



# Forum 21 Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 3

January 2014

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

*Working for a Fair and Sustainable Western Somerset*

## Open Day will feature insulation products which won't cost the earth

An Open Day at the Energy Saving Centre in Minehead on Saturday 1 February will showcase insulation methods and products to help people keep warm, save on fuel bills and reduce their 'carbon footprint'.

### Heat loss

Dave Voisey, one of the trained volunteers at the Centre, said: "We are being supported by Jewsons, who have generously given draught proofing products for us to give away on the day. We also have examples of curtain insulation which can be purchased locally and can make a considerable difference. We know this because we have access to thermal measuring devices and have checked the results ourselves!"

He added: "Heat loss has to be tackled on all possible fronts as 35% goes through the walls, 25% through the roof, 10% through doors, 15% through windows and 15% through floors. The Centre has models, samples and information on cavity and solid wall insulation and affordable DIY insulation measures such as magnetic secondary window glazing, which has only become easily available recently, and underfloor insulation using ordinary, relatively cheap, roof insulation and plastic netting".

### Invaluable

"The work of the Energy Saving Centre is invaluable", said Cllr Maureen Smith who represents TMA on the West Somerset Low Carbon Partnership. "The reduction in the District's carbon footprint, which is higher than the national average, was checked at a recent meeting and found to be on target.



*Minehead resident Gillian Lusk discusses the new magnetic secondary glazing with Cllr Maureen Smith*

Energy conservation can keep this momentum going as well as helping keep costs down and health and comfort affordable. However, we cannot be complacent because our area has many difficult buildings and transport problems. The Energy Saving Centre contributes to this effort with information, support and demonstrations of methods and products".

For more information about the Open Day contact Chris Smith on 01643 709478

The Centre is located in the Co-op car park in Minehead and is open on Thursday 10 am to 2 pm and Saturday 10 am to 1 pm. For more information about the Centre go to [www.transition-mineheadandalcombe.org](http://www.transition-mineheadandalcombe.org) [www.west-somerset-forum21.org.uk](http://www.west-somerset-forum21.org.uk) or phone Hester on 01643 821768.

## Inside

**Insulation measures deliver half the savings claimed**

Government estimates have been grossly exaggerated

**Kathleen Winkley – a generous person with clear principles**

Lorna Scott pays tribute to a founder member of Forum 21

**Shale gas will do little to reduce greenhouse emissions**

**Low solar activity could precipitate cold winters**



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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.*

## Home insulation measures deliver half the savings claimed

Government estimates of annual savings from loft insulation and boiler replacement have been grossly exaggerated, an analysis of the figures by a leading environmentalist suggests (*The Guardian* 18 January 2014).

Annual savings from loft insulation on 21,000 homes tracked by the Department of Energy and Climate Change

(DECC) have been around £15.50 a year, compared with the government's 'up to £180' figure.

The Energy Saving Trust, part funded by the government, has told consumers that a new boiler will save between £105 and £310 a year. But the DECC figures suggest the typical annual saving on bills has been closer to £70 a year.

### Reduce draughts

Before households consider investing in expensive energy saving measures such as a new boiler, they should first do all they can to make their home airtight by reducing draughts, says Chris Goodall, author of *How to Live a Low Carbon Life*. Mr Goodall, who stood as a Green Party candidate in the 2010 general election, says that while the measures undeniably cut energy consumption, they come nowhere near the financial savings claimed by the energy industry. "Home insulation measures deliver half the savings that are claimed," he says, "You lose much more heat than you'd expect from small leaks around the home," he says.

"Get a smoke pen, which will show you where the

draughts are and how strong they are, and insulation tape. You will spend no more than £50 on insulation and you will get a very good return on your investment."

*The figures are contained in the National Energy Efficiency Data-Framework (NEED) published by the DECC last year. It examined savings from loft insulation in 21,000 homes, new boilers in nearly 14,000 homes, and cavity wall insulation installed in 16,000 homes and compared them with properties that did not have the measures installed. It found that on average, loft insulation decreases home gas consumption by 1.7%, cavity wall insulation by 7.8% and a new boiler by 9.2% (median figures were slightly higher).*

### Switch energy suppliers and save money on energy bills

Switching energy suppliers, particularly if you haven't done this for a few years, can save an average of £125 over the year.

West Somerset Council is acting as negotiator on behalf of its community, working in partnership with iChoosr – a collective energy switching provider to make it quicker and easier to change home fuel providers.

It is now possible to register an interest in switching electricity, gas or both, either online or in person through West Somerset Council. There is no obligation to switch.

Households or individuals

on pre-payment meters can take advantage of the service as long as they are not more than £500 in debt to their current supplier.

Those choosing to switch will have a fixed contract for 12 months so will know how much they are paying each month.

People can register using the details from their last annual or monthly gas and electricity bills.

Closing date for registration: 17 February 2014. For more information visit [www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/energyswitch](http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/energyswitch) for more details.

### Low Carbon Partnership to give priority to Forum 21's projects

Two of Forum 21's projects have been chosen as priorities by the Low Carbon Partnership: the Steam Coast Trail and the Community Woodland Project. This means that the LCP will do what it can to support and promote these projects though without any

financial commitments.

The two other priorities are Community Energy and support for land management practices.

The LCP now covers the whole of Exmoor as well as West Somerset.

### How Co-op customers can still get points on their energy bills

Customers of Co-operative Energy have received an email saying they will not in future get a share of the profits through the Co-op points system.

There is a way round this. Co-op Energy is run by Midcounties Co-operative. It is based in the Midlands but

anyone can join.

Co-op Energy customers in West Somerset are advised to join Midcounties Co-op (it costs nothing) by phoning 0800 435 902. They will then continue to get Co-op points on their energy bills, which will give them money back.

### Election of Forum 21 directors

At Forum 21's AGM on 18 November, Bruce Scott and Lorna Scott resigned as directors (in accordance with the memorandum and articles) and were duly re-elected.

Elected unanimously were Maureen Smith, Hester Watson, Graham Boswell and Gareth Hoskins,

joining current directors Judy Mapeldoram, Elinor Harbridge and Bob Rivett.

The meeting was followed by an inspiring talk by Johnny Gowdy, programme director of RegenSW, about the potential of tidal and marine power in the Severn Estuary.

### Kathleen Winkley – a generous person with clear principles

Kathleen Winkley died suddenly on 24 October. Kathleen was a founder member of Forum 21 when it began in 1998. I had known her for much longer, first meeting her in the local Greenpeace group.

What I remember most about her was her subtle sense of humour that illuminated much of her conversation. But she was also one of the most principled people I have met, with very clear convictions about things that concerned her. One of these

was the environment but another was social justice which led to her very active involvement in the local Amnesty group. And she had worked as a volunteer in the Advice Bureau for many years.

Her interest in the arts also involved her working as the membership secretary of the Minehead Film Society.

Kathleen was a 'booky' person. We had several enjoyable conversations about books we had both read. When I first met her



she was a special needs teacher at Old Cleeve school. When she retired from teaching she ran a book club for local schools at a time when education cuts were beginning to make themselves felt. And she was a long term member of the U3A playreading group.

Most recently Kathleen had been a member of the Forum's energy team, visiting applicants for the

*Kathleen had a subtle sense of humour that illuminated her conversation.*

Surviving Winter grants. Her experience in the Advice Bureau meant she could give us valuable information on the changing benefits system and its effects on claimants.

Kathleen was a generous person: generous with her concern, her time, her energy for those things she cared about. Together with many other people I will miss her.

**Lorna Scott**

## Events...

### Seed swap & seed potato sale

Saturday, 8 February 10-12 am  
Methodist Church Hall, The Avenue, Minehead

- Exchange seeds... bring your own seeds to swap
- Choose from 100s of packets donated by seed companies
- Try growing something new
- Pick up some heritage varieties
- Find out about saving seeds

Run by Minehead & Alcombe Transition Group in partnership with Forum 21 and West Somerset LETS

More info from: [tma2009@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tma2009@hotmail.co.uk)  
[www.transitionmineheadandalcombe.org](http://www.transitionmineheadandalcombe.org)  
Tel. 01643 709478

### Winter Warmer

Watchet Energy Group invites Watchet residents to an event at the Sanctuary in Swain Street to pick up **FREE** draughtproofing materials, such as:

- Draught proofing foam
- Letterbox excluders
- Door curtains (with rails)
- Chimney sheep (to seal an open chimney)
- Handmade door 'sausages'

Come and enjoy a FREE bowl of soup and get advice on heating and energy saving

Saturday 8 February from 12 noon until 2 pm

## DVD

### Can we keep expanding in a finite world?

*Last Call* is a DVD which examines the predictions and impact of the controversial environmental book, *The Limits to Growth*, published four decades ago.

Last Call provides provocative insights into the fundamental reasons behind the ongoing global ecological and economic crises, and a vision of a more hopeful future, if we commit to appropriate measures before it's too late.

From: [sales@concordmedia.org.uk](mailto:sales@concordmedia.org.uk) £39.50 plus postage, and VAT if applicable.

### Grants available from Forum 21

We are pleased to announce that Forum 21 is now in a position to offer small grants (maximum £1,000) for measures that meet our sustainability criteria.

The grants are available to community groups to fund small projects or to part-fund larger projects.

Application forms and criteria can be downloaded from the home page (grants) of our website: <http://www.west-somerset-forum21.org.uk>

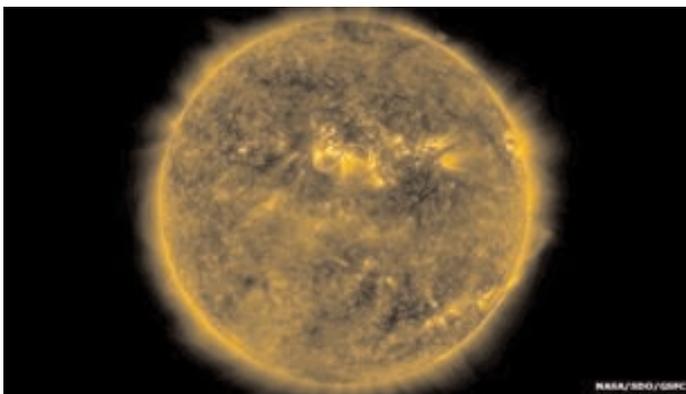
For more information ring 01984 634 242 or email: [mail@forum21.org.uk](mailto:mail@forum21.org.uk)

## Low solar activity could precipitate cold winters

The sun's activity may be falling faster than at any time in 10,000 years. It has reached its solar maximum, the point in its 11-year cycle where activity is at a peak. It should be peppered with sunspots, exploding with flares and spewing out huge clouds of charged particles into space in the form of coronal mass ejections.

feeds into the jet stream - the fast-flowing air current in the upper atmosphere that can drive the weather”.

The results of this are dominantly felt above Europe, says Professor Lockwood, resulting in cold, snowy winters becoming the norm for Europe. "These meanders in the jet stream are called blocking events because



*There is a significant chance that the sun could become increasingly quiet resulting in cold snowy winters.*

Mike Lockwood, professor of space environment physics, from the University of Reading, thinks there is a significant chance that the sun could become increasingly quiet.

they block off the normal moist, mild winds we get from the Atlantic, and instead we get cold air being dragged down from the Arctic and from Russia," he says.

"We think there is a mechanism in Europe where we should expect more cold winters when solar activity is low," he says. He believes this local effect happens because the amount of ultraviolet light radiating from the sun dips when solar activity is low. This means that less UV radiation hits the stratosphere – the layer of air that sits high above the earth. And this in turn

The phenomenon has occurred before. In the 17th century the sun went through an extremely quiet phase. Historical records reveal that sun spots virtually disappeared during this time. The era coincided with a period of bitterly cold winters in Europe. The Thames froze over, snow cover across the continent increased and the Baltic Sea iced over. *Source: BBC World Service*

## Shale gas will do little to reduce greenhouse emissions

A study by BP predicts greenhouse emissions will rise by almost a third in 20 years and that switching to other fuels like shale gas will do little to cut carbon emissions. (*The Guardian*, 15 January 2014).

The rise in emissions, despite international efforts to cut carbon, will occur despite the predicted huge growth in the use of shale gas, according to BP.

Burning gas produces much less CO<sub>2</sub> than burning coal, but the effect of a big rise in shale gas exploration will not ameliorate the increases in emissions that scientists say will take the world to dangerous climate change.

Proponents of the fuel have argued that shale gas can counteract dependence on coal. But while shale gas use has increased dramatically, particularly in the US, where it brought down gas prices from \$12 (£7) to

below \$3 (£1.80) at one stage, global emissions have continued to rise as the coal that would otherwise have been used has been exported elsewhere.

Prime Minister David Cameron announced recently that councils will be entitled to keep 100% of business rates raised from fracking sites in a deal expected to generate millions of pounds for local authorities. He also said that revenues generated by shale gas companies could be paid directly in cash to homeowners living nearby.

However, an opinion poll conducted a few days after this announcement for the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IME) found that 47% of people would be unhappy for a gas well site using fracking to open within 10 miles of their home, compared with just 14% who said they would be happy.

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

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