



GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

MARCH 2008

Guildford Environmental Forum joins **The Guildford Mukono Link**

by John Bannister

Guildford teachers Erica, Gillian, Amy and Hayley, who in February took to Mukono in Uganda equipment supplied by the Forum – some is shown here. Erica and Amy teach at St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School (twinned with Busenya Primary School) and Gillian and Hayley teach at St Peter's Secondary School (twinned with Lutengo United Secondary School).

GUILDFORD's links with Mukono District in Uganda have been building up for a few years with ever-increasing momentum. The main objective of the relationship is to put people in touch with each other to achieve mutual understanding and mutual assistance. Tamsy Baker MBE, former Guildford Lib Dem Councillor, chairs the organisation.

Education is a big part of the programme and already six Guildford schools have forged links with six schools in Mukono. Reciprocal visits are taking place and some impressive school-based projects, such as curriculum sharing, higher education sponsorship, classrooms and teacher houses are bringing tangible results on the ground in Mukono. One of the schools in Mukono is Busenya Primary School, which is located in a completely rural area with no electricity.

Inspired by a call from Peter Slade (past Forum chairman), I attended the launch in London of an organisation called Solar Aid, committed to bring simple, low-tech, low-cost solar PV (photovoltaic) systems to places just like Busenya to provide a minimal amount of clean electricity for their basic needs, such as lights and for charging small batteries. Solar Aid is the brainchild of Jeremy Leggett, founder and CEO of Solar Century based in London and one of the UK's main providers of PV systems. It has always been Jeremy's objective to donate 10% of the company's net profit to establish Solar Aid, but it was only last year when the company first made a profit. Solar Aid's vision is a world where everyone has affordable, clean, renewable power, not least to free people from poverty. Their patron is Cate Blanchett.

Solar Aid's main focus at this stage is to provide simple, 1 watt micro solar systems, that is PV panels measuring about 15 cm square, enough to charge AA, AAA and other small batteries and power LED lights.

Through Solar Aid, the Forum has provided for Mukono two micro solar kits, a kerosene lamp converted to an LED light and three solar torches that also act as battery chargers. In February this equipment was taken out to Mukono by the four teachers pictured left.

We are hoping that local entrepreneurs in Mukono will start producing these micro solar kits, and so help to improve living standards there.

Please consider joining Guildford Mukono Link and your charitable donations will help this tremendous initiative. www.guildford-uganda.com

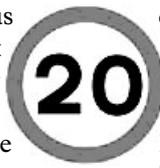


Twenty miles per hour means safer, more civilised streets

THE FORUM has teamed up with the Guildford Society to promote 20mph Zones across the central residential area of Guildford and everywhere in the borough where pedestrians, cyclists and motorists are in close proximity. A blanket 20mph Zone across the town centre would be preferable to selected streets, as then road users would know on entry that an entire area is restricted.

The benefits are self-evident. As Surrey County Council's *Guide to Road Safety* points out, around 25% of deaths and serious injuries occur where drivers are thought to be above the speed limit or travelling too fast for the road conditions. Regrettably, the majority of vehicles are now speeding whenever conditions allow.

At 30mph the risk of serious injury to someone wearing a seat belt travelling in the front seat of a car is three times greater than at 20mph. If you hit a pedestrian at 20mph the pedestrian has a 97% chance of survival, whereas at 30mph the survival chance reduces to 80% and at 40mph to a mere 10%.



For a host of good reasons we want to get more adults and children walking and cycling. This will only happen if motorised traffic learns to share our road space in a more civilised way. Also, damage to our roads is costing tax payers dearly and speed is a major contributor. Road noise too, which is a serious problem throughout Guildford, is speed related.

Surrey has a number of 20mph Zones and the evidence, nationally, is that drivers slow down by 9mph, crashes have fallen by 60% and crashes involving children by 67%. There is a huge 20 mph initiative taking place in London where the Mayor has ambitious targets for cycling and walking to tackle pollution and health problems. There are many other examples across the UK and Europe.

Within Guildford the 20mph Zone in Bellfields has proved a real success. The Forum and the Guildford Society have met with Council officers who are considering how best to take this forward and we will continue to pursue this objective. *John Bannister*

Some welcomes, some farewells

Katie Watson

A new officer, Katie Watson, has been appointed to lead Guildford Environmental Forum's Schools Group. The objective of this group is to work even more closely and effectively with the borough's schools.

Katie graduated in psychology and English and taught English in Spain before pursuing her interest in the environment. She volunteered for a time with London 21 before joining the Energy Centre for Sustainable Communities (ecsc) based in Woking. Her work at ecsc is already involving her in a programme funded by Guildford Borough Council, in which the Forum is a partner, to help schools reduce their energy consumption.

She is also engaging with schools through Friends of the Earth. Both her parents are teachers so "there is no escaping it"!

We know our members will join us in welcoming Katie, and we hope you can meet her soon.

Fiona Booth

Katie replaces Fiona Booth who was our Schools Liaison Co-ordinator until September last year. Fiona, who worked for Guildford Borough Council (GBC), left to take up an environmental officer position as Community

Environmental Sustainability Manager for East Potential, which is part of the East Thames Group involved in accommodation and training opportunities for young people and quality of life improvements for the whole neighbourhood undergoing intense regeneration.

David Harnett

David Harnett has also left the Council. He worked for GBC for eight years in their Climate Change team and will be known to many of our members. David provided us with enormous help and support and will be greatly missed. He has moved to a new environmental post with Milton Keynes Council and we wish him every success.

Cati Smith and Garry Bosworth

With David's departure the Forum looks forward to working with Cati Smith who joined GBC's Climate Change team in January. The new head of this team is Garry Bosworth. We have always had a very close working relationship with GBC, and are eager to continue participating in new exemplar initiatives to move us further along the path to a sustainable Guildford.

Worldwide travel

A satellite-tagged godwit travelled, without food or rest, 11,500 kilometres from Alaska to New Zealand. It is the longest recorded non-stop bird migration, and can be compared to a human being running non-stop for a week.

(Source: BBC Focus, Nov 07)

Animal health

Last century, the organic pioneer Sir Albert Howard found that, by using composting to grow high-quality nutritious feed, cattle were almost totally resistant to foot-and-mouth disease. The future may show that eradication is futile, whereas a positive health approach delivers lasting dividends.

(Source: Living Earth, Winter 07)

Our rubbish

In less than two hours, the UK produces enough waste to fill the Albert Hall.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, July 07)

FACTS & FIGURES

Acid rain

The problem of acid rain has all but disappeared from the UK. But it persists in Scandinavia, where the biggest source is from international shipping in the North and Baltic Seas. Sweden spends £15 million every year spreading alkaline lime in its lakes to try to restore their natural chemical balance.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, Summer 07)

Surrey Hills

WOOD FUEL HUB

by Mark Lebus, Managing Director of LC Energy Ltd

In December last year, the local wood chip market received a significant boost with the official launch of the first fully commercial wood fuel hub in the area near Guildford, providing a reliable and high quality supply. The Surrey Hills Wood Fuel Hub, run by LC Energy Ltd, produces wood chip for the local biomass market from sustainable woodland management.

The hub is based on Albury Estate land, operates in partnership with the estate and has been set up with support from the Surrey Hills AONB Partnership. The hub has already produced 250 tonnes of G30 wood chip at less than 30% moisture content for its first winter heating contracts.

It has been an exciting few months building the hub and getting all the supply chain elements into place. The first fuel contracts began this winter.

The hub will grow from 1,000 tonnes in its first year to 3,000 tonnes a year over the next three years. Beyond that there are options from other local estates, borough councils and local woodland operators like Surrey Wildlife Trust. The hub is the first of five to be built by LC Energy over the next five years, which will help it become an active and leading supplier of wood fuel in the south-east.

Albury Estate is one of the many large landowners beginning to see the benefit of using its lower value timber for a local wood fuel market as the move to become 'green' gathers more momentum each day. This has become an ideal way to prevent this timber feedstock from being transported halfway across the country for little or no return.

Surrey is the most wooded county in the entire country so it would be a travesty not to be able to create a highly sustainable wood fuel supply chain for a very long time to come. Now is the time to make certain that public awareness is top of the wood fuel agenda and that we are building upon a tried and tested industry that has been operating across Europe for over 30 years.

LC Energy has five local customers signed up to wood chip supply contracts including a school, a care home and a number of private residences. The market



The obvious use of Surrey's abundant woodland – managing it sustainably and converting the low-grade timber into woodchip fuel for boilers such as the one pictured.

for this carbon- neutral fuel is growing rapidly and is being driven by local authorities and planning officers and the desire by many businesses, institutions and private landowners to switch to this alternative low-cost and secure solution to heat energy.

If you would like any further information on wood fuel supply or installation of biomass heating systems please contact Mark Lebus on 01483 205659 or visit our website www.LCENERGY.co.uk

Stephen Rainbird reports on two site visits to see what happens to ...

... our domestic waste



Albury landfill site



Gas processing plant at Albury

Jane Alexander, Guildford Borough Council's Project Coordinator (Recycling), organised a visit to Albury landfill site, where the mixed domestic waste collected at the Slyfield depot is sent.

This large landfill in a sand quarry takes around 1,000 tonnes of mixed domestic waste a day from 40-50 articulated 24-tonne lorries.

The site is lined with sand/clay and a rubber liner, and built in 3-metre high stages, with each day's deposit covered

at night. The leachate is pumped off for treatment, and then sent to the sewage system; the methane gas is at present burnt, but we visited a new adjacent plant, the first in the country, where the methane gas will be processed, chilled to liquid form, and will then provide around 20 tonnes of vehicle fuel per day.

The landfill will be filled within about four years, but will continue providing methane from the buried organic waste for around another 60 years.

... and our card

Commercial card collected within the Guildford area is taken for recycling to the St Regis Kemsley Mill in Sittingbourne, Kent. Here we were given a guided tour by Geoff Wood.

The mill was built in 1920 to supply newsprint for the presses in Fleet Street. The area around the mill was (and still is) home to many paper and card mills, which originally used log from Scandinavia for their raw material.

By 1960, the plant had six machines making 150,000 tonnes of newsprint per year, with the first machine introduced to start cardboard production by fluking, to give the corrugations in the finished box material. With 70-90 trucks, each loaded with 25 tonnes of material, and 300 staff, the mill's production was on a vast scale.

With the decline in the value of newsprint, from around 1980 the majority of the business was turned to cardboard production for packaging. Moving to the use of recycled material the plant now produces, from three machines, around half a million tonnes per year – about 50% of the packaging paper in the UK. Production also includes the liners for plasterboards.

Around 99% of the production is of recycled material, with only the top ply of plasterboard liner using virgin stock. The feedstock is divided into cardboard and mixed waste paper.

Staples, and other foreign material, are removed and divided into two categories: the 'light' (50,000 tonnes per year) comprising plastics etc which are burnt in a plant to supply hot water and steam, and the 'heavy' (8,000 tonnes per year) which are sent to landfill and comprise staples, binding wire and glass.

Modern methods have reduced the amount of water needed to 7 tonnes of water to produce 1 tonne of finished product. Some of the production water is re-used as the site has its own water treatment plant, with the sludge produced from

recycling burnt for power, although the site does have its own CHP plant.

The main problem with the use of recycled feed stock is from contamination with plastic, polystyrene, glass and metal. It is better to separate materials before they enter the recycling process, since the plant can lose £5,000 per hour from machine failure due to contamination of feedstock.

We saw the three machines in full production – 1-ply liner at 34 tonnes per hour, 3-ply liner at 45 tonnes per hour, and the fluking for corrugated card at 10 tonnes per hour – helping to supply the annual UK consumption of roughly 12 million tonnes of paper and card per annum, of which only around 4 million tonnes is recycled.



St Regis Kemsley Mill, Sittingbourne

He cannot be serious!

"David Miliband [Environment Minister] made it clear that climate change is the biggest issue humanity has ever faced. How is he going to respond? By spending an extra £10 million on supporting renewable power. £10 million! The Government is currently spending £3.6 billion on putting an extra lane on the M1. It's pitiful.

In fact it's laughable."

(Source: George Monbiot, in *Earthmatters*, Spring 07)

FACTS & FIGURES

The macho approach

A Royal Horticultural Society survey has revealed that nearly 60% of men use weedkiller, compared with only 38% of women.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, Aug 07)

Troubled waters – 1

Since 1992, the approximate annual rise in global sea levels has been 3mm.

Troubled waters – 2

Each year, the equivalent of 21 million barrels of oil are released into oceans from street run-off, industrial effluent and maritime activities.

Troubled waters – 3

The number of people currently dependent on the oceans for their food is 3.5 billion. This number could double in the next 18 years.

(Source: *The Independent*, 7 Jul 07)

One Planet Future – a presentation by WWF Niamh Carey, WWF

NIAMH STARTED her presentation by outlining the fundamental problem that the world is already consuming its resources much faster than it can replace them. For example it would take three planets with as much biologically productive land as the Earth to support the world's population at the UK level of consumption. This conclusion is based on work on "ecological footprinting", much of which has been done by WWF internationally. WWF's involvement in this field springs from the way in which the increasing human footprint since the 1980s is worsening the decline in the number of species in the world since the 1970s.

She placed this consumption growth in the context of the professionalisation of marketing and public relations in the twentieth century that used the work of psychologists to create "wants". This move further from a need-based economy has led to unsustainable development, with dire consequences such as pollution and rapid climate change. The problem is to change this situation, given that we like our lifestyles and would not want to return to a pre-industrial world.

WWF in the UK is tackling this problem with a Sustainable Consumption team, within a framework of larger teams. These are "Cities and Communities", working on sustainable cities; "Education" which has worked with the Education Ministry and OFSTED; "Sustainable Businesses" addresses different sectors in sequence (currently it is working on mobility – oil, rail, and car industries but also communications – with the aim of reducing travelling by better use of telecommunications); "International Development" has, for example worked on improving fishing and forestry techniques in Africa; the mathematical and modelling work is done by the "Metrics Team"; and the "Policy Team" prepare statements of WWF's positions.

The work that the Sustainable Consumption Team do with the public to achieve behaviour change is based on a process of: encourage; enable; engage; exemplify. They seek to combine "social learning" (i.e. individuals working together in a group) and "action learning" (i.e. learning by doing) and to do this they draw people together in groups. Generally people are well aware of the problems of the world as there is plenty of information available, but they are not doing anything about these problems. One way to assist them is to provide a source of information they can trust, and to build on their underlying values and attitudes to create a sense of "environmental citizenship" or "active citizenship".

Where they have set up community groups (such as one in Stoughton), or worked with established groups (as they have done in Reigate and Cranleigh), they start by planning with the groups what they want to do, helping them through implementing this and then evaluating the outcome. It can be a difficult process for participants as many people lacked previous experience – but some found this experience to be life-changing.

WWF is evaluating projects at present. One of the lessons learned is to concentrate on people who are quick adopters of new ideas, so that their example can be followed by others who are slower adopters. It is also important to have someone available to support the group, not just to provide the technical information but to maintain commitment in a situation that lacks tangible outcomes, especially given the urgency of the problems.

WWF is working with many other organisations, locally, regionally and nationally, both on measuring the change in behaviour that is achieved and in sharing the good practice.

Guildford Site Allocations

The Forum's response

THE FORUM has responded to the Guildford Development Framework *Site Allocations Issues and Options Consultation Paper*. This document lists site options that have already been suggested to the Borough Council for future development. Some of them in practice do have the support of the Council, but not all.

We made objections to all those proposals that included suggested developments on SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), and also to those that would have an adverse impact on the Blackwater Valley Strategic Gap. This includes a nature reserve on which we have received a

variety of representations. As two of the Blackwater Valley proposals related to Gypsy and Traveller sites we commented that "the Forum is not expressing any view on the relative merits of this or of any other residential use."

Another wildlife area, in East Horsley, was proposed for residential use and we opposed this as well. On proposals for Pewley reservoir being made an open space, we commented that this should be wildlife-friendly.

We also supported in principle the proposals to create more Sites of Nature Conservation Importance.

Raymond Smith

Solar power: micro-renewable no longer

by Forum member Robert Palgrave

DOMESTIC SCALE solar electric power uses photovoltaic (PV) panels and typically has a maximum output of 1 to 3 kilowatts peak (kWp). In the south east of England, a 1kWp panel can produce 800 to 1000 kWh of electricity in a year – about a quarter of a typical household's consumption – saving about half a tonne of CO₂ emissions compared to grid-purchased electricity.

In the UK, solar electric power is only used on a small scale. It doesn't make economic sense for our electricity generators, given the UK's limited land availability and poor sunshine levels. But in sunnier parts of the world, and with rising oil and gas prices, utility-scale solar electricity is becoming competitive.

Utility-scale means a capacity of tens, preferably hundreds of Megawatts, and reliable enough to be a dependable source of power for national grids. How is solar power generated on this scale, given that the PV technology used in a domestic system is not very efficient, needs a lot of space, and is still very costly?

The largest operational solar power station is in fact one from the 1980s – at Kramer Junction near Los Angeles. It produces a maximum of 354 megawatts, using a technology called Concentrating Solar Power (CSP). An area of desert is covered with solar collectors in the form of horizontal parabolic troughs, which concentrate sunlight to raise a heat transfer fluid to about 500°C. The hot transfer fluid generates steam that drives turbines producing electricity. Heat storage allows the plant to continue operating during periods without adequate sunshine, and the turbines can also be driven by gas firing, so the plant can be in use 24 hours a day if needed.

Last year, new CSP plants went into operation in



Kramer Junction Operating Company

Parabolic troughs at Kramer Junction in the USA



Getty Images

Power tower in Spain

Nevada (64MW) and in Spain, near Seville (11MW). Pilot plants have been built in Australia, China and South Africa. The USA and Spain intend to install hundreds of MW more capacity. Algeria and Morocco are planning 155MW and 450MW plants that will be co-fired with gas, and want to sell some of the electricity to Europe through a new sub-Mediterranean cable. As well as parabolic troughs, CSP plants can be built using tracking heliostats (flat mirrors) and parabolic dishes.

The heat captured by CSP plants can be used to drive desalination plants in addition to generating electricity. In the Middle East, severe drinking water shortages are threatening places like Gaza, and could be averted using CSP to make sea water potable.

The other technology useful for big solar power stations, Concentrating Photovoltaic (CPV), uses Fresnel lenses, tracking dishes or heliostat mirrors to increase the intensity of light hitting photovoltaic solar cells and so get more electricity out of the same land area. Gains of as much as 500 times are achieved.

Solar Systems is building the world's largest PV solar power station in Victoria, Australia using concentrating and tracking heliostat technology, to go into service in 2013. They then aim to build 5GW capacity in Australia by 2030.

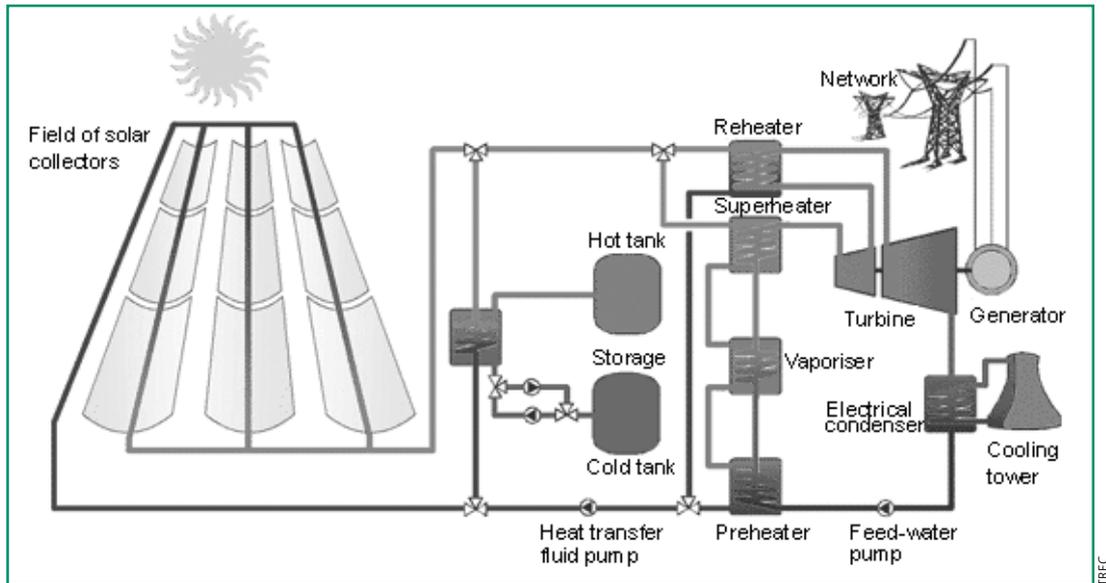
The plant will use 63,000 PV panels to generate 154MW – over twice as much as the world's biggest non-concentrating PV plant, 62MW, planned for Moura in Portugal, which will use 350,000 panels covering an area equivalent to 150 football pitches.

Utility-scale solar power is the most effective renewable energy – using CSP or CPV, one square kilometre of hot desert can produce approximately 250 GWh of electricity annually. This is 250 times

more than can be harvested from one square kilometre of biomass and five times more than from the best wind and hydro power plants. The UK's electricity consumption is about 350 TWh pa., so theoretically could be met by CSP plants covering 1,400 square km of the Sahara.

Transmitting electricity from deserts to centres of population or industry is technically feasible using advanced low-loss High Voltage Direct Current transmission systems. HVDC is a proven technology, already used to interconnect the national grids of many countries within Europe.

A group called TREC – Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation – has developed the DESERTEC concept for supplying part of Europe's electricity from solar power plants in the deserts of North Africa and the Middle East. TREC's roadmap for a pan-European renewable energy network – not



CSP (Concentrating Solar Power) schematic

just solar, but including wind, biomass, hydro and geothermal – is technically plausible, but faces stiff challenges from some politicians and from vested interests. There's a real danger Europe is going to be left behind if we fail to develop such a network to harvest our renewables in a more co-ordinated way.

To find out more about DESERTEC, try these websites:

- www.solarserver.de/solarmagazin/solar-report_0207_e.html
- www.trec-uk.org.uk/



Jackie Carpenter

TRELAY FARM – a mini eco-village

by John Bannister

FOR MANY YEARS, people concerned about over-exploitation of natural resources, about food and fuel security, the dependence of Western economies on excessive consumption increasing year on year and the looming certainty of Peak Oil, have come together in communal groups to try and achieve greater self-reliance and a more spiritual outlook towards each other and the natural world. Such a group with links to Guildford and to the Forum has established itself on a farm in

north Cornwall. I spent a week there over New Year.

Two years ago, people interested in joining the venture started meeting to agree how the community dynamics would work and what they could learn from similar groups with a solid track record. This resulted in a set of common objectives, and a core group who were ready to sell their homes and commit their savings began to look at properties in the west country. Finally, in spring last year,

enough people with enough money bought a 32-acre farm two miles from Crackington Haven.

Twelve people now live at Trelay Farm. The age range at present is about 35 to 86. Some have put in all their savings, others had little or no savings to contribute but bring youthful muscle to work the land instead. Several of the participants have well paid jobs in teaching, mortgages, building control and community care. Others are skilled in plumbing, wildlife conservation and renewable energy. All make a valuable contribution to the common good.

Trelay residents Jackie Carpenter and Ben Oubridge have remained throughout two of the most committed. Both are members of the Forum (in Jackie's case honorary). Jackie was previously Managing Director of Energy 21, a renewable energy charity, which last year was taken over by CAT (the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales). She and Ben have supported Forum projects such as the Puttenham Camping Barn. Ben worked for Guildford Borough Council in what is now called the Climate Change Team before leaving to set up his own company, the Climate Friendly Company, specialising in PV and other renewables.

An enormous amount has been achieved since April 2007 at Trelay Farm. Vegetable plots have been established, pigs have been reared and already two sows are expecting piglets, chickens are providing eggs and bees are quietly surviving the winter in readiness for the first warm days. Ten Greyface Dartmoor sheep, pregnant with lambs, graze one of the fields. The learning curve has been particularly steep for a bunch of townies with little prior experience of animal husbandry. But like all smallholders they care lovingly for their animals.

One of the aims is to use renewable energy as much as possible. So far, timber has been harvested from the woodland, allowing primroses, violets and bluebells to flourish again with sunlight now reaching the woodland floor. There is a large wood-store with a small amount of PV on the roof charging a battery to provide light in outbuildings. Woodstoves have been installed in the private dwellings (everyone has their own space) and a second-hand wood-burning Rayburn fits snugly in the large fireplace in the communal kitchen/dining room where most of the group sit down most days to share meals.

Everyone takes a turn at cooking and the food is wonderful, more so because of the shared experience. The Rayburn is excellent for baking bread. Early this year an energetic party cleared a piece of land to create an orchard. Over 30 trees have been planted, including varieties of plums, pears, apples and nuts. The farm is fairly sheltered to leeward of Atlantic gales, but from the top



Jackie Carpenter

field there are views of Lundy and the coast to the north.

One of the most marvellous aspects is the mutual help from neighbouring farmers, themselves, in some cases, new to the business, while others were born and raised there.

It's still very early days and the vision for Trelay Farm has barely begun. The site is

Clearing the orchard at Trelay Farm. Now 30 varieties of fruit and nut trees are growing there.

The Trelay potato harvest, July 2007.



Jackie Carpenter

perfect for small or medium-sized wind turbines. New buildings, whether of cob, log or straw-bale construction, will have to negotiate the planning process.

Links to the community have started, and not just in the local pubs. The village of Crackington nearby has won Lottery funding for a new community hall and Trelay are keen to put their skills to good use. A mile down the road the general stores and Post Office must be supported and saved. The sense of community within Trelay and without is palpable, viable and growing stronger with the arrival of this brave band of pioneers.

If you are interested in becoming a Friend of Trelay, renting holiday accommodation or joining the community, please look at the website www.trelay.org or contact Jackie Carpenter on 01840 230423 or e-mail jackie@trelay.org



Revitalising our waterways

The UK has 2,200 miles of canals and waterways to which, by 2009, another 1½ miles will be added. This stretch will extend the 127-mile Leeds and Liverpool Canal through the Liverpool docks on the River Mersey, and is expected to bring many economic benefits to the city. A major section in the central docks area includes the construction of new bridges and locks.

Meanwhile, retail giant Tesco is using the Manchester Ship Canal to ferry wine by barge from Liverpool to Manchester, and Sainsbury's ferries food along the River Thames from a distribution centre in south-east London to shops in West London.

Too good to last?

Now that we have a high-speed rail link to Brussels, maybe Britain's transport chiefs could take a look at the rest of the Belgian rail network. It's the much-derided Belgians who have a co-ordinated, fit-for-purpose, publicly owned transport system.

Belgian rail fares are the cheapest in Europe, and up to ten times cheaper than in Britain. A simple ticketing system determines price only by distance, with fares remaining the same in rush hours when more trains and carriages are put on. Capacity is no problem as Belgian Railways owns its own rolling stock.

The various modes of public transport – train, bus, tram – are co-ordinated. In Ghent, you get off a train and a tram is waiting to take you to the city centre (for 1.50 euros, the set fare on all Belgium's trams and buses).

Yet, incredibly, the Belgian transport model is under threat from the European Union. In the name of 'competition', they are calling for the end of national rail monopolies and for transport to be opened to foreign companies.

(Based on a report in the New Statesman, 26 Nov 07)

Students really do care

In a survey conducted recently by BT, more than a third of students consider that working for a caring, responsible company is more important than income. And more than 40% of those polled by BT on the importance of corporate social responsibility say they would not apply to a company with a poor record. About a third put environmental issues top of their list of priorities.

Solar PV strives to reach parity on cost

The US government is investing \$168 million to bring forward the day that PV systems will generate electricity at or below the cost of conventional power generation. The money will be shared between a number of companies, including BP Solar, who will match this funding to develop new PV technology.

PV systems currently generate electricity at 20 to 30 cents per kWh, which is already at gridpeak parity in a few areas such as California. Today's solar PV systems last 30 years and "payback" the energy used to produce them within 3 years. The targets are to reduce the cost of PV power to 13 to 18 c/kWh by 2010, matching the average price paid by US homeowners today, and by 2015 to bring this down to less than 10 c/kWh – a competitive price anywhere.

Wildlife protection measures begin to bite

Natural England has hailed an important court case in which a landowner faces costs in excess of £500,000 pounds, most of which is to rectify damage to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Wemmergill Moor Ltd, who own the Wemmergill Estate and possess shooting rights there, pleaded guilty at Durham Crown Court and were ordered to remove a track and car park which they had built in an SSSI in Lune Forest, in Teesdale. They agreed to carry out additional reparation to reduce the impact of other works within the SSSI.

The area is internationally important peatland habitat, which is also home to birds such as merlin and golden plover.

Its importance is not just for wildlife conservation. Natural England points out that there is more carbon stored in the UK's peat than in all the forests of Britain and France combined. All the peatlands in England and Wales would absorb around 41,000 tonnes of carbon a year if in a pristine condition, but could emit up to 381,000 tonnes of carbon a year if they are damaged by

practices such as excessive burning, drainage and over-grazing.

Oil consumption

The US consumes 20 million barrels of oil a day, 25% of the world's consumption. This is about as much as the combined total of the next five large consumers – China, Japan, Russia, Germany and India. However, Japan is the world leader for energy efficiency and gets more than twice the GDP per unit of energy than the US. Europe only gets 20% more than the US.

Biodiversity in the south-east

"One third of the South East is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are 131,000 hectares of habitats classed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Although wild birds have been declining in the South East in recent years, most recent data show this trend may be changing. Whilst water vole populations are in decline, some localised populations have shown signs of recovery. Otter populations are slowly recovering. Work is under way to improve the status of certain species and habitats and this meets our commitment to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan."

Source: The Environment Agency's 2006 State of the Environment Report. Our score: 6 out of 10?



Useful websites for recycling and reusing

www.junkk.com – hundreds of ideas on reusing things.

MOBILE PHONES

www.fonesforsafety.org.uk – Fonesforsafety is a mobile phone recycling scheme which turns used mobile phones into reconfigured “999 only” phone alarms for victims of domestic violence.

GENERAL HOUSEHOLD GOODS

www.recycle.co.uk – recycle all your unwanted items for free to people in your area.

VEHICLES

Need to dispose of your old vehicle? These websites comply with the latest environmental legislation and present you with an official DVLA Certificate of Destruction (CoD) in line with the new laws on continuous registration.

www.cartakeback.com

www.autogreen.org

COMPUTERS

www.computeraid.org – the world’s largest not-for-profit supplier of computers to developing countries. It accepts any working Pentium III or IV computer or laptop, plus 15in and 17in monitors, adaptors, power cables, keyboards and mice. It will even take a consignment that includes 10% of broken equipment.

FOOTWEAR

www.nike.com – hand back your old Nike trainers, and take a look at their site to find out where the drop off points are located.

SPECTACLES

www.vao.org.uk – Vision Aid Overseas website, a charity that dispatches your glasses to countries such as Africa.



UPDATE

The Ban the Bag campaign got off to a terrific start and is gathering pace. Nearly 100% of stallholders at the Farmers’ Market pledged their support, agreeing to display a sign and limit the amount of plastic bags they give out. Shoppers at the February market were approached, and retailers, starting with those who are members of Guildsafe.

The campaigners are looking to link to other groups across west Surrey.

Jane Alexander, Project Coordinator (Recycling) at Guildford Borough Council Telephone 01483 444499

Chips are good for you

The UK is running out of landfill space, and incineration, besides a waste of resources, produces pollution. So what do you do with all the waste material from your garden?

Composting should be your first option, but what of all the shrubby material? Composting woody material can take an age to break down, and you may not have the space for all the woody material while it is composting. Some can be placed in sheltered places in your garden for the wildlife benefit, providing food for fungi and invertebrates and shelter for insect predators.

A shredder can be bought or hired, to produce smaller material to speed the compost process, or maybe you can follow the example of Onslow Recyclers, and have a Chipping Day, using a shredder and an operating team from Guildford Borough Council.

Onslow Recyclers, led by Lesley Goode, organised a Chipping Day at the Onslow Village Hall. This was a great success, with many residents bringing their shrubby garden material to be shredded, taking home the chippings for composting, or for use as mulch on their gardens.

A community Chipping Day is an excellent example of a local community taking responsibility for its waste garden material, shredding material for mulch or compost, and so diverting it from landfill.

If you would like to organise a Chipping Day in your local community, contact Jane Alexander, Project Coordinator (Recycling) at Guildford Borough Council on 01483 444499.

Stephen Rainbird

FREE Compost Course

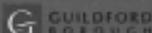
The Green Ark, Lido Rd,
Guildford, GU1
Tuesday 11 March 7 – 9 pm

Unearth the secret of making compost and leafmould – fast. Peter Hill from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) explains how.

Helpful for new and experienced home composters.

The course is free but places are limited. Call Jane Alexander on 01483 444499 to book.




 GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Heads in the sand syndrome

According to an assessment of political parties' firm policy commitments on the environment, delivered by nine of the UK's leading environmental groups, none of the three main parties is yet green enough. Out of a possible 6 points, the Lib Dems scored 3, Labour 1 and Conservatives 0. (Source: *Natural World*, Winter 07)

The working week

If just 10% of the population worked at home one day a week, this would save about 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. (Source: *AA Members Club magazine*, Issue 05)

FACTS & FIGURES

GM by stealth

The Soil Association reports that most of our meat and dairy food is produced with GM crops. Despite public opposition to GM food, it is 'coming in the back door' as imported animal feed.

(Source: *Living Earth*, Winter 07)

Forest (un)cover

Human actions have already destroyed 80% of the world's forests.

(Source: *The Independent*, 7 Jul 07)

The (occasional) diary of a Community Recycler

by Forum member Barbara Jones

IN EARLY NOVEMBER I signed up with Guildford Borough Council to be a Community Recycler. This role involves doing as much, or as little, as I feel able to encourage my local community to **Reduce, Reuse and Recycle**. At the moment I see my community as being the 35 flats at West Mount where I live. Maybe in the future I will expand into the local neighbourhood.

A few years ago I was instrumental in setting up recycling bins at West Mount. There are two bins for newspapers and magazines, and one each for clear, green and brown glass and also one for drinks cans. Despite the paper bins clearly stating they are for newspapers and magazines only, we occasionally find cardboard and general paper in them. The other bins have been trouble-free except when someone dropped their wine bottles into the bin in a cardboard bottle carrier.

More recently I installed two green cones in discreet corners near the compost heaps. I had always taken my raw food scraps to the compost heaps, burying the peelings under leaves or grass cuttings so as not to offend anyone. I now take all my raw and cooked scraps to the nearest cone. Another resident uses the other one but lapsed in the summer, as she did not like the swarms of fruit flies that emerged when the lid was opened.

Communication

Today, 21st January, I finally got around to writing a letter, and delivering it, to all the residents here at West Mount introducing myself as their Community Recycler. Naturally I printed the letters on old paper from my husband's office. I hope the engineering drawings and data on the back of the letters proved of interest.

I reminded everyone of the existing recycling facilities here at West Mount and promised to install more green cones if they became overloaded. Each one is supposed to deal with the food waste for a four-person household.

I also put a cardboard box in a large, wooden, lidded box that hangs on a wall in

one of our car parks. This was originally used for newspaper deliveries when the paper deliverer refused to visit a top floor flat. It is no longer used for that purpose and I have invited residents to deposit any household batteries, computer cartridges, old mobile phones or spectacles they may have. I will recycle these on an ongoing basis.

I have recently acquired a purple recycling box for assorted paper and card. When it is full I put it out across the road for collection. In my letter I reminded everyone that the bins are for newspapers and magazines only and suggested they might like to go down the purple box route. I gave them the Council's phone number and also volunteered to fetch boxes for them. Where to store the boxes between collections will be an issue for many of the flat dwellers.

The Council has already told me it would be willing to come into our car parks to empty recycling boxes, but the Management Committee feels we would end up having boxes lying about all over the place.

Mixed reactions

While delivering the letters I called in on a couple that are good friends of ours and live in one of the smaller flats. On hearing of my new role the wife became quite indignant. She has no room in her small kitchen for dirty bottles and cans and is too busy to put on her coat for a daily visit to the bins. She is not prepared to enter into all this recycling business until the Council get their act together, stop sending out endless unwanted literature and empty everyone's bins regularly. If supermarkets stop handing out carrier bags, with what is she going to line her kitchen bin?

By contrast her husband is all for recycling and suggested I investigate the possibility of further bins on site for assorted paper and card and also for plastic bottles. "What?" queried his wife. "And have more mess around the place?" I already had this in mind as my next step as the Community Recycler.

This mixed response is no doubt par for the course.



Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future. Forum membership costs only £5 per year or £7 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed. Please contact John Bannister on 01483 570468 or e-mail johnw.bannister@virgin.net



CALENDAR



All the Forum's Group meetings are open to the public

Tuesday 11 March Compost Course

Unearth the secret of making compost and leafmould – fast.
Peter Hill, from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), explains how.
The course is free but places are limited. Call Jane Alexander on 01483 444499 to book.
1900 - 2100. The Green Ark, Lido Road, Guildford.

Wednesday 26 March

GEF Biodiversity Group. Mark Willis, Environmental Projects Officer, Guildford Borough Council:
"Nature Conservation and a Car Park: Merrow Park and Ride."
1900. Council Chamber, Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1845.)

Friday 28 March

GEF Schools Group. John Taylor, Managing Director, EcoDriver:
"EcoDriver – an Award-winning System to Engage Schools and Their Communities in Climate Change and Energy Management."
1830. Committee Room 1, Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1800.)
PLEASE NOTE EARLIER START TIME

Wednesday 16 April

GEF Sustainable Energy Group. Russell Smith, Managing Director, Parity Projects,
(winners of *Building Magazine's* 2007 Award for Sustainable Refurbishment):
"Tackling Energy and Water Consumption in Existing Buildings."
1900. Committee Room 1, Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1830.)

Thursday 8 May

GEF Sustainable Energy Group. Ben Brangwyn, Co-founder, Transition Network,
and an active member of Transition Town Totnes in Devon:
**"Transition Guildford: Rebuilding Local Resilience and Reducing Carbon Emissions.
Why it's crucial now and what other communities are doing."**
1900. Committee Room 1, Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1830.)

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

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Please send contributions for the next issue to Clare Windsor by Monday 5 May 2008.

The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.