

UpBEAT

Newsletter for Blackshaw Environmental Action Team (BEAT)



Jan - Feb 2013

Issue 23

From the editor

Happy New Year to everyone!
Hope you had a good seasonal break.

BEAT is preparing for another busy year. We have started on our nature conservation work and would like to thank everyone who gave a donation to this work, whether in cash or through LocalGiving.com.



Photo: Colden Bird Boxes

Charlestown Allotment Group has now got fencing up on their site. BEAT contributed £1,645.52 towards the cost of the fencing.

Congratulations to the Great Rock Coop for a successful event on 23 December. Once again it showed what the community can achieve by working together.

For further information please see www.greatrockcoop.co.uk



Photo: Great Rock Coop Logo

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Photo: Allotment Fencing

Community orchard

Some of the 100 grafted fruit trees need re-grafting and all the grafted trees then need planting into our sheltered tree nursery at Frank and Maggs'. This will take place in March.

The fruit trees will be left in the

nursery for two years to get established while the 1,500 trees already planted as windbreak grow large enough to protect the fruit trees when we plant them in their permanent location.

During the next two years we therefore have to keep the grass and reeds down. The reeds

cannot be cut down with a lawnmower, so rather than using weedkiller, some of the people who participated in the scything workshop organized by Lucy have offered to use their new skills. Many thanks to them for their help.

Community wind turbine

The community wind turbine had generated 5444 kWh on 30th December since its grid connection on 30 October 2012. With a payment of 29.6 pence per kWh produced the profits from the Feed in Tariff will be used to pay a return on members' investment and to benefit the local community.

In the three weeks up to the grid connection the wind turbine was free-wheeling and was therefore noisier than when in operation. Unfortunately, even after the grid connection it has produced some unusual noises at certain wind speeds. After some delay, the wind turbine company came out to adjust the settings of the blades. They will return in early January



Photo: Fencing around Community Wind Turbine

on a windy day to complete this. PCP apologises to the neighbours of the wind turbine for these teething problems.

We have now put a fence around the wind turbine. This is a safety measure to stop people getting near it.

For more information, including a live feed of how much the turbine produces, how much it has produced so far and how much it has produced each day since the grid connection, visit the Pennine Community Power website www.powerinthecommunity.org.

Warmer houses reduced heating bills

As reported in the last BEAT newsletter, BEAT has been working with a British Gas project to install subsidised air source heat pumps in suitable properties. In all, 45 households requested a survey, but not all the houses were suitable for this sort of system.

Some households decided not to go ahead for reasons such as lack of space for a tank or large radiators, the time of year for the installation or the disruption it would cause. Ideally, the work would have been done during the summer.

The deadline for the installation of an air source heat pump with a discount of around £10,000 has now been extended by the government to the end of March

2013. So if you would like a free survey of your house to see if it is suitable, and a quote for installation (usually around £5,000), please email finn.jensen@rocketmail.com with your phone number(s).

The conditions are the same as the initial offer: you have to be off mains gas. If a gas pipe runs near your house but you are not connected to it, you can still qualify. The performance of the heat pumps will be monitored via broadband, and if you do not already have broadband, British Gas will install it for you.

If you have already had a survey done and your house was suitable for an air source heat pump but you did not want it installed in December, you now have the option of having it installed before 1 April 2013.

If you have an air source heat

pump, a biomass heating system or thermal solar panels, you are likely to qualify for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) from 2013 for up to seven years.

These government payments are not finalised but the government is suggesting that they will be high enough to pay off the costs of having the heating system installed plus a bit extra for the inconvenience of the disruption during installation.

BEAT is also discussing with British Gas the possibility of low-income households on state benefits, who are not on mains gas, getting their heating systems upgraded for free. This could be through insulation (loft and cavity wall or solid wall insulation), connection to mains gas or the installation of heat pumps or biomass heating systems.

Watch for further news on this.

Nature conservation

BEAT has bought five bat boxes and five bird boxes, which will be put up in Colden Clough early next year. These are high quality Schwegler boxes which can last 20-25 years. Many thanks to Phil Knowles for securing permission for this and to Matt Bell for advising us where to put the bird boxes.

Photo: Colden Bird & Bat Boxes



Matt will be speaking about birds at one of BEAT's public meetings in 2013. He has also offered to lead a birdwatching walk in May for anyone interested. The walk will start at 7.30am and last for two

and a half hours. This walk is not suitable for children but Matt has offered to lead a separate walk for children if there is interest.

We also bought a bird box with a camera for Colden School, so the children and the rest of us can watch what goes on inside the box on a computer or TV. We plan to download some of the footage and post it on the school and BEAT websites. The bird box was put up by Phil and Steve – many thanks to them both. BEAT spent £377 on these items.



Photo: Camera Bird Box

You can support BEAT's work by making a £10 donation with a

credit/debit card through LocalGiving.com. Type in HX77JB and select BEAT's homepage, which will be the first on the list. The first £10 of every donation we receive will be matched funded – so if you donate £10 BEAT will receive £20 through the scheme! If you are a UK taxpayer, please Gift Aid your donation: BEAT will then receive a 25% top-up on the amount you donate, at no extra cost to you. If you would like to donate more than £10, you can make up to ten £10 donations (a total of £100) and they will each be match funded. BEAT is grateful for all your support that enables us to undertake these projects

On 13 March Hugh Firman BSc (Hons) MSc MIEEM CEnv will be speaking about bats at a public meeting. Hugh is part of the West Yorkshire Bat Group and a conservation officer at Calderdale Council.

Helping our bats

Like much of our wildlife, bats are struggling, and as part of BEAT's nature conservation strategy we are taking steps to give our local population some support by placing five bat boxes in Colden Clough.

The bats we see around Blackshaw Head on summer evenings are Noctules. Noctule bats have rich, golden-brown fur with darker wings, ears and face. They are one of the larger British bat species, 60-80mm long with a wingspan of 320-400mm. Adults can weigh up to 40g and, with luck, can live up to 12 years. They come out around sunset to feed on moths, beetles and other large flying insects.

Noctules are primarily tree

dwellers, living in rot holes or woodpecker holes. From October to April they hibernate in trees, bat boxes, buildings and rock fissures. They sometimes sit on top of each other to keep warm, but in particularly cold winters up to half of them may freeze to death.

The bat population is declining as roost sites are lost and food supplies become less abundant. Natural habitats such as hedgerows, woodlands and ponds have become scarcer. To help bats recover and survive, it is important that we create suitable new habitats as well as managing and enhancing existing ones.

Loss of habitat, the use of pesticides and changes in farming practices have led to a reduction in the numbers of flying insects that bats rely on for food. For example,

the change from hay making to silage has meant that many insects do not reach maturity, so there are fewer flying adults. Changes in climate may also influence insect life cycles and this in turn may affect when bats can feed.

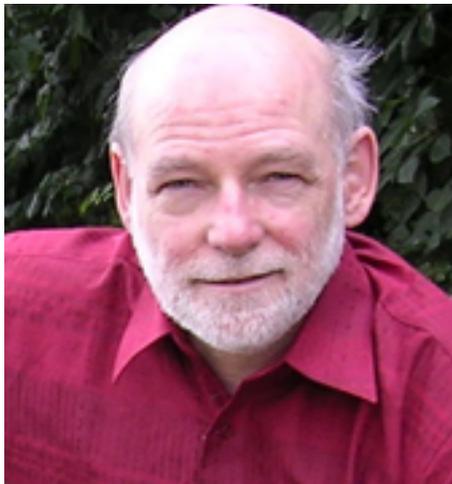
Most of us are aware that there are garden plants that attract insects and bees. Growing some of these will help to provide valuable food sources for bats, as well as having many other benefits for your garden. You might like to put up a bat box to improve their habitat. BEAT has information about bat boxes, so contact us if you are interested.

All UK bats and their roosts are protected by law: it is illegal to harm or disturb them.

By Helen Eccles

BEAT public meeting in Heptonstall

BEAT is holding its first ever public meeting in Heptonstall on Wednesday 9 January at 7.45 pm at the Social and Bowling Club. The topic is 'Our food future – global vs local?', a talk and



discussion led by Geoff Tansey.

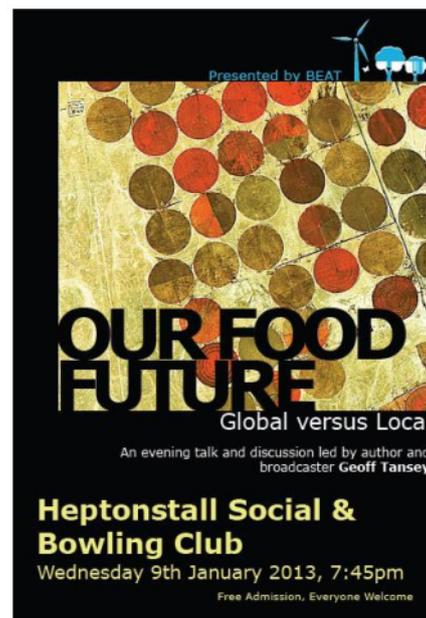
Geoff Tansey has worked on food,

agriculture and development issues for over 35 years. He has degrees in soil science (University of Aberdeen) and history of and social studies of science (Sussex University). He helped found and edit the journal Food Policy in the mid-1970s, has worked on agricultural development projects in Turkey, Mongolia, Albania and Kazakhstan and travelled widely.

Since 1981, he has been an independent writer, consultant, and occasional broadcaster. His books include The Food System: A guide (with Tony Worsley) and co-editorship of The future control of food: A guide to international negotiations and rules on intellectual property, biodiversity and food security.

In June 2005, he received a Joseph Rowntree 'Visionaries for a

Just and Peaceful World' Award and, in 2008, he won the Derek



Cooper Award for best food campaigner/educator, at the BBC Radio 4 Food and Farming Awards. He is a member and a trustee of the Food Ethics Council. Website: www.tansey.org.uk.

BEAT events

On **14 November** Ian Scott spoke about community recycling



schemes and Ben from HebVeg spoke about their vegetable growing and box scheme in Hebden Bridge. Many thanks to both of them.

On **12 December** Jenny Shepherd talked about her work with Incredible Edible Myholm and www.energyroyd.org.uk,



Steve Welsh spoke about their

biomass heating system and wind turbine and Peter Bradley about their wind turbine. We also had mince pies with our tea and coffee as part of the festive season. Many thanks to all the speakers.

On **Wednesday 9 January** BEAT is holding its first public meeting in Heptonstall at 7.45pm at the Social and Bowling Club. The topic is 'Our food future – global vs local?', a talk and discussion led by Geoff Tansey. See more details

Geoff Tansey
fair, healthy and sustainable food systems

about Geoff elsewhere in this newsletter.

On **13 February** we have Jonathan Atkinson from the

Carbon Co-op in Manchester (www.carbon.coop) speaking, Phil Knowles and Finn Jensen will also be talking about their experiences with two different types of thermal solar panels. Phil will describe how ten households in Blackshaw Head got together to install thermal solar panels as a BEAT community project.

On **13 March** we have a public meeting with Hugh Firman BSc (Hons) MSc MIEEM CEnv speaking about bats. Hugh is part of the West Yorkshire Bat Group and a conservation officer at Calderdale Council.

All the above meetings – except 9th Jan – are held at Blackshaw Head Methodist Church (the Chapel) at 7.45pm. Tea and coffee is served.

Contact BEAT: Ashley Sharp (secretary)
Finn Jensen (treasurer)
Peter Bradley (chair)

tel: 07855 746295
tel: 01422 846863
tel: 07910 221098

email: secretary@blackshawbeat.info
email: treasurer@blackshawbeat.info
email: chair@blackshawbeat.com