

Diocesan Ecology Link

From the Bath & Wells Diocesan Environment Group (DEG)

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I SEE THE VICAR IS IN TROUBLE AGAIN – HAD 'GIVE ME OIL IN MY LAMP, KEEP ME BURNING' AT THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE.

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Countdown to Copenhagen.

In December 2009 world leaders will meet in Copenhagen for international talks to try to establish a new climate change agreement.

Christian Aid, which last month launched its Countdown to Copenhagen campaign, says this will be a vitally important meeting because the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol comes to an end in 2012. By then an international agreement on climate change must be in place to keep the global temperature rise to within two degree C. So Copenhagen may well be the last chance to get an agreement that could achieve this.

The aim of the Countdown to Copenhagen campaign is to gets leaders of the European Union to work for a climate change deal that takes into account the need for greater justice for the poorer communities who are already bearing the brunt of global warming. The major principles of the campaign are that wealthier countries, including those in the EU, should bear the responsibility for cutting carbon emissions, and that they should pay for the technology that poorer countries need to develop cleanly.

Christian Aid has produced a range of material designed to help us play our part in lobbying MEPs, informing local media, making and collecting pledges. For fuller details log onto www.christianaid.org.uk/climatechange or contact Elizabeth Perry at eperry@christian-aid.org.

Last call for Noah's Christmas.

Operation Noah, the church's climate change champion, has launched a Reclaim Christmas initiative, for us to shop less, live more, save the earth. It aims to encourage us to put the waiting back into wanting. It writes:

“Because we have already reached the point when the earth's resources for the year are used up and because we reject the idea that happiness at Christmas lies at the bottom of Santa's stocking, Operation Noah is launching its Reclaim Christmas campaign.

Advent was traditionally a period of penitence and quiet anticipation. But now it seems no more than four weeks of frenzied consumption in which stress, needless debt and damage to God's creation have become its defining hallmarks. Did you know:

- 125,000 tonnes of plastic packaging will be thrown away this Christmas?
- 333,333 trees will be used for Christmas cards?

Countless unwanted “gifts” will end up, at best in the charity shops and at worst in the landfill.

If Jesus returned in December 2008, what would he make of us doing all of this in His name?

So, instead of shopping, we want you to come together to celebrate and anticipate the birth of Christ together, in community, reducing your consumption footprint over the Advent period, the time famed for its excessive rate of consumption and to build friendships whilst doing so.

We say no to singing Santa mugs, golf ball washers and umbrella hats that will be discarded by the 12th day of Christmas, and yes to living simply, together, over the Advent period. ”

For your church, youth group or school

'A present for the future' Christmas play

'A present for the future' is a powerful short play for Advent or Christmas with a 'Christmas Carol meets Dr Who' theme as a time traveller visits Christmases in 1945, 2008 and 2045. It was commissioned by Operation Noah and written by Marc Norris of TenTen Theatre Company which specialises in theatre in education. The play lasts about 13 minutes. The script is available for free download from www.operationnoah.org. (details taken from A Rocha's newsletter).

Nuclear power and the General Synod

Christian Ecology Link asks: 'Would you like to see the Church of England take a stance against nuclear power? It has been suggested that CEL raises a question or promotes a motion to the General Synod to stimulate a debate on this important moral issue. And now it wants to find out if there is a group of people to take this forward. If you would like to take part in an exploratory discussion about what can be done, please e-mail paul@christian-ecology.org.uk

A new organisation for Christian environmental professionals.

A new web-based organisation for Christians working in all aspects of environmental action was launched in October by Sir John Houghton at the IFES International Symposium on Climate Change in Jamaica.

The organisation, named Professionals International in Christian Environmental Action (PICEA), aims to support environmental professionals around the world in their personal and professional development, and through networking, to connect individuals and groups. The PICEA website www.joinpicea.org will provide job listings, latest research, a directory of job, discussion board and a peer review facility.

Sir John Houghton said, "The belief that God cares for all of creation brings a strong message of hope that Christian Environmental Professionals share as they get together in PICEA. In this exciting new association experts from rich and poor, north and south, east and west, will cooperate in facing the enormous challenge of halting and reversing the unprecedented environmental degradation in today's world."

More details available from the John Ray Institute website www.jri.org.uk.

Severn reef better than a barrage, says RSPB report

A new tidal power scheme could safeguard wildlife and generate more clean energy from the Severn Estuary than a 10-mile barrage. This is according to a report commissioned by the RSPB to look at the technical and economic feasibility of the “Tidal Reef” concept designed by Evans Engineering.

The “Tidal Reef” is one of 10 tidal power schemes, including the Cardiff-Weston barrage, currently being examined by a government 2-year Severn Tidal Power Feasibility Study. The Study should enable Government to decide whether it could support a tidal power scheme in the Severn Estuary, and if so, on what terms.

Ministers are about to shortlist some of the 10 proposals for the Severn and the tidal reef and Cardiff-Weston barrage are among those being considered. The RSPB fears the reef will be dropped from the list because its design is untested.

The RSPB report concludes that a tidal reef, in effect a longer dam, further downstream, would be less costly than a Cardiff to Weston barrage. And it would keep intact most of the estuary's salt marshes and mudflats on which at least 68,000 birds feed in winter.

It says the reef would operate for longer and have more underwater turbines than a conventional barrage, but turbines would be slower moving, minimising the danger to migrating salmon and eels.

Professor Rod Rainey of engineering consultants Atkins which carried out the study, said: ‘We believe this scheme could be more powerful but less costly than other plans being put forward, particularly the Cardiff to Weston barrage. A tidal reef could rein in that damage, cost the taxpayer much less and be built more quickly’

The Government wants to use the 45-foot tidal range of the Severn – the difference between low and high tides - to generate electricity to cut the UK's carbon emissions.

The report can be downloaded from the RSPB website www.rspb.org.uk.

Climate Safety Report launched.

At the end of November the Public Interest Research Group launched its "Climate Safety" report at Friends Meeting House, Euston, London.

The 52 page report seeks to provide a short and simple summary of the latest climate science followed by a discussion of what is being done about it. The message is we should be aiming for Zero Carbon, as fast as is humanly possible.

In his forward to the report Sir John Houghton, former Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and former Director General of the UK Met Office, writes:

‘**Climate Safety** in presenting this examination of recent climate science brings two important messages. The first is that climate change is accelerating more rapidly and dangerously than most of us in the scientific community had expected or that the IPCC in its 2007 Report presented. The second is that, because political inaction has delayed progress for so long, the imperative for extremely urgent action on both national and global scales is now paramount.

‘I wish to commend the authors of the **Climate Safety** report for their carefully researched assessment of the climate future, the severity of its likely impacts as currently understood and the urgent demands that are made on both global and national action. They point out the 2°C target as currently pursued will almost certainly turn out to be inadequate and will soon need to be substantially strengthened. But they also stress that the required changes are both achievable and affordable.’

The Climate Safety report can be downloaded at www.climatesafety.org

Climate Change: Too late to save our islands, say Pacific Christians. *World Council of Churches - News Release - 24/11/2008 (Edited)*

At the United Nations Advocacy Week of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in November Christians from the Pacific islands have appealed for worldwide solidarity with regard to climate change, a question of life and death in their communities,

Rev. Asora Amosa, a Samoan-born pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, spoke of the region's feeling of threat: “If icebergs break off and float past the south coast of New Zealand we wonder what is coming next.”

Addressing a diverse group of more than 100 representatives from churches and organizations defending people and nature around the world, Amosa underscored that it is time to take action together: “We have criticized the industrialized nations for failing to take courageous action, but we realize also that the time for according blame has gone.”

Rev. Baranite Kirata from Kiribati, one of the three Pacific island states which will lose their territory to the rising sea level in the foreseeable future, explained what it means to know that not only will his people become refugees but that the place they call home will disappear under the rising waters.

People in Kiribati have already lost their homes and livelihoods as floods have become more frequent and intense while fish become fewer. Their health is threatened by diseases and extreme heat, or as an elderly lady on one of the outer islands once told the pastor: “The sun burns as if it was just above my head.”

The rising sea level leads to salt water killing the roots of trees and polluting wells; at the same time, rainfall, the second source of drinking water for the islanders, becomes scarce.

The discussions at the event in New York underscored the injustice that the

populations who will be hardest hit by the atmospheric changes are the ones who have hardly contributed to them. While for example European countries have only few low-lying, densely populated areas, the resources they have available for the construction of seawalls exceed by far the possibilities of island states like Kiribati.

Tevi, the general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, said a series of actions the churches should advocate includes contributing to an adaptation fund based on the “polluter pays” principle and calculating each country’s greenhouse gas emissions and gross domestic product.

With a mixture of realism and optimism, Rev. Baranite Kirata explained that “it is now too late to do something for Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands; but together, we are the world, and it is not too late to do something for us all.”

Bath business footprint project launched

Story from Green Bath News Digest 19 November 2008

After 12 months of planning, the joint Bath University/Federation of Small Businesses/B&NES Council Carbon Footprint Project has been launched. The project will see 45 small businesses in B&NES measure their present carbon footprint and then implement measures to reduce their carbon footprint over a period of 3 years.

A PhD student selected by the University will measure, record and track all data and results as part of his PhD work. Individual solutions are being tailored for each participating business with the help of the technical and environmental management faculties of the University. The Carbon Trust is also participating to identify grants, funding and support schemes.

Bath FSB chairman Angela Ladd said: “The benefit to the businesses will lie in the reduction of their carbon footprint and thus of their overheads. The benefit to the FSB lies in gaining knowledge, which, ultimately, will be rolled out to all our members in the UK.”

Churches in Europe are called to respond to the challenge of climate change

The theme of the 7th Assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) which took place in September in Milan was “The true challenge of climate change”. One hundred delegates from 27 countries and from all Christian traditions took part.

The final statement of the Assembly underlined that: “The roots of human destruction of the environment are to be sought not just in actions, but in our most deep-seated attitudes. It is not enough for humans to keep alive by consuming the world around them; they need a relationship with the world that is not purely utilitarian and market-based”.

Churches need to accept the challenge to come together to overcome the

threat of water shortages, decreased harvests, natural disasters, diseases, migration and many other projected effects of climate change.

Church leaders, church communities across the continent and individual Christians were urged to address their respective governments and political representatives in the European Parliament in the next few months, where important decisions will be taken.

“The EU commitments for Green House Gasses emission must not be achieved through offsetting emissions: significant cuts of greenhouse gas emissions have to be achieved through efforts here and now,’ says the final document.

Invitation from Taunton Transition Town

Taunton became an official Transition Initiative in August 2008. It is as yet a small group but there is a lot of energy in the community which it hopes will find an outlet in the new year.

Forthcoming events:

Open drop-in informal discussions on the first Saturday and third Thursday of each month. Come along, find out more and meet other people interested in building resilience into our lives in Taunton.

Saturday December 6 2008 (3pm) Rendezvous Café (Corfield Hall, Magdalene St, Taunton; behind St Mary Magdalene Church)

Topic: What would a low energy Christmas look like?

Thursday December 18 2008 (8pm) The Plough Inn

Topic: Transport - what's the cost?

Saturday 17 January 2009 World Café Event

Genesis Centre, Somerset College Wellington Road, Taunton
Personal Visions, Collective Inspirations. Open to all.

To find out more about Transition Town Taunton: **Contact Vic Watson**
vicwatson@tauntonbroadband.co.uk or log onto
www.tauntontransition.co.uk.

Looking ahead...

STORM OF HOPE GATHERING 2009

'Welcome to the Banquet: Risking Community',
13-15 February, Ringsfield Hall, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 8JR. For more
information and booking forms for this annual CEL gathering please contact
Chris Walton GreenEditor@aol.com

CHALLENGED BY CHANGE.

Challenged by Change: Conservation Solutions in an Uncertain World, 21
March 2009, Christchurch Baptist, Welwyn Garden City. An A Rocha

conference exploring conservation issues from a Christian perspective. Peter Harris will give the welcome address. Other confirmed speakers are Simon Stuart (IUCN) and Mark Adderley (former CEO, National Trust for Scotland). For more information or to book email uk@arocha.org.

What happens to plastics once they are collected? *(taken from North Somerset Life).*

Mixed plastics are collected from bank sites by the firm Recresco, through custom-built suction vehicles, and are taken back to Recresco's depot. They are tipped into bays where any large visible contaminants are removed. The plastic is then baled and awaits collection by a plastic reprocessing firm.

At the firm's plant the plastics are split and put through an optical sorting plant, which separates the four polymers into different types. The polymers are then cleaned and granulated into flakes. Waste from the bales is used to fuel the plant, reducing the carbon footprint. The products are then sold onto the fibre industry or to plastic bottle manufacturers.

Reminder of the four types that can now be recycled in North Somerset

- __ Type 1, or polyethylene terephthalate, is commonly used to make fizzy drink bottles, water bottles and salad trays.
- __ Type 2, or high density polyethylene, is mainly used to make milk bottles, bleach, cleaners and most shampoo bottles.
- __ Type 5, or polypropylene, is commonly used to make margarine tubs and microwaveable meal trays.
- __ Type 6, or polystyrene, is mainly used to make yoghurt pots, foam hamburger boxes, plastic egg cartons, plastic cutlery and protective packaging for electronic goods.

The editor of DEL is always interested in hearing about environmental events and projects from around the diocese, in particular work being done in individual churches and deaneries. And we always welcome new subscribers (free). Send information and requests by e-mail to brianckellock@brianckellock.plus.com.

With thanks to Gordon Waddington again for the cartoon.