



# GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM newsletter

[www.gefweb.org.uk](http://www.gefweb.org.uk)

**MARCH – MAY 2018**

## A QUARTER CENTURY OF ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN GUILDFORD

**In 1993 a small group of Guildford residents, alarmed at the ever-increasing threats to their town, not least from Climate Change, set up Guildford Environmental Forum.**

The Forum is now celebrating 25 years of continuous activity (evidenced by our temporary logo) and can be proud of its achievements. We shall be holding a 25th Anniversary ticket-only event on 11th October in the centre of Guildford, with a keynote talk by James Smith, Chair of the Carbon Trust.

### ***The Climate Change Challenge – how we can all help***

We believe that 2018 is a crucial year for Climate Change, and that at last a very important but difficult battle has been won in that most of the UK now accepts that Climate Change is a real threat to our current way of life. Even if the science of Climate Change were found to be wrong (and this is now extremely unlikely) or technological change is able to help, GEF believes that we need to take every possible measure now to mitigate the future impact for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

Looking back, there have been some significant successes over the last 25 years, including the much faster than expected switch to solar and wind power. But this is not enough. Sadly, in Guildford, with our beautiful natural environment and our treasured green belt, we have not done sufficient to mitigate Climate Change or build a sustainable environment.

Looking forward, GEF intends to do everything possible to help residents to

understand why we should not continue to ignore this increasing threat. At a recent open meeting we were treated to a wonderful talk by Henrietta Stock, a Chartered Energy Engineer and Energy manager, who is also a young Mum and a new member of GEF. She spent three days in the US being trained to present the Al Gore message, and following the presentation we discussed what GEF can do when faced with such an enormous challenge. All present agreed that the risks we are taking are too great and now is the time to take action for the sake of the next generation. The evidence is much too strong to ignore and we must support more than 170 nations, including the UK, who have ratified the 2016 Paris Agreement.

We can all help to address the issue of the threat of Climate Change and environmental damage for future generations and we believe that we can improve our lives at the same time. GEF has formed an action group to co-ordinate our message. We agree that GEF needs to be more prominent in putting forward our concerns and suggestions. It is our actions that count, now. Here are a baker's dozen of suggestions that we recommend all our readers to adopt:

**1. Switch to a Renewable Energy provider.** The November 2017 issue of *Which?* (p8) found that the average cost of a dual-fuel tariff with 100% renewable electricity is £151 less per year than the average standard tariff from one of the Big Six suppliers. Ecotricity and Good Energy have provided green energy for many years, but *Which?* noted that the cheapest offer is from the market newcomer Tonik Energy, which was £360 pa cheaper.

There are over 40 tariffs with 100%

renewable electricity and *Which?* also noted that some firms now offer green gas (generated by breaking down biodegradable material). Carbon offset for gas is included in some tariffs.

**2. Switch all your electric light bulbs to LED** (not just long life) as soon as possible. 80% lower electricity costs quickly pay back the initial outlay, the light is brighter and most bulb fittings are now available.

**3. Fly as little as possible.** A return flight to New York equals 15% of the average UK person's total normal CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for a year. Test your personal CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on the [footprint.wwf.org.uk](http://footprint.wwf.org.uk) website and see how it improves if you exclude your annual flights.

**4. Reduce your usage of plastic.** David Attenborough's recent TV series has shown us the damage that plastic is doing to our seas. As a start, instead of buying a fresh bottle of water or soft drink every day, refill an old one. Bottled water has no significant advantage over regular tap water and tap water is so much cheaper than bottled, and so much better for you than fizzy drinks! There are numerous other ways to help reduce your usage of plastics.

**5. Reduce your meat intake.** The *New Scientist* calculates that cutting out meat would reduce our average CO<sub>2</sub> food emissions by a half. A vegetarian or even vegan diet can be excellent for your health and saves money as well as CO<sub>2</sub>.

**6. Grow your own food.** GEF and Transition Guildford jointly run an extremely successful Community Garden, within walking distance of Guildford Town Centre.

**7. Reduce car journeys** and save money by switching more to public transport or one of Guildford's excellent park and ride schemes.

**8. Switch to a smaller hybrid or electric vehicle** to save money, especially as petrol/diesel prices keep increasing.

**9. Improve your home insulation.** If you live in an old house, we recommend at least draught-proofing your external doors and using thick curtains. Contact Action Surrey for details on <https://www.actionsurrey.org/>

**10. Turning down the thermostat** in your home during the night can save 10% of your heating bills – see more tips on <https://energy.gov/energysaver/fall-and-winter-energy-saving-tips>

**11. Take holidays more locally** to save money and the hassle of flights and the very high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions mentioned in 3 above.

**12. Join Population Matters** (patron Sir David Attenborough), who have a local group – contact David Hepper (GEF member) on [David.Hepper@Local-Software.co.uk](mailto:David.Hepper@Local-Software.co.uk)

**13. Encourage a friend or relative to join GEF** for just £10pa. GEF have strong links to Surrey Wildlife Trust (Hedgerow Heroes), Butterfly Conservation and the National Trust through the Small Blue Project. The Forum conducts numerous free evening talks throughout the year. Just joining helps us to press for a more sustainable Guildford.

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM – A QUARTER CENTURY

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2018/19 are due on 11th April, 2018. The subscription rate is being maintained again at last year's rate of £10pa (£15pa for a household at one address). For those who have completed standing order mandates and gift aid declarations, there is nothing more to do to renew your membership and we thank you very much for completing both returns in the past.

Most other members will receive a reminder by e-mail to pay their subscription and/or to complete a gift aid mandate. If we do not have an e-mail address for you, there will be a reminder form with your posted newsletter and we would be most grateful if these could be returned to me by 31st March, 2018. We encourage members to pay by standing order as it reduces our administration hugely, but if this is not your preference, then please send me a cheque and the gift aid certificate and I will confirm receipt.

### CURRENT FINANCES

We have been able to maintain subscriptions at the level set in 2011 because membership has risen strongly this year and gift aid recoveries have helped. We have also received some very generous donations from our members. Guildford Borough Council also continues to provide facilities for our lectures and events at no cost to ourselves.

If we could add 30 new members again in 2018/9, we would be able to support even more projects like the Small Blue Stepping Stones and Swift Projects. If you know anyone in the Guildford area who would like to become a member of GEF for £10pa, then please encourage them to apply for membership. This is the very best way in which you could help us achieve our targets for 2018.

Please help us to make our 25th anniversary year a strong year for the Environment and for true Sustainability in Guildford.

Adrian Thompson

### Microbead breakthrough

Plastic microbeads, found in personal care and cleaning products, are a pernicious pollutant. Now a team from Bath University has developed a biodegradable renewable alternative. These beads are made from cellulose, dissolved and formed into tiny droplets that are then 'set'. They remain stable in a bodywash, but can be broken down by organisms at the sewage treatment works, or even in the environment, in a short period of time. (Source: University of Bath, 8 Jun '17)

### Hitching a ride

Debris in the oceans is transporting alien species around the globe. Following the Japanese earthquake and tsunami of 2011, nearly 300 Asian species, including molluscs, worms, anemones, starfish and crustaceans have crossed the Pacific to North America on rafts of marine debris. (Source: BBC Wildlife, Dec '17)

## FACTS & FIGURES

### Look, no ice

A ship, a tanker containing liquefied natural gas, has made a winter crossing of the Arctic without an icebreaker for the first time as global warming causes the region's ice sheets to melt. It is the first commercial vessel to make such a crossing alone during the winter months. This is a significant moment in the story of climate change in the Arctic. (Source: i, 15 Feb '18)

## GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

# Notice of Annual General Meeting 8th May 2018

preceded by a talk on Local Recycling

The AGM of the Guildford Environmental Forum will take place in the Council Chamber at Guildford Borough Council's Millmead offices on Tuesday 8th May.

The evening will start at 18.00 with a talk by Chris Wheeler and Liz Mockeridge of Guildford Borough Council, who will update us on local recycling. Key issues will include the current status of paper, card, glass, plastic and food recycling. This is particularly timely because of the recent publicity surrounding plastic in the oceans and the ban by China on the import of plastic and other waste.



The talk will be followed at about 19.30 by our formal AGM. The agenda is as follows:

- a. Minutes of the last AGM on 3rd May, 2017.
- b. Chairman's Report incl membership, finances and project updates.
- c. Elections to the Executive Committee. (Please let me know if you would like further information about joining the Executive Committee or would like to be more involved in GEF in any way).
- d. The adoption of a new Constitution – see overleaf.
- e. AOB

The existing Constitution is dated 21st January, 1993. It is broadly relevant but includes rules that all membership applications should be submitted to the Executive Committee (which would cause unnecessary delays) and detailed rules on the composition of the Executive Committee, which are no longer relevant. To amend the Constitution, we need a vote of "not less than two-thirds of the GEF members present" at the AGM on 8th May, 2018 to adopt the new proposed Constitution.

I do hope that you can join us on 8th May and please contact me before then if you have any queries.

Adrian Thompson

## Draft CONSTITUTION – Revised in May 2018

### Objective

To promote environmental sustainability in the Borough of Guildford by creating partnerships, disseminating information and managing projects to support Guildford residents and businesses in living and working more sustainably and in stimulating more interest in environmental matters in the Borough.

### Membership

Anyone who lives, works or has business or environmental interests in the Borough of Guildford and wishes to, may become a member. A mailing list shall be maintained of all those expressing a wish to be involved in the Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF).

### Involvement

Members of GEF shall be entitled to consider and report on those issues affecting the Environment and Quality of Life in the Borough of Guildford. GEF Members shall appoint an Executive Committee (Exec) to represent them during the year. The Exec shall make recommendations to Guildford Borough Council (GBC) or any other relevant organisation for both short and long term measures to achieve the Objective (above) and have the power to express their views on any particular measure being proposed. This shall be done at either the general meetings, which shall be held at least three times per year, or through the specific project groups.

Each project group that is established shall prepare a report of their activities in the previous year for submission via the Exec to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of members. The general meetings will also be reported upon at the AGM.

### Meetings and the Executive Committee

1. The management of GEF shall be undertaken by the Exec, which will be comprised of Representatives of the members of the GEF.
2. All the Committee shall be elected annually by members at the AGM, up to a maximum of 10.
3. The Exec may include co-opted members of the Business Community and Councillors or Employees of GBC, who are involved in environmental policy or the implementation thereof at the discretion of the Exec.
4. The AGM shall be held in May each year and members should be given at least fourteen days' notice in writing. Members of the Exec

shall normally hold office until the next AGM.

5. The Exec shall appoint its Chair at their first meeting after the AGM, at which only elected members will have a vote.
6. The Exec shall meet at least three times a year.
7. Any member of the Exec who does not attend at least two meetings of the Committee in a calendar year (incl the AGM) shall stand down at the next AGM, unless exempted by a majority of the Exec.
8. The quorum for a meeting of the Exec shall be four members.
9. Membership fees are to be reviewed annually at the AGM.

### Special Meetings

A Special Meeting of the GEF shall be called at fourteen days' notice upon the receipt by the Secretary of a requisition in writing, signed by at least twenty members of GEF, stating the object thereof, or by the Chair.

### Finance

GEF may raise money by means of membership fees, affiliation fees, donations or legacies and other sources as may be deemed appropriate. All such monies shall be applied solely towards the Objective of GEF. No member of GEF shall seek to profit in any way from their GEF membership. The Financial Year shall end on 31st March in each year.

### Dissolution

GEF may be dissolved at any time by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of those GEF members attending and entitled to vote at a Special Meeting called with at least 21 days' written notice to all members on the GEF Mailing List.

### Alteration to the Constitution

Any alteration to this Constitution may be made at any time by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of those attending and entitled to vote at a Special Meeting called with at least 21 days' written notice to all members on the GEF Mailing List.

*Approved in accordance with the previous Constitution dated 21 January 1993 on 8th May, 2018.*

.....Chair of GEF

*A talk given to the Forum in January by Edward Mayer*

## SWIFTS

*Report by John Bannister*



**EDWARD MAYER** used to work for organisations like The Tate, managing their buildings, and he came to realise, sooner than most, that there is a vital link between our buildings and the welfare of certain animals and birds, such as swifts. He decided that something had to be done to halt the precipitous decline in swift numbers.

### The problem

Hundreds of millions of years went by when swifts were happy to nest in caves, cliffs and old trees. But when man arrived on the scene our buildings proved an attractive alternative. It used to be the case that our buildings provided a guaranteed range of safe materials, insect food and nooks and crannies ideal for creatures wanting to raise their young. At least they did until quite recently. Like the rest of the animal kingdom, swifts have been present on Earth for millennia. It is we who are recent arrivals and are struggling to understand how the rest of creation functions. As someone who understood modern building codes and had researched swift habits Edward was able to make the crucial connections linking their falling numbers with the changes we are making to our buildings. In 2002 he created Swift Conservation and now tours the UK and other parts of the world speaking to raise funds on their behalf. (Another example of how your membership fees are helping the environment.)

Our audience on the 15 January included representatives from Guildford Borough Council's Parks and Countryside, Housing and Planning Departments; Surrey Bird Club; and many GEF members. Most came because they are aware of the swift problem and wanted to do something about it. All across the south-east we're embarking on building thousands of new houses – 'swift bricks' are a cheap and easy way to make space for these birds. GEF would like to work with GBC and other boroughs on making this kind of provision for swifts.

### Swift physiology

Backed by a wonderful display of slides, we were introduced to the sheer beauty and amazing brain power of swifts. Because of their agility in the air, their high-aspect ratio wing design and ability to turn at many G, they're studied in wind tunnels by designers of fighter planes. (They're not the only ones but I wanted to get that out of the way so we can move on to clearer skies.)

Swifts are the fastest birds in level flight and only beaten in a dive by eagles and peregrine falcons. They are slow breeders, which doesn't help with a declining population. Their feet are tiny because they spend almost their entire lives airborne, only touching the earth when they nest or are too exhausted – so feet are virtually redundant. If exhaustion brings them to ground their specialised wings can spell disaster, because they can't take off and easily fall prey to cats.

Swifts feed only on insects, which they catch in the air, and they're able to read the weather so will fly very high or very far to reach food. As a precaution the young are able to remain in semi-torpor and can go without food for several days. Everything they need to raise their 2-3 young comes from the sky as food and nest materials, and their own saliva is used to cement a simple nest under a tile, in a small cavity, etc. They enter the nest at such speed it's often hard to locate.

Moves to heat and insulate our homes against air leakage have meant the gradual elimination of all holes. Modern or refurbished buildings are pressure-tested to locate leaks through even the smallest holes in the building shell, which are then plugged. This means swifts are returning in May after a long migration and arriving at last year's nest to find they can't get in. Also, the use of modern insulation materials for heat retention results in swifts getting entangled when entering the building, and starving.

The competition for nest sites does the rest, so they don't even attempt it the following year.

### What we must do

Edward recommends providing more swift nest boxes and swift bricks, preferably fitted with swift calls to attract them. As they arrive in Britain early in May and leave at the end of July if they can't find a nest site, swifts will lose at least one nesting season, maybe two. Edward's advice was to make every use of scaffolding NOW to get swift boxes up on commercial, civic and domestic buildings: scaffolding will otherwise be a prohibitive cost as the boxes themselves are not expensive. It's important to use boxes designed specifically for swifts with a small, narrow entrance on the underside and with the entrances segregated so the birds don't fight. Boxes should not face the sun and not be too close to trees, and about gutter height or higher.

After a nest box, or failing that an old building with a few holes, the availability of insects in the area is a crucial necessity for swifts. Those of us with cars will have noticed windscreens are no longer spattered with insects like they used to be. Insects are a sign of a healthy environment but not one loved by those growing our food. This is a serious issue for swifts and other insect eaters. Edward cited a study carried out by a farmer friend of his who told him that his field of rape had been given 22 applications of insecticides, herbicides, molluscicides, fertilizer, etc in the course of one year. He described our countryside as a green desert, rapidly becoming devoid of life. We get very worked up by neonicotinoids killing our honey bees but there are over 300 different species of wild bees in this country, all seriously in decline. The poisons we spray so liberally kill all our pollinators including butterflies, bees, other insects, as well as invertebrates, amphibians, rivers, birds, the lot. The agrochemical industry thinks very short term because soil and air without life is not sustainable. The fact that entrepreneurs and businesses are seriously thinking about synthetic meat tells us how dire the situation is. And swifts get horribly caught up as mere collateral damage in our folly.

### Swift migration

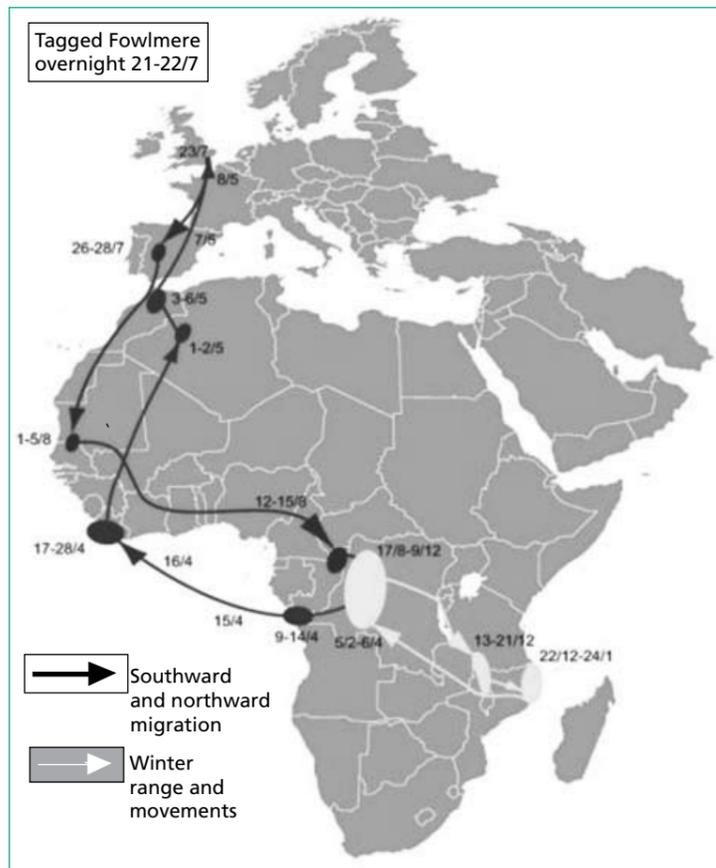
Swifts are not the greatest migratory species in terms of the longest or highest flight path but they're still pretty remarkable. Swifts can be fitted with tracking devices and, as the map shows, a particular swift left Britain on 23 July, took just one week to cross the Channel, travel through France to Spain, cross the Straits of Gibraltar and fly down the west African coast to reach Senegal, having clocked up in that week about 5,500 km. It still had nearly 5,000 km to go to reach its next destination, the

Democratic Republic of Congo, arriving on 17 August, where it spent 115 days feeding on the rich insect life. On 9 December it headed further east to Lake Malawi and after a few days there on to Zambia and Mozambique. A further month, now well south of the equator and on the edge of the Indian Ocean, it lingered before responding to an urge and turned west for the journey to its breeding territory in Britain. A quick flight to the DRC enabled it to fatten up before the long direct flight of nearly 2,000 km, lasting barely 4 days, to cross the Gulf of Guinea, then finally through the Sahel and over the Sahara to reach the northern summer. A round trip of at least 25,000 km without touching land . . . absolutely heroic.

### Come on Guildford!

The least we can do is give swifts somewhere to breed here in Guildford. A few of us have started to talk to workmen and building owners where there is scaffolding. Don't leave it too late. It could be your local church, or an office or a house, but with so many people to engage with it can take a long time – much longer than it takes a swift to cross the Gulf of Guinea. See [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) for their information leaflet on swifts. Several companies specialise making swift boxes and swift bricks.

**I suggest we form a Swift Group so we can support each other. Do contact me on 01483 570468, 07443 914347, or [johnwbannister40@gmail.com](mailto:johnwbannister40@gmail.com). Also, [www.swift-conservation.org](http://www.swift-conservation.org)**



One swift's migration, of more than 25,000 kilometres



Jonathan Mitchell

## Stepping Stones Small Blue Project update

Adrian Thompson

WE WERE FORTUNATE to enjoy a talk on the Small Blue Project by Bill Downey at our AGM on 3 May, 2017 and he followed this up with an article in our September newsletter. I am delighted to report that progress with this project has been very positive throughout the winter and can be summarised as follows:

**Fiona Haynes** was appointed as the project officer by Butterfly Conservation (BC) in July 2017. She was previously a Countryside Ranger for Surrey Wildlife Trust and has a First Class Degree in Environmental Protection (Conservation Management for Biodiversity). She organises every event, which needs prior liaison with local landowners and managers, such as the National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Financing of the project was organised by **Steve Wheatley** of Butterfly Conservation, with **Veolia** as the main funder and helped by core funding by a **GEF member**.

Specialist expertise is provided by, amongst others, **Gail Jeffcoate** of Dorking, **Bill Downey**, Transect Co-ordinator BC (Surrey and SW London) and **Harry Clarke** (BC County Recorder), who have been at the centre of nearly every work party. Fiona, Harry and Bill provide the tools such as mattocks, saws and tree poppers and training for newer volunteers. Gail often supervises the sowing of the kidney vetch seed, which is the food plant of the small blue.

The main work has been both the clearing of bare

ground scrapes, so that kidney vetch seed can be sown, and the reduction of scrub. Once the scrub is cleared it is planned that cattle, such as Belted Galloway, can graze the area effectively and keep the site attractive to the small blue and the other plants and moths that need a similar habitat to thrive.

Work parties started in October and have continued almost weekly through the winter. They have been well supported and have involved a range of sites. The photo shows a recent group at Pewley Down, Guildford on 3rd February. This was a joint work party with the Pewley Down Volunteers (PDV), who do an amazing job through the year in managing this wonderful chalk downland site on the edge of Guildford. GEF members who are very active with PDV include **Anne Wright** and **Jonathan Mitchell**, who both helped organise this work party. Jonathan wrote afterwards: "Many thanks from all of us at PDV for all your help, advice and tips on Saturday. It was so inspiring to meet such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable team of volunteers and a real pleasure to work alongside you. It was just a shame about the weather, not that it seemed to discourage you (or your very patient dogs!). And the new scrape is definitely first in line for the precious kidney vetch seed."

Work parties will continue, weekly, throughout February and March and then into the spring. Please let me know if you would like to get involved in this inspiring project.

# 2017 – another successful year . . .



For this year's scything and apple pressing dates, keep an eye on the back page of our newsletters

## . . . for scything

Both the June and September scything courses at our Rosamund Community Garden were brim full this year with enthusiastic beginners and improvers. Our thanks for this are entirely down to our trainer Mark, woodsman and bodger, often seen at the Wealden Downs museum in Sussex who has done a great job for us for the last seven years. He and I are members of SABI (the Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland)

and both were trained by Simon Fairlie, the well known writer, smallholder, editor of *The Land* and UK scythe importer. Simon has done so much to foster the scything revival in this country. He made a brief appearance in the film we showed in February ("*We The Uncivilised – A life Story*"), unmistakable in thick dark woollens and a gruff black beard.

## . . . and for apple pressing

Apple pressing brought us and our regulars a lot of joy this year, and seriously boosted our coffers at the Rosamund Community Garden as well. Thank you to all our members who came to help. It's always a small core group of helpers who turn out year after year, for which I am very grateful; but please remember that of us may like to retire – soon. Next year Roberto Vogel hopes to undertake more of a lead with the donkey work: the putting up, taking down, the washing, drying, putting away and the maintenance of equipment (not that he doesn't do a lot of this already).

Between us we covered five public apple pressing days in September and October, including a very successful Open Day on 7th October at our garden with squash



soup to go with the juice. At the Surrey Hills Wood Fair, despite a bit of mud, Tonya kept the children occupied with a competition to come up with a word that best described the taste of the juice they had made. Everyone who entered got a prize and "super-apple-fragilistic-espialidocious" took the number one spot. Finally, I again got my act together and did a solo effort at Witley school to help the school finances and demonstrate why apple pressing helps the environment.

# Some good news out there?

John Bannister

**WHATEVER ELSE MAY BE GOING ON globally / politically / in the Middle East / with Brexit / Trump's antics / and so on – there is some good news out there trying to get through to us.**

The big question is timing – will we wake up in time to allow the good stuff to be implemented, as the clear evidence of ever-worsening climate change won't wait? Personally I am deeply concerned about the manifold injustices in our world, but I want here to concentrate on environmental issues.

We now know an awful lot about what we are doing to our world. Ignorance has never been an excuse but certainly not now. There are some amazing newspaper and magazine journalists and scientists working to keep us informed about what we are doing to our world. I would put the *Financial Times* second to none in terms of the quality, breadth and depth of the newspaper articles it publishes on what we are doing to our planet and its resources, giving us the lowdown on everything that has a bearing on the state of the planet.

## Electricity

Let's start with electricity. Electricity will provide a lot of our future decarbonisation, so it's good news that the carbon content of our grid electricity is coming down fast, due to the substitution of coal with gas in power stations and the rapid increase in renewables. The graph overleaf shows this well. The growth in renewable energy will make sure this trend continues as we see the end of fossil fuels coming very fast. Electricity will get smarter in that we will be able to decide when is the optimum time to use it, i.e when the cost and carbon emissions are lowest.

As the article on BedZED showed (GEF newsletter December 2017) we have known for a long time how we can reduce the carbon content of the resources we use, like energy, water, transport, land, materials, etc. A lot of it comes down to attitude, thinking about what we do and our motivation. Do we think enough about what happens if we do this or buy that? Why for example should a few of us choose to fly more than once per year, or even fly at all, knowing as we do what effects it

has? The carbon price needs to rise much faster to choke off excess consumption, such as flying.

## Climate Change

Climate Change is happening dangerously fast, and we can now follow it as it happens and the dreadful impacts it's having. For example, do we allow the sea to invade the land in some places such as Norfolk and the Wash on our east coast, defend the land in others like Barton-on-Sea and Hurst Point in Hampshire, give up and face relocation in some Pacific islands or build bigger, stronger houses on stilts to stay put where money permits and keep clear of the waves as on the New Jersey shore in America? The predictions for sea level rise and encroaching seas all over the world is one of the scariest impacts we're facing, affecting many of the world's biggest cities, including London. The infrastructure bill is unimaginable. I'm not saying this is good news but we have no excuse for not knowing what is causing the oceans to heat up and glaciers on Greenland and the Antarctic to melt, and what we are asking future generations to face.

## Plastics

We know just how many tons of plastic are entering our seas, where it comes from, and how it's entering the food chains of sea animals and man. We know some ways to get to grips with it at the supply end (Pepsi Cola and consumers' attitude to waste) and the demand end (why do people buy water in plastic bottles and Coca Cola in the first place?). *The Guardian* is one other useful paper to keep track of our environmental impacts. A small report in this paper maintained that 90% of the plastic that ends up in our oceans comes from just 10 river systems – the Nile and the Niger in Africa and the Ganges, Yellow, Indus, Yangtze, Haihe, Pearl, Mekong and Amur in Asia. (Yes, I had to reach for the atlas too!) That still leaves us in the developed world and south America accounting for 10%.

This information should allow us all to focus on the best solutions and to help our entrepreneurs invest. Locally we know what we have to do, which is to adopt

## Noise – 1

A train that snorts and barks in an attempt to scare away deer has gone into service in Japan. The invention aims to reduce collisions with the animals, which lick the rails for iron filings.

(Source: *Waitrose Weekend*, 1 Feb '18)

## Noise – 2

It's thought that wildlife is affected by the noise from wind turbines. Research inspired by the wing design of owls – the masters of silent flight – suggests that turbine noise could be significantly reduced by adding serrations to the leading edges of a turbine's blades.

(Source: *BBC Wildlife*, Dec '17)

# FACTS & FIGURES

## How many...?

Blue tit chicks in Britain eat 35 billion moth caterpillars a year.

(Source: *Butterfly Conservation*)

## Distraction – 1

China has started segregating footpaths with special lanes for those using their mobile phones.

(Source: *i Weekend*, 1 Jul '17)

## Distraction – 2

Honolulu is to make it an offence to cross the road while looking at a mobile phone.

(Source: *telegraph.co.uk*, 15 Jul '17)

## Mixed media

A grasshopper has been found embedded in the paint of an 1889 Van Gogh work.

(Source: *i*, 9 Nov '17)

approaches that have been shown to work in other EU countries. We must step up our recycling in the UK using the tools we've been given.

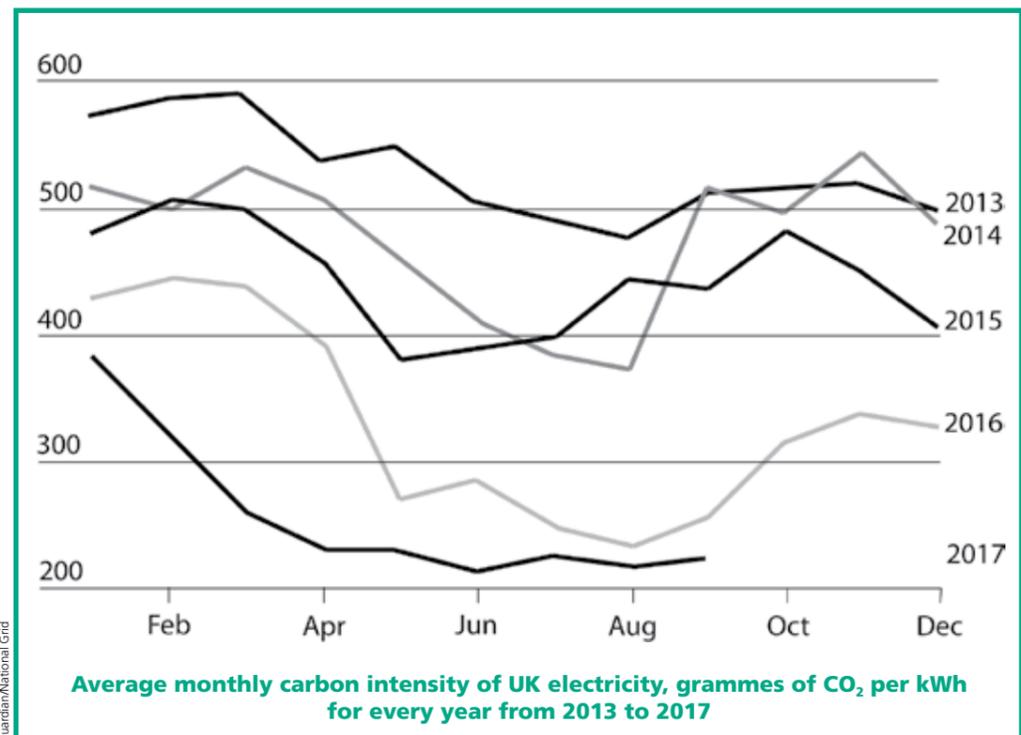
### Renewables

Renewable energy is a fantastic success story. The speed of implementation has taken oil companies, car manufacturers, governments (e.g. nuclear is not needed and not economical), everyone in fact by surprise. It is now the energy source of choice for electrical generation which today means for all our needs bar a few such as chemicals and plastics. In the UK the largest solar farm, five times the capacity of the UK's current largest solar farm, is being discussed in north Kent. It may not go ahead, as the mud flats here are a great reserve for migratory and other birds and for wildlife generally. We wait

for an assessment from the RSPB and other wildlife groups to comment because in our view it should not proceed at the expense of nature, which has suffered terrible losses since WWII. We're fortunate in the UK to have wildlife organisations and a public that will stand up to governments.

These are some thoughts on what we're facing and we haven't even mentioned food and the prospect of 11 billion people on our one planet. There are some good things happening and some reasons, in some areas, to be slightly optimistic, but I think time has run out on many of them. I'm not one of those people who says there's still time if we act now or in the next five or ten years. What we don't want is to be panicked into doing something really stupid. The film "Age of Stupid" with Pete Postlethwaite keeps coming to mind.

**HERE'S GOOD NEWS!  
UK ELECTRICITY IS GETTING GREENER  
EACH YEAR, AS COAL BURNING IS CUT  
DRASTICALLY, GAS IN THE FUEL MIX  
INCREASES SLIGHTLY, AND RENEWABLES  
SURGE UNTIL IN 2017 THEY MAKE UP  
OVER 50% FOR THE FIRST TIME**



Guardian/National Grid

**Gardens**  
The county of Suffolk comprises an area of land equivalent to all the domestic gardens in the UK.  
*(Source: BBC Wildlife, Jun '17)*

**Going, going, gone**  
One elephant is killed on average every 25 minutes, a conference on the illegal trade in wildlife was told last September, meaning that elephants would be wiped out in 25 years.  
*(Source: Today, BBC Radio 4, 26 Sept '17)*

## FACTS & FIGURES

**Deep secret – 1**  
Some species of kelp grow up to half a metre a day, and reach a height of 60 metres.

**Deep secret – 2**  
Sea grasses are thought to be 35 times more efficient than rainforest trees at storing carbon dioxide. Yet scientists estimate that since 1980 we've been losing an area of sea grass equivalent to one football pitch every 30 minutes.  
*(Source: Radio Times, 25 Nov – 1 Dec, '17)*

**Recyclable coffee cup**  
The world's first easy-to-recycle coffee cup could soon be available in Starbucks. Its inventor explains that the new cup is first made from recycled paper, then a very thin waterproof plastic liner is added. Unlike the usual coffee cup, the plastic and paper can be easily separated at the paper mill.  
*(Source: i, 15 Jan '18)*

# Recycling – we need more information

by Forum Member Barbara Jones

**OVER CHRISTMAS I read an interesting article in *The Times* about recycling. It was about a recycling plant at Avonmouth, near Bristol. A fifth of the 250 tons processed at the plant every day has to be burnt because it is 'contaminated'. Most of the material that's burnt could be recycled but it's not economical to do so. At least the burning process produces electricity.**

**Black plastic food trays**  
Supermarkets use black plastic trays because they make meat look more appealing. They are rarely recycled: the black pigment makes it impossible for the sorting machines to assess what sort of plastic they're made from so they're rejected. Well done Waitrose – most of their meat is in clear plastic trays. I must check out other supermarkets.

**Card**  
Card can be sold for £150 a ton, but boxes with clear plastic windows allowing customers to view the products will be burnt. Sandwich wrapping is another problem as it too is a mix of card and clear plastic and the card is often contaminated with food remains.

**Other mixed material items**  
Many items composed of a mixture of materials are very expensive to recycle and so are burnt. **Pringle tubes**, for example, are made of card, metal and plastic and the individual constituents are difficult to separate. **Food pouches for cat food and soups** are made from mixed plastic and metal and are similarly hard to recycle. **Some plastic bottles**, such as Lucozade Sport, which are sheathed in polythene confuse the sorting machines. Should we remove even partial plastic wrapping from plastic bottles? **Plastic trays from boxes of biscuits and chocolates** cannot be recycled.

**Aluminium cans**  
Even aluminium cans, which are the most easily recyclable items, and the most valuable, can end up being incinerated. If 'helpful' householders flatten them to save space the flattened cans may fall through the slots in the sorting machines and get diverted to the incinerator.

**Plastic strapping and electrical cable**  
One of the biggest bugbears at the recycling plant is plastic strapping and lengths of electrical cable which wrap around the rotating cylinders that sift and move the waste, causing the machines to come to a halt.



### WE COULD DO MUCH MORE, GIVEN THE RIGHT ADVICE

Although the incoming waste is handpicked by operatives it moves too fast on the conveyor belts for them to remove all the problem items. So we, the public, need to be more aware of what can and cannot be recycled and why. Packaging manufacturers, product producers and the government need to do more to ensure that recycling is made simpler and more universal.

**EPILOGUE**  
Over the festive period China announced that it would not longer be importing mixed, low-grade waste from the UK for recycling. They have been importing 1,200 tons a day for which we will now have to find an alternative home.



**Chris Wheeler, GBC's Head of Recycling, points out that many of the problems mentioned above relate to a plant in Bristol and are avoided by Guildford. Every local authority is free to contract with a different disposal company (Guildford uses Biffa) so the treatment technology varies across the country.**



**Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future.**  
Join us in our work for the town and have this newsletter posted to your door four times a year. Forum membership costs only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed.  
Please contact Adrian Thompson on 01483 222687 or email [adrian@lampcottage.net](mailto:adrian@lampcottage.net)



# CALENDAR



All the Forum's Group meetings are open to the public

## Tuesday 13 March

Geographical Association of Guildford at The County School, Farnham Road, Guildford.  
Dr Stephen Taylor: **"Biomedical, global health, human development and spatial variation"**.  
1730. All GEF members are invited.

## Monday 16 April

### "Pewley Down, its History and Wildlife"

A talk by Jonathan Mitchell, Chairman of Pewley Down Volunteers. Pewley Down was presented to the town by the Friary Brewery Company in 1920, in gratitude for the ending of the Great War. This much-loved open space, close to the centre of Guildford, is the home of rare downland flora and fauna, such as the Small Blue butterfly. This talk will cover the history of the Down, its significance to the people of Guildford, the site's rich wildlife and the conservation work undertaken by Pewley Down Volunteers.

1900. Room 5 – Whitmoor, GBC Millmead Offices.

## Tuesday 8 May

### Talk on recycling and AGM.

Chris Wheeler and Liz Mockeridge of Guildford Borough Council will update us on local recycling, including the current status of paper, card, glass, plastic and food recycling.

Talk 1800. AGM 1930. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead Offices.

## Saturday 2 June and Thursday 30 August

### Scything courses for beginners and improvers.

For the eighth year in a row we'll be running a scything course, repeated two months later, at our Rosamund Community Garden (near the top of Longdown Road, GU4 8PP). The trainer will again be our champion scyther Mark Allery. Refreshments will be provided but bring a packed lunch. Please register with John Bannister on 01483 570468 to discuss arrangements. **Booking early is recommended.**

Time 1000 to 1600. Cost £35 per head.

## Saturday 9 June

### Sustainability Fayre, 1100 to 1600 at Farnham Gostrey Meadow, GU9 7RT.

Farnham Local Food (soon to be known as Farnham Community Farm) will be holding a repeat of its Sustainability Fayre in the heart of Farnham. There will be many stalls of environmentally-friendly local organisations and businesses, talks and entertainment. GEF and Rosamund Garden will be represented there, promoting sustainable transport and gardening. Stagecoach buses to Farnham, including the 65 that runs from Guildford, stop right outside the event. Please come and support us. Contact [info@farnhamfood.com](mailto:info@farnhamfood.com)

# GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

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## Waste and Recycling – Position vacant

## Treasurer – Adrian Thompson

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## Membership – Position vacant

(Adrian Thompson pro tem: see Treasurer's details above)

## Newsletter – Clare Windsor

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Guildford Environmental Forum's newsletter is published in March, June, September and December.

Please send contributions for the next issue to Clare Windsor by Monday 14 May.

The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.