solely at married couples."

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