

# NEWS FROM DORSET AGENDA 21

September 2005

## getting together

### Weymouth Relief Road - a sustainability case study?

It seemed ironic, when some of us were fresh back from alarming talks at CAT about climate change (see the article below by Richard Toft), to find the Weymouth Relief Road (WRR) close to the top of the planning agenda in South Dorset. Although road building is not usually a sustainable solution, this scheme shows how achieving sustainability is seldom simple. The WRR involves questions of landscape and wildlife, noise, pollution, facilities for buses, cyclists and walkers, local democracy (over 80% of local people polled in favour of the road) and the future of our economy.

We have a couple of events coming up to look more closely at the road plan. On **Sunday 2 October** Derek Fawell will lead a walk along the 2 mile southern half of the proposed route. Meet **at 10.30am at Greenway Road, Weymouth** (on the east side of Dorchester Road, about 20 yards north of the roundabout by Safeways [now Morrisons]). We shall walk to Littlemoor via Two Mile Coppice and Lorton Meadows nature reserve, both of which will be affected by the road. There is also a good vantage point to see where most of the northern half of the route will go. We aim to finish in 1½ - 2 hours, allowing time to stop along the way. Return by bus (bring small change) or walk back. Bring a packed lunch if you'd like to picnic together; you could also continue independently after lunch to view the northern part of the route from public footpaths. Expect some muddy paths. Numbers are limited so please **contact** Derek on 01305 770556 or [dfawell@onetel.com](mailto:dfawell@onetel.com) to book.

On **Wednesday 12 October** at 7.00 pm at **County Hall, Dorchester** we are joining again with other groups for a **meeting about Sustainable Transport in South Dorset**. This follows the meeting we held in July. It will focus partly on the WRR, and we hope to have information about the planning application, which will then be open for comments. For more details **contact** Steve Wills at [gnyndorset@aol.com](mailto:gnyndorset@aol.com) or 01305 787 381.

### Timber, tropics and sustainability

Neil Judd from Bridport is a director of ProForest, a company which certifies sustainable timber and other products all over the world. They have just been appointed as the government's Central Point of Expertise on Timber to advise on responsible procurement. On **Tuesday 8 November** at 7.15 pm Neil will be speaking at the **Woodhouse Garden Pavilion, The Plocks, Blandford** (near the Post Office) on **Sustainable Timber and Tropical Crops**. There will be a small charge to cover costs. (£1 members, £2.50 non-

members). For more details, including help with lift-sharing, **contact** the DA21 office (see end panel). The ProForest web site is [www.proforest.net](http://www.proforest.net).

### !!! Party Party Party Christmas Party Party Party !!!

Our brave member Laura Cousins invites us to step over the border into Poole and gather at her house from **12 till 4** on **Sunday 4 December**. Children are welcome. Please bring food and drink to share. There may well be music (Laura is known for her collection of drums and percussion; earplugs optional but not supplied!) Please **contact** Laura at 01202 248 622 or [ljcousins@hotmail.com](mailto:ljcousins@hotmail.com) for directions and to let her know you are coming.

### Upwey eco-home : return visit

Following our fascinating visit in July to Ronnie and Nick Brown's eco-house under construction, Perwina Whitmore hopes to arrange a return trip soon to see how it is progressing. If you are interested please **contact** Perwina at [tpdw@btinternet.com](mailto:tpdw@btinternet.com) or 01305 261065.

### AGM : date for your diary

We are planning to hold the AGM on Saturday 4 February. More details in the next news bulletin.

## sustainability news

### Climate Change

With the accelerated melting of the Arctic ice sheet, hurricane Katrina, and the drought in Niger, extremes of weather are seldom out of the news at the moment. Several campaigns are under way addressing climate change, including 'Take Global Warming Seriously' by Poole Agenda 21 [[www.tgws.org.uk](http://www.tgws.org.uk)], 'Stop Climate Chaos', a joint campaign by Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Oxfam, Tearfund, the WI, Christian Aid and others [[www.stopclimatechaos.org](http://www.stopclimatechaos.org)], and a campaign for a private member's Bill (*the Climate Change Bill*) to put legal restrictions on the emissions of carbon dioxide [[www.actnetwork.org.uk](http://www.actnetwork.org.uk)].

Our April bulletin carried some sceptical remarks about politicians and the gap between rhetoric and action on climate change. Time to eat humble pie after meeting Colin Challen MP at the CAT members' weekend! Colin is promoting a Bill for 'Domestic Tradable Quotas' (an individual carbon allowance), and a 25/5 campaign, to get people to pledge to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> by 25% over 5 years. He has several MPs signed up already.

However, as the Tyndall Centre's new report 'Decarbonising the UK' illustrates, there's still a way to go on aviation, to name but one! See [www.tyndall.ac.uk](http://www.tyndall.ac.uk)

## **GM crops**

The Five Year Freeze has re-launched as GM Freeze, [www.gmfreeze.org](http://www.gmfreeze.org). On 24 June 2005, Environment Ministers from across Europe voted to allow countries to keep their safety bans on genetically modified (GM) food (see [www.foeeurope.org](http://www.foeeurope.org)). An interim report is expected in October on the legal dispute at the WTO, where the European Union is accused of blocking trade by restricting GMOs ([www.bite-back.org](http://www.bite-back.org)).

## **organisation news**

### **Welcome to John Tomblin, our new Project Officer**

John has joined us to run our 'Community Choices for Sustainable Living' project, mentioned in our April bulletin. He was previously Projects Co-ordinator at Earthworks (a sustainable training centre for people with a learning disability) in Hertfordshire. John was involved in fundraising, publicity and promotions, as well as designing and installing a wind turbine/solar PV system to generate Earthworks' electricity. He enjoyed his day per week working with trainees and volunteers, which partly provided the inspiration for his office-based work.. (ed: I know how he feels!) Previously he worked as a Chemistry Teacher, an Oxfam Regional Organiser and a school Eco-centre Manager.

### **The 'Community Choices' project**

Under this project John aims to recruit volunteer 'community champions' to take action with other people who want to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. There are four possible areas for action: the home, transport, food and renewable energy. Ultimately we hope that consumer clubs will be formed, for example as food co-ops, solar clubs, car-sharing clubs, etc. (For one idea, see the article by Anne Eccleston below.) Training and support will be provided, with the first training in November. If you would like to know more please contact John at the DA21 office or [john@dorsetagenda21.org.uk](mailto:john@dorsetagenda21.org.uk) – he is keen to hear from you!

### **Outreach programme**

We have had a very successful summer taking our display to 10 shows and festivals throughout the county, from Christchurch to Gillingham to Bridport. Many thanks to the 20 odd (!) volunteers who have staffed our stall, to Tamara, Laura and Lynne who organised the project, and to Derek Smith who designed the display.

### **Growing pains**

This is proving a testing year as we grow, hopefully, to deliver more practical support to help Dorset move towards a more sustainable lifestyle. We are still trying to move to a larger office. We are leading or helping on 5 projects whilst still learning the art of project management! We clearly have an appetite for doing a lot with a little in the way of staff! ... and this is only possible thanks to the massive amount of voluntary help we receive. However we know that there have been glitches in letting you know what is happening, acknowledging your subs, and so on, for which we

apologise. We are working hard to sort this out – and it will probably still take a little longer. Please bear with us until we are in our new office and have a regular admin helper in post.

### **Image / facelift**

At our summer outreach events, volunteers have remarked that 'Agenda 21' seems to be an off-putting title for some members of the public. Even a little sinister-sounding, it has been said! There has been some debate in our internet news group about choosing a new name for Dorset Agenda 21, with ideas ranging from 'Dorset Trust for Sustainability' through 'Dorset Green Futures' to DorZed (as in BedZed, the zero energy development). This has the makings of an entertaining and long-lived party game; however we hope to wrap it up in the next few months. Do feel free to join in and send your ideas and thoughts to the office (end panel).

Meanwhile we are fortunate to have met Bernard Friedman, a new volunteer and professional web designer, who has offered to refresh our web site and house style – so look out for the new look.

### **Campaigning, how to ...**

Mike Martin pointed out some time ago that we could do more to raise sustainability up the political agenda. There is so much to say that it is partly a question of where to start! It would be useful to share some ideas face to face. Would anyone be interested in doing this at the pub after our November meeting in Blandford? Or arranging a pub meeting specifically to talk about this? Please let us know at the office.

### **People**

We are very pleased to welcome some new volunteers.

Mike Jones has joined us as External Liaison Officer, and has represented us at the meetings of several partner bodies such as the West Dorset Community Partnership and Volnet. He is also handling our web directory project, which is gathering information about the range of other organisations working for sustainability in Dorset.

Jane Altounyan responded to our advert for an honorary Membership Manager, and is starting to find out how we tick. Jane works part-time for a housing association and is doing the MSc course run jointly by CAT and the University of East London (UEL). She says 'The course ranges from a global examination of energy provision, consumption and climate change, resource provision and waste disposal, to local environmental considerations affecting occupant health and well being; choice of materials with environmental constraints; environmental design; design for energy efficiency and renewable energies.' Handy for us ☺.

Sally Wise-Ketchley has offered some life-saving help sorting out our accounts ready for submission to Companies House. Sally has an unusual combination of skills, having done a degree in geography and environmental studies, followed by training as an accounting technician.

Meanwhile we are sorry to lose Nick Lugg, our outgoing treasurer, who is going into business on his own account, and Maria Timperley who has stepped down as a trustee, due to pressure of other commitments. We are very grateful to both of them for all their hard work; we hope they will still keep in touch (not least so that we can continue our interesting 'discussions' with Nick about his support for nuclear power!)

## news from members

### Visit to CAT - report by Richard Toft

The Centre for Alternative Technology held its Members' weekend on 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> September, and there were three key papers for me as a relative newcomer to the field. The first was the Director's celebration of the 30 years of CAT's existence, an outline of their plans to build a teaching facility to support their Master's degree course, and some observations on the evolving public perception of CAT. This was followed on the Saturday by a review of the latest science of global warming, and where we are heading, presented by Sir John Houghton a former Chairman of the International Panel on Climate Change. On Sunday, Stuart Bond of WWF outlined the Ecological Footprinting of Wales which the Welsh Assembly are supporting. The whole programme was complemented by some inspiring delegates' presentations, and intensive networking amongst a group of like-minded individuals meeting in wonderful surroundings under glorious autumnal weather.

To say that I was shocked would be an understatement. I was left reeling with the implications of what I had heard. Dare I believe what the scientists are telling us, and what it could mean for my lifestyle and that of my children? If you would like more details of any of the presentations, or share my concern and have ideas about what to do about it, please feel free to get in touch with me at [Richard.toft@btinternet.com](mailto:Richard.toft@btinternet.com).

### Straw bale building and lime rendering course - report by Liz Coulter

In July my husband, Colin, attended a straw bale building and lime rendering course at the Magdalen Project near Crewkerne. The course was run by Rob Buckley from the Dorset Centre for Rural Skills. Colin's aim was to learn the skills to build some small outbuildings such as a shed or workshop if or when we are able to get some land in New Zealand. Other members of the course had equally small scale ideas of how to use their soon to be acquired skills.

On the first day some theoretical work was done before beginning a hands-on straw bale construction. From preparing the site, setting out and making the base and top plates and placing and pinning the straw bales with hazel stakes, the whole process was undertaken over the rest of that day and the whole of the next one. Ideally before starting the rendering process the bales should be allowed to settle with the weight of the roof which will cause a small reduction of the overall wall height, for at least a couple of weeks. However, under learning conditions the lime rendering was started the next day

and applied using spraying and the normal hawk and trowel techniques.

The aim of the process is to start off with dry bales and to keep them that way. Any ingress of dampness is likely to begin the decay or composting of the bales. For that reason a roof with a big overlap area is beneficial as is strict attention to the integrity of the rendering. The latter also prevents the possibility of vermin getting in.

Every evening on his return Colin was overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this technique. He has modified his aspirations to building something far more elaborate such as a guest house or even our own living accommodation. Every one of the other course attendees also went away with grander ideas of what could be achieved with straw bales.

### Profile of a prospective community champion - Anne Eccleston ... in her own words!

I have a keen interest in sustainable transport and the interest grows the older I get!

I am 57 years old living with my partner in Dorchester with 3 daughters in their twenties. I am fortunate to live in the centre of town which makes using public transport that much easier. I work for the Family Court Advisory Service with an office base in Poundbury but until February was based in Weymouth. The job demands some travelling but I do my best to use bike or a combination of bike and train with the occasional use of bus.

I am part of the W. Dorset group of Sustrans cyclists who keep an eye on the National Cycle Network in our area, a member of the Dorset Cyclists Network and the Cyclists Touring Club - as you can see my commitment to cycling is beyond question! Yes, I admit there are some places which cannot be reached by anything other than car in a time span that makes best use of my working hours. On average I use the car 2 days a month - something I found very surprising after automatically getting in the car to go to work every day! I have the added bonus of being much fitter now.

For the last 2 1/2 years I have had an arrangement with a friend that I use her car for those journeys. She works at the hospital in Dorchester and doesn't normally need the car during the day. The way our system works is that I let her know the week before when I am likely to need the car for the following week. As I work a 4 day week, we have an understanding that I can use the car during the day from Monday to Thursday. I pay her the extra £50 pa it has cost her to go on her insurance and I pay her 30p for each mile I travel. The car stays at her house and it takes me 10 minutes by bike to get there. This scheme has worked quite well for both of us but will be coming to an end next May.

[... so you'll be looking for some prospective car club partners then Anne ???! - ed]

For further information about Dorset Agenda 21 or this news bulletin please contact Sally Cooke, P O Box 5789, Dorchester DT2 8ZR. Tel : 01305 213721

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