

VALE ROYAL ENVIRONMENT NETWORK

Summer
2007

Alternative Holidays

For Youngsters -

Do it 4Real: More than 10 thousand 10-17 year olds can be catered for at 23 different week-long activity camps during the summer holidays. Activities range from physical fun on land or water to creative camps for the artistic, performing arts to survival skills. The normal cost is £399, but young persons from households on Child Tax Credit qualify for a 50% discount, while those in care, or from households that qualify for Income Support, Family Tax Credit or free school meals pay just £25. Do it 4 Real is run by the Youth Hostel Association (YHA)

These rates are supported by the Big Lottery Fund, along with efforts by members of the YHA, including a sponsored walk on Saturday 8th September at YHA Ilam, in Derbyshire. There's a choice there of a 2 mile 'flat' walk, a 5 miler or a 10 miler. Accommodation and refreshments are available in the hostel (see www.yha.org.uk/about-yha/challenges/ilamhallsponsoredwalk.aspx, or tel: 01629 592638). Adults can also help by becoming Camp Counsellors (email [volunteers\[at\]yha.org.uk](mailto:volunteers[at]yha.org.uk) or phone 01629 592562). For the camps, tel 0870 11 88 018, or see www.yha.org.uk > Enjoy summer camps....

For Oldsters -

Sustrans is organising 3 workcamps this summer. They're open to 18+ year olds, no experience required – just enthusiasm; training is provided. Accommodation is bring-your-own tent, with solo/communal cooking and pub meals. Stay one, two or three weeks; plenty of time for local sightseeing. There's a choice of path-building in Somerset (21 July – 11



Aug), dry-stone walling in Devon (11 – 25 August) and path-laying in Gower (18 August – 2 Sept). See www.sustrans.org.uk > rides and events > workcamps or tel the Supporters' Dept, 0117 915 0115.

National Trust: Along with a range of other holiday types, the National Trust run volunteer holidays: There's a range to choose from – path clearance, wall building, wildlife surveying, pond clearance, stewarding, gardening and more. See www.nationaltrust.org.uk > holidays > working holidays > Find a Working Holiday gets you the search page; you may need to click 'holiday types and costs' to understand the jargon. Alternatively, phone 0870 458 4000

Other volunteer opportunities:

BTCV – See www.btcv.org.uk > volunteer > conservation holidays or tel 01302 388883.

RSPB – See www.rspb.org.uk > Things to do > Volunteering > ways to volunteer or tel 01767 680551 (office hours)

Vale Royal Environment Network

thanks its supporters, volunteers, Groundwork Cheshire and former sponsors. Registered Charity Number 1101585.

Offices at: Yarwoods Arm, Navigation Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1BE; tel 01606 723160, email [vren\[at\]groundwork.org.uk](mailto:vren[at]groundwork.org.uk)
new website! – www.vren.btik.com

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More Holidays

Climate Camp will be setting up near Heathrow Airport this year, to highlight the need to reduce our air travel. Locals, fighting plans for airport expansion, are on-side. Apart from visible protestation, expect some practice at low-carbon living. Dates: 14-21 August. See www.climatecamp.org.uk for more details.

Cycling in France

Barbara Hadrill (of www.babs2brisbane.blogspot.com fame, in our last newsletter) finished her return trip to Australia with a cycle from Paris to home. She said: "Travelling overland has made me more aware of the environmental problems I saw. It was definitely a more exciting experience than flying, and I'm glad I decided to do it."

57-year old Sheila Paine, opted for a stretch, buying a bike in order to cycle and catch trains from Strasbourg to Calais, as reported in CTC's latest Cycle Magazine. Also therein, the cycle-camping Normandy holiday enjoyed by a family of five, youngest being 8.

Ticks

With a warming climate and changes in farming practices, ticks are becoming more common. Like mosquitoes they can transmit disease – important ones being Lyme Disease and Tick Borne Encephalitis (TBE).

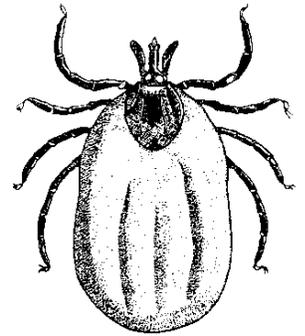
Lyme disease starts with a rash of red spots working out from the bite site, and maybe a touch of influenza-like illness; later it can work its way into the nervous system. It can be treated with antibiotics. TBE is a virus, endemic to Europe, especially north and east, but not yet the UK.

After 6-14 days' incubation, you get symptoms like a bad cold, later symptoms include photophobia, neck stiffness, bad headaches and paralysis. There's no specific treatment.

Ticks can be as small as poppy seeds, and they wait in vegetation, typically near paths or human/other animal habitations, about 20-70cm above ground waiting for a blood host. They'll attach almost anywhere, but prefer creases like the armpit, groin or back of the knee. You won't feel the bite as they inject anaesthetic. They'll feed for around 30 minutes.

To protect yourself, use a suitable repellent (CTC suggest Care Plus Natural Tick Deo Spray from some Blacks stores, £5.50); don't wear shorts in long grass or woodland, but keep yourself well covered and tuck your trousers into your socks; keep checking for ticks – if found, use fine tweezers, grasp close to the skin, and pull off vertically; touching with something hot will cause them to withdraw. Avoid unpasteurised milk in areas where

TBE is found. *Cycle Magazine*, and www.who.int/docstore/water_sanitation_health/vectcontrol/ch26.htm - whence tick pic



Local News

VREN News

Our new website is up and running, obtained from communitykit.co.uk – www.vren.btik.com. You'll find member's websites, news, and former newsletters.

In addition to the dates and news blogs, we now have a blog for consultations – www.vrencons.blogspot.com. (The others, in the same format, are *vrendates* and *vrennews* respectively). Keep feeding us your information and pictures!

We're planning to launch a wiki. We understand you'll find this easy to use, develop and work on your (or your group's) own space, write things, collaborate with other group members, etc., or just browse and read. We believe the newsletter too should be a collaborative effort, using the knowledge and expertise of you, the members – so some material (with the author's agreement) may well find its way from wiki to the newsletter. We'll announce the wiki launch to our E-News and E-Newsletter recipients, and on our website. (If you'd like to receive E-News or your newsletter by email, let us know.)

Some received advice: If you're uploading pictures on any Mid-Cheshire and environmental theme, using a distinctive tag (we suggest 'vren') will help searchers to find them. 'vren' is pretty unique, at least in the UK. Let VREN know where it is, and we can link to it from our site.

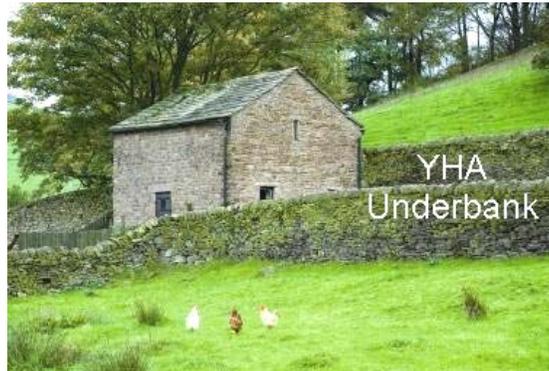
Basement Café Disaster

The Basement in Lever Street, a hub for alternative culture, radical politics, campaigning and art with wholefood shop, vegan cafe, library, bookshop, computers and exhibition space, just off Manchester's Piccadilly, suffered when an adjacent building caught fire recently. While the building was protected from the inferno by a sprinkler system, there was inevitable smoke and water damage. The top two floors of their building were gutted by fire, and the floor above (their ceiling) waterlogged – the floorboards need replacing. There is a call for help getting it back up and running: see <http://thebasement.clearerchannel.org/new/>, or text 07925 771 017

Chester Youth Hostel to close

The only Cheshire alternatives will be: Chester Backpackers, and YHA's Underbank Camping Barn near Wildboarclough, on the county's eastern boundary. Throughout England and Wales, the YHA has over 250 locations: hostels (options of using the self-catering kitchen or being fed), guest houses, camping at a hostel (half the adult indoor rate), rent-a-tipi ("surprisingly luxurious"), camping barns (go camping without your tent), and bunkhouses (up from camping barns: they have hot water, drying rooms and a self-catering kitchen, but unlike hostels, you bring your sleeping bag). See www.yha.org.uk (whence pics) or tel 0870 770 8868.

Hostelworld's website lists many hostels, whether YHA or independent or guest houses. But it excludes many out-of-town hostels. www.hostelworld.com (pic from www.independenthostelguide.co.uk)



Schools

Oxfam School Speakers

Do you need support in bringing Global Citizenship to life in the classroom? Oxfam's School Speakers are here to help! Oxfam School Speakers are fully trained volunteers who work with local schools to raise awareness of the issues surrounding global poverty, Oxfam's work, and what teachers and pupils can do to make a positive difference in the world. They can deliver presentations to large assemblies (up to 30 mins), or classroom workshops (up to an hour). Topics include poverty, health, education and Millennium Development

Goals, cover various curriculum subjects, especially Geography, Citizenship and PSHE, and can be tailored for pupils from 8 to 18 years old.

Every school that books a talk will receive a copy of *Change the World in Eight Steps*, with follow up activities and guidance on tackling the issues around global

poverty.

The cost is £20 per session, which includes a poster pack and speaker's travel. The speaker must be supervised, and the teachers are responsible for managing their pupils' behaviour.

Speakers are available throughout much of England: to request one, see www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet

> Oxfam School Speakers



The Yorkshire Carbon Fighter

North Yorkshire has appointed a full-time carbon-reduction officer, Emma Casson, to help schools improve their energy efficiency and to help students set up Eco-schools groups and monitor energy. See <http://tinyurl.com/3d5c3m>

Web Resource

A one-stop-shop for everything environmental for your school? www.suschool.org.uk. It comes from the Alternative Technology Centre at Hebden Bridge, who offer support, information and advice, and run a range of workshops – at the centre, or outreach. Members can access the full website, resources, and personal advice – from £50 for small primary schools to £125 for secondaries, and £250 other organisations. Join from www.suschool.org.uk/suschool.html



Walking Buses

Two Vale Royal schools have gained £1000 Department for Transport grants for starting walking buses – Barnton CP and St. Wilfrid's Catholic Primary; while Kingsley St. John's CE Primary are running an alternative scheme qualifying for a £500 grant. 21 Cheshire schools are receiving funding.

Food

Where to Buy Fairtrade

A guide is available from Northwich Information centre, Castle Park, Frodsham and Wyvern House, Winsford detailing the outlets for fairtrade products. It is also available to download on the Council's website at www.valeroyal.gov.uk. The address is dead long, but a search for 'fairtrade' on Vale Royal's website lists the document at the top. If you are a retailer or café who provides a Fairtrade option please contact Denise Snelson, Environmental Policy Assistant on tel:01606 867724 and your details will be added to the next guide - to be reprinted in shortly – so let Denise know your details in advance.

Apple Crunch



The Russet apple by Hartford Blue Bridge (the fruit of which was amongst those pictured in the last newsletter) has been hit by a careering vehicle, that found its way through a gap in the crash barrier. The tree should continue to live –

most of its roots are still in the ground – and hopefully the occupants of the vehicle will too.

Travelling Turkey

Eggs are sent from the UK to Hungary, the chicks are reared and slaughtered there and returned to the UK. The breast meat is extracted here, and much of the rest of the meat returned to Hungary to make turkey sausages.

www.guardian.co.uk/birdflu/story/0,,2011797,00.html

Farm-Saved Seed: a tradition under threat

Two-thirds of the world's crop area is planted with farm-saved seed, and in many developing countries, that represents 80-90% of sown seed. However, Europe-based companies want to get rid of farmers' entitlement to save seed. This would cost farmers an extra \$20 billion a year. GRAIN is campaigning for biodiverse cropping, based on people's control of their genetic resources and knowledge.

In many countries, farmers are allowed to harvest, for their own use, seeds of varieties authorised by their government. This gives commercial seed companies a monopoly over commercial multiplication and marketing, and they want to ensure they have the monopoly over breeding from those varieties, enabling them to stand still on improving varieties. See www.grain.org

Stretton Water Mill Reopened

This corn-grinding mill with picnic area, toilets, historical displays and handy parking reopened on 1st April. In April & September it's open weekends only, 1-5pm; May-August everyday except non-bank holiday Mondays, 1-5pm. It's signposted off the A534 near Farndon, south of Chester. For info and groups/schools booking, tel 01606 41331. There's a small admission charge.

www.strettonwatermill.org.uk

Potato Woes

Following a spreading of farmyard manure earlier this year, a number of allotment-holders at Vickersway found their potato plants producing curly leaves.

Advice from a Reaseheath expert was that the problem was hormone weedkiller, imported on the straw, (or possibly via the animal feed) and that to eliminate the problem the crop should be burned.

Other possible causes of leaf-curling (potato leaf curl virus – affects lower leaves first; calcium deficiency – shoots would be leggy; and black leg – there'd



be rot at the stem base) were eliminated. Hormone weedkillers target specific types of plants; the culprit here could be either Clopyralid or the similar Picloram. Clopyralid breaks down extremely slowly during composting, and is likely to be used by farmers to eliminate creeping thistle. It will also affect sunflowers and members of the pea family: a Jerusalem Artichoke was seen to be affected on one allotment. It shouldn't affect grasses, eg sweet corn. We don't know its effects on humans, except it is excreted freely. Clopyralid is also used for lawns, so clippings from them can spoil any compost – we suggest the box is left off the mower. From <http://www.albrightseed.com/clopyralid.htm>

Organic Opportunity

Oakcroft Gardens, the long-standing organic farm near Malpas, is begging - the proprietor, Mehr Fardoonji, is retiring, and wishes to lease the business. There are 4 acres, with 2½ as organic market garden (pic), the rest is woodland, the house and its garden. The applicant should be a non-smoking vegetarian, with some gardening and business experience, and some capital to fall back on or to expand protected growing. They will be subject to a rent-free trial period. Applicants should send their contact details, something about themselves, and how you'd like to develop Oakcroft as a productive market garden to Oakcroft Gardens, Cross O' th' Hill, Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 8BD. See www.oakcroft.org.uk



Bale Art Competition

Weetabix, celebrating 75 years of being steeped in milk, is offering a £3000 prize to the winner of a Straw Bale Sculpture competition. Closing date is 14th September. See www.nfuonline.com/x16541.xml or www.weetabix.co.uk/farmer/, or call the NFU on 0870 845 8458

Cheshire Smallholders' Association, meets once a month; they have training courses e.g. lambing, hedge laying, fencing. Also lectures, walks, social events, newsletters. Membership is £5. For details contact Lesley Gallagher, 01928 740212

Fantastic Food Partnership Food Hub

The Fantastic Food Partnership have been researching the challenge of distribution for producers of local and regional food for sometime now and they are now in a position to trial a food hub at the Hollies Farm Shop in Tabley and so are looking for food producers, carriers and retailers who may be interested in using this hub. The idea is to reduce time, distribution costs, food miles, enable farmers to reach a wider market. During the 8 month trial the costs will be no more than £1 per case depending on use. For Group bookings call Andy Collis on 01520 744432 and for individual bookings call 01565 632174. See www.icep.org.uk/news/hub.shtml

Waterwise on the Farm

Is a new water management guide published by the National Farmers Union in partnership with others. It's free to farmers and land managers, and provides an insight into the prevention of agricultural water pollution. There are sections on pollution, conducting a water audit, and ideas for harvesting rainwater and saving tap water (wet the milking parlour floor first so the muck doesn't stick so hard; and cows like water used previously for cooling milk). For a copy of the booklet call 08708 506506; or download from www.nfuonline.com > library > Waterwise. *Edie*

Organic Fortnight

The Soil Association's Organic Fortnight is from 1st-15th September, and awareness-raising events are sought – this year, to the main theme: 'Wake up to an Organic Breakfast'. Suggestions include – catering facilities hosting an organic breakfast; self-catering breakfast at work; a tasting; a cookery class; mass picnic, trip to a farm. Already listed on the SA website are:

Organic Gardening Demonstrations, with Pathways Community Interest Company in Crewe, with practical demonstrations and training sessions including beginning organic gardening, planning vegetable garden, container vegetable garden, and gardening fun. Contact: Yvonne Clarke, tel 01270 275518, yvonne.clarke[at]pathwayscic.co.uk, www.pathwayscic.co.uk.

Organic Promotions and Samples, at As Nature Intended's Hale store. There'll be 'strong promotions for September focussing on breakfast foods'. Stores are open 7am – 9pm. Contact: Tessa Hart, T: 020 8840 4856, tessa[at]asnatureintended.uk.com, www.asnatureintended.uk.com

Further information, advice on how to get involved and details of sponsorship opportunities can be found at www.soilassociation.org/organicfortnight

See Farming and Nature

Simon Bennett and his family, of Shipbrook Hill Farm, Whatcroft are working on a series of paths and cycleways around and through their organic farm, so that people can appreciate the farm and associated wildlife as well as use the organic farm shop. They're being helped by Natural England, while the RSPB and volunteer groups are helping to create breeding grounds for endangered birds like lapwings and skylarks.



Small Print

VREN aims to be impartial and to present information as we see it: please accept the information presented as fallible, and take the usual necessary precautions with your computer, money, lives, etc.

New Hollies Outlet

The Hollies farm shop on the A49 near Eaton now has a branch in Upper Whitley, on the Northwich road.



Resources

Ethical Bidding

E2bid.com is a new online auction site. "The UK's first Auction marketplace dedicated to raising money for charity", run by a Community Interest Company, aims to differentiate itself from other online auction sites by charging just 40p to £2.70 to list items and not charging a final value fee.

E2bid.com says that 25% of listing fees will be donated to charity together with 25% of all site revenue. Indeed, the company aims to increase this to 50% or more. See www.e2bid.com

Your Ethical Business

CAN, who work to support social entrepreneurs to achieve a greater impact on their communities and the social economy are promoting a new 'how to' handbook on starting up and running a successful ethical enterprise. The book covers a range of subjects, from choosing an ethical legal structure, access to 'clean' finance, and how to carry out ethical accounting.

It includes contributions from some of the UK's leading ethical entrepreneurs.

The publication costs £10, and there is a special price for CAN members of £7.50.

www.youreticalbusiness.co.uk/brochure

Random Wants and Resources for Community Enterprises, etc

www.candoexchange.org is a website full of courses, skills, equipment, communities, etc.

Cheshire F.M, 92.5 fm.

Is a Community Radio Station, covering Mid Cheshire (Northwich, Winsford and Middlewich areas). It's now on 'air' via a 5 year licence from OFCOM. They're looking for input, news and features. They're staffed primarily by volunteers. So let them know what you're doing! They need your input. Tel 01606 555910, www.Cheshirefm.com

Funding page on the VAVR website

Voluntary Action Vale Royal's (VAVR, formerly Vale Royal CVS) website has links to over 40 possible sources of funding. It includes Grant Finder which features thousands of grant giving trusts and organisations and the ability to search for quite specific requirements. FunderFinder is also there, to download. See www.vavaleroyal.org.uk > VAVR Services > Funding; alternatively, visit VAVR at Waterside House, Navigation Road, Northwich. (By the industrial units)

Help with Media

A free service helping charities to communicate is offered by Media Trust, who have professional media advisors available to give advice and support to improve your communications. See www.mediatrust.org/media-matching or contact the Media Matching team at [mediamatching\[at\]mediatrust.org](mailto:mediamatching[at]mediatrust.org) or call 020 7874 7610.

Active Communities

Wythenshawe Forever! is a climate change awareness project taking place in Wythenshawe, between April and July 2007. W4E! celebrates. With fun, everything that's good about Wythenshawe and showing they can be independent and self sufficient, now and in the future. They'll be thinking about how they will face up to future challenges such as climate change.

A series of projects lead up to the 'Party Without Pollution' (Sat 14th July, Kirkup Gardens) - a free outdoor entertainment do run by local residents and community groups. This was a low carbon event, because the energy required to power it was generated or saved by the actions of local people and their projects, using suitable small-scale, low-carbon, alternative-energy production and reduction methods. There were fun activities and performances, showing how that energy was saved/generated, and what being in Wythenshawe Forever! really means.

The event and workshops were centred around a specially built new temporary sculptural meeting space, called the PowerStation, made from shipping containers and sited in a local green space. There were projects on food, energy, storytelling and communication.

See www.w4e.org.uk (Alternatively, contact Eleanor Hoad a call on 0161 436 4165 or email [eleanor\[at\]wfmradio.org](mailto:eleanor[at]wfmradio.org))

The picture shows 5 tonnes of topsoil, from a school redevelopment, going into raised beds at a Wythenshawe allotment.



Going Carbon Neutral Conference

Ashton Hayes' bold adventure towards carbon neutrality saw a convening of about 140 delegates from around the UK converge on the University of Chester, hoping to turn their communities onto a similar path.

Garry Charnock spoke on the initial inspiration, the easy winning-over of the parish council, and the general acceptance by the villagers – especially with the fun activities, and involvement of the school. He introduced their aims:

- Help Ashton Hayes become carbon-neutral, and
- Share experiences and inspire others.

Rules include: it's a journey towards carbon neutrality, of undetermined duration; it's grass roots, no politics; they're non-confrontational, and won't force anyone against their will; all are welcome to join; and they focus on the benefits of action rather than the threats of climate change. (Transition Towns apparently have a different, more structured philosophy, with a timetable rather than a loose consensus.)

Roy Alexander, also of Ashton Hayes, introduced the toolkit, a computer program to work out domestic carbon emissions. Ruth Morgan from Brilley, Herefordshire, related the experiences of a small but tight-knit village, little interest in a Parish Plan, but the environment movement built up with visits to the likes of the local organic farm, and now people are having carbon-footprinting done by the local explorer scouts. Mark Lynas, writer on climate change, gave us statistics:

- there's more money spent widening 100 metres of the M1 than on carbon reduction;
- the rate of increase in CO₂ emissions has quadrupled in the past decade, there's the

prospect of a 6C temperature rise by the end of the century – unprecedented since the Permian, 251m years ago, when 90% of species died;

- and 85-90% of people are concerned about climate change, while less than 5% have done anything about it.

A turnaround is possible – look at the way the UK and US turned their economies onto a war footing in 1939.

Chantal Cooke of Passion for the Planet Radio extolled the virtues of publicity, to raise awareness, to recruit help and participants, win the council and funding, and for the BUZZ. Announcements in the press lead to conversation in the street. The spokesperson should know what's going on, be consistent, clear, credible, coherent, concise in words, and contactable and readily available. He/she should have the support of the team: it can seem a glamorous job when things are going well, but when things don't... And on the message: the first paragraph is most important; how is your story different? journalists want a *story*, not a list of funders; and finally, follow the reporters up, talk to them, and be willing to help them.

After an excellent lunch, delegates broke up into four workshops: Kickstart, Maintaining Momentum, Media/Publicity and Low-Carbon Technologies/Carbon Footprints/Microgeneration.

Kickstart: Capitalise on local resources – budding journalists from the University of Chester, Energy Saving Trust's (EST) school's outreach, the motivated teacher (there's one in every school, get to know them).

Give your sponsors lots of material to put in their PR reports.

Adapt your message to your audience – in Hulme, there are 4 different presentations. It's not a totally middle-class thing. However, apathy and total negativity are to be expected to some degree, but go with people who'll go with you. Hardware stores can stock up with special low-energy light bulbs, not the standard ones given out by EST.

Ashton Hayes used an 'offsetting' scheme to pay for an efficient heating system for the scout hall.

Involvement of the school, and a steady stream on announcements, ensures there was a good crowd for the launch of the Ashton Hayes



scheme – producing a mandate to go forward. *Maintaining Momentum* is about communication, how it's going, what each household is doing. There are now certificates in the front windows and on the gateposts of Ashton Hayes, specifying what each household is doing: it could be small, like walking a neighbour's children to school, or big. A haulage company has installed speed limiters in its lorries; even after overtime payments, it's saving £30 a day per vehicle. There are now two ecohouses being worked on in the village. The media like stories of people taking action. The University of East Anglia's C-Red programme gives people a roadmap to carbon reduction.

Mark Lynas had not needed to warn us of a 6C temperature rise by the century end: it had already happened, it seemed, on that unusually hot April day: windows were open, and people were sweating and fanning themselves! Then a number of us joined a team of cyclists on the Chester-Ashton Hayes leg of a 300 mile journey to Stirling, and saw children and youths bathing in the river.

The evening party in Ashton Hayes saw local entertainment and refreshments at their best – thanks!

For more details, see www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk > "Missed the Conference?"

A low-resolution copy of the video shown at Ashton Hayes' first anniversary is downloadable from this site. (pics are video stills, low resolution: solar panel, tree-seed planting)

Every Action Counts: Community Champions Wanted

Every Action Counts is all about building a sustainable future, one small action at a time. With Defra backing, it will help community groups take simple steps that will benefit themselves and help create a cleaner, greener, fairer and safer community at the same time. Community Champions will help motivate community groups to take action - by creating an action plan to create a more sustainable future.

The Community Champions strand of Every Action Counts is co-ordinated by BTCV.

You can register to become a Community Champion: visit www.btcv.org.uk > Community Champions, or telephone the Community Champions team on 01302 388 841

There will then be a 2-day training course, reasonable expenses paid.

Insulation Advice

If you've got cavity wall insulation and it's not performing, you may have some of a CIGA (Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency) 25-year independent guarantee. Tel 01525 853 300 or see www.ciga.co.uk There are Energy Company discounted loft and/or cavity wall insulation schemes.

The recommended depth for loft insulation is now 10"/11" (250mm/270mm)

If a Vale Royal householder has insulation installed through any of the Energy Company schemes, they can apply for a £50 per measure cashback, subject to funding remaining, through CHEEAC (freephone 0800 512 012 or direct line no. 01606 594228), from money made available to them by Vale Royal Borough Council. This is strictly on a first come basis. Insulating wallpaper: there is a product called 'Sempatap' which is described as exactly that. See www.mgcltd.co.uk. It is targeted at those difficult to insulate solid brick properties. It is only about 5mm thick and is bonded to the inside of an external wall. It can improve the 'u' value of a 9" solid brick wall from 2.6 to 2.0. It also cuts sound transmission (so use on party walls as well!) and, being elastic, can be used over cracks (homebuyers beware!) It can apparently be painted, papered, or tiled. There is a Cheshire-wide 25% discount on this product when ordered through CHEEAC from Mould Growth Consultants. More info from CHEEAC's Gary Pain, 01606 594331 or e-mail [gary\[at\]jepplus.org.uk](mailto:gary[at]jepplus.org.uk) (for reference, u-values from another source: 9" brick: 2.2, 11" brick & cavity: 1.0, 11" brick & insulated cavity: 0.6. From www.diydata.com/information/u_values/u_values.php)

Low Carbon Buildings Programme

Is back – since the 29th May, you can apply for grants for micro-wind turbines, solar panels, woodburning stoves etc. There's more money available, but you'll need the planning permission first (this hurdle was preventing the payment of half of the allocated grants). There's now a £2500 per household limit. To date, 1467 solar thermal panels have been funded, 313 solar PV, 242 wind turbines, 104 ground source heat pumps, 46 wood fuelled boilers, 3 wood pellet heaters, and a handful of small hydro and air source heat pumps applied for but not yet granted. See www.gnn.gov.uk/content/detail.asp?ReleaseID=287365&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromSearch=True and www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk



Windfarm Planning Appeal

Tegni Cymru Cyf are appealing against the rejected planning application for 4, 3MW wind turbines proposed at Aston Grange, near Acton Bridge. There'll be an inquiry, details being arranged. Comments made at the planning stage will be carried forward; any additional comments should be sent, in triplicate, to The Planning Inspectorate, Room 3/18a, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN, quoting ref APP/L0635/A/2047477/NWF, or online at <http://tinyurl.com/36drur>

Sustainable Development Commission: no to nuclear

While rated as 'low carbon', the SDC considers that

- ◆ There's currently no long term solution to nuclear waste disposal
- ◆ The economics are highly uncertain
- ◆ It would lock the UK into a centralised electricity distribution system, rather than a renewables-ready distributed one
- ◆ It would undermine energy efficiency by sending out the wrong price signals
- ◆ Opting for nuclear means we can hardly call on other countries to do without. With lower safety standards, they run higher risks of accidents, radiation exposure, proliferation and terrorist attacks. See www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/060306.html

Debate on Nuclear Power

There's a government consultation "The Future of Nuclear Power: the role of nuclear power in a low carbon UK economy" to weigh up the options to help sate our energy hunger. They say: "To help the country tackle climate change and give us secure energy supplies, it is the Government's preliminary view that it is in the public interest to allow energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations."

For the document, go to www.dti.gov.uk > consultations > scroll down to find. Top is the informative consultation doc; other docs for reference, and a link to the online consultation. For queries, tel 0207 215 5000.

The Ecologist Magazine has a feature at www.theecologist.org/archive_detail.asp?content_id=935 'Nuclear Power: Unnecessary, Dangerous and Expensive' is a report of a parliamentary meeting: download from www.nuclearpowernothanks.co.uk or send £1.50 per copy (payable to Norwich & District Peace Council) to 80 Mill Hill Road, Norwich NR2 3DS
Add your thoughts to www.vrencons.blogspot.com

Jobs and Careers

Students wanting environmental placements could try Student Force – see www.studentforce.org.uk, or contact the recruitment officer by emailing [AndyScully\[at\]studentforce.org.uk](mailto:AndyScully[at]studentforce.org.uk) (thanks to Theresa Barnes)

Climate Change

Climate Change – We're in Hot Water!

Uncondensed atmospheric water vapour is a powerful greenhouse gas, but while temperatures are stable, it can be ignored. However, as global temperatures rise, so does the sea surface, and

evaporation increases, producing a positive feedback. It's estimated this will be 1 Watt/square meter/degree C temperature rise. A rise of 3C will give 3W, double the current forcing from CO₂ alone, and render impotent any human attempts at control. Then there's a description of positive feedbacks from reduced ice caps, poorer carbon absorption, loss of carbon from the soil etc, and release of methane. All at: www.meridian.org.uk/whats1.htm> Feedback Dynamics and the Acceleration of Climate Change:

Climate Change Myths -

Debunked: see www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/presoffice/myths/index.html

In brief:

Myth 1: CO₂ follows climate change? – no, they're linked. Previously, things like our orbit affected temperature; this is not the case this time.

Myth 2: Solar Activity drives climate change – throw all the facts into the computer, and you can only predict the current temperature trend by including man's activities.

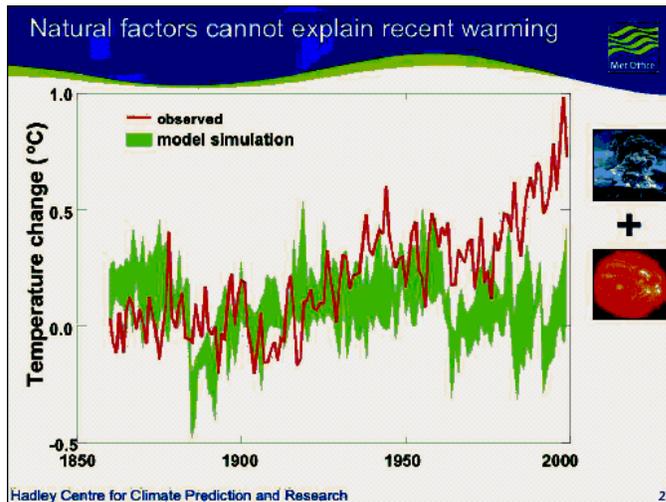
Myth 3: (rather deep)

Myth 4: Reduced gamma radiation, which triggers cloud formation, can be responsible for rising temperatures? – if cosmic rays have any effect on the climate, their intensity has not changed recently.

Myth 5: The climate is too complex to model? – major advances in the past 20 years have seen the inclusion of many factors including coupling of ocean and atmospheric currents, feedbacks from ice and the biosphere, and have been used to model past climates.

Also, a recent report by Prof Mike Lockwood shows that the Sun's magnetic field has declined since 1985, allowing more cosmic rays to reach Earth, helping form the kind of clouds that reflect the Sun's energy into space. So the Earth should be cooling,

but it's actually warming. A graph of temperature and solar activity, shown on Channel 4's The Great Global Warming Swindle did not extend beyond 1985.



Education Materials

Climate Change and the Greenhouse Effect, from Metoffice/DEFRA, is available as individual slides at www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/hadleycentre/pubs/brochures/2005/clim_green/index.html

Contraction & Convergence DVD

A DVD, "An Incontestable Truth" has been produced by the All Party Parliament Climate Change Group (APPCCG), which includes MP Colin Challen. It delves into possible future policies to combat climate change. It focuses on the 'Contraction and Convergence' (C&C) framework as an effective, and just, way to cut emissions of CO₂. C&C would be an international carbon trading scheme, simultaneously limiting emissions and encouraging sustainable growth in less developed countries.

An Incontestable Truth is available in a streaming format <http://video.google.co.uk/videoplay?docid=-2492574552022074121>, (the dash is a minus) or by contacting Colin Challen MP: 020 7219 8260/0771 or [ChallenC\[at\]parliament.uk](mailto:ChallenC[at]parliament.uk)

60 MPs have already signed up to an all-party challenge to reduce their personal carbon emissions by 25% before the year 2010.

Of Sheep and Sheepdogs?

A poll on people's thoughts on climate – they won't take the lead themselves, they want Government to do the running! With 81% of Brits concerned about climate change, just 18% have cut down on air travel in the last year, and 13% will do in future. However, 75% use a washing line rather than a dryer, and 61% want an environment tax on 4WD cars. The 24% favouring more nuclear were outnumbered by those wanting alternative energy sources. www.gmi-mr.com/gmipoll/release.php?p=20070605-uk

Carbon Offsetting – the spoof

The people at CheatNeutral believe carbon offsetting to be a cheap way to continue emissions as usual. Their website turns the idea round, with a play scheme where people who cheat on their partners pay others to remain faithful! See www.cheatneutral.com

Countryside & Wildlife

Greenbridge Project

This Mersey Forest project offers training of communities in biodiversity-related activities, until December 2007. For example – wildlife recording, managing trees and hedges, propagating wild plants, restoring or creating meadows, making and siting bird/other boxes, making hibernaculae and deadwood piles, and communication skills. Funds are available for tools and materials, photography, co-ordination, events and exhibitions, and volunteer costs.

It's limited to the Mersey Forest area (the boroughs of Vale Royal, Ellesmere Port & Neston, Halton, Warrington, St Helens, Knowsley, Liverpool and Sefton). Contact Jo Sayers, 01925 816217 or email [josayers\[at\]merseyfor est.org.uk](mailto:josayers[at]merseyfor est.org.uk)



Illegal Timber

After China and Japan, Britain is the third largest importer of illegally felled timber. Most of our 3.2 m cubic metres imported is from temperate forests, with illegal logging in Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Sweden; 370,000 cubic metres is tropical. 8.2 m and 5.4 m cubic metres are imported by China and Japan respectively. From a report by WWF, "Illegal Logging: Cut It Out", which continues with the effects: forest and habitat destruction, money to criminals and not to communities. See www.wwf-uk.org/news/n_0000003562.asp Meanwhile a fashion for timber-framed houses and wooden floors has led to a high demand for oak – being met with imports from France and Germany. The Forestry Commission is having to educate some people that it has to fell trees while they have economic value – perhaps at 200 years rather than far more. (pic from a Marc Roberts cartoon, www.throbgoblins.blogspot.com)



Cheshire CPRE's Hedgerow Award Scheme

The scheme is run annually, and they are currently taking entries for the 2008 (as of 1st February 2007). The closing date is 31st January 2008. with judging during the spring.

It's worth people entering even if they don't think their hedgerows are potential award-winners yet, as the judges provide useful (and free) advice on improving them to meet the standards in future.

For details contact CPRE, Cheshire Hedgerow Awards Scheme, Victoria Buildings, Middlewich. For queries ring Geoffrey Sparrow, 01625 861269.

Petition re-Funding for Local Biodiversity Record Centres

rECOrd, Cheshire's Local Biological Records Centre collecting data from many volunteers on wildlife sightings, relies on funding from local government. rECOrd's Steve McWilliam would like people to sign this on-line petition to safeguard this funding from possible cuts. The petition closes on 16th September. See <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/LRC-Funding/> For information on rECOrd, see www.record-lrc.co.uk or tel 01244 383749

A New Beach for Hartford!

The meadow of Thorn Wood, just off Beach Road/Northwich Road, was looking rather sandy earlier this year. This is because the Woodland Trust and Landlife have used an imported deep plough to bury the previous lush vegetation, seeds and fertility so that a sowing of more floriferous wild plants will succeed on the upturned subsoil. It is now blossoming with corn marigold, corn poppy, cornflower, corncockle, chamomile, carrot, and some ribwort and greater plantains, pineapple weed and creeping thistle. Etc. There's very little "beach" left. Deep ploughing is a technique used in Denmark and Lithuania to reduce weed competition in newly planted forests. Trees also establish better. The plough turns the soil over to a maximum depth of 90cm (3ft), completely inverting light soils. Few weeds resurface, but creeping thistle is problematic. Biodiversity increases, with more bees, rare invertebrates and even corncrakes found in the first season.

The technique has also been used at Delamere, on the Old Pale; two sites in Halton including Paddington Meadow, and is planned for another Woodland Trust site at Dutton Farm. To date, 31 UK sites have been deep-ploughed. *info from Landlife, www.landlife.org.uk > projects, tel 0151 737 1819; pic A Powell*

Clean Up the World Weekend, 14-16 September 2007.

Clean Up the World is a community based environmental campaign that inspires and empowers individuals and communities from every corner of the globe to make their environment a cleaner, healthier place to live.

See

http://www.cleanuptheworld.org/PDF/en/brochure_en.pdf (1.61MB) or <http://www.cleanuptheworld.org/en/>

Gates Stolen

United Utilities has had many gates stolen from its properties on the West Pennine Moors. This can result in domestic animals and the public straying onto land with deep waters. It's now marking them, as it's believed they're being sold on outside the area.

Learn to do a Meadow, Pond, Grot Spot..

For anyone in the Mersey Forest Area, a "Green Bridge" grant may be able to fund BTCV training for locals, so that they can make a meadow, pond, etc; or rectify a tough grot spot, and know enough to maintain it and work on the next! Contact Mac Carding at Mersey Forest, [maccarding\[at\]merseyforest.org](mailto:maccarding[at]merseyforest.org), tel 01925 816217.

Kids and Ponds

To protect your children from risk of drowning, there are at least two products available:

A rigid grate that fits either above or below the normal waterline, strong enough to take an adult. It rests in the pond, without (they say) rupturing your liner. It also protects fish from herons. Safapond Ltd, Unit 6, Cornel Court, Forest Town, Mansfield, Notts NG19 0NF, tel: 01623 428873, www.safapond.com

A net, pinned to the surrounds. With a 4" mesh, it's visible, deters being crawled on, and won't let a youngster through. It can be removed by adults. Covers4Pools, Station Road, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 1PZ, tel: 0870 8508067,

www.covers4pools.co.uk/katchakid1.html



Waste, Recycling, Pollution

Number 1s and Number 2s

What plastics are wanted? Both St. Helen's JFC Delleve who receive our kerbside collections, and Recresco who take from the 'bring' sites, are only interested in PET (code 1) and HDPE (code 2). Most bottles fall in these categories, hence their ready

acceptance by collectors. All plastics in codes 1 to 6 are actually recyclable, and indeed one company, CK Polymers of Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, will take them all – in minimum quantities of 500kg.

Recoup lists a number of companies in the North West who take one or more types, pretty well covering the range.

See www.jfcuk.com/index.asp?active_page_id=5 and www.recresco.com



Learn about plastics: www.recoveredplastics.com

Glass Plant

Meanwhile, Recresco has opened a new glass processing plant at Ellesmere Port, capable of sorting 30 tonnes/hour of mixed cullet. The location is handy for bottle manufacturer Quinn Glass at Frodsham. www.letsrecycle.com/materials/glass/news.jsp?story=6544

New Recycling Centre for Winsford

A new recycling centre on the new industrial estate in Woodford Lane, Winsford, is to open this autumn. It's expected to have facilities for wood, card, rubble, green waste, batteries, textiles, furniture, etc. Contact Cheshire County Council on 01244 603000 or email [waste\[at\]cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:waste[at]cheshire.gov.uk) for info.

Waste of Waste?

Ineos Chlor has submitted a planning application to the DTI (Dept for Trade and Industry) for an energy from waste incinerator, to burn refuse-derived fuel (RDF) (from domestic waste, including plastics) at their Runcorn chemicals site. It would consume 750,000 to 800,000 tons RDF/year, and generate 360MW steam and 100MW electricity. The waste catchment area would be Merseyside, Manchester, and all old Cheshire. About 260,000 tonnes of ash could be used for building, while the most toxic 40,000 tons would go to Ineos' Randle Island, Runcorn, hazardous waste landfill (adjacent Wigg Island Nature Reserve, Halton). (*Halton FoE*)

Meanwhile, Peel Holdings has appealed against Cheshire County Council's rejection of their Ince Resource Recovery Park (the DTI has yet to decide on the incinerator itself.)

Healthy Cars

That 'new car' smell can be indicative of some doubtful chemicals. Bromine from flame retardants, phthalates from PVC, heavy metals in fabrics and leather. Many significantly decrease in concentration in the first few months, others remain to upset the dismantlers. New regulations are cutting their use. A US-based website gives information on the chemicals and issues, and a guide to the new models they tested in late 2006. See www.healthycar.org

Merseyside's Waste to Energy

Orchid has developed and is now commercialising a process that treats household and commercial waste, using natural gas to produce a fuel (RDF) from the biodegradable portion. The fuel from the Merseyside plant will go for power stations or cement manufacturers. The plant is accepted to be a greenhouse gas emitter, but it has a 'twin' in Thailand that does burn the RDF, and this will offset the Merseyside plant through the Kyoto Clean Development Mechanism.

Bob Anderson of Orchid says: "We don't burn anything, we just convert waste into various products. From the environmental point of view it's very clean. Major issues from any waste processor are odour and noise, and in this process noise is contained, there is no dust or particles released into the atmosphere, and we treat emissions through a bio-filtration system so there are no odours."

With DTI and Defra funding, the plant is expected to be up and running by the end of 2007. It can be adapted to partially segregated waste, and the company hope to build more plants in the UK, including some that use the RDF to generate electricity. (www.nwda.co.uk/news-events/press-releases-1/200701/green-light-for-pioneering-%C2%A313.aspx : *process details at www.orchid-environmental.co.uk, whence pic*)



New Sodium Bicarbonate Plant for Brunner Mond

Brunner Mond is to market Sodium Bicarbonate, produced at Lostock, as a flue gas treatment called Briskarb. Compared to Lime ($\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$) and Sodium carbonate (Na_2CO_3), Sodium bicarbonate, NaHCO_3 , is said to have the advantage of a high surface area when the heat in the flue gas drives off half the attached CO_2 . It then releases further CO_2 as it works to neutralise acids such as Hydrochloric acid and

Sulphur dioxide. From www.brunnermond.com/products/Briskarb/Briskarb_brochure.pdf

Using the Solvay Process, the CO_2 in Sodium bicarbonate is derived from limestone, the Sodium from salt. (<http://scifun.chem.wisc.edu/CHEMWEEK/Bicarb/SodiumBicarb.html>).

Recycling Building Materials

There's a new website to offer unwanted/look for unloved building materials – all the way down to hardcore and plants. They look short of materials to offer, as yet – so check any skip you've got! It has been set up Checktrade, a company set up to vet tradesmen, monitoring the quality of their work to give potential customers a third party assurance that they are honest and reliable. See www.tradeleftovers.com

In-House Recycling

The Cooperative Group's head office complex in Manchester has its own in-house recycling centre, working its way through 10,000 tonnes of office waste a year – paper, card, plastic bottles and cups, cans, CDs and uniforms. They also have capacity to take in waste from other businesses in the Manchester area, collected by electric lorry.

Letter from Australia

Our waste disposal is slightly different from in England, but then each LA in the UK has a different system too. Here we can recycle glass, plastic, tins and cans, cardboard and paper, foil and tetrapak cartons. They all go into one big wheelie bin and are taken away once a fortnight. On the alternate weeks we can put out a bin for garden waste. Then every week we put out a tiny wheelie bin of non-recyclable stuff. The thing that surprised me was that I had to put it against the kerb on the 'nature strip' (we don't have a pavement in this street) with the wheels and handle facing the house. The garbage truck (no lorries here) drives along the kerbside and a mechanical arm lifts the bin and empties it. So no gangs of men having to wheel the bin to the back of the bin lorry. Twice a year there is a collection of all bulky non-recyclable waste like old furniture. Our collection is today so for the past week the streets have been gradually filling with little waste heaps. We've seen people driving around looking for stuff they'd like and taking it from the heaps. Well that's recycling I suppose. *Sophie*

Lifestyle

IKEA Flat-Pack Homes!

IKEA have moved into flat-pack homes; initially from its Gateshead store, near where an estate of 117 will be built, each costing £70,000, and limited to households in the £15k - £30k bracket. They plan to extend the scheme to Brighton, New Forest and Edinburgh. (*Edie*)

Free Giving

Give to the hungry, breast cancer, child health, literacy, rainforests, or animal rescue – a regular click is all that's needed, along with a look at the links to the various sponsors. See www.thehungersite.com

Permaculture Design Courses

Learn to live lightly, to match and manipulate your needs and your natural resources. Full (90 hour) and shorter Permaculture Design Courses are available (a full one at Beccles, near the Suffolk/Norfolk border, 8 -22 Sept; another on the Isle of Man, 7-16 Sept) – see www.permaculture.org.uk or tel 0845 4581805.

Home Information Packs

Learn more about them at www.homeinformationpacks.gov.uk or phone 020 7944 4400. Predictably, there's a section on how to become an Energy Assessor! But there's nowhere to train....

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is an innovative new measure, developed by the New Economics Foundation that shows the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered. It's calculated by multiplying life satisfaction by life expectancy, and dividing by ecological footprint. Vanuatu and a host of Latin American countries come top; Zimbabwe is bottom, the UK comes 108th out of 178.

It addresses the relative success or failure of countries in supporting good life for their citizens, whilst respecting the environmental resource limits upon which our lives depend. You can calculate your own HPI

www.happyplanetindex.org

Credit Union

Cheshire Neighbours credit union is looking for new members. For information, contact Maggie Tippin at Vale Royal CAB, tel 01606 330386, [maggie\[at\]vrcab.org.uk](mailto:maggie[at]vrcab.org.uk).

Ash-Worth Time Bank

Members of Ash-Worth Time Bank offer and receive help from other members, spreading the load over many people and extending their social circles. Currently, there are members in 10 villages - Ashton Hayes, Mouldsworth, Manley, Kelsall, Kingsley, Norley, Crowton, Tarvin, Great Barrow, Alvanley – and numbers are increasing (300, plus 8 organisations). They have facilities for a welcome home when you return from hospital, for pampering carers, a library, and social activities like art, walking and keep-fit. Members are welcome from all ages; membership and all services are free (they had a lottery grant in 2003).

To request help, a member rings the administrator, who finds a willing helper. There's no minimum time commitment, but it can be likened to an insurance policy – you never know when you'll need to call on it!

For more information, contact them on 01829 751398, email: [ash-worthtimebank\[at\]care4free.net](mailto:ash-worthtimebank[at]care4free.net) or see www.ash-worthtimebank.org.uk

Transport

Driving Efficiency

This Department for Transport website has a section on advice on buying and driving a car, and you can test your eco-driving skills! See www.dft.gov.uk/ActOnCO2/

Road Repairs

For pot holes, signs pointing the wrong way, lights on/off, traffic light timing, cyclepath problems, footpath flooding, overhanging branches – contact (in Vale Royal) [engvr\[at\]cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:engvr[at]cheshire.gov.uk); or one of CTC's dedicated websites, www.fillthathole.org.uk and www.clearthattrail.org.uk, where the report will be visible to other prospective users as well as the local authority. Also, Cheshire County Council has a dedicated web page: www.cheshire.gov.uk/roads/FaultForm, with a link to report problems on Public Rights of Way.

Congestion Charging Debate

There's an online debate, open to all, at www.keepmoving.co.uk. It includes arguments from Green Party Principal Speaker Derek Wall and Peter Roberts, poster of the Downing Street e-petition opposing vehicle tracking and road pricing. Interesting how little people know about the problem...



Petition for no VAT on Bikes

For reasons of health and CO₂ emissions – this petition calls for zero VAT on bikes, spares and parts, nor on other human-powered vehicles. It closes on 8th August. See <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/NoVATonBikes/>

Proposed Cycle Routes

For a map of proposed cycle routes in Cheshire, see www.cheshire.gov.uk > Transport and Roads > Cycling > Cycling Strategy > Action Plan or Where we would like to be. It shows the circular Cheshire Cycleway, the National Cycle Network linking Sandbach, Northwich and Runcorn, and canal routes.

Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association

MCRUA campaigns for rail service improvements, and are able to influence service providers. They hold meetings, have an informative newsletter (mere snippets above), run railtours, help keep stations looking good, and only cost £5 (£7 family) to join. They're highly supportive of the proposal to reopen the Crewe-Sandbach-Northwich line, and Middlewich Station, to passenger traffic. Contact MCRUA via Arthur Sancto, 01565 651209 or see www.mcrua.org.uk



A556 Mere ByPass

The Highways Agency has recently consulted on a bypass to take the A556 to the west of Mere, with an option to take it from Tabley, too. To the south, there will be provision to connect direct to the M6 – part of plans to widen that motorway. A number of wooded areas near Mere are in line. The Highways Agency says

“Environmental impact has been a key factor during the development of the new plans and both routes will help improve the air quality in the surrounding villages. Extensive landscaping will ensure either bypass is in keeping with the existing scenery and steps will be taken to safeguard water quality and cultural heritage.”

www.highways.gov.uk/roads/projects/14909.aspx or contact Dave Clark, 0161 9305695, email [A556KnutsfordBowdon\[at\]highways.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:A556KnutsfordBowdon[at]highways.gsi.gov.uk)

Rail News

Track relaying on the Altrincham Metrolink line will mean no trains from early July to late August. Meanwhile, the mid-Cheshire services will be ‘strengthened’ (maybe more coaches per train), and there will be a substitute bus service. Cheapest ways to London: £7 from Manchester, a single on Midland Main Line’s Advance C tariff via Sheffield; and a single on Virgin West Coast Value Advance C for £12.50. (You can start your journey in Northwich: specify via Stockport, it costs £13.50 for a single.) Ticket machines at Piccadilly and Stockport are reportedly only selling Peak Fare tickets. Northern Rail introduced a Cheshire Day Ranger in January. This covers all operators (except Metrolink) in the area bounded by West Kirby, Liverpool, Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent, Crewe and Chester, from 8.45am weekdays and all day weekends and bank holidays. It costs £15 (£9.90 railcard holders). Cheshire Best-Kept Station Competition: Cuddington won its first award ever, for best station in Vale Royal; Northwich won an award for the involvement of the local youth community; Mobberley was the Tidiest Station; Stockport got an award for improved staff performance. See www.cheshirerail.org Due to lack of funding, there is to be no Sandstone Rambler this year – the summertime bus linking Frodsham and Whitchurch via Delamere and Mouldsworth. Freight: a load of limestone from Dowlow to Garston will be passing through the Hartford curve on Thursdays. The Sandbach plant producing nitric acid is said to be due to close; movements up to Sellafield have ceased. On the Northwich Salt Mine Stabilisation, brine export to Middlewich has ceased, and flyash import from Drax Power Station in Yorkshire will cease around May. MCRUA

“In general, the best way to get access to where you want to be is to be there already” – Rocky Mountain Institute

GroupSave

Central Trains, operators of the Liverpool – Birmingham line, have an offer whereby groups of 3 or 4 travel for the same price as 2. It's available on Cheap Day single/return and Saver single/return tickets for most journeys in the Central Trains region plus selected journeys with many other train operators. Up to 4 children can be included at £1 each, under 5s free. You can't use it before 9.30 Monday to Friday, nor with a railcard. Groups of 10 or more can have 26% off, on selected non-busy trains, again without railcard discounts. You have to pre-book on 0870 609 6060, 9am –5pm at least 5 days in advance (to allow postage). It looks like GroupSave is probably better!



Roads Safe for Pedestrians, Cyclists, Children as well as Motorists

'Manual of Streets', was published by the Department for Transport in March. It "provides guidance for practitioners involved in the planning, design, provision and approval of new residential streets, and modifications to existing ones. It aims to increase the quality of life through good design which creates more people-orientated streets." You start with the desired speed, not the anticipated speed. It suggests that roads are not just for cars, but for the whole community; that whatever the transport mode, they are part of a well-connected network; they are safe, attractive, and cost-effective. It covers provision for cyclists (cycle routes should not entail dismounting), pedestrians (they, like cyclists, like travelling in straight lines, regardless of the junction geometry), public transport (put cycle-parking by bus stops), cars, car clubs and speed control, service vehicles, play and recreation, and other design factors. It's a 5MB pdf at www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/pdfmanforstreets.pdf, also available in paper from Thomas Telford Ltd, tel 01892 832299 for £22.50 (ISBN 9780727735010).

Meanwhile, Groningen in the Netherlands is divided into 4: to drive from one zone to another means using the ring road, but you can cycle or walk direct.

Bikes and Trains

In July, the Government will publish a White Paper laying out its vision for the future of the railways. Seizing the chance to influence the next 30 years of rail travel, CTC has joined forces with the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group (APPCG) to call on the Government to make it easier for passengers to take cycles with them on the train, or to park them safely at stations. See www.ctc.org.uk/cyclerrail (pic - camcycle)

Ethics

Affordable Medicine

There's a Petition calling on Novartis to drop its claim against the Indian Government for allowing cloning of Gleevec (cancer drug) and other drugs for the benefit of poor people - Medecins Sans Frontiers have organised a petition calling on Novartis to drop the case. So far, it has attracted over 250,000 signatures. Read – or sign – it at: www.msf.org/petition_india/international.html

Trident

See www.bigtridentdebate.org.uk/ for your chance so say yay or nay on Trident replacement. Or sign a petition calling for a national debate.

Depleted Uranium

www.bandepleteduranium.org reports a 7-fold increase in childhood cancers in Iraq since the use of DU weapons in the first Iraq war

Taking Liberties

A book, and a film, about erosion of human rights in the UK. Order the book, or find out where the film is showing, at www.noliberties.com, or tel 020 7243 4300

War on Democracy

Another film, released on 15th June. John Pilger's film questions the rôle of the USA, etc, in Latin America and elsewhere, and how the indigenous people are fighting back, regaining what they lost to corporations and governments.

Then there's MP Chris Mullin's book 'A very British coup' which looked at how the US might remove a progressive British government; and there are some films like the Machuca which cover the same ground as Pilger.

See www.johnpilger.com (check this site for showings and trailer), and www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machuca

Diary Dates *(see www.vrendates.blogspot.com for updates)*

21st July to 5th Aug

Forest Fever Fortnight:

'Heritage in the Forest'. Details at www.merseyforest.org.uk > events > Forest Fever 2007: 2 local events – Quarry Tales (gone) & Trading and Travel, listed below

Wed 1st Aug (also 3rd, 16th Aug; 12th, 19th, 28th Sept)

Multi-disciplinary Training, Free, Sandiway. Local Implementation Network, tel 01244 602919

Thurs 2 Aug

Weaver Parkway Bug Hunt

Safari: Join the rangers and discover the Parkway insect life. Over 8's only please. Booking essential: tel Tony Blackledge, 01606 593133

Sat 4 Aug

Purple Haze: It's heather flowering season, and we'll investigate the associated wildlife. Meet: 10am, Coach Road car park, Little Budworth Country Park. Lee Thompson, 01606 301484

Sat 4th Aug

Intro to Marine Mammals, with Nia Jones, times tbc, Hilbre Island. Learn to identify marine mammals, and of their basic biology, ecology, habitats and threats. Also practice and learn standard survey techniques. CWT training*

4 and 5 Aug

Pete Woollam's open garden.

Noon-5pm. Half acre ornamental kitchen garden, 200 different edibles. Young forest garden. Refreshments, plants, rustic seats for sale. From A34 Alderley Edge, take the road for Mottram St Andrew. After 1 mile, turn left into Hough Lane. tel 01625 425192 after 6pm. Adults £1, children free, pre-book for guided tour (£5) Email: [woollamp\[at\]aol.com](mailto:woollamp[at]aol.com)

4 & 5 Aug

Trading and Travel - medieval style. Find out about Halton's own 'ferry 'cross the Mersey' - landscape evidence and ancient charters, with re-enactors demonstrating medieval skills and crafts. Dogs on lead. 11am – 6pm, Norton Priory, Runcorn. Lynn Smith, 01928 569895

Wed 8 Aug

Southern Stroll: a morning walk around the Northwich Flashes looking at its unique site history, its many natural features and its future management. 10am, Witton Mill Car Park. tel Steph Hefferan 01606 77741

Sat 11th Aug

Ferns and fern allies, with Dr Martha Newton, 10.30 to 4pm, Warburton's Wood, near Kingsley (SJ555762). For all levels of experience, learn about the ecology and habitats of ferns, and identify in the wild. CWT training*

Sun 12th Aug

Moths for Breakfast: See what was caught in the moth traps during National Moth Night. FOAM, 9am Rangers' Cabins Marbury Country Park. Paul Hill of Biota 0871 7340111

12th Aug (and July 23 to Aug 22)

Watch out for the Perseids.

A new moon spells dark skies, ideal for spotting these shooting stars, so called for coming from the direction of constellation Perseus in the NW. They're the debris left by comet Swift-Tuttle, and they'll be coming through 60 or so an hour at their peak, 11th/12th Aug.

14th August for 1 week

Climate Camp. In the vicinity of Heathrow Airport. Plenty to do in the run-up, too! See www.climatecamp.org.uk

Thurs 16 Aug

Weaver Parkway Bug Hunt Safari. Join the Rangers and discover the Parkway insect life. Over 8's only please. Booking essential: tel Tony Blackledge, 01606 593133

Sat 18th Aug

Willow Weaving at Tatton Park. Telephone 01625 534428 or 01625 534400

Sat 18th Aug

Bumblebee ID, with Carl Clee & Tony Parker, 10 to 3pm, Astbury Visitors Centre. Intro to bumblebee ecology and biology, with basic field ID and info on their conservation and future. CWT training*

19th, 22nd Aug

Open Garden: 35 Heyes Lane, Timperley, Altrincham. Small mature suburban organic garden. Trees, small pond, greenhouses, many fruits, interesting and unusual plants. Plant sale, teas, no dogs. £2.50 adults, children free.

25 – 27 Aug

Tatton Park **Country Show**, Small Showground.

3-5 Sept

Allotment Projects, for groups planning a new plot. £10 for most. Trafford Hall, Chester, tel 01244 300246, www.traffordhall.com

6+7 Sept

Linking to the Community Strategy, £10 for most) Trafford Hall, Chester, tel 01244 300246 www.traffordhall.com

Sat 8th Sept (also 13 Oct, 10 Nov)

Watercolour Workshop at Tatton Park. Tel 01625 534428

Sat 8 Sept

Try Dry Stone Walling

in Macclesfield

Forest/Wildboarclough. A family afternoon with Lionel Bellfield and Cheshire Landscape Trust. Booking essential through CLT*

Sat 8 Sept

Food For Free:

hosted by Marbury Park Rangers. Includes a 2 hour walk, then preparing, cooking and tasting. You may need to bring your lunch! 10am - 3pm at Marbury Country Park. tel Chris Moseley 01606 77741

Sat 8th Sept

Mosses and Liverworts, with Dr Martha Newton, 10.30 to 4pm, Holcroft Moss, 6 miles NE of Warrington, SJ685934. For all levels of experience: their ecology and habitats, and how to identify in the wild. CWT training*

Sat 8th Sept

Learn to Photograph Raptors, Barnton: £65 incl lunch & refreshments (20% off promotion) 10am-4ish. Tel 0151-426-1693, email info@fotographicimages.co.uk



Sat 8 Sept

Bat Talk and Walk: hear about the different bats of Marbury Country Park, then a guided walk led by Mike Freeman of the Cheshire Bat Group. Meet: 8pm, Marbury Country Park. tel Chris Moseley 01606 77741

8th & 9th Sept

Heritage Open Days – Norton Priory & Halton Castle Free, with family activities. Tel 01928 569895

Cheshire Open Studios 2007

Enjoy the Cheshire countryside visiting workshops of local professional artists and craftspeople: 8 & 9 Sept; 15 & 16 Sept; 22 & 23 Sept
See www.cheshireopenstudios.org.uk or brochures in libraries from August. Or call Emma on 01565 621156, email: [info\[at\]cheshireopenstudios.org.uk](mailto:info[at]cheshireopenstudios.org.uk)

Wed 12th Sept

Can your Community challenge Climate Change? reduce community energy use, energy efficient buildings, local renewable energy, funding for environment projects. 7-9pm, Middlewich Civic Hall. Tel Louise Hare, 01244 354115,

louise.hare@cheshirecc.org.uk

Thurs 13th, 27th Sept

Multi-disciplinary Training, Free, Knutsford. Local Implementation Network, tel 01244 602919

14th - 16th Sept

Clean Up the World Weekend, worldwide community-based environmental campaign. See www.cleanuptheworld.org/PDF/en/brochure_en.pdf (1.61MB) or www.cleanuptheworld.org/en/

Sat 15th Sept

Northwich Community Woodlands Walk: a leisurely 6-7 miler (about 4 hours) visiting all parts of NCW, via many interesting bits. Bring sensible clothing, footwear and lunch. FOAM, 10am Anderton Nature Park car park. Brian Jaques 01606 891242.

Sat 15th Sept

Tree Wardens meet 1pm Delamere Visitor Centre - guided walk around tree nursery and Old

Pale community woodland with Duncan MacNaughton. CLT*

15th and 16th Sept

Roman Middlewich Festival watch www.middlewich.org.uk/2007_festival.htm for details or tel Dave Thompson, 01606 833434

for info. (features

'Middlewich in Action': local groups seeking helpers to make a difference in Middlewich If your group would like a stand, contact Sally Davies

on 01270 763100 or email [sally.l.davies\[at\]btconnect.com](mailto:sally.l.davies[at]btconnect.com))

Fri 21st Sept

Weaver Wander: A gentle stroll through Weaver Parkway looking at local and natural history.

Booking essential: Tony Blackledge, 01606 593133

22 – 23 Sept

Harvest Festival at Tatton Park Farm. Steam engine, spinning, ferret racing, make corn dollies and scarecrows. Noon – 5pm (last entry 4pm). Normal admission charges. Tel 01625 534431

Sun 23 Sept

The Memory Walk: explore Marbury Country Park and Anderton Nature Park on this 8km walk as part of National Alzheimer's Week of sponsored walks. The walk will finish with refreshments back at Marbury. More from Vale Royal Alzheimer's Society, 01606 351112

Tues 25th Sept

Organic Vegetable Production, with Derek Jones at Weaverham &

District Gardeners' Group. 7.30pm at Wallerscote Primary School, Weaverham. Joy Brain, 01606 853197

Wed 26th Sept

Annual Ploughing and Hedgelaying Championship, Eaton Hall, Eccleston, Chester. Info: Mr N Lawson, Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Barthomley, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 5NX. Tel: 01270 876447 (from www.ploughmen.co.uk/local%20matches.htm)

Thurs 27th Sept

Summer Community Event Workshop (under £50), Warrington CVS. 01925 246880

Sat 29 Sept

Dane Valley Coppice Crafts Group AGM and exhibition at Brereton Heath LNR: Further details: Aileen Thompson, 01270 760810

29 Sept - 7 Oct

Mersey Basin Week 2007:

Mersey Basin Campaign's annual celebration of the rivers, canals and watersides of the Northwest. Water themed events and activities such as guided walks, clean ups & environmental art workshops. Further details from Ann Bates, Action Weaver Valley, 01606 79576 or email [a.bates\[at\]merseybasin.org.uk](mailto:a.bates[at]merseybasin.org.uk)

Sun 30 Sept

Landscape, Trees and Water: A guided walk with CLT through Marbury Park trying some of the fruit from the CLT/CFWI Orchard. Meet: 2pm, Rangers' Office, Marbury Country Park. Contact CLT*

Tues 2nd Oct

Vale Royal Voluntary Sector Forum, with presentation by Helen from Elizabeth Finn Care. 2pm at Winnington Park Recreation Club. Info: Arthur Neil, VAVR, 01606 723182.

Sat 6th Oct

Seed Gathering: help collect tree and flower seeds during National Seed Gathering Season for growing in the Woodland Trust's nurseries and our own. FOAM, 10am Anderton Nature Park car park. Brian Jaques 01606 891242

Sat 6 Oct

Teachers and Pleachers: Try hedge laying in Northwich Community Woodlands with expert guidance. Booking essential: Pete Schofield, 01606 77741

Sat 6 Oct

Norton Priory Quince Day: activities and guided walk through the quince collection with Norton Priory Museum Trust and CLT support. Normal entry charges. Meet: 2pm, Norton Priory Walled Garden. tel Norton Priory, 01928 569895



Sat 6 Oct

Wilderness Ramblings: A late afternoon stroll around Little Budworth Country Park, mainly the lowland heathland habitat. We'll also think about how people lived in wild places and how concepts of wilderness have changed over time. Meet: 5pm, Coach Road car park. tel Lee Thompson 01606 301484

Sat 13 Oct

Wrenbury Apple Festival: A day of activities, apple displays, apple juicing, village walks, face painting and story telling. 11am - 4pm. CLT*

Wed 17th Oct

RHS Lecture - **Unlocking the Secrets of the Japanese Garden**, Tenants Foyer, Tatton Park. Booking essential – RHS, 020 7821 3408

Wed 17 Oct

Winsford Area Meeting, Civic Hall, Winsford at 7pm.

Fri 19 Oct

G(r)owing Nuts – learn about them ready for the planting season. More than just hazels! VROWG*: 7.30pm at Comberbach Memorial Hall, £1.50. Tel Anthony, 01606 853099

Sun 21 Oct

Norton Priory **Apple Day:** activities and traditional games with Norton Priory Museum Trust and CLT. Normal entry charges. Meet: 1pm, Norton Priory Walled Garden. Contact CLT*

Sun 23rd Oct

Landscape, Trees and Water – CLT led guided walk with orchard fruit tasting. 2pm, Ranger's Office, Marbury Country Park. Contact CLT*

Sat 27th Oct

Fungi foray, with Rita Cook, 10.30 to 4pm, Black Moss Covert, GR 745889 (far side of Dunham Massey). For all levels of experience. Learn to identify the larger species of fungi in the field. CWT training*

Wed 31 Oct

Frodsham Area Meeting, Community Centre, Fluin Lane, Frodsham, 7pm

Thurs 1 Nov

Rural Area Meeting, 7pm, venue TBA

Sat 3 Nov

Fires and Aliens: Get into Bonfire night spirit and help eradicate the rhododendron from ancient woodland at Marbury Park, 10am - 3pm. tel Chris Moseley, 01606 77741

Sat 3rd Nov

Planning for Wildlife & Wildlife Crime, with Dr Hilary Ash, PC Stephen Harris, Malcolm Ingham & Chris Driver, 10am to 2pm, Bickley Hall Farm. How land use planning can incorporate biodiversity benefits into new development proposals. Wildlife legislation; impact of development on protected species and sites; and advice on dealing with planning applications. Also protected species legislation, wildlife crime reporting and what the law can actually do for wildlife. CWT training*

Tues 6th Nov

Northwich Area Meeting, Memorial Hall, Northwich, 7pm

Mon 12th Nov

Common Herbs for Common Ailments. With medical herbalist Natalia Kerkham. FOAM, at Comberbach Memorial Hall, 7.30pm; £1.50 for non-members. Tel Natalia Kerkham, 01925 860287 or see www.urbanherbalist.co.uk/

*Notes

CLT: Cheshire Landscape Trust, Tel 01244 376333 or email [cltoffice\[at\]tiscali.co.uk](mailto:cltoffice[at]tiscali.co.uk)

CWT: Cheshire Wildlife Trust, 01948 820728

CWT Training. See www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/cheshire/news_training.htm, tel 01948 820728. £25 standard, £15 members, £50 environment professionals, £10 concessions (OAP/student/unemployed)

FOAM: Friends of Anderton & Marbury

LNR: Local Nature Reserve

VROWG: Vale Royal Organic & Wildlife Gardeners, tel Anthony, 01606 853099

sundry pics: Wild Chamomile

