



GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

DECEMBER 2009

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM HAS JUST LAUNCHED ITS OWN WEBSITE

www.gefweb.org.uk



FOR MANY YEARS the Forum had pages on Guildford Borough Council's website, but outgrew the facilities they can currently offer. We are keen to reach out more into the new media as a way to communicate efficiently with our members, to reach new members and to provide useful information for those looking for ways to become more "green". The new site, with far more capacity, will offer us the chance to deliver more information that can be updated on a regular basis.

It is somewhere that you can refer people who would like to know more about us and our activities. The site contains summaries of the scope of our various working groups and a calendar of future meetings organised by the Forum, as well as other local green-themed meetings. It also has an archive of its newsletters, stretching back to 2005. New resources are expected to be added over time.

We greatly appreciate the provision of webspace

by Guildford Borough Council in the past, which has made our work a lot easier. We still have a page on the council's website www.guildford.gov.uk with a well-used link to our site.

We have been fully worked over by Google (and some other search engines). If you want to look for a specific search term within our site, including the archived newsletters, and have the Google toolbar installed, you can use its "search only on the current site" function to do this.

Please do not confuse "www.gefweb.org.uk" with "www.gefweb.org" which is the Global Environment Facility. That was founded in 1991 and is thus a bit older than Guildford Environmental Forum which did not come along until 1993. Having given grants since then totalling \$8.5 billion, the Global Environment Facility is also somewhat larger than us!

Raymond Smith

County Council shoots down Pegasus

Pegasus, the innovative attempt that Surrey County Council made to provide an attractive school bus service that would provide an alternative to car-based school runs, has been brought down to earth. This cost-cutting move has faced widespread protests from users in Guildford and Mole Valley where most of the routes run.

Guildford Environmental Forum added its weight to those protests, having taken a close and supportive interest in the establishment of the Pegasus service since the early days of its inception. Pegasus is a rare initiative that is environmentally advantageous and beneficial to other road users. We argued that:

- **Apart from the general aspect of reducing the education system's carbon footprint, it should also be assessed in terms of its economic advantages to businesses in Surrey by reducing staff time wasted in congested traffic.**
- **In addition to this there are of course the practical advantages for parents – with the possibility of reducing vehicle numbers per household, and increasing pedestrian safety in the vicinity of schools.**
- **Whilst it is recognised that there is significant dead time for the vehicles during the day, this problem is inherent in any commuter based transport system, including cars.**

While this reflected arguments put forward by others, that was because Pegasus was a very valuable initiative, worthy of expansion, rather than being shut down.

Raymond Smith

Reminder to members

If you are not already on the electronic distribution list for the newsletter, and would like to receive it in pdf format, please contact Chris Coventry at gefmembership@dsl.pipex.com

Sandfield Primary School wins Eco-schools Green Flag Award

'Eco-schools' is an international programme designed to get schools to look at their ecological footprint and motivate the children to work out ways to reduce their environmental impact. Children become fully engaged in thinking about how they affect the environment, and devising ways to reduce their impacts through practical measures right throughout the school day. In Sandfield's case this included travel to and from school, waste minimisation, composting and recycling, energy saving, growing food, creating habitats for wildlife, collecting rainwater and saving water.

Sandfield set up an Eco-council over two years ago with representatives from every class. Staff members, with a bit of help from the Forum, provided some guidance, but it was the children who enthusiastically came up with the ideas and then went back into their classrooms to persuade everyone to put them into effect and monitor progress. Bronze and Silver Awards quickly followed and in October this year the exciting news came through that they had won the Eco-schools Green Flag Award.

It doesn't stop there. Eco-schools is about continuous improvement, so already young brains are working on how to go even further to help the environment at Sandfield School and make sure they retain their Green Flag status.

We would like to encourage as many of our members as possible to get involved with their local schools and share with us all the fun they have working with children.

John Bannister

No to Dunsfold Park

Our June newsletter featured the exciting proposal to create a new sustainable settlement at Dunsfold Park, the former airfield in Surrey, to which Waverley Borough Council had refused permission. We now learn that Dunsfold Park Ltd's subsequent appeal has been rejected.

Although praising many aspects of the plan, John Denham (Secretary of State for the Countryside) concluded that the extra road traffic generated by the scheme "would have a severe and unacceptable impact on an overstretched local road network." He also said the new development would pre-empt the consideration of alternative sites through the Local Development Framework process.

We are very disappointed that the opportunity to build a truly sustainable 'eco-village' has now gone.

Waste – 1

In 1990, a 25% target was set for recycling of household waste. Even though we've reached the target, the amount we consume has risen so steeply that unrecycled waste has fallen only slightly.

Waste – 2

Only 9% of total waste is domestic, but the government is reluctant to confront powerful business interests. Regulations exist, but they are opaque, fitfully enforced and disjointed.

(Source: New Statesman, 1 Sept 08)

FACTS & FIGURES

Wood pigeons

According to a BTO survey, 46% of gardens in London have wood pigeons. The species is now the fourth most common bird in domestic gardens.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, Mar 08)

Canada's oil

The oil, a mixture of bitumen and sand, that lies under Alberta's forests is being extracted and processed into petrol. Despite being an expensive and inefficient business, generating three times more greenhouse gas than conventional oil production, it has now become economically viable. In order to access the oil sands, forests are cleared, rivers are diverted and wetland is drained: as a result an area of 140,000 square miles of northern Canada is an ecological disaster zone.

(Source: WWF Action, Oct 07)



LAUNCH EVENT DRAWS THE CROWDS

*by Chris Coventry, Coordinator
for Greening The Horsleys, and
Forum Membership Secretary*

GREENING THE HORSLEYS was the first of the Greening Campaign groups in Guildford Borough to hold their Launch Event. It took place at East Horsley Village Hall on 17th October.

The expectations of the steering group were well and truly exceeded when between 250 and 300 people came through the doors during the afternoon. The community groups demonstrating each of the nine simple energy- and water-saving challenges had put a huge amount of work and lots of ingenuity into their displays. The resulting atmosphere had a great buzz.

Amongst all the great demonstrations, children (young and old) enjoyed trying to cycle a static bike to make a torch work or heat water for a drink, whilst others sampled lifting a heavy weight to show how much energy we waste by leaving items on standby when they could be switched off. The Brownies demonstrated just how much water is wasted if the tap is left running while you brush your teeth.

The Mayor of Guildford, Cllr Pauline Searle, was able to come and see the demonstrations and try many of the fun activities on offer too. The hall was decorated with several enormous posters made by different nursery schools and groups in the villages. They gave a very poignant message, asking us all to 'Please look after this precious planet for our future'.

At the time of writing, cards with all nine challenges on (e.g. turning lights off when you leave a room, turning your thermostat down by a degree, topping up loft insulation to 270 mm, insulating the hot water tank) should have been delivered to each household and business in the Horsleys, asking everyone to commit to doing at least five of the challenges and then putting their card up to show they are joining in. After six weeks those cards that are displayed will be counted and from this the amount of carbon dioxide the Horsleys have saved will be calculated and publicised. In the new year, Greening The Horsleys will start to think about Phase 2 by choosing a few projects most relevant to the community.

Having started to make changes and reduce energy and water consumption, it's vital that people don't then think "that's it, I've done my bit, the problem of climate change is no longer my concern". There are hundreds of ways people can save energy and water, and in so doing to reduce their impact on the

environment. The choices we make on what we eat, where our food comes from, how we drive, whether we can walk or take public transport, how well we control our heating system and many, many more, all make a difference. The better informed we all become the more we can achieve. If we all ask ourselves "What can we do?" and try to take action, the changes that we all face can become a positive motivational force that will benefit the wider whole.

All the Greening groups, Guildford Environmental Forum and the Transition Town Guildford group are working hard towards the same aim – that of addressing the major threats of climate change and peak oil that we are now facing. By thinking globally and acting locally from whatever point we are at right now, we can all take more steps towards creating the sustainable and resilient future that we need.

Guildford Borough currently has four other communities running a Greening Campaign, all at different stages and working at their own pace. There is still funding for one more, so if you and your community are interested in taking action in this way contact the Climate Change Team at Guildford Borough Council on 01483 444509 or by e-mail to climatechange@guildford.gov.uk



How much pedalling does it take to make a torch work, or to heat water?

Leaving equipment on standby wastes the equivalent of how much of the energy needed to lift a heavy weight?



4

Guildford Environmental Forum has given support in a number of ways to help Trudy Thompson, a Forum member, to launch the

BRICKS AND BREAD

SUSTAINABLE LIVING CENTRE

We believe that the work of the Centre – giving training, re-skilling and the art of sustainable living to people and companies – is vitally important if we are to modify our high-carbon lifestyles in time to avoid catastrophic climate change. Bricks and Bread is an inspired new venture leading us forward in a way no-one else is offering.

Here, Trudy reports on the Centre's first months of operation and imparts an important personal message.

OCTOBER HAS BEEN an incredibly exciting and interesting month, with more people visiting the Centre in the last few weeks than in the five months we have been open. The phone has been ringing off the hook with enquiries. E-mails are coming in every few minutes from across the world offering support and asking for our help. Our website, that I created myself because we didn't have the budget or the time to wait for someone else to do it properly, is now consistently attracting a whopping 9,000 hits on average a day!

On 24th October we held a very successful event to support 350.org Campaign and the International Day of Climate Action, which saw over 5,000 events occurring in 181 countries to highlight that 350 parts per million is the safe upper limit of carbon emissions in the atmosphere (we are now at 390ppm). The number of local people who attended our event with their children and grandchildren was really heart-warming. It was a family fun day which attracted more media coverage than we have ever had, ranging from our local paper to a radio station in South Africa.

I have been invited to speak at Oxford University next month about the Centre, as well as being booked as a guest speaker at other prestigious and influential events this year. This would normally terrify me, but instead I'm really looking forward to the opportunity, both deeply thrilled and very proud they are paying to hear me speak!

Many major organisations have also been in contact that I would not have dreamt would take my community interest company as seriously as they have. I can't believe how rapidly they have gone out of their way to align themselves with us, let alone offering us a considerable amount of sponsorship so we can achieve our goals of providing subsidised training and advice for local people.

The huge effort and long hours I have put into creating this business appear to be paying off. The odds have truly been against me, I have not been able to afford more than a handful of days off in the last year. I have completely stuck my neck on the line

to create this business. My closest friends thought it wasn't worth me taking the risk of going bankrupt if it went wrong.

I wish this is where my message ends, as a good news story of a growing venture.

What was deeply troubling me and inspired me to create this centre is really worrying me now. At the beginning of this year it was obvious to me that this is a critical year for the future of our planet.

The warning signs have been around for years: rising fossil fuel prices combined with diminishing resources and increasing demand for oil, along with our global trade network, is increasing greenhouse gas emissions like CO₂ and methane. Our throwaway, credit culture society was not just creating a ticking bomb under the economy. It was also accelerating climate change.

Copenhagen

In December world leaders are meeting for the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. If we are lucky they will make far-reaching decisions that may reverse what has become a major threat to mankind and the environment. But be in no doubt that if they do create a treaty that really tackles climate change, this will have far-reaching impacts on all our lives. The polluter will be forced to pay – that means all of us, as we all have an environmental impact.

Whatever happens at Copenhagen, it is still down to all of us to take immediate action and not just a handful of us. There are billions of people who don't want to make changes to their lives. We may be lucky that the damage we have caused the environment may be reversible. I truly hope so.

There are millions of businesses who are only interested in profits; they ignore the consequences of marketing greenwash. It's fairly simple to play with figures, turn statistics to your benefit, or offset carbon emissions. These businesses will not admit they haven't reduced the environmental impacts from their business in case it damages consumer/ shareholder opinions.



Supporting the 350.org Campaign at the Bricks and Bread Centre in October, highlighting that 350 parts per million is the safe upper limit of carbon emissions in the atmosphere.

It has taken me seven years of determination to obtain my level of knowledge, and another year of complete dedication to get this business off the ground.

I know how incredibly difficult it is to make a business truly sustainable, even if you start out that way and have very clear, transparent objectives. Once you work with other businesses and use other companies' products it can quickly become an unsustainable business. In order to be a sustainable business, your supply chain needs to be supplied by sustainable businesses too.

This is why, just a few weeks before Copenhagen, we have been inundated with offers of support from large organisations, who know they will need ethical, sustainable businesses like ours to help them look good and survive.

I have had no funding, grants, or financial support of any kind from anyone in public sector organisations who either ought to be supporting us, or who said months ago that they wanted to support us. They have not done anything yet!

I may be on my way to being able to pay our bills and will make a profit in the next year that will benefit our local community. But in the meantime the majority of schools, small businesses and residents within 10 miles of the Centre do not seem to realise how lucky they are to have a hub for expert advice here.

It's vitally important that they get in touch with us to obtain the advice, training, products and services

we offer. Few people in our local area are self-sufficient, nor do they know how to build eco-homes or how to run a sustainable business.

Unless we can engage the vast majority of local people to come into the Centre for advice, training and products, then all my business will achieve is to make large corporates look and feel better.

Act now

It is unbelievably urgent that everyone who reads this makes the effort to get in touch with us, even if you think you already do enough to be sustainable, or don't believe you can do anything to make a difference.

Do something this week, don't delay taking this action. This business is here to benefit you, our local economy, our community and most importantly our environment.

This is not a sales technique or a marketing ploy. This is a sincere message from a businesswoman who risked her own financial stability to set up a community-interest company as a hub for experts, simply to help you and other local people learn how to live, work and build sustainably.

Your response to this message is vital. Within a very short time I can see us ending up becoming a Crisis Centre, sponsored by large corporates, helping the people who didn't adapt to a low carbon economy!

Bricks and Bread Sustainable Living Centre,
Albion Works, Next to the Garden Gate Pub,
Church Lane East, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 3BT

Telephone: 01252 314060 www.bricksandbread.com

GOING UP-MARKET ON COMPOST

by Alwyn Marriage

MAKING COMPOST is what, in common parlance, is now called a 'no-brainer', as kitchen and garden waste are turned into wholesome compost which then helps to grow the vegetables and flowers for the following season. Over the years I have used four different methods of creating compost, the most recent being with a compost tumbler, so I will outline these four different methods and assess how well each has worked for me.

For many years I used to put compostable material onto a pile anywhere in the garden, increasing the size of the heap until it became too large, and then starting another one somewhere else. We would then use the compost until it had all gone, at which point the soil underneath was rich and fertile. This method can be used by anyone who has a little space in their garden – and if there's not much space, then the pile can even be renewed *in situ*.

The idea of a wormery appealed to me, partly because of the liquid fertilizer that can be drained off from time to time; so I acquired one of these with the resident worms. Worms and I co-existed happily for a couple of years, but the colony died out one summer when I was away and the weather was unusually hot. The liquid feed was, indeed, good, if somewhat smelly; but apart from that I didn't really feel that the method had many advantages over my old compost heap method. A wormery, however, is probably a good option if there is no space at all in the garden for a compost heap.

As I used up more and more of the garden for producing our food, it became less easy to sacrifice the space for heaps. My husband therefore created a large wooden bin from pallets and bits of old fence. When the compost reached the top, he dug it all out into sacks, leaving any uncomposted material at the bottom to form the basis of the next bin-load. As most gardeners know, the composting process can be helped enormously by the addition of the nitrogen present in human urine.

We used this method for years, but I was aware that it worked far better when the compost was turned regularly – a task I found demanded more strength than I had. We therefore decided to buy a compost tumbler. These are not cheap, and they do require regular turning, but the publicity claims that they make compost in as little as 14 days; and of course the turning of the compost is easy. The other advantage is that more things can be composted than on a garden heap; for example it seems to be OK to put fish bones into the mix, and of course these are then safe from marauding cats.



What is my assessment of the tumbler after using one for nine months?

1. Whoever used a tumbler to achieve usable compost in 14 days must have done so in a heatwave and never missed a day of handle turning. For us it still takes much longer than that.
2. We have retained the old wooden bin alongside the tumbler so that we can deposit material there, and then add it to the tumbler *en masse* every now and then. We therefore have clear evidence that the tumbler does indeed break down the material much faster than the bin.
3. Turning the compost is now, obviously, no problem at all, as no strength is required to turn the geared handle.
4. The process is speeded up considerably in the summer months – as, of course, is the case with any other method. We are just about to empty the contents into sacks and start refilling the tumbler; and on the evidence of last winter we are assuming that the next load of compost will not be ready to use until the spring.

In conclusion, the tumbler is rather an expensive piece of equipment for producing compost; but it is easier and undeniably faster. If anyone else has used one, I should be interested to hear how successful they found it.

Mad world

Because we do not have to pay the full environmental cost of fuel, we engage in bizarre forms of 'boomerang trade'. The UK imports 5,000 tonnes of toilet paper from Germany, and then exports almost 4,000 tonnes back again. We export 4,400 tonnes of ice cream to Italy, only to import 4,200 tonnes.

There are many similar examples. (Source: *New Statesman*, 19 Oct 09)

FACTS & FIGURES

GM crops

The Soil Association's review of the last decade of GM crop research has found that GM sometimes yields less, and sometimes the same, as non-GM varieties – but not more.

(Source: *Living Earth*, Summer 08)

Supergrid

The EU is keen to develop a vast electricity grid to cover the whole of Europe and beyond. Norway already delivers hydro-electric power to Holland, and Britain already takes surplus nuclear power from France. More ambitious proposals would see cables beneath the Mediterranean bringing the power of the sun and the wind of the Sahara. But many on the continent are surprised the UK isn't leading the supergrid charge, as they view these islands as unusually blessed with green power sources.

(Source: *BBC Focus*, Oct 09)

My experiences of 'going green'

by Forum member Emma White

IT WAS QUITE a long time before I realised the need to change my lifestyle to a 'greener' one. I used to think my Mum wildly eccentric (and very annoying) when she would tell me off for leaving the lights on as I left rooms, and for not religiously turning appliances off at the plug.

Looking back now, I'm not sure exactly what really made me aware of climate change, but it happened about four years ago as I was finishing my undergraduate degree. It very quickly gathered momentum, and I decided to move to Surrey to learn more about ways to change behaviours to more sustainable ones.

Moving in to a flat with my boyfriend, Richard, who was equally as committed to reducing his environmental impact, felt like a clean slate, away from the energy-intensive flatmates I shared with at university, and the ideal opportunity to start a lower-carbon lifestyle. In this article, I'd like to tell you a bit about how we did this in our home, the level of success we had in various areas, and our experiences of doing so. Given that we rent our flat, we were limited to making behavioural and superficial changes within our home, mainly in relation to water and energy usage, but I hope this will illustrate just how possible it is to create change even at this scale.

Water

Richard and I had already tried to make small changes in relation to our water usage: we never left the tap running whilst brushing teeth, or over-filled the kettle. But we found that living by ourselves meant that we were able to tackle areas of water usage that weren't possible before.

Number one was the toilet. Although it's quite a taboo subject for many in the UK, I feel we can learn a great deal from our friends down under, who have been experiencing terrible drought in recent years. When I was travelling in Australia (yes, I have a great deal of environmental damage to make up for!), I saw many signs in the toilets reading "if it's yellow, let it mellow; if it's brown, flush it down". And this was our new motto. Although fairly embarrassing at first, this was very effective.

The other major change we made was to switch our shower head to a low-flow aerating one. Initially, the shower felt fairly pathetic, but we've grown to love it. It manages to clean the allotment dirt out my long hair, and is so much softer: you don't leave feeling like you've lost half your skin, as you did with the original shower

head. Richard (being a very scientific man) compared the performance of the two shower heads, and found that the low-flow one actually used a quarter of the water that the original one did in the same time period; so a big thumbs up there. According to the Environment Agency (2008), the average person in the UK uses 150 litres of water a day, and we were very happy to find that we now use less than half that, at 71 litres each per day, solely by making these pretty easy, unobtrusive changes.

Gas

We were very fortunate that by moving in to a small, newly-built flat, we had good insulation, double-glazed windows, an efficient boiler, and all that heat from our neighbours. So, compared to the big, old, airy places I lived in before, the heating needed to be on much less. But there was still room to reduce the gas bills, and we began slowly turning the thermostat down, from 22°C to 17°C, over the course of one winter. This slow acclimatisation meant that we never really felt cold or tempted to overcompensate by whacking up the heating every now and then as we got chilly (as I had a tendency to do in the past). We also put tin foil on the walls behind the radiators, and found that the walls no longer became hot to the touch, since the heat was being reflected back into the room. Accordingly, our gas bills reduced.

Electricity

With regards to electricity, however, we had one big problem: the majority of the light fittings took GU10 light bulbs, meaning we needed 19 50w bulbs, something which amounted to a massive 950w. After a lot of deliberation, we decided to replace the ones we could with low-energy 11w bulbs, at the whopping price of £110. Although initially painful, Richard worked out that it would take 1 year to pay back in electricity costs, after which we would be making money savings.

We also tried the dimmable version of these bulbs where needed, but they were much less successful since they flash on and off like disco lights! Instead, we bought standard lamps for two of the rooms with an 11w bulb in each and used those in place of the ceiling lights – something which I would highly recommend, since they are bright and extremely cheap long-term. This then reduced the overall watts required for essential lighting across the flat from 1390w to 343w.

Also to save energy, we made the decision

not to replace the television when it broke but to replace the kettle (again, when it broke) with one on which you can select the temperature of the water. That way, you can make tea at 80°C, something of which the connoisseur of green and jasmine tea would approve, and which reduces the heating time. All in all, we have halved our electricity usage from 8kWh/per day to 4kWh/per day.

To sum up

We are very pleased with the changes we have made to our lifestyles, and I hope that this article suggests practical methods of reducing energy and water use in the home. Other things we have done to reduce our environmental impact include buying an organic vegetable box each week (with delicious, tasty, seasonal produce), learning to grow our own, and buying organic,

environmentally friendly toiletries and home products (which also smell and feel great by the way!).

But there is a lot more that we can do, and we are always trying to find ways to further reduce our impact. For example, we are now trying out a combination microwave oven in place of our big oven for some cooking.

If you don't do these things already, give them a go. One word of caution though: don't forget to flush the loo before the neighbours come round!

Some products we use:

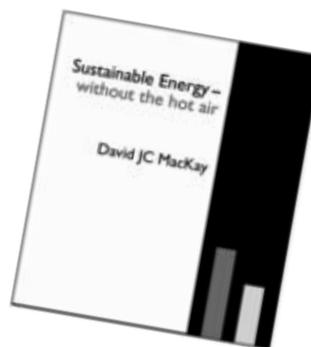
Megaman GU10 energy-saving light bulbs
Philips HD4687 Temperature Control kettle
Faith in Nature beauty and home cleaning products
Oxygenics low flow shower head

BOOK REVIEW

Sustainable Energy – without the hot air

by David J C MacKay

UIT Cambridge, 2008. £19.99. ISBN 978-0-9544529-3-3
Available free online from www.withouthotair.com



This book, *Sustainable Energy – without the hot air*, is about cutting UK “emissions of twaddle – twaddle about sustainable energy”. Most people think that discontinuing the use of fossil fuels is important because they are the major cause of global warming; in addition many such fuels are running out and supplies could be precarious. However, the author considers that “twaddle emissions” are high because people get emotional (for example about wind farms and nuclear energy) and either do not talk about big numbers, or if they do, use them to make an impression or score points in an argument. Often they arrive at incorrect conclusions from the numbers they quote.

Essentially the book is about numbers and a guide to the reader around the claptrap to actions that really make a difference and to policies that add up.

The book contains an immense amount of detail about the use of global energy resources and points out some of the fallacies that surround the subject. Despite the large quantity of information and range of topics discussed, together with a wealth of statistics and calculations – some of them complex – the book is a pleasure to read and often entertaining. I was particularly impressed by the huge amount of detailed information that may be difficult to access elsewhere.

One cannot summarise adequately all that it contains, but one important observation is worth mentioning, namely that the popular saying

that “*every little helps*” should be replaced by “*if everyone does a little we'll achieve only a little*”. In other words if we are to make effective changes we must think big.

MacKay certainly thinks big! By using a simple unit of measurement to calculate the power consumed by land area in Britain, he has quantified the potential power from energy crops, windfarms and solar power. He comes up with a compelling case for vast wind, solar and nuclear installations, estimating the size of the areas needed for each purpose. (It's worth noting that MacKay has recently been appointed chief scientific adviser to the Department of Energy and Climate Change.)

Are there any errors or omissions? I could detect none, but some environmentalists may not be entirely happy with some of the conclusions. For example, the author does not dismiss the use of nuclear energy or coal. Also he is not an enthusiast for combined heat and power – he prefers the use of heat pumps, with the electricity required coming from renewable sources. However, I found all the conclusions and recommendations rational.

I would urge all Forum members to read the book, while accepting that many will already have done so. In particular the recommendations for ‘actions by individuals’ is a useful *aide-memoire*. Finally, the book can be downloaded free from the internet and used for educational purposes. Do have a look at it now!

Howard Allison

Imbalance

Between 1960 and 2000, the world's human population doubled, while the animal population declined by 30%.

(Source: *Earthmatters, Autumn 08*)

Harlequins on the rampage

Harlequin ladybirds, a threat to native British ladybirds, are spreading rapidly through the UK. First seen here in 2004 in south-east England, it is now the commonest ladybird in London, and is the dominant ladybird in trees in Oxford. There have been two sightings in Scotland.

(Source: *Buglife Action Update, Summer 08*)

Plastic bags

UK supermarkets gave out 452 million plastic bags in May 2009, down from 870 million in May 2008.

(Source: *BBC Focus, Oct 09*)

FACTS & FIGURES

Methane – 1

The global warming potential of methane is estimated to be about 23 times that of carbon dioxide.

(Source: *New Statesman, 26 Oct 09*)

Methane – 2

Methane levels are on the rise worldwide, after seven years of being static. The destruction of tropical wetlands is thought to be a major cause.

(Source: *BBC Focus, Mar 09*)

Methane – 3

Farmed animals produce more greenhouse gas emissions (18%) than the world's entire transport system (13.5%).

(Source: *The Vegetarian Society*)

Poor energy ratings on public buildings

by John Bannister

A year ago all public buildings over 1,000m² in England and Wales to which the public had access had to display their actual energy rating and to update that rating each year. Energy efficiency in buildings is vitally important because they account for about 40% of our energy use.

Out of a total of 28,259 buildings, only 151 (0.5%) achieved the top A rating and a further 1,043 (3.7%) a B rating. In contrast 2,707 (9.6%) merited an F, and an alarming 5,159 (18.3%) scored the worst G rating. The vast majority, that is 19,197 (67.9%) scored a C, D or E.

Guildford Borough Council's Millmead offices score only an E. However, the council's Climate

Change Officer Garry Bosworth has been working intensively with the Carbon Trust, and a number of short payback, cost-effective projects have been identified and agreed that could reduce energy consumption right across the council's estate (buildings and transport) by 34% by 2015. Included in this are potential projects at Millmead, which would help improve its energy rating over time.

Guildford Borough Council has already implemented a number of good energy-saving projects at the Spectrum and elsewhere. Further projects to go beyond a 34% cut are being looked at.

FURNITURE PROJECT TO BECOME A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE COMPANY

The Guildford Action Furniture Project, which we reported on in the September newsletter, is now in the throes of becoming a social enterprise company to reflect its new-found confidence in the future. **With its motto of 'Recycle, Refurbish, Reuse' the organisation is looking for Trustees who can identify with the Project's ambitious goals of becoming a stable, long-term organisation delivering key environmental and social benefits.**

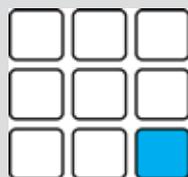
If you are interested in becoming a Trustee (or simply want to find a bargain or would like to donate furniture) then visit or contact Joan O'Byrne at:

Guildford Action – Furniture Project,
Jacobs Yard, Woodlands Road,
Guildford, Surrey GU1 1RL.

Tel: 01483 506504.

To provide a further taster of what the project is about, Guildford Environmental Forum members are being offered a discount voucher – see below and overleaf – to encourage a visit to the Jacobs Yard premises to see the Project in action.

guildford **action** furniture project



Reader offer

10% DISCOUNT VOUCHER

ALLOTMENT ROUND-UP *by Stephen Rainbird*

IT IS NOWTWOYEARS since I took on my allotment and, apart from a period when I had broken my arm, the allotment is now providing me with a regular source of fruit and vegetables.

Starting an allotment

Points that I have learnt from starting an allotment include patience – as they say, Rome was not built in a day – so don't try to do everything in the first season: you will only lose heart.

On taking on an allotment, firstly get the weed under control. This I made a start on by strimming twice, and then covering with cardboard and ground-cover membrane (card can be obtained from supermarkets, and those shops selling furniture and white goods). When using ground-cover membrane avoid the woven plastic type, as when cut the strips get *everywhere* – use the porous type material. And do lift and re-lay every few months, otherwise perennial weed such as couch, dandelion and bindweed will push through; two years on, I'm still battling with bindweed.

Don't try to dig the whole plot – ground-cover the majority, and just cultivate a small area. You can always grow plants in pots and other containers over the ground-cover material. Extend the growing area each season as time and weed-control allows.

Don't look upon fruit already present as a gift – I have a large thorn-less blackberry which, although providing plenty of fruit, is a reservoir of bindweed. Inherited fruit can also be a source of pests and disease, so check carefully and remove if there's a problem.

Don't be a martyr – if perennial weed is a continuing problem, then spray it. It's better to do this occasionally, rather than give up the allotment in frustration.

Raised beds

I tried boards made from recycled plastic, but I found these too flexible. Wood of the equivalent width would be better. The posts of recycled plastic that I tried were also too flexible, and will have to be replaced by wood posts at some time in the future.

Planning

Produce an outline plan of the plot as soon as possible. I've found that when you start growing, there's a considerable

requirement for water, so right from the start plan for water butts, leaky hose, and piping to avoid re-building later on. And as soon as you can (that is during the first winter) start putting in soft and tree fruit – modern grafted varieties of apple and pear will fruit after only two or three years, although you should remove those first years' fruits to provide more energy for the plant to establish.

In planning what to grow, start with only those crops providing a bulk supply, such as peas, beans (runner and broad), onions, carrots and beetroots. All are relatively easy, and will yield large volumes of produce to use fresh or to freeze. Try other crops when time allows, remembering that these may need more work to produce a successful crop. Potatoes are good but blight can be a problem, so grow those which are expensive in the shops, such as early types, which will also miss the blight season.

When growing crops through the winter, use protective mesh. I lost most of my broad beans during the snow last winter, and had to re-sow in the spring. Growing broad beans under an insect mesh will also avoid blackfly.

Maintenance

You'll be surprised how much watering you need to do, and be prepared to hoe, little-and-often, to keep weed in check.

Always have something growing at home to plant on the allotment. Don't try to sow peas and beans directly as you will lose a large amount to mice. As the allotment develops, then you can try direct sowing of crops such as carrots and beetroots.

Cover everything where possible with an insect mesh to avoid insect pests and birds, and also to stop cats from fouling on your seedbeds. Use ground-cover material on the paths to cut down on weeds, and use an organic (not peat) mulch to provide a little feed and reduce weed growth and watering requirements.

Work to do now

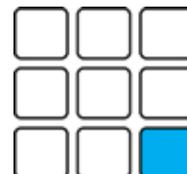
There is still time to sow broad beans and hardy peas (here use the round-podded varieties as these are hardier), over-wintering onions and garlic. Plant soft and tree fruit; prune for growth during the winter on restricted forms, and check that tree ties are tight. Now is the time for building new raised beds, and planning next years' crops.



guildford action

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Presentation of this Voucher entitles the bearer to a discount from the prices displayed on furniture and electrical items at our Jacobs Yard warehouse. One voucher per transaction This Voucher is not transferable and must be surrendered with purchase. Date of expiry 28.02.10.

Depot: Jacobs Yard, Woodlands Road, Slyfield Green, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 1RL

Website www.surreycommunity.info/guildfordaction

E-mail furnitureproject@guildfordaction.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 1078721

Registered Company Number 3767533

What happens to all the electrical and electronic items we throw away?

by John Bannister

LAST MONTH, a group of Guildford Community Recyclers visited a plant recycling domestic waste, electrical and electronic items. We wanted to see what actually happens when we throw away kitchen white goods, televisions, computers and the growing number of battery-operated gadgets now commonly found in homes.

In 2002 the European Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive came into force. (By August 2004, a year after national law was meant to be in place, only the UK and Malta had failed even to make framework provisions.) UK WEEE law will accept recovery rates as low as 30% by a registered WEEE recycler – which is not exactly demanding. This is one bone of contention that Phil Burgon, the National Recycling Manager for M.D.J.Light Bros, raised when we met him at their works in Lewes.

Excellent recycling rate

It can be superficially attractive, i.e. cheaper, for a waste disposal authority such as Surrey County Council (SCC) to send our WEEE waste to a recycler achieving little better than 30% recovery. The good news is that SCC is sending most of our WEEE waste to M.D.J.Light Bros, who are recovering over 94%, with much of the materials recovered going back into manufacturing within the UK. With recession-driven cost-cutting, Phil is working hard to keep SCC's business. Another bone of contention is that the UK Producer Compliance Scheme gives much of the control and a large slice of the profits to companies who merely administer the scheme.

Different processes for different products

WEEE contains high value metals, such as copper, aluminium, mercury, brass, bronze and steel. WEEE has a high embodied energy and therefore recycling the materials reduces both energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. Some of it is also toxic (such as mercury in lighting units). Other items contain some of the worst man-made greenhouse gases and ozone depleters – CFCs – which are compounds made with chlorine and fluorine and are now banned. M.D.J.Light Bros is one of only ten WEEE recyclers in the UK licensed to dispose of old fridges and freezers,

which contain CFCs as the refrigerant. The CFCs have to be extracted, contained and disposed of in high temperature incinerators. Also, our old fridges and freezers use polyurethane insulation which has been expanded with CFCs, so this too has to be extracted (under vacuum), adsorbed onto activated carbon and incinerated. Once the toxic substances have been removed, and items like motors and compressors separated to recover copper and other metals, the carcasses are shredded and the plastics, aluminium, etc then recovered for recycling. At least seven different types of plastic are recovered at the site and sold on ready to mould or extrude into new products.

Small domestic WEEE, such as phones, pocket calculators, Nintendos, kettles and mixers are shredded together before separation of plastics and metals for recycling.

Televisions

The other domestic item that uses a lot of space and equipment at M.D.J.Light Bros is the TV. Most of the weight in an old TV is the cathode ray tube (CRT). This operates under vacuum and is made of thick glass: the bigger the screen the thicker the glass. Moreover, the glass used to make CRTs is heavily leaded as a safety precaution against stray radiation and, therefore, represents an environmental hazard. This glass, as well as the glass TV screen, is removed by hand at the same time as the electronic bits, and the glass is then crushed, washed and graded into different sizes. As no facilities exist in this country to reprocess leaded glass it is sent to Malaysia where new CRTs are still being made. Smaller-sized glass is used as a substitute for sand and gravel, allowing a reduction in quarrying of these raw materials. About 80% of the TVs arriving at the plant are still in good working order, and some of these supply a small market for re-use.

This gives you a snapshot of some of what happens at M.D.J.Light Bros. They recycle much more besides, including commercial WEEE and end-of-life vehicles, and have perfected some of their own technology. It's a third-generation privately owned company and the present owner is proud of his grandfather who started life as a rag-and-bone man. We were well impressed by what we saw.



Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future. Forum membership costs only £5 per year or £7 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed. Please contact John Bannister on 01483 570468 or e-mail johnw.bannister@virgin.net



CALENDAR

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



Wednesday 27 January 2010

GEF Biodiversity Group.

Peter Curnock: **"Pewley's Butterflies in the Surrey Context"**.

1900. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1845)

Friday 29 January

Guildford Geographical Association.

Prof. Martin Menzies, Dept. of Earth Sciences, Royal Holloway College:

"Volcanic Hazards".

1830. Auditorium, Royal Grammar School.

Tuesday 2 February

GEF Sustainable Energy Group.

Guided tour of TMO Renewables Limited's biofuels plant at Dunsfold Park.

1830 at the plant.

This tour is limited to 10 people on a first come first served basis. Names and car registration details have to be provided. Please contact John Bannister.

Tuesday 16 March

Guildford Geographical Association.

Dr. Katie Willis, Royal Holloway, University of London:

"Urbanisation in Less Economically Developed Countries".

1830. Auditorium, Royal Grammar School.

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

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Please send contributions for the next issue to Clare Windsor by Monday 1 February 2010.

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