



Forum 21 Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 2

October 2013

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

Working for a Fair and Sustainable Western Somerset

Can tidal lagoons solve our energy problems in West Somerset?

Plans to construct a tidal lagoon in Swansea Bay are proceeding apace following the Government's rejection of the proposed Cardiff/Weston barrage. The company involved says this will be the world's first, purpose-built, tidal energy lagoon, capable of generating predictable, renewable electricity to over 120,000 homes for over 120 years.

The significance of this project to West

Somerset is that, if successful, other tidal lagoons could be constructed on this side of the Severn – specifically at Minehead where tidal flow is very strong.

Last Thursday, 17 October, the Tidal Lagoon Swansea Bay plc presented the findings of their 'Environmental Impact Assessment'. The company claim their project is supported by Stop Hinkley, the Green Party and numerous environmental groups.

The assessment has included coastal processes, sediment transport and contamination, marine and terrestrial ecology and coastal birds.

The barrage – a structure extending from one coastline to the other – would have generated a large amount of electricity but would have involved significant environmental consequences. The proposed tidal lagoon is limited to one area of the Severn and the electricity generated would be substantially less. However, there remain concerns about, for example, the danger to fish, such as dolphins, from the large turbine blades.

At an earlier meeting, the company admitted it would require ten to 15 such lagoons to enable Hinkley to be 'switched off' but experts have estimated that the figure would be nearer 22 to cover the days the lagoon power could not generate.

In this issue

Labour to scrap the Green Deal

The Labour Party has promised to scrap the scheme if it wins the 2015 election, describing its progress as 'woefully inadequate'

Power company cuts investment in marine and tidal technology

SSE has confirmed it is reconsidering its four major projects off Orkney and in the Pentland Firth

PLUS West Somerset Council supports the Steam Coast Trail

Switch your fuel provider, save money and stay warm

Surviving Winter – scheme extended to people aged 50-60

Global News 'Human influence on the climate system is clear'

Tidal and Marine Power

Monday, 18 November 7.30 pm

Speaker: Johnny Gowdy of Regen SW

Venue: The United Reform Church Hall, Bancks Street, Minehead

An opportunity to hear an expert view on tidal and marine power in the West, especially the Severn.

The talk will follow Western Somerset Forum 21 Ltd's
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Nominations are invited for directors – closing date 31 October

See page 3 for more details

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.

Labour will scrap the Green Deal

Only 12 households got to the 'live' Green Deal stage by the end of August this year. ('Live' means installations have been done using the Green Deal loan package).

The Labour Party has promised to scrap the scheme if it wins the election, describing its progress as 'woefully inadequate'.

The Green Deal aims to retrofit 14 million of Britain's energy-wasteful homes in the next decade, by offering loans for measures such as insulation and new boilers, with repayments offset by energy bill savings.

Labour is consulting on energy savings and says it will address the issues it thinks has hampered the Green Deal, including

relatively high interest rates for the loans, concerns over penalties for early repayment and whether the loan being attached to the house deters home buyers.

Shadow Energy Secretary Caroline Flint has visited the German state bank KfW which has delivered interest rates of 1-2%, compared to the Green Deal's 7 to 9%.

Paul King, chief executive of the UK Green Building

Council, said: "Labour are right to look at reducing the interest rate but even low cost loans will not work without other incentives to nudge people into action".

Incentives might include discounts on council tax and stamp duty. The current incentive, a cashback scheme, has mainly been spent on boiler replacements rather than whole-house measures.

SSE to scale back investment in marine and tidal technology

A major investor in experimental marine and tidal technology is talking to partners about scaling back investment in key schemes.

The move by SSE, which recently announced an 8% increase in its fuel bills, followed the threat by Labour leader Ed Milliband to freeze energy prices and break up big power firms if Labour wins the next election.

RenewableUK, the lobby group that represents wave and tidal power, said the difficult regulatory environment had depressed

forecasts of how much capacity could be deployed.

Dave Krohn, wave and tidal development manager, told *The Guardian*. "Wave energy is still in the early years of its story and we need perspective and patience as our industry matures".

SSE confirmed it was reconsidering its four major projects off Orkney and in the Pentland Firth but have denied it is pulling out. Two of the other big six players, RWE and E.ON, have also scaled back investment in the sector.

West Somerset Council gives unanimous support to the Steam Coast Trail

West Somerset District Council voted unanimously to support the Steam Coast Trail project at a council meeting in August.

Council leader Tim Taylor congratulated the group for their work. "This is a great opportunity and if it can be brought about it will not just be for locals but will also attract people to the area. We as a council should be promoting this", he said.

The route will follow the coastline and create a traffic-free route between Minehead, Dunster, Carhampton, Blue Anchor, Washford, Watchet and Williton. The trail is not just for pedestrians and cyclists – it will be open to everyone, including wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Steam Coast Trail organiser Judy

Mapledorum, said: "This is a welcome addition to the growing list of organisations who support the project. In addition, Friends of the Steam Coast Trail is keeping up the pressure on Sustrans to make this cycle path happen and formal agreements are being sought with the landowners. The next stage will be to raise the money. While most of this will come from grants we also welcome donations, however small, as these are another way of showing the level of support for the project".

For more information go to the web site: www.steam-coast-trail.net

For the most up-to-date news, see the Facebook page www.facebook.com/steam.coast.trail

You do not have to register with Facebook to view this page.

Late News...

Plans to build a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point – the first for 35 years – have been agreed between the Government, Edf and a consortium of investors, including companies owned by the Chinese government.

The complex financial plan will have to win a legal battle with the EU before building can go ahead.

A claim by Environment Secretary Ed Davey that the

project will bring 5,000 jobs to the area have been disputed by Stop Hinkley who say Edf has admitted that the only jobs available to local workers would be 'muck-shifting'.

Stop Hinkley also say concerns over safety, waste disposal and the threatened 'energy gap' before the plant comes on stream in 10 years time, have not been addressed.

Events...

Western Somerset Forum 21 Ltd's ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Monday 18 November 7.30 pm

The United Reform Church Hall
Bancks Street, Minehead

Agenda

Welcome and introduction

Apologies

1. Minutes of AGM 19 November 2012

2. Reports

• Summary of the year 2012-2013

• Financial report

3. Elections

• directors

4. Appointment of auditor

Forum 21 invites you to get involved in our work. We are keen to interest like-minded people in our exciting projects aimed at promoting sustainable development, such as combating fuel poverty, saving energy, reducing carbon emissions, encouraging diversity and protecting the environment.

Nominations for directors are invited

Closing date: 31 October

**Please let Lorna Scott know if you are coming:
mail@forum21.org.uk tel. 01984 634242**

Green Food Fair

Nether Stowey Church Centre

Saturday 26 October

Local food, drinks & craft stalls

Celebrating the best of Somerset

Get help with fuel bills

Forum 21 will once again be offering help to people struggling to keep warm this winter under their Surviving Winter scheme.

The grant has a sliding scale up to a maximum of £250.

Those eligible include people aged over 60 receiving pension credit and

others on low incomes who find it hard to keep warm.

This year the scheme has been extended to help people aged 50-60 who can't work because of ill health. Eligibility will depend on circumstances.

Ring 01984 634 242 or email:
mail@forum21.org.uk

Stop heat leaking from your home!

Saturday 26 October 26

**DIY Open Day at the Energy Saving Centre,
Coop car park, Minehead 10am - 1pm**

Experienced volunteers will demonstrate displays of draught exclusion, secondary glazing and insulation to show what you can do to improve your home.

"With so many people feeling the pinch, it is worth thinking about improvements you can do yourself to make your home less leaky and save on your energy bills", says Dave Voisey of Transition Minehead & Alcombe.

During the past year around 350 people have got help from the Centre. As well as advice about draught proofing, secondary glazing and insulation, they have been helped with energy bills, boiler and heating controls, and solar installations. For more detailed guidance, volunteers will arrange a home visit.

Although there are fewer grants available this year, people on low incomes or benefits may be eligible for help with new boilers and insulation. For those off gas, there are Community Oil schemes, monthly payment schemes and low interest loans for fuel.

The Energy Saving Centre is open on Thursdays from 10 am to 2pm and on Saturdays from 10 am to 1pm. The Centre is run by Transition Minehead & Alcombe volunteers.

For further information or to volunteer help please phone Hester 01643 821768.

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

Please send items for inclusion to:
elinor.harbridge@virgin.net

To join Forum 21 contact:

Lorna Scott
8 Severn Terrace
Watchet TA23 0AS
Tel. 01984 634242
Email: mail@forum21.org.uk

Admin. Marlene Allinson
Email: forum21@btinternet.com

Switch your fuel provider, save money and stay warm

West Somerset Council is promoting a new scheme to help residents switch fuel providers and reduce household fuel bills. The Council is keen to work with all its partners to promote it.

Switching can be complex with multiple suppliers and tariffs to choose from so most people stick to their supplier. Complicated deals, fears over contract cancellation charges and a simple lack of time mean many people are still reluctant to switch.

Forum 21, among others, offers support to people wanting to switch and may find a better deal for a household. The benefits of this scheme are anyone can register, even if not resident in West Somerset, and it is quick and simple. The message is about encouraging people to switch, save money and stay warm.

Acting as negotiators on behalf of the West Somerset community, the Council will work in partnership with iChoosr – a collective energy switching provider to make it quicker and easier to change home fuel providers.

Groups of residents will come together to buy bulk energy at a lower cost. An auction is then held where

the energy companies must bid their best tariff based on the number of people who have registered an interest in switching. There are over 150 Councils in partnership with iChoosr who run three auctions a year so the collective buying power of local people is something the energy companies have to take seriously.

People can register an interest in switching gas, electricity, or both, either online or in person through West Somerset Council. There is no obligation to switch. There is also an option for households or individuals on pre-payment meters to switch, as long as they are not more than £500 in debt to their current supplier.

Anyone who chooses to switch will have a fixed contract for 12 months so will know how much they are paying every month. Now is a good time to fix costs as the energy companies are beginning to announce their price increases.

It is simple to register using the details from the last annual or monthly gas and electricity bills.

Go to:
www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/energyswitch

New premises for Somerset Wildlife Trust

Somerset Wildlife Trust has purchased 34 Wellington Road, Taunton, as its new central office. The Trust says the move will provide 50 jobs and more opportunities for volunteers and community groups to be involved in its work.

‘Human influence on the climate system is clear’

The effect of human activity is evident in most regions of the globe, an assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes.

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal and, since the 1950s, many changes are unprecedented. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, snow and ice have diminished, sea levels have risen and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased.

A comprehensive assessment of the physical science basis of climate change, the report was compiled by 259 authors from 39 countries.

They conclude that if people continue to emit greenhouse gases at current rates, the accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere could mean that within as little as two to three decades the world will face nearly inevitable warming of more than 2C, resulting in rising sea levels, heatwaves, droughts and more extreme weather.

The IPCC rebuffed the argument of climate sceptics that a ‘pause’ for the last 10-15 years in the upward trend of global temperatures was evidence of flaws in their computer models. The scientists say that each of the last three decades have been successively warmer at the Earth’s

surface than any preceding decade since 1850. Furthermore, they claim the period from 1983-2012 was probably the warmest 30-year period of the last 1,400 years.

A possible reason for the less pronounced warming, the scientists say, could be the role of the oceans in absorbing heat which is still poorly understood.

A controversial finding of the report was its ‘carbon budget’. To hold warming to 2C, total emissions cannot exceed 1,000 gigatons of carbon. Yet by 2011, more than half of that - 513 gigatons - had already been emitted.

To ensure the budget is not exceeded, governments and businesses may have to leave valuable fossil fuel reserves unexploited.

Key Figures

3.7C

extra global surface warming likely between 2081 and 2100

40%

rise in concentration of atmospheric CO2 between 1750 and 2011

63cm

likely sea level rise by 2081 to 2100

275bn

tonnes ‘very likely’ lost annually from world’s glaciers between 1993 and 2009