

UpBEAT

Newsletter from Blackshaw Environmental Action Team (BEAT)



UpBEAT no 14, July-August 2011

From the editor:

Thanks to everyone who supported the 'Visit Your Neighbour' event on 2nd July and particular thanks to those who opened up their gardens, showed their smallholdings or renewable technologies. As this was the first time we'd held this event, we sought feedback from the community on how it had gone, many thanks for filling in the survey. We raised over £200 which was divided amongst the organising local groups. The feedback was very positive, as you can see:

Headlines:

- ❖ 97% of people would take part again
 - ❖ 89% of the people who didn't come only didn't because they weren't available
 - ❖ 93% of people thought the variety of things to do was good or excellent
 - ❖ 83% of people thought the map was good or excellent
 - ❖ 70% want it to stay the same in terms of donating what you can at each site
 - ❖ there was quite a split in terms of how widely to market next year, with 42% wanting just Blackshaw Parish and 58% wanting to add in Heptonstall Parish, Hebden Bridge & Todmorden
 - ❖ Main niggles were with marketing and getting the timings right
- We'll take on board this feedback and any more you'd like to give and make sure next years event is even better!

Also thanks to those who came to BEAT's community consultation meeting on 13th July, where the vision and plan for a sustainable Blackshaw Parish was discussed and agreed. The plan is published in this newsletter, on www.blackshaw.net/BEAT and will also be available at the village fete.

The agreed plan now sets the priorities for BEAT's work for the coming months and years. If you want to be involved in some of this work please contact one of the three BEAT officers. We will give updates on the various projects in future issues of UpBEAT.

You can contact BEAT on:

Ashley Sharp, secretary, tel. 07855746295, email: ashleysharp@sustainable-sources.co.uk
Tim Cole, chair, tel. 01706-813800, email: dargancole@btinternet.com
Finn Jensen, treasurer, tel. 01422 846863, email: finn.jensen@rocketmail.com

***** Green News *****

Dutch study reveals how offshore wind farms may benefit wildlife

The study by the University of Wageningen looked at the impact on wildlife of the first large offshore wind farm built off the Dutch coast. It found that a few species sea bird may avoid the area surrounding the turbines, but the seabed was much higher in biodiversity and abundance in the areas surrounding the turbine foundations. The implications of the study are that the increasing number of wind farms being built around the UK coastline could provide vital refuges for marine animals, including marine mammals and fish.

Australian turtle numbers falling on Great Barrier Reef

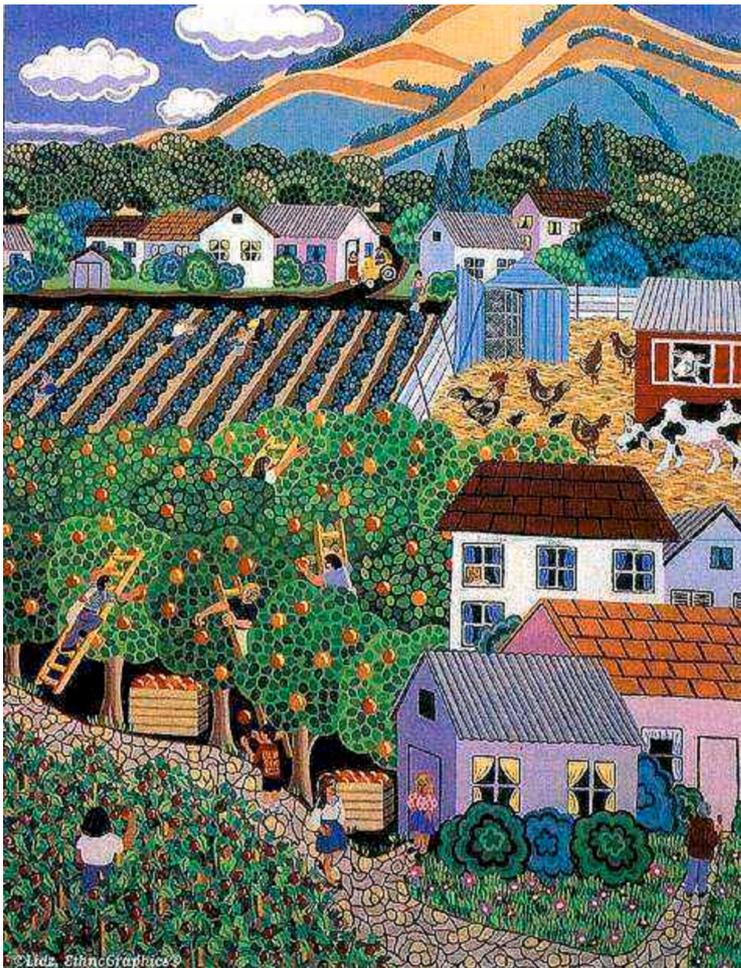
Nearly 650 turtle have been washed up either dead or dying on the Australian coastline this year. Scientists are recording that nearly all are starving indicating that their usual food supply is running low. The turtles usually feed on the seagrasses surrounding the reef, however large areas were destroyed by cyclone Yasi which hit the area in February this year. Pesticides from agricultural runoff are also causing problems for the reef. Some of the turtles are being rehabilitated at local rescue centres, however the outlook is bleak for many as these centres fill up.

Rush to complete large scale solar farms before feed in tariff rates drop

Several companies managed to beat the August 1st deadline for the completion of new solar farms generating over 50kW after the government carried through their proposal to cut the feed in tariff (FIT) for large solar farms by up to 70%. Feed in tariff rates have not been cut for domestic scale installations, however citing concerns that large scale solar parks would Hoover up the available FIT money, and despite widespread opposition from the solar industry, the government enforced the deadline as planned.

Community Orchard & Allotments

Maggs and Frank have kindly offered to have a community orchard on some of their land and are exploring the idea of community allotments. BEAT discussed the idea with Blackshaw Optimistic Gardeners (BOGs) and Blackshaw Food Network (BFN) who are both keen on the idea. So we have started planning this project. Treesponsibility and Calderdale Local Orchard Group (CLOG) have agreed to help us in various ways. Treesponsibility has offered to plant windbreaks this year so they can be established before planting fruit trees and bushes. Various school groups will help with the tree planting sessions with Treesponsibility showing them how to do it. We will apply to the Woodland Trust for 1260 free trees – the rest (if we need more) will be provided by Treesponsibility. CLOG will advise us on which local apple tree varieties will grow best on the site of the community orchard. They will also offer training courses on grafting, maintenance of the fruit trees and how to make cider out of the apples! Some local residents are willing to run courses on how to make produce (jam, chutney, etc) out of the fruit. The orchard will also have fruit bushes.



Come & see the display on the BFN stall at Blackshaw Fete on 3rd September to see how the community orchard & allotments could look and give us your opinion!

Among other ideas for the community orchard is having a shed for the tools. The shed can also act as shelter and for brewing a cuppa. We could even have a polytunnel or green house if we establish a community allotment/garden after the orchard is finished. Benches and picnic tables could also be set up around the orchard. Frank and Maggs have agreed that we can harvest the rainwater from their house-roof and store the water in 1000 litre containers – so the plants can survive a dry period. So far BOGs and BEAT have raised £91.21 – from the 'Visit Your Neighbour' event – for the community orchard.

The community orchard will be open for any local resident to come and enjoy the fruits, particularly those who have helped maintain the orchard. We will need volunteers to make sure the orchard stays healthy.

Our local Parish Council is supporting this project. Here is what they decided:

“At the last meeting of Blackshaw Parish Council on 27 June 2011 there was a discussion about the BEAT proposal to try and create a community orchard at Lower Moss Hall Farm. Following that discussion, the Parish Council instructed me as Clerk to write and offer the full support of the Parish Council to your proposals.

The Community Orchard proposal from BEAT is an excellent way to encourage more local food production and help to educate the community to become more sustainable and self reliant. Frank and Mags, the owners of Lower Moss Hall Farm, are to be congratulated for their altruism in providing the land and opportunity for this orchard and hopefully the partnership with Calderdale Local Orchard Group will be fruitful (!). The Parish Council wishes you every success with the project and look forward to fresh fruit growing on these wonderful hills where we are lucky enough to live.”

Lars Hansen, clerk to the Parish Council

Making our Local Church and Community Centre Sustainable.

As you will have seen in UpBEAT no 13 BEAT offered our local Methodist Church help making the building more sustainable. The church is a really important community centre as well as a place of worship. On United Nations' Environmental Day the church (called the Chapel locally) held a service on how we all can help look after the environment and BEAT was given an opportunity to speak on how the Chapel could reduce it's energy needs and produce some of its own electricity.

Having had various companies out to give advice and quotes, BEAT is recommending the Chapel install a 9kw photovoltaic (PV) system which will produce electricity for the Chapel even on cloudy days, to install double glazed windows and insulate the wall in the two downstairs community rooms. These plans will now be submitted to the Chapel's committee for consideration. BEAT has also offered the Chapel's committee and other members of the congregation to arrange a day trip to various community owned village halls in the Forest of Bowland, which have all installed renewable technologies – to hear of their experience and how much they have saved on their energy bills. Once the Chapel's committee has agreed to any work they want done on the Chapel we will be making grant applications for that work.

Explain Yourself

*Two Curlews fly high
Warbling,
Curving in the breeze,
Celebrating their new young.
Two swallows swoop low
Catching food for their new young
Fast, back to the nest.
Two huge grey military helicopters
Invade the valley
Throbbing
Overturning the peace
Hammering hard and close.
The geese huddle together
Beaks all in a line,
Moving together as one,
Gazing at the passing monsters,
Confused.
...It takes a few moments
...For all to recover
I feel lost.*

*What can I say to explain...
Sorry?*

*Written by Keith Lomax
4 June 2010*

Hydro Project.

BEAT is working with Hebden Bridge Transition Town (HBTT) and Powerfromthelandscape at the Alternative Technology Centre (ATC) in Hebden Bridge to establish a 15kw hydro project. We had a meeting with the local residents association who own the land to discuss the project and got their support. Preliminary estimates indicates that the hydro project could generate up to £10,000 per year and it has been agreed that the local residents' association will be paid £1,000 per year for the first 12 years the project gives a surplus (after maintenance costs have been paid). This will enable the association to pay off a £12,000 private loan they took to buy the land – to stop developers cutting down the trees and building on the land.

Food Festival a Success!



Blackshaw Food Network (BFN) held their second annual food festival in July. A very successful event, with fantastic food and drink, much of it grown in peoples' gardens and allotments. There are so many talented chefs in our community!

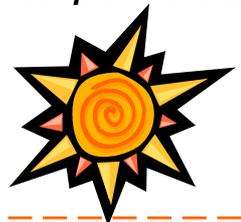
You did not have to bring food for the event and there was an opportunity to make a donation where half the money went to BFN and the other half to the famine victims in East Africa. Many thanks to BFN for organising this enjoyable afternoon and evening.



Photos by Craig at bluplanetphoto.co.uk

PV Solar on community buildings.

The Alternative Technology Centre in Hebden Bridge arranged a training course on the benefits of having PV solar panels on community buildings generating electricity. A member of BEAT attended the course that was beneficial for our discussions with the Chapel in Blackshaw Head.



Local Economy event on 16th July.

Hebden Bridge Transition Town arranged a showcase event where local community groups and businesses could show how they contribute to the local economy. Each participating group could have a page in a booklet, printed in 1000 copies, where they could explain what they did and wanted to do, ask for help that could be in the form of volunteers, donations, investments, materials, etc. BEAT had a page in the booklet, a stall with an exhibition and Ash did a presentation of the Parish Sustainability Plan in the main hall of Riverside School.

Transition Network Conference in Liverpool

The hundreds of transition towns across the UK held their annual conference in Liverpool on 9-11th July. A member of BEAT attended the conference and participated in a workshop on community owned renewable energy systems. There are now 375 transition initiatives in the UK and a further 400 who are in the process of becoming one. Between 250 and 260 attended the conference and although it was a UK conference 12 countries were represented – from Japan to Brazil.

An extensive report on the conference is available at

<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/news>



'Digging a little deeper: exploring environmental issues'

This is a 10-week course organised by Workers Educational Association (WEA) starts on 15th September and takes place every Thursday from 7-9pm at the Alternative Technology Centre (ATC) in Hebden Bridge. The course costs £60 (£3 if you are on state benefits).

The course will consider a range of issues, including: will the world soon face an energy and food shortage? Do we need nuclear power? how can we avoid the loss of biodiversity? What could a sustainable society look like? For more information, call the tutor Finn on 01422 846863 or email finn.jensen@rocketmail.com. You do not have to book in advance – just turn up on 15-9 at 7pm, and you do not have to pay until 22nd September.

Get your Green Electricity via BEAT and get a 10% discount!

BEAT has teamed up with Green Energy UK to give you the opportunity to support 100% green electricity from renewable sources. If you sign up through BEAT you will get a 10% discount on you electricity bills. It only takes a couple of minutes to sign up. We can either email you the web-link if you contact Finn or you can contact Green Energy UK on 0800 954 0675 and speak to Liz Bell but remember to tell her that you want to sign up through BEAT!

For every household and business that sign up we are one step closer to making our Parish the greenest in the country!

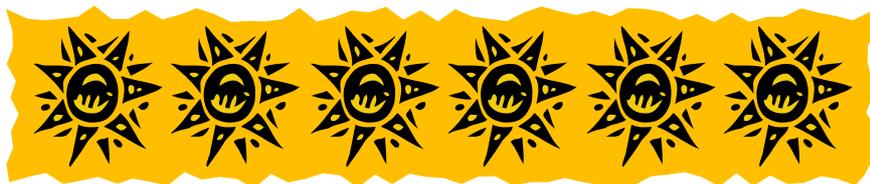
More on Solar Panels

In the no 12 issue of UpBEAT we had an article from Phil Knowles on his experience with his thermal solar panel. Here Jan Melloy gives her experience of thermal solar panels:

As one of the residents who was mentioned in the UpBEAT magazine, I thought I would add a piece about my experience of solar panels. In case you haven't read issue no 12, ten of us joined together to buy the solar panels for our hot water about six years ago.

Of course, the major saving is that we are not using fossil fuels to heat our water for about six months of the year and even when it is not hot enough for washing up or a bath, the water only has to be heated from tepid. The other saving is financial, but we, like Phil have not actually totted up this saving. That is quite hard to do in view of the increase in fuel charge and VAT. However for me the main change is that I do not EXPECT hot water to come steaming out of the tap (as if it is our right!), I have to think about it and also that on a sunny day I will do the jobs that need hot water in the morning so that it can heat up again for domestic use in the evening. It is this awareness that seems to me to be the real joy and keeps me connected to the seasons and weather.

Jan Melloy



BEAT meetings

At the BEAT public meeting on 13th July a 'Sustainability Plan for Blackshaw Parish' was agreed. Ash Sharp was elected as secretary of BEAT as George had to resign. Thanks to George for her work as a BEAT secretary. It was also agreed to have a village clean-up on Saturday 15th October and to have the BEAT AGM on Wednesday 12th October.

There is no BEAT meeting in August – we are taking a break from a busy year.

On Wednesday 14th September BEAT has an extraordinary meeting to discuss our sustainability plan including the plans for a community owned wind turbine. This meeting will be advertised at the Blackshaw fete on 3rd September. On 12th October BEAT will have its Annual General Meeting where we have various speakers on community owned renewable energy systems: Emma Thompson from Calderdale Council, Polly Webber from Alternative Technology Centre and Peter Hill from Power from the Landscape.

All BEAT meetings are open to the public but only BEAT members can vote, so become a member for just £1 per year and take part in shaping the future!

Designed & formatted by Angie Guy