

Diocesan Environment Link

[Bath & Wells Diocesan Environment Group]

Environmental news from the around region and beyond

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Nuclear power, the way ahead?

In coming together as a coalition government the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have found agreement on a range of issues relating to the environment (see later item for details). But one topic of considerable interest to our region where this is not the case is nuclear power. Their joint statement says:

'Liberal Democrats have long opposed any new nuclear construction. Conservatives, by contrast, are committed to allowing the replacement of existing nuclear power stations provided they are subject to the normal planning process for major projects (under a new national planning statement) and provided also that they receive no public subsidy.

'We have agreed a process that will allow Liberal Democrats to maintain their opposition to nuclear power while permitting the government to bring forward the national planning statement for ratification by Parliament so that new nuclear construction becomes possible.'

This process will involve the government completing the drafting of a national planning statement and putting it before Parliament; a specific agreement that a Liberal Democrat spokesman will speak against the planning statement, but that Liberal Democrat MPs will abstain; and clarity that this will not be regarded as an issue of confidence.

Underfloor heating is part of £400k plans for Bridgwater Church

Underfloor heating and improved lighting are two of the features included in plans being put forward to transform the interior of a Somerset Church and open it up for community use. St Mary's, Bridgwater is inviting parishioners and other townspeople to comment on the plans before final approval is sought from the Diocese for the £400,000 development project.

As part of the project the inflexible Victorian pews are to be banished to make way for movable chairs and the old wooden floor will be replaced with blue lias. The chapel and the transept floors are to be lowered so they are the same as the nave. The remodelled interior will be suitable both for worship and by community organisations that need the use of town centre facilities.

The interior improvements are the second stage of enhancements to the ancient Church. In recent years exterior stonework was restored. Vicar, the Revd Charles Chadwick, said the project was exciting and innovative and added:

"We believe that an enriched and enhanced interior will complement the work done on the exterior, and make an architectural statement about beauty and light. It will also provide space where people can find rest and inspiration in a busy and demanding world and this latest scheme will make it even more usable by a wide range of people."

At a farm near you - Open farm Sunday 13th June.

At least 18 farms within a 30 mile radius of Wells have registered to be open to the public on Open Farm Sunday 13th June as part of the national event organised each year by LEAF. Open Farm Sunday is an annual event that gives everyone the opportunity to meet the farmers who grow their food and care for the countryside.

The event in 2009 attracted 140,000 visitors onto 425 farms across the UK giving them the chance to meet the farmers who grow their food and care for

the countryside. Organised by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), it benefits from generous cross-industry support. For full details and access to the list of farms go to www.leafuk.org.

Each event will be unique with its own activities - based around the host farm's own individual story. Activities during the day may include a farm walk, nature trail, tractor & trailer rides, pond dipping, activities for kids, mini farmers market or picnics. One such unique event will be that organised at the Bridgwater College's Rodway Farm, Cannington detailed below.

Open farm Sunday at Cannington.

Held at Rodway Farm, Cannington between 11am and 4pm (13th June), this will feature tractor and trailer rides, viewing of pigs, calves and lambs, an afternoon milking, willow weaving, wood carving, bale rolling, welling wanging, blacksmithing, beekeeping, archery, falconry, tug of war and more. There will also be a farmers' market, hog roast and local produce stalls. Entry is free (dogs not permitted). For more information ring 01278 655065 or see Bridgwater College web site www.bridgwater.ac.uk.

What the Liberal Conservatives have agreed

As a coalition Government the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have agreed to implement a *'full programme of measures aimed at making the UK a low carbon and eco-friendly economy'*. As listed in the joint document published on 12th May these include:

- The establishment of a smart grid and the roll-out of smart meters.
- The full establishment of feed-in tariff systems in electricity – as well as the maintenance of banded ROCs.
- Measures to promote a huge increase in energy from waste through anaerobic digestion.
- The creation of a green investment bank.
- The provision of home energy improvement paid for by the savings from lower energy bills.
- Retention of energy performance certificates while scrapping HIPs.
- Measures to encourage marine energy.
- The establishment of an emissions performance standard that will prevent coal-fired power stations being built unless they are equipped with sufficient CCS to meet the emissions performance standard.
- The establishment of a high-speed rail network.
- The cancellation of the third runway at Heathrow.
- The refusal of additional runways at Gatwick and Stansted.

- The replacement of the Air Passenger Duty with a per flight duty.
- The provision of a floor price for carbon, as well as efforts to persuade the EU to move towards full auctioning of ETS permits.
- Measures to make the import or possession of illegal timber a criminal offence.
- Measures to promote green spaces and wildlife corridors in order to halt the loss of habitats and restore biodiversity.
- Mandating a national recharging network for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.
- Continuation of the present Government's proposals for public sector investment in CCS technology for four coal-fired power stations; and a specific commitment to reduce central government carbon emissions by 10 per cent within 12 months.
- We are agreed that we would seek to increase the target for energy from renewable sources, subject to the advice of the Climate Change Committee.

The full joint document (*Conservative – Liberal Democrats coalition negotiations agreements*) which covers a broad range of topics from deficit reduction to immigration can be viewed on the websites of both party (www.conservative.com and www.libdems.org.uk)

Christian Ecology Link and transition network news.

Following on from its transition conferences at Ottery Saint Mary (see DEL 27) and Scarborough the CEL has become an official 'partner' of the Transition Towns Network. This gives it a place on the transitions network website under the name Christians in Transition (CiT), along with two other Christian groups. In the summer issue of its Green Christian magazine CEL says:

'This is really significant - since the website is used by hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. Furthermore, since the CiT site is an open one, Christians from all over the world can share their experiences'

The Transition Network is keen to make links with faith groups concerned with sustainable living. It has recently recruited a diversity officer, Catriona Pickering, one of whose roles is to develop these links. CiT can be accessed on the www.transitionnetwork.org website by going to *About* and then *Partners*.

Other CEL news

Weekend retreat. *Gardening in Gethsemane being with nature on the way to the resurrection.* Ringfield, Beccles, Suffolk 15-17 October. 'this weekend we will gather on behalf of this fragile web of life.' Details from GreenEditor@aol.com.

Annual members meeting. Saturday 6th November, The Magdalen Centre, Eversholt Road, London NW1 1BN. 2pm (www.christian-ecology.org.uk)

A Rocha and quarry transformation in Lancashire

A Rocha has started a two-year partnership with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust transforming a former quarry next to M6 junction 31 at Brockholes. The result will be a woodland and wetland reserve where visitors can experience nature at first hand. As part of this, two A Rocha volunteers travelled to Lancashire in April to start a baseline survey of wasps, bees and ants.

They report; *'The work started with a health and safety tour of the site. A cool breeze and no sun ensured there were no distracting insects for this part of the visit. There are still several diggers etc hard at work so High Viz clothing had to be worn. The following day the sun did break through and a good start was made on the survey.'*

Our daily bread: food security, people and the planet.

Justice and Peace Weekend Conference, 16-18 July, Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Food is so essential a part of our lives that the "breaking of bread" with others celebrates love, mutuality and the gifts of the natural world. Yet the global food system upon which we depend is increasingly fragile. An impressive list of speakers will be taking part.

For your diary - Caring for Creation in a World of Crisis

23 July 2010 – 25 July 2010 at Hilfield Friary, Dorchester. A weekend exploring the links between peace and the environment from a Christian perspective. This A Rocha Creation weekend of exploration and discovery will be led by Andy Lester, Conservation Director of A Rocha UK and Rev Simon Brignall. The two days will include walks, talks, meditation, exercise and quiet. Full details, directions and booking information at www.hilfieldproject.co.uk.

Bristol Green Doors (September 11 and 12) – latest update.

An update meeting concerning this event is planned Thursday 27th May at 6.00 at The Hub, 3rd Floor, Bush House, 72 Prince Street, BS1 4QD.

Bristol Green Doors is an open homes weekend where people will be able to see and discuss the ways home owners or tenants have reduced their homes energy efficiency through no-cost to high-cost retrofitting, installation of renewables and behaviour change. The weekend will be permanently supported by a unique online directory offering mapping and networking throughout the year so enabling the continuation of the learning process.

The UK has a target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050. As 27% of our current CO₂ emissions come from our homes, lowering domestic fossil fuel based energy consumption is critical. Bristol Green Doors will show how homes and lifestyle can be made fit for the future and help people to make the changes necessary by learning directly from others. www.bristolgreendoors.org

Sir John Houghton opens climate change research lab in Bangor

A £500,000 research facility to house the Wolfson Carbon Capture Laboratory has been opened at Bangor University by Sir John Houghton. The Wolfson Carbon Capture Laboratory aims to find ways of preventing greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, from entering the atmosphere.

As well as a prominent Christian, Sir John is one of the world's most respected climate scientists and was co-founder of the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which won a Nobel Peace Prize three years ago. Speaking before the event, Sir John said global warming was the most important issue the planet had ever faced.

'The work that is being done at the Wolfson Carbon Capture Laboratory in Bangor University is vital if we are to try and control levels of dangerous greenhouse gases. By locking up stores of carbon - which produces carbon dioxide - we can limit the damage we cause by continuing to burn fossil fuels.'

Up to a dozen scientists will initially be based in the centre, with the majority of their work concentrating on ways to enhance and maintain the huge stores of carbon found in Europe's peat-lands such as those on nearby Snowdonia. This "trapping" of pollutants (including CO₂) in peat-land plants could then be taken further so that more carbon can be stored.

Ecotricity plans new environmentally friendly HQ

Renewable energy supplier Ecotricity, based in Stroud, has been granted planning permission to construct a 300-people headquarters on the site of a derelict DSS office, which has stood empty at the entrance to the town for more than a decade. Ecotricity's plans include a mass of environmentally-friendly features that will include rainwater harvesting, induced convection ventilation, passive and active solar heating and 'living' walls.

Ecotricity currently employs 170 people in Stroud and is expanding. The location has been chosen to minimise 'travel-to-work carbon', being walking distance from the town centre and on the major bus routes. It is near the area's cycle network and right next to the Cotswold canal which along which Ecotricity is considering running a shuttle boat service.

According to Times on line, Ecotricity *'intends to announce within weeks the location of the first 25-acre, 5-megawatt solar farm. By 2020 Ecotricity plans to be generating 500 megawatts of electricity from solar panels, enough to power more than 100,000 homes.'*

The company's founder Dale Vince told The Times: *'We are planning to build grid-connected solar farms all over the country. We are looking on the East Coast, the South West, the South East and around here in Stroud. We don't want to go too far north because the sunshine drops away. Halfway up the country would be the cut off, a bit north of Birmingham.'*

Feed in Tariffs – what they offer

The feed in tariff scheme introduced by the Government's DECC in April and supported by the new government will make payment to small generators of electricity using solar PV and wind generating plant. A brief guide to the scheme is

contained in the Summer newsletter of Good Energy, the only UK's only 100 per cent renewable electricity supplier.

The guide states among other things that (currently):

- The feed-in tariff will pay solar PV generators 41.3p per unit of electricity generated including all electricity they use themselves. Wind generators will get 26.5p for systems between 1.5 and 15kW.
- Payments will be inflation linked for all generators and tax free for domestic properties.
- Payments are guaranteed for 20 to 25 years depending on the technology.

The guide also carries the instructions that; householders should not consider installing any micro-generation technology until they have 'first addressed the energy efficiency of their property' and that the technology must be appropriate for the situation, for example PV works best on a south facing roof. Fuller details can be accessed at www.generateyourown.co.uk (a Good Energy website).

Key life support systems outlined

Our attention has been drawn to a significant article by New Scientist senior environment correspondent Fred Pearce. It outlines the nine life support systems essential for sustainable existence, and their current status. The article is based on the findings of a team of scientists headed by the director of the Stockholm Environment Institute.

The chief value of the article lies in the fact that under each of nine life support system headings is given the key boundary figure beyond which it is being suggested 'we risk causing irreversible and abrupt environmental change that could make the world an inhospitable place.'

For example, for both fresh water and land use the boundaries will be approached by mid-century. Four other systems are less threatened or not known. But for three systems – nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, biodiversity, and climate change – the boundaries have already been exceeded, in the case of biodiversity by a factor of ten and nitrogen fix by a factor of four. The full article can be seen at www.newscientist.com (search ocean-to-ozone).

My thanks to the Revd Roger Pollard of Ilminster for drawing my attention to this article (and for his ongoing encouragement) BK.

With my thanks also to Gordon Waddington for the (recycled) cartoon

The editor of DEL is always interested in hearing about environmental events and projects from around the diocese, in particular work in individual churches and deaneries. And we always welcome new subscribers (free). Send an e-mail to brianckellock@brianckellock.plus.co.uk. Or you can add your name to the subscriber list through our website www.bathandwellsevenvironmental.org

[.uk](#). Back issues and other useful information can also be accessed through the site.

