



Forum 21 Newsletter

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Working for a Fair and Sustainable Western Somerset

Save our wildlife – use a free ‘morsbag’



Katy Attwater of Timberscombe is pictured with Lesley Culverhouse, proprietor of the Reading Room in Friday Street, Minehead, using her heavy duty morsbag to carry books.

smaller shops and outlets in the West Somerset area. And they are absolutely FREE.

Studies have found that 95 per cent of birds in the North Sea had ingested plastic. But it's not just wildlife – mammals, birds and fish – which is affected. Scientists have found huge quantities of plastic on seafloors and the tiny fragments ingested by

shellfish mean that dangerous toxins are entering the food chain.

Lesley Culverhouse, the owner of the Reading Room in Friday Street, Minehead, is happy to distribute the bags. She says, “The bags can be left with us or other shops for re-use or the person can re-use a favourite bag themselves. The main thing is to use them instead of plastic bags!”

If you care about wildlife and don't want to spend 5p each for plastic bags a local resident has the solution. She has been producing bags – known as ‘morsbags’ – made of recycled biodegradable material donated by well-wishers.

Forum 21 has provided a grant of £300 to purchase a new ‘overlocker’ sewing machine for this one-woman production line. This will enable her to make another 1,000 ‘morsbags’.

The bags are being distributed to

If you would like to help to protect our local wildlife, contact Maureen Smith of Forum 21 on 01643 709478 or email: mail@forum21.org.uk

Grass fed future- putting carbon back in the soil

The speaker at Forum 21's AGM this year is Graham Harvey, the agricultural story editor for the Radio 4 serial *The Archers* and the author of books including *The Killing of the Countryside* and *The Carbon Fields*.



All welcome on Monday 16 November, from 7.30 pm. at the Quaker Meeting House, Banck Street, Minehead.

Inside

China signs up but finance problems remain for EDF

Take a walk on the wild side with our Community Woodland experts

Forum 21 news Surviving Winter Landlords Project Help with switching

Join a People's Climate Change March near you



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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.

Chinese sign up but problems remain for EDF

China's much publicised investment in the building of Hinkley Point C does not signal the end of the controversy.

China has agreed to take a one-third stake in the project but at the time of going to press a final investment decision by EDF Energy is still awaited.

Two credit rating agencies, Moody's and Standard and Poor, have issued warnings that EDF will face credit downgrades if it goes ahead with Hinkley C.

The construction of plants using European Pressurised Reactors (EPRs) in Finland and France has resulted in drastic losses by AREVA and EDF and the cost of constructing Hinkley C – also using EPRs – would incur further losses and could lead to the

break up of EDF or a major sell-off of assets.

Under the deal agreed during the second day of a state visit by Chinese president Xi Jinping to the UK, China General Nuclear (CGN) will invest £6 billion (\$9 billion) in EDF Energy's project to construct the plant.

Under the Strategic Investment Agreement, EDF's share in the project will be 66.5% and CGN's will be 33.5%. EDF said it intends to offer other investors stakes in the £18 billion (\$28 billion) project, but will keep at least a 50% stake itself.

CGN will make its investment in the UK through its new company called General Nuclear International.

Jobs promise for Somerset

Hinkley C is expected to provide 25,000 jobs during construction, a cabinet member of Somerset County Council told the *Bridgwater Mercury*.

"We would like the development of Hinkley Point C to provide a catalyst for sustainable economic growth in Somerset and the wider South West region, which in turn can go on to support the national nuclear renaissance", David Hall, Cabinet Member for Business, Inward Investment and Policy, said.

"We want to maximise the economic advantages of Hinkley Point C to Somerset and for it to leave a sustainable legacy from its construction which will benefit our county for generations to come".

Hinkley Point Site Stakeholders Group

Hinkley B to remain in operation until 2023 but staff at Hinkley A face redundancy

Between 60 and 70 people of the existing 270 employed at Hinkley A will be made redundant as the closure programme proceeds.

The director of Hinkley Point A Site, Ron Schroder, assured the group that the redundancies would be carried

out sensitively.

There is no relationship between the closure of Hinkley B, now expected to remain operational until 2023, and the timing of the construction of C, the group was told. Decisions will be made solely on the grounds of safety.

Group to discuss security concerns

The security of waste disposal – including low and intermediate level waste as well as the more toxic fuel element debris – will be the subject of a special meeting of the Site Stakeholders Group in January, the chairman Mike Caswell, told representatives.

The waste, which includes shavings from the bottom of cooling ponds and from skips, is analysed to assess the level of contamination before being classed as low, medium or high level

contamination. It is then stored in drums at designated sites still to be decided.

Concerns were expressed that the Hinkley site is being used to decontaminate skips from other sites but the meeting was told this was the only site where the skills and technology were available.

Anxiety was also expressed about the possible reduction in budgets expected in the Chancellor's autumn

NDA launches strategy review

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has launched a review of its strategy to get rid of first generation nuclear plants. The NDA has to review its strategy every five years.

Markku Koskelainen of NDA said he hoped stakeholders would participate in advance of the consultation planned for January 2016. They are particularly keen to know if they are asking the right questions.

The draft strategy can be downloaded from their website: www.nda.gov.uk

statement on 25 November. The view of one member of the group that no political party would support cuts to such a sensitive area of public expenditure was strongly supported.

Community Woodland Project

Take a walk on the wild side

Two years ago, Forum 21 set up the Community Woodland Project in Woodcombe, a partnership venture with Exmoor National Park who granted the group a licence for the work.

Our objectives are to manage the woodlands to maximise its conservation, enhance the landscape value while at the same time extracting valuable wood products.

The project involves assembling a comprehensive database of the site's ecological assets. So far 20 trees and shrubs, 50 species of flowering plants, 22 lichen species, 10 mosses, 5 ferns and 8 fungi have been identified.

Animals other than birds are less easy to spot and many of the smaller ones are difficult to identify.

Woodland training

In carrying out our objectives we have embarked on a programme of public education and training. Three members have been trained in the use of chainsaws and other equipment and one has been on a woodland management training course. These skills, combined with considerable in-house expertise in conservation and ecology, enable us to run on-site training sessions.

If you have visited the site in the last nine months you may have noticed that the sycamores on the north

Experts needed

The collection of data is ongoing and we need a lot of help with identifying species, in particular insects, small animals and bats. We would love to hear from anyone with knowledge of these species.

A number of activities are planned for the autumn. On the 8th and 22nd of November and 6th December trees will be felled using chainsaws and the use of hand tools and appropriate safety equipment will be demonstrated. Come along and get involved or just come and see what is being done.

Contact:

**Graham Boswell at: togooutdoors@hotmail.com
or Forum 21: mail@forum21.org.uk**

side of the stream have been felled. This section of the woodland is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Forum

21 is working with Natural England to determine how best to manage it for its conservation interests.

Surviving Winter

Forum 21 will once again be offering grants to people over 50 in West Somerset this winter, on behalf of the Somerset Community Foundation.

Pensioners struggling to afford to keep warm, and over 50s with significant long term health or disability, can apply on 01984 634 242 or mail@forum21.org.uk

Support for private landlords

We are still looking for more private landlords who would like our support to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, which have to reach EPC level E by 2018. On offer are free energy checks and information and advice on the best ways to achieve this. Our trained volunteers are equipped with damp monitors, heat sensors and thermal imaging cameras. Contact Lorna Scott (01984

634 242; mail@forum21.org.uk) or Hester Watson (01643 821 768; hestertavens@yahoo.co.uk) to make an appointment.

Save money by switching

An information day at the Energy Centre on 3 October found savings of £1300 so we are running it again on 7 November. If people bring in a bill we can do a computer search for the cheapest supplier. The switching company U Switch has arranged a bulk buy deal with EoN making the savings especially high while this lasts. We also have information about schemes for home improvements and financial help with bills. Many people, not just pensioners, are eligible for the warm home discount and there are organisations that can help with debts.

So come along on 7 November between 10am and 1pm. The Centre is located in Minehead Coop car park.

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

**Please send items for inclusion to the newsletter editor:
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Climate change

Get involved in the People's Climate March

Forum 21 is urging members and supporters to attend the People's Climate March in London on 29 November. The March is timed to coincide with the start of the Paris climate change summit on 30 November to be attended by many world leaders.

The organisers say Amsterdam in 2009 failed because rich countries tried to impose emission limits on poorer ones.

This one has a better chance as a 'bottom-up' approach has been adopted. Countries have been asked

to suggest what they can do to limit emissions by 2020.

Unchecked

Nevertheless, the UN says the pledges made by 150 countries will not meet the 2C target by the end of the century. The plans represent a 5C warming if left unchecked, widely regarded as the limit of safety beyond which many of the effects of climate change – floods, droughts, heatwaves, sea level rises and intense storms – are likely to become much more dangerous.

The French hosts of the conference, and the UN, are hoping that a regular review mechanism will also be agreed in Paris, by which the pledges could be ratcheted up in further steps, probably every five years.

If you can't get to the London march you can join one in Ilminster organised by Allison Jarman.

To find out more go to: https://secure.avaaz.org/en/event/globalclimatemarch/Ilminster_Climate_March?cl=8648348935&v=65318

Fracking

National parks may no longer to be protected from fracking activities

Labour and Greenpeace have condemned as 'deeply disturbing' a move to avoid full parliamentary debate on allowing drilling beneath protected areas.

Ministers have been accused of trying to sneak through new rules allowing shale drilling under national parks without a proper parliamentary debate. The rules, first proposed in July, would permit drilling underneath protected areas, despite a commitment before the election from Amber Rudd, the energy secretary, to have an outright ban on fracking in national parks, sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

No debate

Instead of a full parliamentary debate, the controversial measures will be discussed and voted on by a small committee of MPs this week. All MPs will get to vote on the regulations at some point but will be denied the chance of a debate.

The 18 committee members include 10 Conservatives, including energy minister Andrea Leadsom, Julian Smith, an assistant whip, and Paul Maynard, a parliamentary aide to Rudd whose local association received a £5,000 donation before the election from Addison Projects, a company that could benefit from fracking. Maynard, the MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys, denied the donation was connected to the development of shale gas.

Greenpeace estimates that 23 MPs have constituencies that include national parks or areas of outstanding natural

beauty that could be affected by the new rules – including the former deputy prime minister, Nick Clegg, the Conservative chairman of the Treasury committee, Andrew Tyrie, and Oliver Letwin, the Conservative Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The charity does not believe any of the MPs on the committee are likely to see shale drilling near national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty in their own constituencies.

Labour managed to secure an amendment to the infrastructure bill in January to ensure that fracking could not take place in areas where drinking water is collected or in protected sensitive areas.

However, the new regulations issued shortly after the election say fracking would be allowed to take place below 1,200 metres in national parks, the broads, areas of outstanding natural beauty, world heritage sites and areas most vulnerable to groundwater pollution. To do this, fracking companies would have to drill down and sideways from outside protected areas.

SSSIs, conservation areas for wildlife and plants, would receive no protection under the regulations.

Somerset has received no applications

At the Hinkley Point Site Stakeholders Group meeting last week, a spokesman for Somerset County Council said no planning applications had been received to carry out fracking in the county.