



Forum 21 Newsletter

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

Working for a Fair and Sustainable Western Somerset

Volunteers needed for exciting woodland project

Forum 21 is looking for volunteers for an exciting new project developing skills working with woodland.

The Forum and Exmoor National Park have reached agreement for a community woodland project on North Hill, Minehead.

Volunteers would have opportunities to learn about: extracting useful products, such as wood fuel and timber, and maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

The project would seek to engage and educate the public by demonstrating how ecosystems work and to raise awareness of our natural capital by encouraging

species identification and conservation of nature and landscape.

An added bonus would be the opportunity for people in fuel poverty to obtain wood fuel as a carbon neutral source of energy.

The plan is to involve West Somerset Community College and its associated apprenticeship scheme, as well as schools, people in fuel poverty and possibly the Sure Start Scheme.

Forum 21 will shortly sign a licence granted by Exmoor National Park allowing them to use the site. It is hoped work can begin soon.

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Steam Coast Trail gets nearer to reality

The Steam Coast Trail team has reached agreement with Blue Anchor chalet-owners to continue the trail, overcoming a major stumbling block. The team is also applying for funding for the project to several large fund-holders and is hopeful they will be successful this year.



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.

The Steam Coast Trail team has been joined by Harry Singer and many other new faces – and has a new website: www.steamcoasttrail.org



Like us? Please go to our Facebook page and say so – Forum 21 at Facebook.

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.

Shale gas will not solve our energy problems

Predictions that US shale gas can solve the world's energy problems are 'preposterous' according to energy expert Arthur Berman. "Oil companies have to make a big deal about shale plays because that is all that is left in the world", he told James Stafford of Oilprice.com

He added: "Shale plays will eventually spread to Europe but it will take a longer time

than it did in North America. The biggest reason is the lack of private mineral ownership in most of Europe so there is no incentive for local people to get on board. In fact, there are only the negative factors of industrial development for them to look forward to with no financial return. It's also a lot more expensive to drill and produce gas in Europe. Not all plays work even though they look good on paper, and

potentially commercial areas are always quite small compared to the total resource. Also, we know that these plays do not last forever and that once the drilling treadmill starts, it never ends. Because of high decline rates, new wells must constantly be drilled to maintain production. Shale plays will last years, not decades".

Mr Berman thinks the UK

could use gas from one play, the Bowland Shale which, though not huge, could be enough. He anticipated a lot of opposition because people in the UK are sensitive to the environment.

"There is no way to hide the fact that shale development has a big footprint despite pad drilling and industry efforts to make it less invasive".

Communities Secretary accused of double standards in favouring fracking over windfarms

Founder of the green energy company Ecotricity Dale Vince has accused Communities Secretary Eric Pickles of double standards, claiming he is applying greater local scrutiny to windfarms than fracking.

In January, Mr Pickles overruled the recommendation of the planning inspector and rejected an appeal by Ecotricity for a four-turbine windfarm on the Somerset Levels. There is only one turbine in the entire county.

Greater consultation with local communities is demanded for wind turbine plans and, while wind applications are dealt with at local level, decisions on shale gas plans are put in the hands of the obscure Minerals Planning Authority run by county councils.

Mr Vince told the *Guardian*. "Local voices are being completely bypassed when it comes to shale gas fracking. This is a clear double standard".

Onshore windfarms have become highly controversial, particularly in rural constituencies. Subsidies

have been cut and tougher planning rules introduced. The Tories recently announced that no more onshore windfarms would be approved if they win the next election.

Mr Vince said the lighter scrutiny being applied to fracking projects makes it far harder for opponents to submit objections.

Caroline Lucas, Green Party MP, said: "It's disgraceful that ministers are denying local residents the right to be notified directly when they're affected by shale gas drilling. Fracking is a dangerous, dirty and unnecessary technology that is completely incompatible with our obligations to tackle climate change and the government knows very well that public opposition to fracking is growing."

Sign up to oppose fracking



Protesters in the West Sussex village of Balcombe where Cuadrilla planned to drill a well up to 3,000 feet (910 m) deep with a possible 2,500 feet (760 m) horizontal leg.

The environmental campaigning group 38degrees is asking people to sign a petition calling on David Cameron to reconsider his position on fracking.

The petition demands that instead he should champion clean energy sources which do not risk the global climate, the natural environment and people's health.

The group says Cameron is recklessly stepping up the UK's investment in fracking

by giving tax breaks to fracking companies and buying off councils. He is also trying to change trespass laws to make it harder to oppose fracking.

At the time of writing the petition had 174,224 signatures towards its target of 200,000.

Sign the petition:
<https://secure.38degrees.org.uk/sign-now-for-a-frack-free-uk>

Late News...

The Renewable Heat Incentive has started at last!

From 9 April householders will be able to claim payments for kilowatts of renewable heat they produce from installations like solar hot water, biomass boilers and heat pumps. RHI is available for homeowners, private landlords, social landlords and self builders.

Go to the DECC website or ring the official information line on 0300 123 123

Achieving sustainable growth – the challenge for councils

Climate Local – delivering growth and supporting resilient communities LGA Conference 31 March 2014

The conference coincided with the publication of the IPCC report on climate change (<http://www.ipcc.ch/>).

Councillors and officers from local authorities and government and business organisations described the means they are using to achieve sustainable growth.

Examples are:

- Kent's Low Carbon Kent which supports and promotes green business including, transport initiatives;
- Cambridge North West Action Plan which will supply 14,000 new sustainable homes and infrastructure by 2031 (this includes underground refuse collection, built in ventilation and water harvesting for non potable

uses); and
• Hull's LEP, who have had to deal with huge commercial losses when the floods inundated the dock and industrial area. They are now developing the Humber low carbon energy estuary, including a sustainable new port, and are going to raise the height of their flood barrage – again!

Jane Wildeblood, Corporate Sustainability Manager from Bath & North East Somerset Council, asserted that community energy is essential to resilience and all objections can be overcome with persistence.

Attendees were surprised to hear that overheating and risk of heat waves were very

probable in the near future and should be taken into account for new build and retrofitting insulation and ventilation (air conditioning is not acceptable!). Wildfire risk must be considered when planning new build near forestry (Bracknell 2011).

Speakers stressed reliance on communities to carry out much of the preventative and crisis work and noted that people do not engage with discussion about climate change but respond better to 'unpredictable, extreme weather'.

The keynote speech was given by Cllr Robert Light of the Environment Agency who outlined the combination of weather (heavy rain caused by the Jetstream moving south of the UK) and other factors that caused the recent floods and made it clear that they will recur in the future.

The Corporate Director from

Eastleigh described Hampshire's ambitious and countywide effort to set up and market a workable delivery system for the Green Deal, Solent Green Deal, but only succeeded in providing a handful of boiler replacements as the policies were continually changed and reduced.

If you require more information contact Maureen Smith, a Forum 21 board member, secretary of Transition Minehead and Alcombe and a West Somerset District Councillor with special interests in environment, housing, health and wellbeing (now the the remit of local authorities) and economic regeneration on 01643 709478 or msmith@westsomerset.gov.uk

To view papers from the conference go to www.local.gov.uk, and click on Events and then on Past Events.

Maureen Smith

Events...

Rural Housing Fair

Thursday 8 May
Dulverton Town Hall
1 - 7 pm

Energy advice for private landlords

By 2018 landlords of privately-rented property will have to get a Level D Energy Performance Certificate

Greening Education 2014 Mermaid Conference Centre London 9 June

This event is organised by govtoday in association with the Carbon Trust. It will discuss how leaders in the education sector can set a sufficiently sustainable precedent for the young people they teach to follow.

For more information go to:
www.greeningeducation.co.uk/event-home/?user=&passw=1
or ring 0161 6865576

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

Plant Swap



Saturday, 24 May 10 - 12 am
Methodist Church Hall, The Avenue, Minehead

WANTED - Donations

Please bring your surplus plants & seedlings Swap for different plants... try something new 1000s of seedlings to choose from - vegetables, fruit, flowers, perennials.

Save money, save time

Stock your plot - vegetable, fruit, extra plants on sale Bring & Buy - recycled tools, books, garden paraphernalia.

Home baking and refreshments

Info or to get involved contact: tma2009@hotmail.co.uk
Tel. 01643 709478
www.transitionmineheadandalcombe.org.uk

EDF resumes preparatory work at Hinkley C site

EDF are resuming preparatory work on the Hinkley C site even though the decision on whether or not to build the power station is not due to be made until the outcome of a European Commission review of the 'strike price' is complete.

On 7 April more than 100 MPs, academics and businessmen put their names to a document urging the EC to reject the state aid request from the British government that would enable the building of new reactors at Hinkley Point.

The signatories – co-ordinated by Paul Dorfman, senior research associate at the Energy Institute at University College, London – oppose the funding of the reactors for a variety of reasons, including cost and safety, but also for potentially distorting the market against wind and other renewable technologies.

The document says: "The development of sustainable and affordable low carbon energy remains a growing economic sector with huge

potential for job creation. To seek to delimit this diversity through state aid support of nuclear power at the expense of other potentially more flexible, safe, productive, cost effective and affordable technologies seems, at the very least, unwise."

More information from: <http://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/sgr-supports-submission-criticising-nuclear-subsidies>

Resilience against flooding

Within EDF a programme of work has been undertaken to assess preparedness for meeting credible and unknown threats. Work on site included actions to provide additional resilience against flooding and the assessment of buildings and plant items to withstand seismic hazards.

EDF has invested in vehicles, plant and machinery which might be required in extreme circumstances to move debris or heavy loads and provide supplementary pumping and electricity generating capacity.

Urgent action needed to halt rise in mean temperatures

Global greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to rise at an accelerated pace is the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's latest report, *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change*.

It says that urgent action is needed to limit the increase in global mean temperature to 2° C and that action now will be far less costly than postponing action for the future.

Highlighting the gravity of the situation and the urgency with which action must be taken, the chair of the IPCC, Rajendra Pachauri, told a press conference: "The high speed mitigation train needs to leave the station very soon and all of global society would need to get on board."

If the world stays on the present path, the IPCC says the world's global mean temperature could rise to between 3.7-4.8° C (6.7-8.4 ° Fahrenheit) by the end of this century.

The total human-caused emissions were the highest in human history between 2000 and 2010 and more than three-quarters of the carbon dioxide emissions were from the combustion of fossil fuels and from industry. About half of all emissions since 1750 have occurred in the last 40 years.

In a statement issued at UN Headquarters shortly after the report's release, the Secretary-General urged "all countries to act swiftly and boldly on climate change, to bring ambitious announcements and actions to the climate summit on 23 September, and to make every effort needed to reach a global, ambitious and legal climate agreement in 2015."

The UN's Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is convening a summit on 23 September to raise the level of ambition, catalyze action on the ground and increase political momentum. He has been using every opportunity to press for bold actions to tackle what he describes as the "defining issue of our times."

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

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

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