



The Green Network

The Environmental Network of North Somerset

Issue 2

Summer 2008

COMMENT

Spring has been a busy time with Forums and Meetings aplenty and it has been great not only to meet up with folk in our county but also to hear what groups and organisations outside the area are doing. It has been inspiring to hear what has been achieved even when faced with that basic problem - lack of funding,

Hard to choose what was most inspirational, but at the forum held by Sustainability South West, George Ferguson described how he saved the last of the Wills Factory from the bulldozer and how it is now a thriving community building. Portishead must also be admired for doggedly attempting to get the railway to Bristol back in use. This we are told has the potential for taking a large chunk of the 3,000 commuters off the road each day.

It is clear that progress can be driven from a groundswell movement. Since last year many areas were inspired by Modbury to try to rid themselves of single use plastic bags, and the Government has responded with the Chancellor's statement of intent to bring in legislation next year if nothing is done voluntarily. Would this have come about without the voice of people?

Green Festival@The Quarry

Saturday 30th August 12.00 noon
Weston Old Town Quarry, South Road

Tenons are organising a green event this year in The Old Town Quarry in Weston. This lovely wildlife haven, where a family of peregrine falcons nest most years, is possibly Weston's best kept secret. The Quarry Artists have

studios there and Nathan Bennett can be found working at his forge.

The day will be a celebration of local foods and crafts with many environmental stalls, competitions, including a scarecrow challenge, an eco schools challenge, food and music. It will be an excellent opportunity for you to meet with other groups and individuals who share your passion for the environment as well as being a fun day out for the whole family. The stalls will close about 5.00 but we plan to finish with an evening event including a pig roast and a ceilidh.

We have celebrities, Chris Sperring who will be well known to many of you, and zoologist Sanjida O'Connell, author and BBC presenter of nature programmes.

If you would like to be more involved in this day and help, please call me on 01934 623000. In particular we are looking for gazebos/tables and if you are able to lend anything for day or donate items for the scarecrow challenge including old duvets please contact me.



Inside Weston Old Town Quarry

An avalanche begins with a snowflake
Joseph D Compton

‘You’re Not Alone!’

Those of you who run groups may have been approached at the end of last year by Friends of the Earth. They were conducting a survey into projects on climate change by environmental groups in North Somerset, called ‘A movement of the people’. As a follow up, a networking day was arranged in Yatton in April this year for some of these groups to get together, arranged by Janice Gardner of Avon Wildlife and supported by Nicola Builder and Terry Black of NSC.

The groups involved in the networking day were TENONS, Backwell Fairtrade Cafe, Clevedon Rotary, Greener Footprints, FOE, Greenpeace, N. Som Green Party, The Wildlife Wardens, Young Mothers Group and Transition Wrington.

It was interesting to be told the survey found that in the South West, FoE had estimated they would find about 150 community groups but, in the event, discovered well over 250 all concerned with Climate Change and also Peak Oil. 103 of these groups have been formed since 2005 which underlines the growing concern of people about these issues. Altogether in the South West they consider that 250,000 people are involved on a purely voluntary basis. In all, environmental issues concerned a range of groups from eco-schools and faith groups to Women’s Institute and Scouts.

The survey found the issues commonly worked on by these groups were ‘environmental education’, ‘waste and recycling’ and ‘energy use and efficiency’ mainly tackled by holding awareness events, changing personal behaviour and influencing local policy. Unsurprisingly the main barrier was reported to be funding, with influencing policy and recruitment seen by some as a slight barrier.

On the Networking Day, we all met in Yatton in the Methodist Church Hall and started the session with introductions from each other and

described the successes or failures of our projects and also our aspirations.

Out of this day TENONS decided they would like to put together a Directory of Environmental Groups in North Somerset which we would make available via our website and this newsletter. We will, at some point, be contacting groups to ask permission to include them and also to ask for a short paragraph on the group’s project(s).

FoE <http://www.foe.co.uk/index.html>

Avon Wildlife <http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/>

North Somerset Wildlife Wardens (Part 1)

Terry Smith

Established in 1998 as an outcome of the symposium on biodiversity entitled ‘Which Way for Wildlife’ held in Nailsea, the group now has 43 members, covering many of the parishes of North Somerset and representing a wide range of expertise. There is a close working relationship with other groups, like the Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC), Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group (YACWAG), Avon Bat Group, Backwell Environment Trust, The Wildlife Trust, and Bristol Naturalists’ Society, amongst others. The group has benefited from grants given by North Somerset Council and Nailsea Town Council, from Yansec, and more recently from the National Lottery, which has financed computer equipment and a data projector. There is a small membership fee that covers insurance. The objectives are to 1) record, monitor and identify areas of wildlife interest; 2) act as a link between the community and relevant bodies on wildlife issues; 3) promote habitat creation and conservation in North Somerset; and 4) encourage sustainable lifestyles.

The Wildlife Wardens have placed considerable emphasis on work with threatened species and habitats. With the acquisition of sophisticated ultrasonic detection systems funded by Yansec, we have been able to monitor bats from several roosts in North Somerset, notably at Tyntesfield

near Nailsea, Slader's Leigh on the Mendips and at Abbot's Pool. The frequency division detector enables computer identification of the species. The Wardens have looked especially for Horseshoe Bats since the southwest is the last stronghold of this endangered species in the UK. Knowing that hedges are important habitats in providing insects for these bats, we have made many hedge surveys across North Somerset using the methods recommended by DEFRA. Since Glow-worms are under threat from loss of habitat and from increased street illumination we have also been monitoring this species in several locations on the Mendips and around Nailsea. The Wardens have also taken part in schemes to monitor Water Voles, Water Shrews and Great Crested Newt populations. www.nswwww.btik.com (see next issue for Part 2)

The Eponymous Plastic Bag

Chancellor Alistair Darling announced in his 2008 budget speech that unless supermarkets voluntarily make big changes to the use of plastic bags in their outlets, next year he proposes to bring in legislation.

Following this announcement response has been seen from the High Street Chains with charging or just asking if the customer needs a bag. Indeed M&S introduced their 5p and 10p bag charge prior to the Chancellors speech.

Although these are steps in the right direction, shoppers still need encouragement to take their own bags with them on shopping trips. Now as you will know Winscombe Zero Waste and Uphill Village Society have already kicked off with their own projects and it is pleasing to see them joined by Congresbury and Greener Footprints of Clevedon. In Congresbury it is Glebe Infants School children who are the motivators and you will not be surprised to learn that they are holders of the first flag in the Eco Schools Campaign. See next issue to see how Uphill Primary School are tackling this issue.

Detractors are ready with counter arguments, as always, but, as we know, all small actions when

done en mass add up to become more than the sum total of the parts.

Set-Aside Scheme Concerns

Gareth Price

The EU set-aside scheme is being demolished at least for a year due to Common Agricultural Policy 'health check'. The ruling that depicts 10% of farmers land has to stay fallow is to be demolished amid fears of grain shortages and rising prices. The scheme converts to 559,000 ha in the UK and the abandonment of the scheme could release 17m tonnes of grain into the market. Could the benefits of subsistence of the millions of British birds & insects as well as the linking of habitats and the provision of protecting soils, accrued in the 15 year period of the scheme be lost in one year? A replacement scheme must be implemented; personally I would like to see a return of balanced old fashioned sustainable farming.

Walters Munde: Our man in Edmonton-Canada

Edmonton Councillor Linda Sloan is advocating that plastic bags be outlawed in Edmonton as already achieved in Canada and Europe. People, she added, should switch to cloth bags or plastic boxes. As an alternative paper bags should not be considered as it means cutting down trees.

Instead of an outright ban the question of a levy was suggested but there would still be the question of litter from discarded bags the city Mayor noted. He also dismissed the idea of the creation of a new tax on plastic bags adding it would be a nightmare to collect.

They noted that Ireland started charging consumers 20 cents for each plastic bag in 2002. Seattle is considering a similar "green fee" on both plastic and paper bags used by grocery, drug and convenience stores while San Francisco has banned plastic bags.

In Brief

New Kids on the Block

A new environmental group formed in Clevedon is called Greener Footprints and their website is www.greenerfootprints.org.uk
contact Melanie Durstan on 01934 342975
More about them in the next issue.

Award for Weston

At the 3rd annual Local to Regional Sustainability Forum of Sustainability South West, where the theme was 'Achieving Genuinely Sustainable Resilient Communities', Weston Woods was one of ten to win a handsome plaque as a brilliant example of urban greenspaces.

At the Forum inspirational presentations were given from key speakers and the general message was one of enthusiasm. See the website for downloads. www.sustainabilitysouthwest.org.uk/projects/local_to_regional/

Planting 4Youth Project

Over 2 days, youngsters of South Ward in Weston helped improve the area by clearing and planting a mixed hedge. Their aim was to change the negative view many people have towards youth by helping to improve the environment. Contact for more information the 'For All Healthy Living Centre' in Lonsdale Road, Weston.



Helen Burge & Alison Bond at Uphill Green Day

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

15th June: Weston Woods Festival, The Water Tower, Weston Woods, Worlebury Hill Rd.

9 Aug: Flower Show at St Pauls Church Hall, Walliscote Road, Weston.

6/7 Sep: Organic Food Festival, Harbourside, Bristol.

NEXT ISSUE will be the autumn issue. Please send any articles or outings/meeting dates for inclusion to Rose by August 20th.

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TENONS' MEETINGS 2008

10th September: James Field 'The North Somerset Levels'.

8th October: **Dr Lawrence Matthews** 'Why should I do my bit unless everyone else does too?'

5th November: **Mike Birkin** : Mike is South West Regional Campaigner for Friends of the Earth

26th November: AGM

Venue: The Victoria Methodist Hall, Station Road, Weston-super-Mare

Time: 7.30 p.m. (unless otherwise stipulated)

VISITS

Monday 14th July 10.30 a.m. at **Yeo Valley Farms**, The Mendip Centre, Blagdon phone 01934 623000 for details and to book

Saturday 16th August : Walk with Jon Burgess of the Woodland Trust in **Dolebury Warren**. Meet 1.00 p.m. at Peartree Industrial Estate (on left on road to Burrington from Churchill traffic lights 100 yds before Blagdon Water Centre)

Saturday 16th August 9.00 p.m. **Evening with Bats** in August at Mike Amos' farm in Failand. Numbers are restricted please contact Gareth on 01934 811694

www.tenons.org.uk