



GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

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

SEPTEMBER 2010

## Solar PV in Guildford gets the green light

(but not without a struggle)

*John Bannister*

TWO NEW PIECES OF legislation introduced by the last government were intended to make it easier for homeowners to install solar PV panels to generate green electricity. In April 2008, permitted development rules defined where and how you could proceed with solar PV without the need for planning permission.<sup>1</sup> Then, in April 2010, payments started for electricity produced from renewable energy microgeneration systems. Known as the feed-in-tariff, this emulates what Germany introduced 10 years ago but has taken years of campaigning in this country.

For a typical domestic-scale solar PV installation you will now receive 41.3 p/kWh for all the electricity your PV system produces. This is indexed-linked to inflation over the life of the scheme, expected to be 25 years. The rate of return on investment is about 8% per annum. Not surprisingly there has been a surge of interest by Guildford residents wanting to invest their savings in solar PV, to cut their energy bills and their carbon emissions.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2008/uksi\\_20080675\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2008/uksi_20080675_en_1)



**Dr Ann Harvey's house. The solar PV panels were installed in July 2008.**

All fine and dandy, except that the planning department in Guildford Borough Council (GBC) decided to try and exert control over solar PV installations through their interpretation of the permitted development rules. They focused on Dr Ann Harvey in Friars Gate, Onslow Village, who had installed solar PV in July 2008. Dr Harvey had openly communicated with the council at the time and been told she could proceed under permitted development – only for the council to rescind this decision later and start enforcement procedures. They wanted her to submit a retrospective planning application.

The permitted development rules state that solar panels, so far as practicable, should be sited so as to minimise their effect on the external appearance of the house and likewise on the amenity of the area. Guildford and Waverley Friends of the Earth (GWFOE) quickly recognised that the key word here is “sited”, and if your south-facing roof also faces onto the road it remains your only practicable option for solar energy. GBC took a different view and moreover expressed concern that solar PV panels might become widespread in Guildford.

Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF) does not for a moment take issue that important heritage buildings need appropriate protection through the planning system. But the vast majority of Guildford's buildings are not of heritage value.

This episode has been very unfortunate, given that GBC is doing so much good work to reduce carbon emissions from its own buildings and transport, as we have reported in an earlier newsletter. But much more is needed to meet its obligations to reduce carbon from the rest of the community.

Domestic renewable energy is part of the solution to reducing community emissions. GEF and GWFOE felt so strongly that Guildford was in danger of setting a regressive precedent that we mounted a campaign in support of Dr Harvey (and the growing list of other residents outside conservation areas wanting to install solar PV under permitted development). The number of letters of support for Dr Harvey from members of the public exceeded 70

(only one against). Several supportive letters have appeared in the *Surrey Advertiser* (none against) as well as articles and a leader by the paper. As a result, the planning department changed its approach and is now allowing solar PV to proceed under permitted development outside conservation areas and excluding listed buildings.

GBC was watching closely another protracted case by a determined applicant in Poole, Dorset, where the council refused permission for solar PV and then refused an application for a certificate of lawfulness. In a determination made on 21 July 2010, the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State allowed the PV installation to go ahead after concluding that the proposed siting was the only practicable option. He stated that the condition in the permitted development legislation "is concerned with siting not size. Had parliament decided to impose a size limitation it would have been a simple matter to do so."

The UK Climate Change Act legislates that we must reduce our carbon emissions by at least 80% by 2050. This is an enormous task, with no time to lose. Also, our coalition government wants to increase to 30% the cuts we must make by 2020, while we are currently not even

on track for a 20% cut. A step change is needed for progress to be made.

Dr Ann Harvey was right in her recent letter to the *Surrey Advertiser* to point out that this is a shared responsibility and the residents of Guildford need, as individuals, to make a contribution, and not leave it to someone else. She has put up a determined fight at great personal cost (including £4,240 paid to a planning consultant). Others might have wilted under the pressure.

If you live outside a conservation area and want to install solar PV you can do so by complying with a few simple rules under permitted development (see link on previous page). However, tell the council what you propose, as they need to document carbon savings made by the community. They will offer you the legal protection of a Certificate of Lawfulness for £75, but this is optional.

We are keen to hear what problems, if any, residents are experiencing from the planning department at GBC regarding solar PV installations, as we are still getting reports of a limited understanding of renewable energy and what seem like bureaucratic delays to requests for Certificates of Lawfulness.

## Subscriptions to increase next year

AT GUILDFORD Environmental Forum's AGM on 12th May 2010, it was agreed that the subscriptions would have to rise with effect from April 2011.

The reason for the increase is that our grant from Guildford Borough Council was reduced to just £1,000 in 2009, and in the light of the present economic constraints on local council funding it would be unwise for GEF to expect any increase in this level. Our accounts for 2009/10 showed that at the current level of subscription our income was only £741, whilst basic operating costs are some £1,500.

As subscriptions have not been increased for many years, it was agreed that a single subscription would be £10 pa and that the joint subscription should rise to £15 per household. We would also welcome any additional donations.

If you are a member of the Forum we will be contacting you to ask for a change in your standing order. We would like all new standing orders to start from 11th April, 2011 in future in respect of the year starting in April 2011 as this will make our volunteer administration much simpler. A copy of the standing order mandate is available on our website if you would like to make this change now. Alternatively, if you change your mandate via the internet, please advise me that the change has been made so that we don't chase you again!

*Adrian Thompson, Hon Treasurer*

## Wasted medicines are a real problem

DID YOU KNOW that the value of medicines wasted in Surrey last year was estimated to be at least £8 million and weighed more than four double decker buses? NHS Surrey is asking every prescription medicine user in Surrey to help tackle this issue with a very simple message – "Think Before You Tick".

Many people are unaware that once a medicine has left the pharmacy it cannot be re-used even if unopened but must be destroyed by incineration. Many people also receive medicines 'on repeat', meaning that you don't have to see your doctor every time you need more.

NHS Surrey is asking you to check what you have in stock at home before you order a repeat medicine and to only order what you need. Don't be worried about talking to your doctor if you are no longer taking a medicine, and ask for old items to be taken off your repeat request form.

If you are worried about the side effects of a medicine, talk to your doctor or community pharmacist. It is important to check before you leave the pharmacy that you only have the medicines that you need.

If you do have unwanted medicines at home, please do not flush them down the toilet or put them out with your household rubbish, but return them to your local pharmacy who will arrange for their safe disposal.

Visit [www.surreyhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.surreyhealth.nhs.uk) to find out more.

### It's a switch-on

Research from the National Energy Foundation has found that nearly 20% of workers don't turn their computers off at the end of the day, wasting 1.5 billion kWh of electricity per year. This equates to the annual CO<sub>2</sub> produced by 200,000 small family cars.

(Source: *New Statesman*, 14 June '10)

## FACTS & FIGURES

### Water – 1

It takes 2,700 litres of water to produce the average cotton shirt, and 11,000 litres to produce a pair of jeans.

### Water – 2

Out of our total water 'footprint', just 38% is derived from the UK, while the rest comes from other (often drier) countries growing and manufacturing products for the British market.

(Source: *WWF Action*, Oct 08)

### Water – 3

Globally, two-thirds of water abstracted from the environment is used to irrigate crops.

(Source: *Living Earth*, Winter 08)

### Return of the elms?

In the 1980s, gardening contractor Paul King noticed that two 200-year-old elms in Essex had not been affected by Dutch Elm disease.

He took cuttings from and now he has grown 2,000 healthy English elm saplings. So far, they seem resistant to the disease.

(Source: *Waitrose 'Weekend'*, 17 June '10)



## ***Biomass supplies all the heat at the Surrey Sports Park***

LC ENERGY, run by Managing Director Mark Lebus, has become one of the UK's leading suppliers of low carbon energy services and wood fuel. They have a wood fuel hub for supplying their local customers at their base in Albury, Guildford.

LC Energy was chosen to provide all the heating for the new flagship Surrey Sports Park at the University of Surrey, which includes a 50-metre competition swimming pool. To keep the whole facility heated they will supply 300 tonnes per year of sustainable wood chip, sourced from the Surrey Hills area, to a wood chip boiler installed at the Sports Park. Most of this wood fuel comes from within a 15-mile radius of the Sports Park.

It is calculated that using biomass fuel will save about 220 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum versus the alternative of natural gas fuel. This is due to wood fuel being almost carbon-free: sustainable woodlands are harvested at a rate matching the natural regrowth.

The Sports Park will benefit from the fuel cost

savings and the associated carbon savings, including the expected UK government's Renewable Heat Incentive due to start from April 2011. The local rural economy will benefit in a number of ways from the resulting better woodland management. Matthew Woodcock, Programmes Manager with the Forestry Commission in the south and south-east of England, believes that 500,000 tonnes of wood per annum from currently under-managed woodlands could be produced sustainably in the south-east – a quarter of the UK total.

LC Energy currently supplies Stansted Airport, a number of schools, care homes, housing developments and private customers in the south and south-east of England. It is currently providing the consultancy for the biomass project at GBC's Millmead offices.

Mark is a member of the GEF Executive Committee and well known to GEF members. We have arranged a visit to the Surrey Sports Park in early November (see back page).  
*John Bannister*

## ***Mini eco-house built by Pewley Down Infant School***

EARLIER THIS YEAR, led by their Eco-team, the pupils at Pewley Down Infant School turned a dilapidated timber playhouse at the school into a showcase eco-resource for the whole school community. The pupils undertook their own research into how to reduce the amount of energy needed to heat and light buildings and how water is used.

Sara Waterfield, a school governor who works for Guildford architects Gerry Lytle, provided guidance and the Bricks and Bread Sustainable Living Centre gave a hand and provided some insulation materials. £1,475 was awarded by CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment), and Guildford Borough Council also awarded the school with a £300 'Greening the Borough' grant towards the project.

The children ended up fitting a green roof, several different kinds of natural and recycled insulating materials (such as paper, lamb's wool and old clothes), rainwater collection to a water butt and solar-powered lighting. Everything is beautifully labelled and decorated with artwork by the children.

The project culminated in a series of workshops and a school family day of celebration and information. It was featured on the 'Engaging Places' website [www.engagingplaces.org.uk/news/art78664](http://www.engagingplaces.org.uk/news/art78664)  
*John Bannister*



# AN INITIATIVE TO REDUCE PHOSPHATES IN SALT WATER CREEKS

Hugh Marriage

SALCOMBE HARBOUR is famous for the quality and clarity of its water and its unique sea-life community. The golden beaches at the harbour mouth are bathed in sparklingly clean water and are deservedly popular. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a nature reserve and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). But the water in some of the beautiful inland creeks can have excessively high levels of phosphates, which fertilise toxic red algae blooms and render seafood poisonous. There is now an initiative to try to prevent this.

**What is the issue?** Phosphates help detergents work better in hard water, but they stay dissolved in water and enter creeks from sewage works and outflows from domestic septic tanks and bi-digesters.

Because Salcombe Harbour is an enclosed inlet without, unusually, a big river to flush out any residues, reducing phosphate use by yachts and in houses around the harbour is likely to greatly improve the quality of the harbour water. It will also help safeguard any farmed oysters and other shellfish for human consumption.

**Why aren't phosphates banned?** The United States had severe problems with its lakes and banned detergents with phosphates over 10 years ago. However, phosphates in detergents will not be banned in the UK until 2015 at the earliest. That is why there are now a number of initiatives to encourage the boating community, and people living round harbours and inland lakes, to move to phosphate-free washing products as soon as possible.

**A note on nitrates:** Nitrates also cause problems in streams and creeks as they encourage the unsightly green weed which floats on the water or sits on the mud. Nitrates mainly come from sewage: but there is one way in which some households can reduce their nitrate output. This is to dispose of excess food waste in brown caddies or on a compost heap, rather than down a sink disposal unit.

**What else is happening?** Phosphates are of course a problem not only in Salcombe but in open water everywhere. The Royal Yachting Association and others, through their Green-Blue project, are urging all yachts to use phosphate-free detergents; British Waterways has banned detergents with phosphates on its inland waters; some sewage works are having to install equipment to remove phosphates (and nitrates) from their effluent. Shops around Salcombe Harbour will be encouraged to stock only or mainly phosphate-free.

**What can I do?** All detergents have their hazards for water life so the first rule is to use less. In soft water areas in particular, detergents tend to wash cleaner (because they rinse out better) if one uses less. The second rule is to use **phosphate-free**.

It is surprisingly difficult to compile a list of phosphate-free washing products (there seems to be only one UK version on the internet). So I would be grateful if GEF members could look at the products in their own house, check whether they are properly classified and if not, or if they are not in the table, please email me at [stade@marriages.me.uk](mailto:stade@marriages.me.uk) (which is the email address I reserve for public use). And then go phosphate-free!

## Which washing products are phosphate-free?

As at July 2010	Phosphate-free or low phosphate	Containing phosphate
Dishwashing	Aldi 'Alimat', Ecover, Fairy Liquid, Wave, Clear Spring, Cussons Morning Fresh, Lino, Safechem, Sonett, Surcare, Morrisons citrus autodishwasher	Duzzit, Fairy dishwasher tablets and powder, Finish, Morrisons (except citrus)
Clothes washing	0%: Bio-D, Bold, Clear Spring, Daz tablets, Dreft, Eco-Balls, Ecoleaf, Ecover, Lino, Surf, Tesco 'Naturally' <5%: Ariel, Persil Non-Bio (powder only), Daz powder, Fairy, Morrisons, Persil Hygiene, Surf	Eco-Smart, Morrisons Bio
Liquid handwash	Dove, Imperial Leather, Morrisons, Nivea Shower Cream, Palmolive, Radox	Cussons Carex
Shampoo	Clairol, Dove, Head and Shoulders*, L'Oreal, Morrisons Natural, Pantene, VO5, Vosene	

\*contains phosphonates

Hugh Marriage is a member of Salcombe Harbour Board: this article expresses his personal views.



Exterior and interior of the new zero-carbon WISE building at the Centre for Alternative Technology

## Zero emissions Britain 2030

John Bannister

THE CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY (CAT) in Machynlleth, North Wales, has over the last 30-plus years become one of the foremost demonstration and teaching institutions in the world for sustainable living. Under the guidance of Peter Harper, the founder of CAT, and the far-sighted management of Paul Allen, it continues to grow as a voice for a sane lifestyle in a world that is struggling to face up to the realities of Earth's limited resources. Their approach has always been to research and demonstrate practical, deliverable solutions needed for us to live sustainably and in sync with the Earth. Do visit CAT if you have never been and please visit again if you have not been for a while. [www.cat.org.uk](http://www.cat.org.uk)

This year has seen the achievement of two major new milestones at CAT. After several years of determined effort (and strained finances) they have completed their most ambitious construction project to date. This is the beautiful and, of course, zero-carbon WISE building (Wales Institute for Sustainable Education). GEF gave a small donation to the project. In June they also published a major study called *Zero Carbon Britain 2030* (or *ZCB2030*). This is a blueprint for a rapid de-carbonisation of the UK economy to reach zero net emissions by 2030 – in other words, a 100% reduction in the UK's carbon emissions by 2030 versus the

80% reduction by 2050 mandated in the Climate Change Act. It is a response to the man-made climate emergency that we face, where speed is of the essence if we are to limit global average temperature rise to 2°C, which some climate scientists are saying is too high and should be 1.5°C.

*ZCB2030* with its 364 pages and 10 chapters is too big to do the report justice here. But the strategy is to 'power down' our high energy, high carbon living through lifestyle and other changes and 'power up' investment in renewable energy, without recourse to any new nuclear energy. There are chapters on transport, land use and agriculture, microgrids, policy and economics, employment and residual emissions. GEF member Chris Mason was the lead author of the chapter on transport.

CAT's pioneering roadmap shows that, given both the political and public will, we could redirect our economy quite quickly away from dependency on fossil and nuclear fuels. Like any drastic change, most people will dismiss this out of hand. But the presenters are keen to state that the report should be seen as a framework to spark debate, and to create a vision that zero-carbon living is both attractive and feasible.

The report is free to download from the web at [www.zcb2030.org](http://www.zcb2030.org)

## A natural invitation to shape the future

Raymond Smith

THROUGH DEFRA, the government has launched a fundamental review of policies on the natural environment: *An invitation to shape the Nature of England*. The responses to this should form the basis for a new White Paper.

Its approach is promising when it says that we "know that we can no longer afford the costs to our economy and quality of life which arise from a degraded natural environment", but before that it says "Deficit reduction and ensuring economic recovery are the Government's top priorities." Some of us suspect that having a viable biosphere in which to live is actually more important than the economy.

It is, however, an important document to which to respond. It starts with the question "What do we need to do to embed the true value of our natural resources in decision making at all levels?" and does not confine itself to the

impacts within England. Further in, it also asks "How best can we reduce our footprint on the natural environment abroad, through the goods, services and products we use?"

The last question, number 15, "If you could choose just one priority action for the Natural Environment White Paper to drive forward locally, nationally or internationally – what would it be?" is the sort of thing I feel is a bit dumb. Choosing between policies makes them sound like luxuries some or all of which we could do without. The obvious answer to a question like that – reduce consumption levels to a "One Planet Living" level and then set about repairing past damage – is probably rather wider than they envisage.

The deadline for responses is 30 October 2010.

The consultation can be found on <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/our-responsibilities/nat-environment>



## Moths and climate change

**David Gardner, Chair of the Surrey and South West London Branch of Butterfly Conservation**

THE FORUM'S BIODIVERSITY GROUP meeting in July had an intensive presentation from David Gardner, which showed research work in progress on the effects of climate change on moth populations. David is Chair of the Surrey and South West London Branch of Butterfly Conservation but the work was based on the data for Kent, where he is also Chair.

Moths are insects that evolved from the water-dwelling caddisflies about 250 million years ago and became land-based. With the evolution of more complex life forms such as birds that feed on them, most moth species became night fliers to evade predation. Butterflies can be seen simply as moths that evolved other strategies and remained as day fliers. Meanwhile bats have evolved their complex night-flying skills to feed on night-time insects. Moths are a vital food source for higher animals but their numbers have been declining for decades and this is likely to be a contributory factor in the fall of bird numbers.

Moths themselves have a variety of food sources, depending on the species, which are mainly native plants, garden exotics, even detritus and fur and skin of mammal carrion. These fur-eating moth species have of course become better known for eating woollen clothes and carpets.

There are about 2,500 moth species in Britain and about 2,000 of these occur in Kent. Some moth species are not useful for checking the impacts of climate change, most obviously because they fly at all times of the year.

The graphs David showed were for the times of the year in which recorders had noted the presence of moths for a range of specific species from 1980 to

2009. There is a slight problem with looking at this data as the number of people recording moths has increased over the period so the intensity of entries has increased on the graphs. In reading them therefore one must keep in mind the reality that moth numbers have in general declined. Having made allowance for

this it was possible to focus on the changing patterns within the years. The most obvious change is that many species are flying earlier and (to a lesser extent) later in the season now compared with 20 or 30 years ago.

This increased period of activity may well be bad for the moth species. For example, the individuals emerging early as a response to rising temperatures may well find that their preferred food plants have not responded in a similar way and they struggle to find enough food to survive. Also, given that the earlier flying

is not the case for all individuals of the species, the concentration of individual moths at any time is reduced thus lowering the chances of individuals finding a mate and producing a further generation.

There is another more complex change evident in the data. Whilst many moth species only have one generation each year, others have two. The evidence is, however, that many species that only had one generation are now starting to have two generations in each year. Again this may be a problem as the offspring caterpillars of this new second generation may find that their preferred food is not available and may struggle to survive the winter due to weather



*Lymantria monacha*, or Black Arches



*Endotrichia flammealis* on ragwort

issues or life stage problems.

For more information on moths see the Butterfly Conservation website: [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

### Flocks – 1

A flock of whooper swans was spotted from an aircraft flying at an altitude of 8,800m over Northern Ireland.

### Flocks – 2

Flying in a V-formation flock can save birds up to 70% of their energy. Each bird flies in just the right position to get an uplift from the eddies of air created by the birds in front. But the leader of the flock obtains no extra lift, so the birds take it in turns to fly at the apex of the V.

### Flocks – 3

A flock of dunlins can turn so fast that the message to perform the manoeuvre travels between the birds in a mere 70th of a second.

### Flocks – 4

The largest swarms on record are of desert locusts. In 1954, in Kenya, a mass of 500 billion of these insects reached 1.5 kilometres high and weighed 100,000 tonnes. (Source: BBC Wildlife, Feb '09)

## FACTS & FIGURES

### Wind energy

According to the British Wind Energy Association, the UK could power itself with wind-generated energy several times over. A modern 2.5MW turbine at a reasonable site will generate 6.5 million units of electricity each year, enough to meet the annual needs of over 1,400 households, make 230 million cups of tea or run a computer for 2,250 years.

(Source: The Guildford Magazine, Sept '09)



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

## Have the targets been met?

John Bannister

GOVERNMENTS of all types love targets, but it's frustrating when there's no way of holding them to account if they miss them by a mile. So you ask what's the point?

The point is that although governments take forever to achieve few genuine benefits, charities, trusts, social enterprise companies, NGOs, volunteers and a few really enlightened elected representatives do take targets seriously and work their socks off to produce tangible benefits on the ground. Call it the Big Society if you want.

Biodiversity is a case in point. In 2001 the EU (including the UK) agreed a target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. It is now clear that, despite some progress, we have not stopped the loss of wildlife and the degradation of the natural environment. We can see how hard it is in Guildford, where without volunteers on, for example, Pewley Down and the Hog's Back, the situation would not be as good as it is. The ever growing pressures of traffic, resource waste, unreasonable consumption, noise and light pollution and, yes, dogs and cats, are relentless and risk an ongoing losing battle to save our environment.

Surrey Wildlife Trust and the RSPB are just two organisations that do excellent work to help wildlife (although even they see themselves forced to compromise on some issues such as international wildlife vacations). In this International Year of Biodiversity the RSPB says we can at least celebrate the successes in reversing the decline of birds such as the stone-curlew, bittern and corncrake. It believes we can take heart from the start that has been made in 'greening' agriculture. We can also be pleased that at long last we have marine nature conservation legislation. GEF recently showed the film *The End of the Line*, a graphic portrayal of how corrupt the systems are to deliver targets to reduce fishing pressures. There's still so much to do to restore a healthy natural environment with thriving populations of wildlife.

In March the EU agreed a new 2020 target for wildlife conservation. This is a target of "halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible." The RSPB stated that "This time, for the health and happiness of future generations, this is a target we really cannot afford to miss."

Why not get involved in some local habitat conservation work to help achieve the new target.

### Biodiversity website launched

A really handy new website<sup>1</sup> has been launched which will be of use to nearly everyone interested in biodiversity policy in Britain (although it's only in a pilot version at the time of writing and some of the pages are therefore empty). Set up by the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) it is called "The Biodiversity Planning Toolkit". (Pity about the name, I suspect "tool kits" may be getting a bit passé.)

It brings together lists, summaries or links to a variety of different key documents, as well as explanations for key terms (useful when you need to remind yourself about the difference between an SPA and an SAC). The Introduction to Law, Policy and Practice page puts convenient links to the relevant legislation in one place.

It's not just of use to people in the planning field, although it's aimed primarily at them. It includes interactive pages that approach the issue from the point of view of planning applicants. On the other hand, summaries of BAP policy and definitions of Key habitats would be of use to anyone venturing into biodiversity in Britain.

Raymond Smith

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/>

### Advance notice – Surrey County Council to consult on Countryside Services

Surrey County Council are planning to consult on the provision of their Countryside Services. It is expected that the consultation document will be sent out on 4 October, with a closing date of 30 November. This review is mainly about reducing costs, but also to improve performance. It will include reviewing the options for discontinuing non-statutory Countryside work. The review of the management contract with Surrey Wildlife Trust for much of their estate will be less intensive as this has recently been through a routine review, but it will include whether the Council should continue with the access agreements.

Raymond Smith

# CONSULTATION ON FARMING REGULATION

Raymond Smith

THE MINISTER OF STATE for Agriculture and Food, Jim Paice, has announced a new Task Force on Farming Regulation, calling for opinions and ideas on ways to improve approaches to regulation. This is to find ways of reducing the bureaucratic burdens that English farmers and food producers face. They are looking for examples of:

- regulations that are unnecessary and could be removed without lowering standards for business, the public or the environment;
- regulations that have had additional and unnecessary measures added to them; and
- regulations that are overly complex or disproportionate in the way that they are implemented or enforced.

With some relief one sees that this is not just about removing regulations but improving them, as he continued *"Regulations have nearly always been put in place for good reasons but not necessarily in the best way. There is too much red tape tying up our farmers and food businesses."*

The consultation is clearly aimed at the farming industry as Richard Macdonald, the Task Force chairman said: *"We want farmers, growers and the food industry, who often complain about excessive regulation and bureaucratic processes, to help us to improve the system . . . It is our intention also to get out and meet farmers, growers and food processors to get first-hand views on what's wrong and explore new and alternative ways to current regulations and processes."*

However, I see no reason why others who are concerned about food, rural land management and animal welfare should not also respond with any suggestions that they may have on ways to improve regulations.

The consultation will be open until 31 October. Evidence can be submitted online at <http://engage.defra.gov.uk/farm-regulation/> Written submissions can be e-mailed to [FarmRegulationTaskforce@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FarmRegulationTaskforce@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or posted to Task Force on Farming Regulation, Area 8D Millbank, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.



Raymond Smith

**A field of farming regulations? No, just a footpath blocked by an oilseed crop.**

## England's biggest onshore wind farm

Vestas, the Danish wind turbine company, will supply 22 E9 wind turbines each rated at 3 MW for what will become England's largest onshore windfarm. The 66 MW windfarm will be located between Barnstaple and Ilfracombe in North Devon and will become fully operational in September 2011. Devon Wind Power Ltd, owned by ESB Wind Development Ltd, received planning permission in October 2009 from the Secretary of State for BERR as then was. With a hub height of 65m and blade length of 45m, the blade tips will reach a height of 110m. Sufficient electricity for 30,000 homes will be generated. As the de-carbonised UK in future will need to run on renewable electricity from wind, solar, marine and biomass energy sources this is a very welcome development. (I say this and the estuary of the Taw and Torridge is my spiritual home – *John Bannister*).

## US Military warns on peak oil

In many oil-producing areas oil production is already in steep decline. The Gulf of Mexico, scene of the recent BP disaster, is just one example. New oil production has to replace these losses as well as meet incremental global demand driven by China and India. The US Military, the world's largest user of transport fuels, is the latest big consumer to warn that global oil surplus capacity could completely disappear within two years, and that serious shortages face all of us by 2015.

This has prompted the US Department of Energy to change its tune and admit there could be a problem. The oil price is heading up again towards the \$100 mark, which is inevitable if all governments can think of is returning to the old-style high growth without very big improvements in energy efficiency.

*John Bannister*

## Rubbish hols

The latest Beachwatch survey from the Marine Conservation Society shows an increase of 121% in the plastic rubbish found on Britain's beaches since 1994.

(Source: BBC Focus, Summer '09)

## "Looks like rain"

Each Briton spends 49 hours over the course of a year discussing the weather.

(Source: Daily Mail)

# FACTS & FIGURES

## Carbon capture

Organic farms that include grassland as part of their crop rotations can capture large amounts of carbon and put it back in the soil. The Royal Society estimates that carbon capture by the world's farmlands could total as much as 10 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year, given better management of the soil. Equalling more than the annual CO<sub>2</sub> accumulation in the atmosphere, this would solve the problem of global warming.

(Source: Living Earth, Autumn '09)

## Computer use

Computing causes about 2% of greenhouse gas emissions. That's the same as aviation and the figure is rising rapidly. One data centre in London demands around 10MW of electricity, similar to a 10,000-home town.

The computing giant, Google, now aims to halve its energy use in three years.

(Source: BBC Focus, May '10)



# Meat and ten veg – changes in land use are hurting

John Bannister

IT IS QUITE COMMONLY stated that our food accounts for 22% of our carbon emissions and that livestock accounts for 80% of this, which is 18%. But these percentages exclude the land-use changes associated with our food production. In the presentation given to GEF on 19 July, Emily Lewis-Brown from the Food Climate Research Network at the University of Surrey referred to the contribution of land-use changes when she told us that, if all impacts around the world are taken into account, then our food actually accounts for an estimated 29% of our carbon emissions.

Our food now comes from all over the world and most of it is the product of global agribusinesses dominated by a few very large American and European companies. The high amounts of carbon coming from land-use changes associated with food are mostly related to meat and dairy production. Meat and dairy consumption are increasing globally, which doesn't help.

Even when farm animals are fed on grass, the grass is usually improved with fertiliser. A recent study of American grasslands has shown that heavily-grazed fertilised wheatgrass is a net source of carbon emissions, whereas moderately grazed native grasslands are a net carbon sink. So it would help if we greatly reduced our consumption of meat and dairy foods as well as the intensive methods by which most of it is produced. The new food paradigm needs to be **quality** in place of **quantity**. As Peter Harper of the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) puts it, we need to move from meat and three veg to a ratio of meat and ten veg. His message is to eat less and switch your diet as soon as possible from dairy and meat to vegetable protein.

Today, farm animals are fed large amounts of soy and corn and, with increasing demand for meat and dairy products, more land is being cleared to grow these animal food crops and raise more livestock. Cleared land is sometimes native grasslands or savannah and sometimes tropical rainforest. Tropical rainforests are the Earth's lungs and its largest carbon sink, and when they are cut down or burnt for agribusiness carbon is released and

the Earth's respiratory system is put at risk. Reducing our meat and dairy demands would release more land for other de-carbonisation purposes.

Similarly, there is a lot of concern about the effects of land-use changes associated with biofuels production.

Our soils can be an effective carbon sink if managed with that end in view. How farming manages the soil is critical to whether carbon is released or stored. A high organic content in UK and similar soils is said to increase carbon uptake. On the other hand, rice paddy fields are a major source of carbon (methane) emissions because of the anaerobic conditions. So in countries like India, rice paddies are second only to livestock as the source of carbon emissions in the agricultural sector. Some soil types like peatlands, for example, have locked up very large amounts of carbon, so are best left undisturbed. This is why they should not be drained and why we should only buy peat-free compost if we can't make enough of our own compost.

According to the *CAT Zero Carbon Britain 2030* report (*ZCB2030*), twice as much carbon is stored in soils than in the atmosphere, so a relatively small increase in soil carbon might reduce CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Some people are suggesting that carbon should be added to the soil as charcoal (or biochar, as it's called) made from farmed biomass, but no consensus has yet emerged on the benefits of doing this.

If you only read one chapter of CAT's *ZCB2030* report then you would I think find the chapter on "Land-use and Agriculture" very interesting. Go to [www.zcb2030.org](http://www.zcb2030.org)

It is a real dichotomy that with all these land-use issues we end up throwing away and wasting so much food in this country, purportedly something like 40%. Is it because food is too cheap? I read somewhere that if the price of a supermarket chicken had increased to the same extent as house prices since 1970 then a typical supermarket chicken would now cost £47. Maybe if food was more expensive we would take greater care of farmed animals and supermarkets and their customers would waste less.

A SCORCHINGLY HOT DAY and you toil on foot back up the A31, regarding with feelings as mixed as hydrogenated margarine the queue of dazzling metal roofs stretching up and away to some sausage-machine outlet too distant to see. Envy mingles with pity as you remark the faces of the patient and the anticipatory, trapped in vehicles accomplishing an advance slower than a push on the Western Front. It matters not what sum is printed on their car tax discs: Aston Martins, Range Rovers, Fiestas are all in the same boat. Dear Oh Dear, just how did we get here, so horribly far from the realization of any dream of satisfaction or happiness? The same scene of heavily subsidised suffering will be spread throughout much of this green and pleasant land on this beautiful afternoon.

A large part of the irony of such a situation is that we at least should have some element of choice – not like the cows lying beneath willows in the meadows or gulls riding the air above cliffs.

I paint this particular picture because it seems to represent fairly adequately where many of us find ourselves in relation to the Big Question: Where do we stand in relation to Climate Change? The car may serve to identify well enough with the genie let out of the bottle, though there are plenty of other bottles and other irritated genii buzzing around. It is just that the car seems so often to be an indisputably ludicrous item, whether in a scorching traffic jam or safely secured in a garage. In either situation it is a drain for hard-earned money, and even before it starts to pollute, knock down people or give drivers high blood pressure it has, by its consumption of rare raw materials, not done the planet a service. One could go on and on, but this is not just about cars. Please do pardon the beginnings of a rant.

The great wheel of Climate Change has quickened its pace and we cling to it like ants to the London Eye, inevitably moving with it without any real concept of what we are on. Just another meretricious comparison? Of course, we are so different from ants, are we not? Unlike us they can work together (at least, within the same species) and THEY have a marvellous record of survival. No, I was just attempting to get things in proportion, more difficult than it may seem, and again I have failed. But let's keep trying!

We do at last witness a concensus of serious scientists concluding from indisputable evidence that temperatures and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have in tandem hugely accelerated in the last 200 years when you look at the patterns of these over the last half a million years. It is no longer seriously disputed that we are perilously close to those limits of carbon released into the atmosphere which would produce disastrous effects on flora and fauna (in which we are included) on the surface of this planet. Many, in fact, believe that already we have not left ourselves enough stopping distance (car imagery pervades everything!) and that our children and grandchildren will have a fight for survival on their hands because of our failure.

It is virtually impossible not to be aware that a threat hangs over us, but many otherwise sane citizens still do not take the issue to heart. There are a variety of possible responses: one is "Che Sera, Sera! So let's enjoy ourselves anyway." (How? would be an excellent question, partly since there is much disagreement on the answer. Not in a motor car, aeroplane or jet-ski, I would hope, but one has to accept that many in their attitudes and behaviour disagree.)

Another is "I'm all right Jack!" But if really "No man is an island" that solution is also doomed to failure.

Even to try to stop what is happening encounters conflicting solutions and a good chance of

barking up the wrong tree. The

fear of wasting a lot of money and of making oneself look foolish has no doubt made some halt rather than hesitate. There is, for example a big question mark over Bio-Mass as a solution to the provision of sustainable energy. If what the majority feel, that the normal individual has little more influence than an ant, is true, then the answer might seem to be "Don't bother", essentially the George Bush response.

Yet, most would agree that the pursuit of real happiness is desirable, so why should we not, even if cautiously, stand back and look at where we are, satisfaction and happinesswise, to coin a term. Why not achieve something laudable (though that something may seem so small in the grand scale) if it genuinely increases the "feel good factor" and simultaneously helps to decrease one's carbon footprint?

Maybe a few suggestions would assist: how could you improve your own locality, your own backyard, your own street, your own town or village? How could you reduce your own carbon emissions? How could you give the rest of nature a better chance?

Take Guildford, for example. It has all the potential to become one of the loveliest towns in Western Europe, but suffers from traffic congestion. How difficult is it to have more Park and Ride facilities? Why are pedestrians and cyclists in Guildford treated in some key spots as an inferior race: the main railway bridge? the Old Portsmouth Road? So many inadequate pavements! Why do we have so many car parks so close to the centre of the town?

We have marvellous countryside around us in the Surrey Hills and inhabit the most densely wooded county in England. Walking in these areas restores body and spirit and more are taking advantage of this. How much help is yet needed, however, to assist bodies like the National Trust and Natural England and others to sustain and improve these facilities? Are some users sufficiently conscious of their responsibilities to others? I am thinking here of those who do not control their dogs, so that these may cause alarm to some walkers and be a real threat to wildlife like ground- nesting birds; those who charge on mountain bikes past pedestrians who may not hear them coming; those who plough up bridle paths in wet weather; those who just drop their tin cans and plastic bottles when they are empty.

It is heartening however, to see more and more parents

# Impasse?

by Michael Tanner

of younger children taking them out into the country on foot or on bikes so that it becomes a way of life. Of course, that is where the main work really lies, in helping the young to guard their inheritance better than the older ones have – another way of adding real satisfaction to one’s life, and not just for parents. There is a real enemy and a real war, though it should not be advertised in quite the earlier terms.

“Your World Needs You!” is more appropriate, but better drop the “Your”.

Mind you, if even larger numbers of the young and currently able-bodied allow such new technologies as Ipod Touch to dominate their heads and their limbs, we shall simply have an alternative to the motor car to blame for everything. Parents and all consumers, over to us!

### Look north for inspiration

A anaerobic digestion (AD) plant is to be built between Glasgow and Edinburgh as part of a £70 million waste-to-energy facility. It will take 105,000 tonnes of waste per annum, mainly from the commercial and industrial sectors, but also some domestic waste.

AD provides rapid breakdown of biodegradable wastes and produces methane (natural gas) and a digestate (soil improver). Pre-treatment will remove recyclables such as metals. The gas produced will drive CHP gas engines and generate enough electricity for more than 7,000 homes and enough heat to serve the equivalent of 9,000 homes. As far as we can make out the heat will be used on-site.

This facility is being built on a site part-owned by Scotwaste, a family-owned firm which has achieved an outstanding landfill diversion rate of over 70%. The nearest residents live 300m from the facility.

In June Scotland launched its Zero Waste Strategy 2025, one of the most ambitious waste plans in Europe. This sets a 2025 target of 70% recycling and composting for all waste types, a 5% limit on the amount of waste to landfill, landfill bans on specific waste types and restrictions on materials sent to energy-from-waste plants. Scots wahey!

*John Bannister*

### Foot dragging – again

Timed to coincide with the opening of the latest round of UN-backed climate change negotiations in Bonn, Climate Strategies, an independent network of international climate academics hosted at the University of Cambridge, released a new study in August analysing the likely impact of the emissions targets for 2020 currently pledged by industrialised and developing economies.

The report, entitled *Analytic support to target-based negotiations*, concludes that the pledged targets announced by countries as part of the Copenhagen Accord are insufficient to drive the robust price in the carbon market needed to peak emissions by 2020.

It warns that unless action is taken soon to deliver more ambitious cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, future generations will have to achieve daunting cuts if there is to be any hope of stabilising temperature increases at about 2°C above pre-industrial levels.



The Forum took part in Springwatch on a beautiful Sunday in June

### The first Guildford Springwatch

For the first time Surrey Wildlife Trust has run a Springwatch event, in partnership with Guildford Borough Council and as part of the BBC’s ‘Breathing Places’ campaign. Wildlife groups and organisations from across Surrey came to Shalford Park with stalls, displays and children’s activities.

The theme was the International Year of Biodiversity, so there was lots of hands-on nature fun for the whole family, the chance to get close to some of Surrey’s amazing creatures and tips for people on how to make their garden a great place for wildlife. A well-stocked farmers’ market selling delicious local food and drink also proved very popular.

With ideal weather, the event attracted several thousand people. One family commented “This is better than Thorpe Park and we didn’t have to pay to come here!”

GEF had a stall, and we thank Guildford Borough Council for sharing their pitch with us. We had plenty of visitors to talk to, with the most popular topic being renewable energy, especially solar PV.



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 Chris Coventry on 01483 283571 or e-mail [gefmembership@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:gefmembership@dsl.pipex.com)



# CALENDAR



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

## Wednesday 15 September

GEF Energy and Sustainable Construction Groups. Dr Alina Congreve, School of Real Estate & Planning, University of Reading: **"Guildford's Behaviour Change Challenge"**. 1900. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1830)

## Wednesday 22 September

GEF Biodiversity Group. Dr Nigel Reeve, author of *The Hedgehog* in the Poyser series: **"Hedgehogs"**. 1900. Committee Room 1, GBC Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1845) (Collection in aid of Surrey Wildlife Trust)

## Wednesday 6 October

GEF Renewable Energy Group. Mike Smyth, a director of Energy4all, the UK community cooperative renewables organisation: **"Community Ownership of Renewable Energy"**. 1900. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1830)

## Monday 18 October

All GEF Groups. A short film **"Life After Growth"** followed by a free discussion about our vision for low-carbon, zero-growth future. We can draw on the study *Zero Carbon Britain 2030* by the Centre for Alternative Technology, and *Prosperity Without Growth?* by Professor Tim Jackson for the Sustainable Development Commission. 1900. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1845)

## Wednesday 3 November

GEF Energy and Sustainable Construction Groups. **A visit to the Surrey Sports Centre** at the University of Surrey, for a tour of the biomass heating system led by Mark Lebus, and to hear about the building construction. 1900. Meet at the Centre but please contact John Bannister beforehand.

## Wednesday 24 November

GEF Biodiversity Group. Frances Halstead, Group Support Officer, Surrey Greenspace Project, Surrey Wildlife Trust. **"The Surrey Greenspace Project – Protecting and Enhancing Surrey's Biodiversity"**. 1900. Committee Room 1, GBC Millmead Offices. (Liquid refreshments from 1845)

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

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