

NEWS FROM DORSET AGENDA 21

April 2005

getting together

an extraordinary example of sustainable living

On **Saturday 7 May** we visit **Tinker's Bubble**. This is a low impact, intentional community that was established in woodland near Yeovil in 1994. The aim of the founders was to make a living from the land whilst making minimal environmental impact. Today they live with no fossil fuel power, in yurts and cob buildings, selling organic vegetables, fruit, wool and wood to local people and at local markets. They have some wind and solar power for electricity, a steam-powered saw-bench and a Shire horse that helps with heavy work in the woodland.

The community have experienced much resistance to their plans to live off the 40 acres that they bought and were involved in an epic battle with the local council, as planning law does not provide for people who want to live this way. Now the dozen adults and handful of children are appreciated and valued members of the local community. Paddy Ashdown lives locally and is a supporter, saying, "...the outcome has been to add to, not diminish, the quality of life in our village".

Our visit is an opportunity for a walk around a project with a difference with much more to discover than described above – animals, a cider house, permaculture, compost toilets, a ram pump, orchards and meadows. We will be accompanied by one of the members of the co-operative and the visit **will start at 2pm and last 2-3 hours. Numbers are strictly limited** to 25 so please **contact** Damian Brothers on 01300 345216 or d.brothers@virgin.net as soon as possible to reserve your place. Parking is very limited so a meeting point away from the site will be organised where we can gather into six cars and travel there in convoy. There will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions and a cup of tea will be provided. The site is fairly hilly and there are no paths so those with mobility issues might find the terrain difficult. There is no entry charge but we will pass a hat around afterwards or you might like to bring some fresh organic produce from your garden or kitchen!

sustainability news

Climate Change and the election

It seemed that climate change was in everyone's face after the international conference at the Met Office's Hadley Centre in Exeter in February – yet what signs do you see that the political parties are willing to begin acting rather than talking about it? Which is especially surprising given that 'small actions now are disproportionately important ... because of the non-linearity of the process' (i.e. climate change effects can run out of control once they reach a

certain threshold) – said Lord May, President of the Royal Society, in March.

Why not use your chance before 5 May to ask your parliamentary candidates what they would do (for example) to manage the demand for car and air travel, and create tax incentives for materials and production methods that use less fossil fuels?

If you live in West Dorset there's a chance to question your candidates at:

WWF's **"Stop Climate Chaos"** hustings on **Saturday 30th April** at 8pm at **Dorchester Town Hall**.

This is the only event of its kind in the South-West region. It's an open meeting but WWF would like you to contact Sam Durham on sdurham@wwf.org.uk or 0117 317 9350, to reserve a place and help them gauge numbers. Please tell your friends!

Millennium report – planet dying but what about the people?

Did you read about the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, backed by the Chief Scientist at the World Bank and nearly 1400 scientists from 95 countries, which was launched at the Royal Society on March 30th? In headline language it says that 2/3 of the world's resources are 'used up', or more temperately that 'almost two-thirds of the natural machinery that supports life on Earth is being degraded' (still pretty bad then ...).

Unfortunately the press reported a raft of gloomy statistics, with mind-numbing effect. It said nothing of the plight of individual people or communities who are struggling to cope with flooding, desertification or the collapse of fish stocks.

GM update

News recently came to light that small amounts of unapproved GM maize seed have been allowed into Europe from the US since 2001, due to an oversight by the US regulatory authorities. Meanwhile the US has been pursuing its complaint in the World Trade Organisation against Europe for allowing individual countries to maintain a *de facto* ban on GM crops. A WTO panel ruling is expected this Spring, with a report to follow in June. (source: www.fiveyearfreeze.org)

The Five Year Freeze, of which DA21 is a member, has suggested some questions for election candidates, see their website above, for example asking about strict liability on GM companies for damage, or about local areas having a right to decide whether GM crops should be grown there.

Waste champions in Dorset

This pilot scheme, which involves volunteers encouraging more people to compost their green waste, is under way and will hopefully be appearing at a summer event near

you More info from Liz Coulter on 01305 852278 or liz@coulter@tiscali.co.uk .

DA21 has put in a bid to CRED (one of the Lottery funds) for just over £100,000 to expand the scheme (i.e. for some staff to run it!) Many thanks to our partner organisations, especially WRAP, DWT and DCC, who helped to make the bid possible. We expect a result (hopefully a yes!) by late autumn.

Dorset's Renewable Energy Strategy out

Since November 2003 the Centre for Sustainable Energy, based in Bristol, has been at work on a strategy for renewable energy in Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole, commissioned by Dorset County Council. There has been wide consultation with community groups, and Alan Swindall, William Kendrick and Ray Peto have worked hard to put DA21's views across. Dave Bloomfield helped our Energy Working Group to formulate and submit views on the strategy in draft. The final version is now out and awaiting endorsement by councils and consultees.

It's packed with information and plans. On the action front, it proposes positive planning policies, energy from waste and biomass, action for sustainable energy in buildings, community renewables (a role for DA21), and research on Dorset's potential for energy efficiency, tidal stream potential, business opportunities and liquid biofuels for transport. But, before you get too excited, be aware - funds for delivering the actions have yet to be identified...

After endorsement, the strategy will be published in July. Until then we have a copy that can be viewed in the office - please ring or email if you're interested.

organisation news

New DA21 project to promote sustainable consumption

Thanks to a joint initiative with partner organisations in Somerset and Devon we have been awarded just over £100,000 from the government's Environmental Action Fund for a project called 'Community Choices for Sustainable Living' - bit of a mouthful, but the idea is simple: helping householders switch to a more environmentally friendly lifestyle.

We'll do this by showing examples of where people are already living more sustainably, and by highlighting environmentally friendly products and where you can buy them. The project can include many different aspects of lifestyle, from holidays to heating and from food to furniture.

We are currently advertising for 2 paid staff (1 full- and 1 part-time) to run the project, so if you or any friends are interested please contact the office as soon as possible (office@dorsetagenda21.org.uk or 01305 213721).

Recent events (1)

Our AGM / mini-conference in January attracted 50 of you and heard from several members of DA21 on themes both local and global. Our principal speaker was Sir Ghillean Prance, former director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Sir Ghillean spoke about his work in Brazil, where he has seen areas of rainforest devastated for

ranching and soya bean growing. However, in some individual towns, fittingly since Rio saw the birth of Agenda 21, Local Agenda 21 is making a real difference. Asked if it's already too late to halt the eco-catastrophe of climate change, Sir Ghillean felt that the point of no-return was near, but we have a few years to make a difference - a call to action indeed.

We elected a new board of directors at the AGM, who are also our charity trustees. They are :

Sally Cooke (chairman)	Dave Bloomfield
Richard Burden (secretary)	Damian Brothers
John Gaylard	Pamela Sylvester
Maria Timperley	

Recent events (2)

Several members made the trip to Exeter to visit the "Homes for Good Exhibition" on Friday and Saturday 18/ 19 February. There were over 70 exhibitors this year (up on last year's 50), and many useful contacts were made. Celebrity-spotters may like to know that one of us noticed Will Anderson there, who writes a weekly 'diary of an eco-builder' in the Independent. Many thanks to Kelvin Bland for arranging the trip.

Schools workshops

Last year our team of Jill Strawbridge, Mandy Marshall, Dorothy Woods and Tamara Loakes developed a workshop for schools on Food Miles, in which about 600 children at 10 schools took part. In March we ran it again, at Portesham School during their Food Week, with great success. The updated workshop lasts about 2 hours and is available to schools with year 5 and 6 students. (There is a charge to cover time, materials and travel.)

Questionnaire and volunteers

Remember the shocking pink questionnaire? In November we sent it to the 260 people on our mailing list, to help us get ready for being more active in the community and to clarify what members want. By January we'd had 36 back (more since), and surprisingly few shocking comments!

Highlights of the results are : members are most interested in waste, energy and food, with building, transport and education not far behind; the most popular DA21 activities are site visits, closely followed by speaker meetings; people who are getting what they want from DA21 outnumber those who aren't by 2½ to 1 (most of those who aren't made suggestions which we are taking on board); almost 2/3 of replies offered help with DA21's activities.

Letters have been sent to people who offered help, linking them with our members who are leading on specific activities... but if you would still like to offer there is room for more! Please contact the office (see end panel). A report on the results is available from the office. Many thanks to Damian Brothers and Nigel Topham for their work on this.

Outreach - summer programme of displays at events

Tamara has begun organising our summer programme, with a team of volunteers drawn from people who

answered the questionnaire. We aim to attend 10-20 events this year, with new displays and hopefully a game or two. We are grateful to the Dorset Strategic Partnership for helping to fund the materials.

Our first event is likely to be Bridport Food Festival at the beginning of June. More helpers for any events would be very welcome! If you would like to know more, please contact the office.

Other sustainability organisations in Dorset

Over the years we've acquired contacts in a wide range of other organisations – about 140 (that's just the ones we know about!). It's quite a haphazard mix, from tiny businesses to big charities to local community-based partnerships. Since we aim to be, as far as we can, a representative 'voice for sustainability' in Dorset, it seems sensible to get a bit clearer about what each organisation does, its views, and who is providing the link between us and them. We can also offer, via our website, a 'shop window' for community groups who are providing some sustainability service(s).

The Dorset Strategic Partnership has given us a grant to liaise with these other groups and develop some information to go on the Web, and we are just starting work on this project.

If you are either representing DA21 on another group, or are a member of a group delivering an aspect of sustainability, or if you have some skills you'd like to offer to the project, please contact Dave Bloomfield. on 02380 284 945 or dave@dorsetagenda21.org.uk before 2 May.

People

We have been sorry to see our trustees Simon Jacobson and Mike Guilment-Cush retire, and thank them for their hard work helping to establish DA21 as an independent organisation. We wish Simon well with his move to Bristol and look forward to still seeing Mike who remains a member and is juggling his duties as a new parent with having taken on extra responsibilities at work.

We've also been sorry to see Maria Grimes step down as our keeper of our membership database, communications hub and events co-ordinator. Thank you Maria for all you did to set up our systems to run like clockwork (if they don't now it shows how much time you must have been putting in). We hope Maria is enjoying her new 'spare' time (we gather she is as busy as ever in community activities).

Maria Timperley has taken over as events co-ordinator, so please send her your ideas about speakers and places to visit, and offers to organise events. She is ready willing and able to help you set up events if you've a mind to! (01258 863 716 or metimperley@btinternet.com)

Sally Cooke has been holding the fort in the office while we have been 'between staff' but her input has been intermittent over the last few months due to some lengthy bouts of flu. We are sorry that the flow of information to members has been less than usual during this period. We are in the process of setting up some new systems with the

aid of people who have volunteered, which we hope will sort things out.

We are exploring a move to a larger office to accommodate the new staff, and could use some help from any members with legal or property know-how – please contact Sally if you might be able to help.

consultations

Many consultations come our way and we try to post the information on the electronic newsgroup. (It's easy to join if you already have an e-mail account: Step 1. Go to <http://my.yahoo.com> and open a Yahoo account [free] NB It's yahoo.com and NOT .co.uk Step 2. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DA21/> and hit the "Join This Group" button.) Please keep an eye out for upcoming consultations so that you have a chance to put the green viewpoint.

Vol sector / Change Up

There are several initiatives at present to increase the effectiveness of the 'voluntary and community sector' – VCS for short – in delivering services to benefit the community. One, a government fund called 'Change Up', should bring in about £250,000 to help the VCS in Dorset work together over the next year to plan our future.

Another is a consultation by Dorset County Council on how it can work better with the VCS. We will be submitting some ideas by the closing date of 30 April.

Pesticides

The government is consulting on a draft national strategy for the "sustainable use of plant protection products". It will include draft action plans aimed at reducing water pollution, safeguarding wildlife, and reducing environmental harm generally, including seeking a 'targeted reduction' of the use of pesticides.

To see the consultation document ring 01904 455 967 or go to <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/> and look under consultations. Comments should reach the Pesticides Safety Directorate by 30th June 2005.

If you are interested in looking at this for DA21 and drafting some views please contact the office.

West Dorset Local Plan ; Regional Spatial Strategy

Dave Rickard has recently appeared at the inquiry into this plan, speaking about its policies on sustainability. For further details contact him direct on dgrickard@waitrose.com or 01305 889995.

Mike Martin and Alan Swindall have represented DA21 at events on sub-regional studies feeding into the Regional Spatial Strategy for 2006-2026. More info about the RSS is on the website of the South West Regional Assembly, <http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/>.

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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