

Wirral Evergreen



The magazine of Wirral LA21 Network
Promoting Wirral's environment and sustainable living

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Kids dig in for Gardens in Schools project

There was a Harvest Festival atmosphere in and around Birkenhead Park's new pavilion on 3rd July, and the sun shone as eleven Wirral schools celebrated completing the first year of Wirral LA21 Network's 'Gardens in Schools' project. Running until summer 2008, the project involves designing and creating school garden areas, and growing a variety of produce. Young people of all ages have been helping to plant and grow fruit, vegetables, flowers and herbs, and are learning a great deal from the experience - as well as being able to sell some produce within their schools, raising funds to buy seeds and plants for next year.



Each school was presented with a certificate, and had material on display; a fascinating selection of photos, fresh produce, artwork and associated school work was on view. FairTrade refreshments and locally grown salads were enjoyed by all. Participating schools were: Cole Street Primary School, Hayfield School, Egremont Primary School, Kilgarth School, Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School, Park High School, Prenton High School, Portland Primary School, St. Joseph's Primary School, Woodchurch C of E Primary School and Woodchurch High School.

The Mayor opened the celebration, and enjoyed speaking to the children, young people and staff and admiring the displays. An observation bee hive was on display, and set the children buzzing with interest. Carol Seery, Wirral LA21 Network's horticulturalist, said, 'There was a great deal of interest in this project, and we did not have enough funding to accommodate all the schools who wished to take part. Getting children involved in gardening at this age will hopefully plant the seeds of a lifelong interest. Gardening is a great way to keep fit, with the advantage that you can eat and enjoy the fruits of your labours - so you save money as well as having a good hobby.'

Wirral LA21 Network worked with Acacia Horticultural Services to deliver this project, which is funded by Local Strategic Partnership using the Neighbourhood Renewal Grant.

Well done to Mayor Gilchrist and Wirral Council on their campaign to turn Wirral council buildings Energy Efficient. Pictured is Mayor, Phil Gilchrist, changing one of the many light bulbs in the Mayors Parlour for energy saving bulbs. These bulbs use on average one fifth of the energy of normal light bulbs. As there are over 80 bulbs just in the mayors parlour alone, this amounts to a big saving for those that pay the bills - the Tax Payers. And for those of you who are questioning the cost, the replaced bulbs have been used elsewhere until they blow, then they will be replaced with CFL's more commonly known as energy saving light bulbs. Local retailers with the cheapest offers of energy saving light bulbs are Morrison's and Wilkinson's. Further information is available from Merseyside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on 0800 512 012



We do not inherit the world from our parents. We borrow it from our grandchildren.

BIO TRAINS *Are they stopping at a station near you?*

ON 7 JUNE this year, Virgin Trains brought into service Europe's first train to run partly on fuels derived from crops. The fuel is a 20% biodiesel-diesel blend known as B20 produced by Greenergy.

At its launch, Sir Richard Branson forecast drastic cuts in the rail industry's carbon count while Gordon Brown, called for every British train operator to consider running its fleet on biodiesel.

Come December, Virgin hopes to see if the fuel blend has damaged the train's Cummins QSK-19 engine in any way, as well as investigate the impact on running time and power output. Any adverse passenger effects, such as engine noise, aromatics or vibrations, will also be assessed.

There is strong industry backing for this although there are problems with refuelling infrastructure unless more operators could be persuaded to use the same fuel. There are also environmental concerns.

COSTLY GREEN

So-called green fuels are heavily taxed. While the red diesel commonly used by the national rail industry is taxed at 7.69 pence per

litre, the tax rate on the biodiesel blend used in the Virgin trial is nearly eight times greater.

Although the trial is exempt from this tax, if this excise duty remains it will not be commercially economical to move the entire fleet to biodiesel. What's more, many believe that until manufacturers can truly certify how green their fuel actually is, applying an appropriate tax is impossible. And it is this lack of environmental kudos that could be the real show-stopper for biodiesel.

Critics of biodiesel cite two key reasons not to use the fuel. First, they argue that if you look at the greenhouse gas levels emitted during fuel production, there is little, if any, carbon saving relative to conventional diesel production. Even worse, emissions can rise. Second, they say turning over land



to biofuel crop growth spells economic and environmental disaster. Not only will we run out of food to eat, but cutting down forests that act as carbon sinks will exacerbate climate change.

In the face of environment opposition, David Edwards, Virgin Cross-Country project engineer remains stoic. "The sustainability of the fuel is a big issue ... yes there are viable points, yes these are open for discussion and yes they need to be resolved if the rail industry is to convert to biodiesel," he asserts. "But we have tried to ensure our fuel is as sustainable as possible. Our supplier Greenergy is very outspoken on sustainability ... and runs a stringent [production] process."

Stringent or not, until the emergence of a clear certification scheme that allows train operators to know how much carbon dioxide is saved when buying biodiesel, the rail industry cannot fully adopt the biofuel.

Based on an article in 'Engineering & Technology' (edited by Pete Exley)

Picture: <http://www.hydrail.net/>

Hydrogen hope

If biodiesel isn't for you, then why not try hydrogen? Many transport developers across the world are already swapping their diesel engines for hydrogen fuel cells.

Earlier this year, East Japan Railway started trialing its own version along the Yatsugatake mountain range in central Japan. If successful, the railcar will be the first hydrogen-fuelled train to travel on a regular passenger track. And while it won't beat any land-speed records - with a top speed of 80km/h - JR East hopes to see it shunting commuters back and forth within the next 20 years.

But despite hydrogen's huge potential, making it cheaply without producing greenhouse gases isn't easy. Most hydrogen, including that used by JR East, is produced from natural gas via steam reforming.

Unfortunately, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide are produced at the same time.

Carbon-free hydrogen production can take place by using electricity from renewable generation to split water molecules, but right now, this is very expensive.

Tetrapak recycling

Plugged as the environmental packaging for the future, it comes as a bit of a shock to most people when they discover Tetrapak's can not go in the Grey Bin Kerbside Recycling bin.

Don't despair, there are now new recycling bins at some of our local recycling centres where you can drop your cleaned tetrapaks for recycling.

As with all recycling, it only needs rinsing out to ensure it's clean and to prevent mould contaminating the recycling process.

So next time you pop to Tesco's for your FairTrade Orange Juice, Remember, take back your old one.

Experiences of a Climate Camper

A Diary series by Rosie Bland

If I'm honest I decided to go to the climate camp because I thought it would be fun. I wasn't quite prepared for the hard-working atmosphere & solemn focus that I found. On arrival I was given an introductory talk on the camp in the welcome tent - a lot to take on board but essential information such as how to use the composting toilets. The infrastructure was simply gob-smacking; all plumbing, power, waste, food, marquees, and also meetings, legal briefings and more were organised by non-hierarchical teams using consensus decision making.

Everybody was encouraged to pitch in and take a turn at one of the following: gate duty, 'copwatch', cooking, neighbourhood spokesperson, washing up, recycling, and other

jobs too numerous (and forgotten) to mention.

I had missed the main workshops - which were reported to have been amazing, 'mostly' - but there were still training sessions on things like being a legal observer, radio communication and methods for non-violent direct action.



Terrorist Hippies

The police were treating everybody like criminals -

stopping and searching us any time we left the camp. I had to suppress a laugh as 8 officers radioed control and discussed among themselves what to do with me and a little old lady. I was glad to have been forewarned that giving them your details is not compulsory (they certainly don't tell you!) In the end they let us go because they couldn't find a female officer to search us, not before they made sure they had wasted at least 20 minutes of our time (and theirs).

Some campers wondered why they weren't using their precious resources to tackle knife crime instead. Perhaps because teenage gang's profits are not quite as large as BAA's.

www.climatecamp.org.uk

Transition Town Wirral - Can You Imagine Wirral Beyond Oil?

Transition Towns, are a group of about twenty areas in the UK's exploring how to prepare for a carbon constrained, energy lean world. Transition Towns are based on the idea that a 'town' using much less energy and resources than we presently consume could, if properly planned for and designed, be more resilient, more abundant and more pleasurable than the present. TT initiatives strive to be an inclusive, imaginative, practical and fun. People who get involved don't have to be experts, they meet lots of interesting people, strengthen their community, and learn new skills.

The concept builds on what our organization has been involved in



for many years but it may provide a new impetus and focus for creating true sustainability. At a meeting of 60 people held in mid September we discussed how to take the process forward on Wirral. A steering group - separate from LA21 but with several of our members actively involved - will be set up to take the idea forward. If

you want to keep in touch with developments, email rosie@la21.net or give us a call. The next event will be the showing of the film 'The End of Suburbia' at Westbourne Hall, West Kirby, followed by a discussion on 15th October, starting at 7:30

For more information have a look at www.transitiontowns.org and, in particular, be inspired by what Totness has achieved in a very short time!

Written by Roy Wood - long term member of the Editorial Team and Volunteer for W.LA21 N

