



Forum 21 Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 1

July 2013

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

Working for a Fair and Sustainable Western Somerset

Only a handful of households have signed up to the Green Deal

The Government's environmental flagship policy – the Green Deal — was launched with much fanfare in January. But during the first six months of the scheme only four deals have been taken up, though more people are signing up for home assessments.

Six months after its launch, energy suppliers are still struggling with the IT systems and legal arrangements they need to offer households insulation and other improvements. Of the so-called 'Big Six' energy suppliers, only British Gas has fully launched a national Green Deal programme. Under the deal, homeowners can take out loans to pay for energy efficiency measures paying them off through additions to electricity bills over up to 25 years.

Forum 21's volunteers have been working very hard in West Somerset to try to use the Green Deal as a way of getting some of our hard-to-treat homes more energy efficient. The area has 60 per cent of households without a mains

gas supply and a further 60 per cent with solid walls, the most expensive to insulate. There is also a high level of fuel poverty in the area with many householders who don't qualify for free help but who can't afford to keep adequately warm.

Forum 21 had understood that vulnerable pensioners would be able to get the measures installed under the Affordable Warmth scheme but we have discovered that only loft and cavity wall insulation and repair or replacement of gas boilers are possible.

Lorna Scott, who has been co-ordinating the work, says: "We've discovered all sorts of problems with the scheme which mean it will be very difficult to get solid walls insulated, or more efficient off gas heating, especially for people on low incomes who were expecting to receive grants for these improvements. We are very disappointed and frustrated by what is happening."

Support our campaign to build a safe new multi-user path

Join our campaign to complete the Steam Coast Trail, a multi-user path planned for West Somerset. It will be open to pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair-users and mobility scooters, and will do a lot to improve sustainable transport between Minehead, Watchet and Williton. Planning permission has been granted for the section linking Dunster Beach with Blue Anchor, and we are hoping to build this section first.

Go to: www.steam-coast-trail.net to sign our petition to help us complete this exciting project.

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Forum 21 is a not-for-profit company whose aims are to raise awareness about ecology, natural history, resource conservation, sustainable development and environmental studies as well as to conserve and protect the environment and natural resources.

Do you have an eco-friendly home?

Open Homes comes to West Somerset – Monday 30 September - Saturday 5 October

Would you like to open your home to show visitors the eco improvements you have made?

Forum 21 and Transition MInthead and Alcombe are organising an Open Homes event for people in West Somerset. This will provide an opportunity to visit houses and learn first-hand what different types of eco-

improvements can be like and what benefits they have brought.

People will be opening their homes to show all sorts of ways they have managed to make them more eco-friendly and cheaper to run. These could be anything from insulation and draught-proofing to renewable energy generation, low impact water

systems, composting and vegetable gardening.

The homes will be open during the week at times to suit the householders – it could be just one half day.

If you would like to show people what you've done to your home, we'd be delighted to hear from you. We'll send a guidance pack and explain

more about the project. Contact Lorna Scott 01984 634 242 - mail@forum21.org.uk or Hester Watson 01643 821 768

Look out for publicity in August and September when the programme will be available.

Pay as you burn

Bill Butcher describes a new policy called Cap and Dividend which offers real incentives for companies and individuals to reduce carbon emissions

Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have been rising since the 1970s and will do for decades unless we change the way we live. Our climate shows ever more extremes, of floods, droughts, heatwaves and cold, our strange winter an effect of the highest ever recorded ice melt in the Arctic with its effects on the jet stream. Over the whole planet the average temperature rise goes on, ever closer towards the 2 degrees at which the scientific community forecasts thresholds are crossed, feedback kicks in and the change becomes unstoppable. And yet, bizarrely, in the face of near certain ruin of our children's and grandchildren's lives, society acts as if there is no emergency.

In the UK we have an impressive Climate Change Act, agreed by the last government, that in theory commits to an 80 per cent cut in emissions by 2050 and a 50 per cent cut by 2023-27. But the coalition government is squeezing local authorities so hard that they no longer have any resources to take positive action on climate change. As a result, West Somerset Council, doing so many good things until 2011, has now dropped climate change as a priority.

Local communities achieving remarkable change

So, is despair inevitable? A new policy called Cap and Dividend offers hope that we can reduce carbon emissions. It



differs from Cap and Trade, which relies on politicians doing backroom deals with corporations, often ending in shareholders getting richer for the company doing nothing. Cap and Dividend is backed by author James Hansen of NASA, one of the world's leading climate scientists. The Cap is an annual auction of carbon emission permits to firms which first sell fossil carbon into the economy, with the total permits reduced each year. The Dividend is the proceeds of this auction, divided up and handed out equally to every citizen. The fund is handled by a not-for-profit independent trust (www.capanddividend.org/files/CarbonCapping_CitizensGuide.pdf).

Incentives for business

The scheme offers immediate incentives for businesses to reduce their carbon emissions; carbon emissions prices will rise as the cap declines, spurring private capital to flow into clean alternatives such as renewable energies. Dividends will rise along with the carbon prices, easing the impact on consumers.

Cap and Dividend creates a virtuous circle, in which how people fare depends on what they do. The more carbon any company or individual burns, the more that company or individual pays. Because everybody gets the same amount back, people gain if they conserve and lose if they guzzle.

This is fair to all, with the 99 per cent getting as much dividend each as the 1 per cent, a little different from business as usual, while the poor actually come out ahead because they burn less carbon than other people.

The ever reducing emissions cap means that emissions must come down. It works. Consultation in the USA shows that most people love the idea when they understand it. Who's up for discussing these ideas here?

This article first appeared in the News Trader in May 2013

Will we need to grow more of our own food?

Population pressures and unpredictable weather mean we will have to start taking food security seriously, says **Maureen Smith**

The spectre of food shortages was raised recently when Minister for Farming, David Heath, warned that rising food prices and global shortages may make it necessary for us to grow more of our own food in future. It has been mistakenly believed in the past that we did not need to produce much food in this country because we could just import what we needed. For a long time, globally produced food has been unrealistically cheap because of subsidies but from now on the pressures of population and unpredictable weather, due to climate change, mean that food security must be taken seriously.

There are many aspects to consider: water use, the huge resources needed for meat production and our incredibly varied diet which is causing massive health problems, including obesity and diabetes. Consumers need information and access to adequate food supplies which promote health and meet needs. The message from the international Food Sovereignty movement in Malawi in 2007 was: "Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems....".

A third of food is thrown away

Genetically modified food is being promoted as a way of increasing production but the technology is widely mistrusted, not least because it provides big corporations with enormous profits. Is it really needed when UK households throw away around a third of the food they buy? This is a serious waste of money when budgets are under strain. Waste food creates methane which is more than 20 times damaging as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

The 'Love food: Hate Waste' campaign from WRAP, is a superb source of ideas for using food effectively and avoiding waste. My favourite is freezing grapes and other fruit getting past their best and, when you have enough, using them to make a warm fruit salad to go on your breakfast cereal.
<http://england.lovefoodhatewaste.com>.

In West Somerset, Transition Minehead and Alcombe promotes local food production and food growing skills through the Friends and Family Allotment in Alcombe and through annual Seed and Plant swaps. Supported by Minehead Town Council, they plan to establish a Community Orchard. The group has a

special interest in Permaculture, a method of growing food in an organic way avoiding the use of petroleum based fertilisers and insecticides which are costly and damage ecosystems. The allotment is a work in progress and prospective food growers are always welcome to get involved and share the produce. For information email tma2009@hotmail.co.uk phone 01643 709478 or go to www.transitionmineheadandalcomb.org.uk.

In Somerset, help to find land and grow food is available from www.somersetcommunityfood.org.uk and their website for home and community growers, www.incredible-edible-somerset.ning.com/.

"Eat what your grandmother ate"

Michael Pollen, an American food writer who has tried every food available, says: "Eat what your grandmother ate, not too much of it and mostly plants". I would add, keep the 'food miles' as low as possible – local is ideal and home grown fantastic.

This article first appeared in the News Trader in June 2013

NEA calls for a new fuel poverty strategy

The Government is seeking new duties from Parliament to mitigate the increasing costs of energy for those on low incomes. In setting out a framework for action it has acknowledged that it is unable to end fuel poverty by 2016.

The National Energy Action (NEA) has lobbied for amendments to the Energy Bill, currently going through the House of Lords, to mitigate the increasing cost of energy bills through greater home energy efficiency measures.

"We need a refreshed and well-resourced fuel poverty strategy beyond 2016 as we make the transition to a low

carbon economy and longer term security of supply," says Jenny Saunders, Chief Executive of NEA.

"The Government has recognised that it is unable to deliver an end to fuel poverty by 2016 with the current level of resources and policies. Quite rightly it is now seeking new duties from Parliament to mitigate the increasing costs of energy for those on the lowest incomes".

She welcomed the announcement by the Secretary of State Ed Davey MP to renew the Government's commitment to tackle fuel poverty in England beyond its existing

Rising temperatures causing species loss

Rising temperatures and habitat degradation have contributed to the decline of up to 60 per cent of British animal and plant species in the past 50 years. One in ten could disappear, a stocktake of UK nature suggests.

The State of Nature report, compiled by 25 wildlife organisations, collates assessments of 3,148 species.

duties up to 2016.

The Government's amendments to its Energy Bill will enable it, and successive governments, to set out new targets and a delivery strategy to meet

It offers clues to the fate of the UK's 59,000 species. Among those seeing the largest falls in numbers are turtle doves, water voles, red squirrels and hedgehogs.

Species requiring specific habitats have fared particularly poorly compared to the generalists able to adapt to the country's changing environment.

these targets.

National Energy Action is the national charity which aims to eradicate fuel poverty and campaigns for greater investment in energy efficiency to help those who are poor and vulnerable.

Minehead Meeting House gets a £22,000 eco overhaul

Over the past ten years, Minehead Quakers have discussed environmental issues and investigated what they could do in their building. Nationally Quakers have committed themselves to sustainability. Awareness of the work of Forum 21 and Transition Town groups has accompanied and encouraged this.



The Quakers have committed themselves to sustainability.

The Quakers have just completed a £22,000 overhaul of their 110-year old church hall in the centre of Minehead. Minehead Meeting House is used by many community groups. It is built of stone with single glazing and heating is by convector heaters.

The work was helped five years ago by a professional survey and recommendations by the Ecos Trust (funded through the Bristol-based Green Communities organisation).

It has included:

- Changing the electricity supplier to Good Energy.
- Installing a thermostat and timer to control the heaters.
- Improving insulation in the loft spaces.
- Doing some draught excluding.
- Upgrading the water heater in the kitchen.
- Changing the carpet tiles in the meeting room into a carpet with an insulating underlay.
- Cutting down water consumption by means of 'hippos' in the cisterns and

reduced flow to the taps.

- Adding secondary glazing to the biggest of the windows.
- Re-tiling the roof adding a modern insulation layer below the tiles and in the eaves areas.
- Installing 16 PV panels on the roof (4kw), with a read-out meter and information on public display

The Meeting hopes to be generating over half the total amount of electricity it uses each year, although little of it will be free as heating and generating do not often coincide.

The Quaker Area Meeting, which funded the improvements, should get its investment in the PV panels back over the next ten years.

"This isn't necessarily cost-effective", said Chris Lawson of the Meeting, "But we're showing what we can do to reduce our carbon footprint and put Quaker sustainability principles into practice. Suggestions for what we do next would be welcomed".

Chris can be contacted on: c2lawson@care4free.net

Parliament's decision signals the end of Europe's carbon trading scheme

The European Parliament has rejected a plan to rescue the EU's carbon trading scheme.

Members narrowly voted against a so-called 'backloading' proposal that would have cut the huge surplus of allowances currently being traded, arguing the plan would push up energy costs.

Because of this excess, the price of carbon on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) has plunged

to less than 5 euros a tonne.

The price of carbon has fluctuated since the ETS was launched in 2005. The scheme limits the emissions from around 12,000 power plants and factories across the 27-member bloc.



Plans to cut surplus trading allowances failed

Flights to get bumpier

Raised levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will contribute to very uncomfortable conditions for air passengers by the middle of the century.

Scientists at Reading University are predicting that the average strength of transatlantic turbulence could increase by between 10 and 40 per cent, and the amount of airspace likely to contain significant turbulence by between 40 and 170 per

cent, where the most likely outcome is around 100 per cent. In other words, a doubling of the amount of airspace affected.

They used a supercomputer to simulate likely changes to air currents above 10km in altitude, such as the fast-moving jet stream.

The Nature Climate Change study is said to be the first to examine the future of aviation turbulence.

Forum 21's newsletter is published quarterly in July, October, January and April.

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Late News

Interest-free loans to buy bulk fuel

Households with incomes of less than £35,000 a year are eligible for interest-free loans to buy bulk fuel.

The loans of up to £500 can be used to purchase oil, wood, Calor Gas, Coal, TRVs and room thermostats (including installation). It means people can borrow, for example, £200 and pay back £33.33 a month over six months.

The loans are being made available through Wessex Resolutions CIC by the six Somerset councils: Mendip,

Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Taunton Deane and West Somerset.

For more information and a home visit tel. 01823 461099.

Use powers in Localism Act for low carbon initiatives

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) is keen to see more communities take advantage of the powers in the Localism Act to promote, enable and establish low carbon infrastructure in their areas.

A new set of resources are available to download from the PlanLoCal website (www.planlocal.org.uk/pages/localism-and-neighbourhood-planning) or email the CSE at planlocal@cse.org.uk to request a printed pack.

Funds to help rural communities with renewable energy projects

The Rural Community Energy Fund for England was launched on 28 June. This £15 million government fund will help rural

communities with the costs of getting renewable energy projects up and running.

There are two funding stages: an initial feasibility grant; and a loan for development costs (paid back only if the scheme goes ahead). The fund is managed by WRAP and details can be found at:

www.wrap.org.uk/content/rural-community-energy-fund

The CSE can supply written guidance on the fund and is happy to talk with any group who is interested in applying and would like further support. Go to:

www.cse.org.uk/news/view/1740

Publications

An alarming outlook for the planet

Ten Billion
By Stephen Emmott
Penguin, £6.99

The title refers to the expected size of the world's population some time before the end of this century. It deals with the devastating consequences for people and the planet of this unsustainable growth.

One alarming consequence will be chronic water shortage. Emmott lists the many ways we waste water, pointing out that it takes thousands of litres of water to produce much of the food and everyday items we consume.

Here are some statistics to spoil your appetite— it takes 3,000 litres of water to produce one burger, 27,000 to produce one kilogram of chocolate, 9,000 to produce one chicken and, ironically,

four litres of water to produce a one-litre plastic bottle of water.

Perhaps his most frightening prediction is that we have no known means of being able to feed 10 billion people at our current rate of per capita consumption which is set to increase, not decrease, over the next decades.

The projected rapid expansion of global shipping and airline sectors to transport everything we consume round the planet will result in more carbon emissions.

Emmott does not think wind farms or nuclear power are the answers. Our best efforts, he says, should focus on reducing demand.

How to get rid of clutter

Somerset residents are being offered a guide to help them liberate space in their homes and lives by getting rid of clutter.

The guide is an initiative by Somerset's Green Routine 2013 waste prevention campaign. It offers several ways of disposing of unwanted possessions as alternatives to the refuse bin and adding to polluting landfill:

- Give away things through online networks like Freegle or Freecycle.
- Have a 'swishing' party to donate and get clothes
- Hold or join a swap shop event for a free exchange of goods
- Take unwanted bits and pieces to a car boot or table top sale
- Sell possessions online through eBay, Gumtree or Facebook.
- Use free or cheap newspaper ads for low-cost items
- Advertise them on a postcard at a local newsagent.

The guide can be found on the Somerset Waste Partnership's website: www.somersetwaste.gov.uk

Climate change is back in the curriculum

Climate change pressure group 38 degrees is claiming success in its campaign to get Education Secretary Michael Gove to abandon his plans to drop climate change from the curriculum.

More than 37,000 people from organisations such as the Youth Climate Coalition and People & Planet, supported the campaign.

Teacher Margaret Hunter, a 38 Degree member, said: "Young people will now have the opportunity to understand climate change and how it will affect their lives. It's only by educating children about what their future will look like that we can give them the chance to shape it for the better".

38 Degrees is a British not-for-profit political-activism organisation that campaigns on a diverse range of issues, including the environment and climate change.

To join email: action@38degrees.org.uk