

The Forum 21 Flier



Towards a Sustainable
West Somerset

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<http://www.forum21.org.uk>

The Forum 21 website is updated regularly and includes a link to the Memorandum and Articles of Western Somerset Forum 21 Limited and to the Energy Efficiency Pack as well as a downloadable membership form and a Library of Forum 21 articles which have appeared in the *News Trader*. If you have any items for the website please e-mail them to Marlene at forum21@btinternet.com

Energy Saving Centre, Minehead

Almost two years of work by the Transition Minehead and Alcombe Energy Group was rewarded on 29 September with the opening of the Energy Saving Centre in Minehead's Co-op car park by the leader of West Somerset Council, Doug Ross. In March this year TMA carried out a sample household survey in Minehead and Alcombe which showed support for such a centre which is a focal point for anyone with concerns about meeting fuel bills, seeking guidance on ways to save energy or wishing to know about renewable energy.

The Centre is open two days a week at present – Saturday and Thursday - from 10.00am to 2.00pm and will be staffed by trained volunteers. It has so far received funding from LARC (Local Action for Rural Communities) and Minehead Town Council and has a lease (reviewable on a monthly basis) from West Somerset Council for a year. So far over 40 people have visited the centre. A number of people have requested energy surveys and these will be referred to Forum 21.

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Western Somerset Forum 21 Limited

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

Methodist Church Hall Lounge
Monday November 19th at 7.30pm

AGENDA

Welcome and introduction

Apologies

1. Notes of AGM 19th October 2011
Notes of EGM April 13th 2012
2. Reports
Summary of the year 2011-2012
Financial report
3. Elections
 - directors
 - management committee
4. Appointment of auditor

Crispin Aubrey

We were very sad to hear of Crispin's death at the end of September. Crispin had been a member of the Forum's steering group for several years until he resigned to lead the Stop Hinkley campaign against the building of new reactors. He was a principled and committed environmentalist with particular interest in renewables.

He had national and international recognition as an environmental journalist.

Forum 21 first came into contact with Crispin in 2004 during the campaign for the proposed wind farm near Hinkley Point and he continued to support our work. We were fortunate indeed to have had the benefit of his skills and expertise and extensive knowledge in West Somerset.

We will miss him.

Grants for Biomass Heating Systems

You may be eligible for a grant to install a biomass heating system: interests must be expressed by November 14th.

Grants apply to domestic installations in Exmoor National Park and nearby rural areas without access to gas.

E-mail Eco-Exmoor Devon Ltd.
sales@ecoexmoordevon.co.uk
or phone 01271 859002.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2012
NOVEMBER
16th Food and Farming Question Time
Organised by Quantock Eco.
Bicknoller Village Hall
7.30pm
19th Forum 21 AGM
Methodist Church Hall

Our Energy Future

From Fossil Fuels to Renewable Energy: Working Together on this Transition

More than 50 delegates from across the county attended this Transition Somerset conference at the Genesis Centre in Taunton on 20th October.

Working in 'world café' discussion format, the delegates were initially asked to consider and exchange ideas on four possible future energy scenarios and the potential consequences – globally, locally, for their community groups and for their own lives. The scenarios included rapid economic growth, green growth, a shift in focus to the well-being of people and planet, and where it became clear that oil was a one-off that could not be replaced.

These discussions were followed by a variety of parallel short presentations, including those from Brendon Energy, Frack Free Somerset and The Converging World. Led by former Forum 21 co-ordinator Wendy Stephenson, Bristol based TCW is in the latter stages of developing software for an Energy Hub that will enable communities to create their own home page and draw down local energy demand statistics to assess which renewable energy sources and projects will have the most beneficial impact for their area.

The final part of the event comprised three talks from invited speakers. **Ian Christie, Research Fellow of the University of Surrey's Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group, opened with 'Issues we must resolve for a sustainable future'**. He said there was a need for joined-up thinking to encourage people who made energy savings to put those savings into renewable investments, rather than spend them on carbon-intensive consumption. Other initiatives proposed included the formation of alliances between universities, businesses, local government and communities, a move towards more part-time working and the production of longer-life products.

Peter Andrews, a director of Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE) followed with **'Breaking the Mould'**. He said that developing partnerships is key – Bath & North East Somerset DC (BANES) gave BWCE introductions to schools – 8 out of the first 10 solar PV projects were on school buildings. It was also important to partner with a major supplier to benefit from economy of scale.

'Every pound you spend is a vote for the way you want things to be', was a message BWCE put out at the time of their share offer, Peter said. Investing in a democratically run community energy company, with a one member/one vote decision making process appealed to a wide cross-section of the community. In response to criticism that minimum investment had been £500, he said that smaller regular payments were being considered as an alternative.

Brendon Energy's initial share offer allowed for a minimum investment of £10.

Tessa Munt, MP and PPS to Vince Cable, gave the final talk under the title **'Facing the Electorate, Facing-Down Vested Interests'**. 'It's important to ask people what they care about . . . people deserve to be listened to' and understood was the early theme. Tessa said that many politicians and much of the media focused on the fear and safety level. This caused anxiety in people, who felt their needs at this level were priority and were therefore unable to focus on higher needs which might benefit both the individual and wider society. 'All the time people are worrying about (this) stuff they are not going to be concerned about the Green Deal,' she said.

In terms of our energy future, Tessa concluded, 'we need to talk about "green replacement" rather than Green Growth.'

New Community Renewable Energy Group Participates in Low Carbon Festival

A new Western Somerset Community Renewable Energy Working Group (CREW Group) has been initiated by Forum 21 and Transition Minehead & Alcombe.

The group's aim is to explore both appropriate renewable energy options for the Western Somerset area and the level of interest among local residents towards investment in community projects.

The CREW Group has actively co-operated with Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) and Brendon Energy (BE) in designing and delivering a workshop during the Dartmoor & Exmoor Low Carbon Festival held in the first week of October.

ENPA has succeeded in attracting considerable government and EU funding in recent years for mainly solar energy installations on buildings such as village halls, but this has not so far involved investment by local residents.

Wiveliscombe-based BE has set up as an Industrial & Provident Society (IPS) for the Benefit of the Community. Approximately 50 residents have invested in the first project, being a solar photovoltaic (PV) installation on the roof of the Children's Centre in the town. Apart from a significant reduction in carbon emissions, there are two immediate financial beneficiaries: the building user - the Children's Society - which benefits from lower electricity bills, and the private investors who benefit from a modest but worthwhile annual dividend.

The CREW Group would like to harness both the natural resources and human power across the district by encouraging all existing groups to work together. This may mean the formation of a new community enterprise, or the expansion of an existing one with a range of projects across the wider district. To that end, the group's 'Investing in Community Renewable Energy Workshop' contribution on Friday 5th October focused on the investor's perspective. Questions addressed included: how much – or how little – could residents invest, and what would their returns be? Would the investment be secure? How would the wider community benefit?

If you would either like to become involved in expanding the working group, or want to look into private investment in a community energy project, please contact one of the following group members:

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Thank you for reading,
we hope to see you at
some of the
forthcoming events!

Forum 21 is an environmental group in West Somerset working with West Somerset Council and other partners to help avoid climate change and to promote sustainability.

Energy Projects 2012-13

You will have heard by now that the bid to the BIG Lottery Communities Living Sustainably fund was not successful. But the partners who put in the bid know that their work won't be wasted. It laid strong foundations and a launch pad for future work. And the three environmental groups involved in the bid - Transition Minehead and Alcombe, Quantock Eco and Forum 21 - are planning to start by carrying out two of the projects we identified.

One of these is to help householders understand and make use of the government's Green Deal scheme which has just been launched to make homes warmer and more energy efficient by installing new boilers, insulation or a host of other measures. Our partnership will promote this scheme but more importantly we will support local people who want to apply by helping them understand the application process and get the best financial deal from it.

The other project will seek a small rural community to test a range of different ideas and activities that will enhance health and well-being and a more sustainable lifestyle. The community will be able to choose from a menu of possible initiatives including local food, energy efficiency and community energy, transport, waste - whatever the community chooses to work on. They may also have ideas for initiatives of their own. It is a long term piece of work, for which we will need to seek funding. At this stage we are looking for a community that wants to work with us on the development of the project, so that we can ensure a perfect fit. We would very much like to hear from anyone who thinks that their community might be interested in joining us in this project. We are really excited about this project and are looking forward to working with people who share our enthusiasm.

The Somerset Community Foundation has asked us to take part in their Surviving Winter campaign again this winter. So if you know any pensioner who may have difficulty in keeping warm please ask them to get in touch to see if they are eligible for an additional winter fuel payment. The Surviving Winter flier is reproduced below and it can also be downloaded from the Energy page of our website.

SURVIVING WINTER

Grants for pensioners in West Somerset

- Do you have trouble paying for fuel to keep you warm in winter?
- Are you over 60?
- Is your only income the state pension - with or without pension credit?

If so, a Somerset charity may be able to give you a top-up to help pay for your energy bills this winter - on top of the government's winter fuel payments.

Up to £250 available to pensioners who qualify

Forum 21, a voluntary group,
has been asked to administer this grant in West Somerset.

HOW TO APPLY

Contact Lorna Scott

Forum 21

01984 634 242

mail@forum21.org.uk

One of our trained volunteers will get in touch with you.