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Contents

Editorial

Mike Edmunds

Climate change briefs

Mike Edmunds and Eric Eisenhandler

Green Deal? Or Green lottery?

Eric Eisenhandler

Blewbury School: Eco-School and Eco-Council

Jo Lakeland

Blewbury Garden Market – the background

Angela Hoy

Heritage Lottery Fund award for the Blewbury Wagon

Peter Cockrell

Bee alert Blewbury

Debs Furness

Low Carbon Hub shortlisted for prestigious Ashden Awards

Jo Lakeland

Sustainable Blewbury beer mats

Blewbury Garden Market Extra

**Saturday mornings 9.30 – 11.30, Post Office,
until 9th May**

Blewbury Garden Market

**Saturday mornings, 9.30 – 11.30, Garage,
starting 16th May**

Editorial

Mike Edmunds

There has been a shift in emphasis in the debate on climate change in recent months. We are used to hearing of rising carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in the atmosphere as the main indicator of fossil fuel burning and global warming. The level of CO₂ varies regularly through the year, peaking during the northern hemisphere spring. This year it surpassed 400 parts per million as early as February – last year it was above 400 ppm from April through June, and in 2013 it only reached 400 ppm for a few days. It is important to note that CO₂ already emitted from burning fossil fuel has yet to show its full impact, and it will remain in the atmosphere for centuries.

From a pragmatic and a political point of view it is more useful to consider the causes rather than the symptoms. So a better indicator would be to measure – and most importantly to restrict – unused fossil fuel reserves which are at the root of the problem. Sustainable Blewbury therefore fully supports the joint initiative by 350.org and the Guardian to “Keep It In The Ground”.

In this issue we also cover the latest twists in the Green Deal saga, Blewbury School’s Eco-School programme, the roots of the Blewbury Garden Market, lottery funding for the Blewbury wagon, more from the Bee Group, and Ashden award shortlisting for the Oxfordshire Low Carbon Hub.

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Climate change briefs

Mike Edmunds and Eric Eisenhandler

Fracking developments

Fracking (hydraulic fracturing) is facing challenges. More and more countries, US states and regions are banning it, including France, Scotland, Wales, New York State, and Tasmania.

Large quantities of water are needed for fracking, and this has put pressure on arid areas such as Algeria and those hit by severe drought, notably California.

Carbon emissions stable in 2014

Preliminary data from the International Energy Agency indicates that global CO₂ emissions in 2014 were the same as in 2013. This is the first time in 40 years (ignoring a few years with economic problems) that emissions have not risen. Was this good news, or just a fluke?

This could be especially hopeful because since the millennium the annual rise in emissions has actually been accelerating. But will the recent fall in oil prices lead to increased emissions in 2015, despite more and more renewable energy becoming available?

One contribution to reducing emissions (which might seem surprising) is energy consumption in China, which is now burning less coal and generating more of its electricity from solar and wind. China is the world leader in wind power, with 31% of global capacity, and is second in solar, with 16% of global capacity.

Another contribution is improved energy efficiency combined with more renewable energy in OECD countries, including the UK.

Danish wind power record

In 2014 Denmark generated 39% of its electricity from wind. Unlike solar, wind power output peaks during the winter – in January 2014 wind contributed 61% of the Danish electricity supply.

Bangladesh solar-powered houses

About 40% of the population of Bangladesh does not have access to electricity. Starting in 2003, Bangladesh has implemented a programme to enable people to install a solar panel with battery storage on their homes at low cost and with repayments spread over a few years. This has now been done for about 3 million households, and installations are currently running at roughly 50,000 per month.

These are not big installations – typically just one panel generating about 1 kWh per day – but they can supply lighting at night and run low-power devices ranging from water pumps to TVs.

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"We know that if we continue on our current path of allowing emissions to rise year after year, climate change will change everything about our world. And we don't have to do anything to bring about this future. All we have to do is nothing." Naomi Klein

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Green Deal ? Or Green lottery?

Eric Eisenhandler

The UK's housing stock includes more old, poorly insulated houses than other European countries. It's not just pretty thatched cottages of course – think of the long rows of Victorian and Edwardian semis and terraces in our towns and cities. Many of these houses are unhealthily cold and draughty, expensive to heat, and add greatly to our CO₂ emissions.

The Green Deal was supposed to be the flagship government programme to improve the heating systems and insulation of the UK's houses. However, due to its complex rules, and offering only expensive loans paid back via electricity bills, the Green Deal went nowhere.



External insulation of solid walls

In June 2014 a more attractive attempt to encourage people to improve their homes, with or without the unpopular Green Deal loans, was launched. We

described this 'Green Deal Home Improvement Fund' (GDHIF) in issue 11 of this newsletter. It offered grants of up to £1000 towards any two items from a long list, such as improved loft insulation, cavity-wall insulation, improved windows or a new boiler. But the standout feature was up to £6000 towards the cost of the expensive solid-wall insulation very badly needed in so many old houses.

The GDHIF was popular – its limited funding was all gone after just seven weeks. In December 2014 the GDHIF was re-started, but this time the solid-wall insulation funding was separated from the other measures. Within just one day (!) the money for solid walls was committed, and that part of the scheme closed down again. Funding for other items was taken up more slowly and did not run out.

The GDHIF's third round started in March, going back to having a single pot of money. The maximum grant for solid-wall insulation was reduced to £3750, while for the other items it was raised to £1250. After just ten days the £70 million available was fully allocated. However, grants for items other than solid walls continue, using money left from the previous round. It is not yet known when (or if) the next round of grants for solid-wall insulation will open.

It isn't surprising that many people who would benefit from solid wall insulation feel that with so much uncertainty and confusion the hassle of applying for the grant isn't worthwhile. For more details on the Green Deal, see our website:

www.blewbury.co.uk/energy/grants.htm

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Blewbury School: Eco-School and Eco-Council

Jo Lakeland

Blewbury School is working towards the Green Flag Eco-Schools award. This is a whole-school approach to the way that children can impact their environment through sustainability topics. The three topics chosen by Blewbury School are **energy**, **waste** and **biodiversity**. See eco-schools.org.uk

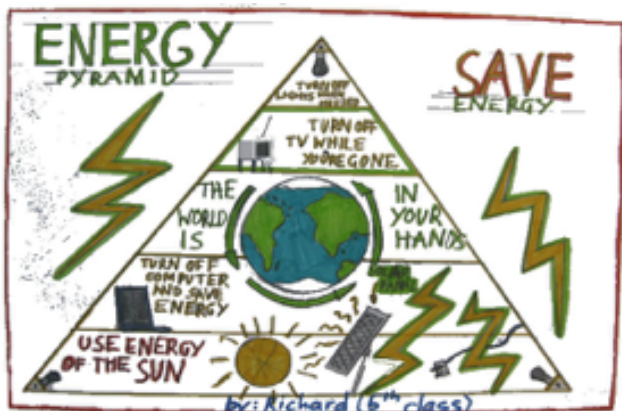
The school has set up an Eco-Council as part of the award process. The members are several children from each class, the head teacher Ms. Marion Mills, and two other teachers. The Eco-Council meets six times a year. We were asked if a member of Sustainable Blewbury could attend the meetings to provide a community perspective on the topics being discussed. We were pleased to be asked, and have already attended several meetings.



The theme for the autumn terms was **waste**, so Master Composter Angela Hoy was asked to talk to the children at a meeting about recycling. Two representatives of each class, ranging in age from 4½ to 10, plus teacher Sophie Batin, gathered together to play the Compost Game. This was a very raucous session, with each child picking cards out of the bag and shouting out whether it should go in the composter or not. Angela explained the pros and cons of each item, and felt they absorbed a lot of useful information in the hour session. At the end, all the composting leaflets had disappeared, and afterwards Sophie told Angela the children were very enthused and would she please come again next year. A successful visit!



Energy was the topic for the spring terms, and I attended the first meeting in January. One of the interesting challenges of the Eco-Council meetings is to make them interesting to *all* the members, who were aged from 4½ to 10 when I first met them. The idea is that the children take back ideas to their own classes, so we discussed ways of saving energy shown in the pictures above, and they decided which ones they could do. Closing outside doors and writing/drawing on both sides of a sheet of paper is something even the reception class can do.



Sustainable Blewbury is also going to provide small prizes for each class in a design competition for energy posters. The posters should be on display in the summer terms.

I am hoping to show the children a thermal imaging camera in May, together with the images the Blewbury Energy Initiative took of their own class rooms in February.

The topic for the summer term is **biodiversity**: we will talk about the importance of bees and for them to find out if there are bee-friendly plants growing in the school grounds. And finally, we hope to hold an eco-fair in July.

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"There have been two terrible realisations. We have started too late, and it doesn't matter how much solar and wind power there is – you are still burning all the coal, oil and gas. Even if you do so more slowly, it will still go into the atmosphere and cause climate change." Michael Jacobs, former climate change adviser to Gordon Brown.

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Blewbury Garden Market – the background

Angela Hoy

What we now call the Blewbury Garden Market originally came into being during World War II, when everyone was keen to grow as much fruit and vegetables as possible to make the ration book go further. It was run by the Village Produce Association on Wednesday mornings.

It carried on after the war, expanding into baked goods when more raw ingredients became available. It took place at an old barn (no longer there) on London Road, and later on the forecourt of the Barley Mow (now the Blueberry). It continued until about the turn of the century, at which time the main (elderly) participants decided it was getting to be too much effort and folded the tables away one last time.



Sarah Deco heard about this from Karen Brooks at the Post Office in 2008 and decided to revive what had been a very successful formula. This time it was sited at the Blewbury Garage with kind permission of the shopkeeper, Nadarajah Mahendrabalan (“Balan”), for whom it brought welcome footfall to the shop. Sadly, Sarah moved to London in 2012, and the mantle passed to Angela Hoy, who has managed it ever since.

The group has expanded, and has used the profits, donations and grants to invest in a smart (waterproof!) gazebo, new tables and even chairs to sit on. But the formula remains the same: local residents bring their surplus fruit, vegetables and plants, as well as a wonderful array of baked goods including bread (you usually have to come early to buy a loaf), muffins, cakes, and croissants from the Blewbury Bakers group. Other items such as preserves, local honey and free-range eggs are also available, and sometimes flowers.

It all makes for a very colourful display and it’s great fun to participate, both as a producer and stall hand. The stall is open at the Garage on Saturday mornings, **this year from 16 May to mid-October**, after which we retreat to the corner of the Post Office where Karen kindly lets us sell mainly bread and the occasional cake.

If you would like to join in, please contact angela.hoy@sky.com or go to the Sustainable Blewbury website for more information: www.sustainable-blewbury.org.uk/food.htm

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Heritage Lottery Fund award for the Blewbury Wagon

Peter Cockrell

In January 2015 a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £17,400 was approved for a display shelter at Orchard Dene for the Blewbury Wagon and a book on the wagon’s story. The final, vital, parts of the work: those of protecting and displaying the wagon and of telling its story were accepted by The Heritage Lottery Fund trustees as a good case for grant aid.

Our first realistic opportunity to save the Blewbury Wagon came late in 2009 with an offer from Warren Blain, wheelwright, to restore it fully for £6000. It was decided that if sufficient money could be raised within the village it would be a clear vote of approval for the project to begin. Sustainable Blewbury gave the lead by recognising that: *“The wagon is a potentially wonderful symbol for both the community and visitors to see and admire. Well over a century old, it is a part of our heritage and deserves our care.”*

The village responded wonderfully. Individuals and village societies contributed money, physical help, and supported fund-raising events. The target was exceeded and the work was commissioned in June 2011. Warren encountered severe difficulties, both technical and from an injury, but it was delivered, completely restored but unpainted, for the Festival in July 2013. By July 2014 the work was truly complete down to the last details of paintwork and lettering, and the wagon was drawn proudly through the village by the Percheron cart horse Gilbert, driven by Warren and his partner Kate.



Work on the shelter began on 13th April 2015. It will have a traditional appearance, built of oak with open sides and a tiled roof. Positioned opposite Orchard Dene House, the wagon and shelter will be a wonderful reminder of our agricultural heritage and will enhance the village scene for us all. The book launch is planned for Christmas 2015.

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Bee alert Blewbury

Debs Furness (Bee Group)

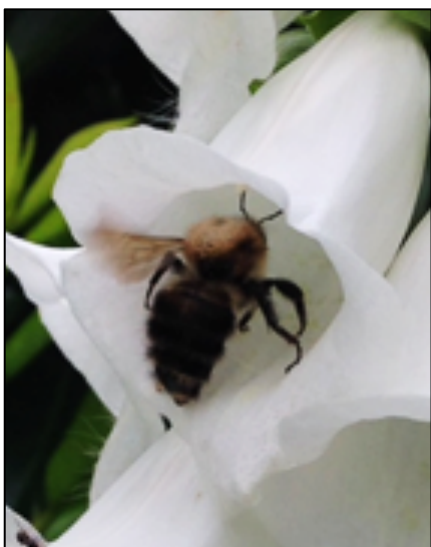
I admit to being a bit lazy in my garden but that’s not the only reason it might appear messy to some people. Lawns mown to within an inch of their lives and rows of closed flowers are very bad for wildlife, and bumblebees in particular.



As for weeds, there are far too many products on the market that are doing no end of harm to all life forms when wielded profusely. Neonicotinoids in pesticides are thought by many to be the main reason that bees have suffered for a number of years as they appear to affect their nervous systems, but they've also suffered from parasites, loss of wildflower habitats, and fluctuations in the weather.

Anyway, I'm no expert, but as I love to watch the variety of bees that visit the flowers in my garden while wondering what they're off to pollinate when they buzz away, I do as much as I can to make sure they come back again.

Professor Dave Goulson at the University of Sussex is an expert on bees so look him up to find his books and read about his latest research. Otherwise, follow @BlewburyBees on Twitter as you'll discover his work and that of others there, along with information on the best flowers to plant for bees and occasional photographs of our local beauties.



Here are two images taken in my garden: one waiting to be identified and (probably) a Tree Bee

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Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, believes climate change is the medium-term issue of our age, but talks about the "tragedy of horizons". By this he means that central banks and finance ministers are set up to deal with short-term problems, such as whether inflation will hit its target in two or three years' time, or whether another housing bubble can be prevented before the end of the decade. Governments are thinking about climate change, but they have other more immediate priorities: reducing unemployment, increasing living standards and, in the case of politicians, getting re-elected. Larry Elliott, The Guardian, 8/4/15.

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Low Carbon Hub shortlisted for prestigious Ashden Awards

Jo Lakeland

The Low Carbon Hub is a social enterprise tackling climate change in Oxfordshire. They work with communities, schools and businesses on renewable energy-generation projects which put local power in the hands of local people. One of their ongoing projects is community share offers which provide the money needed for photovoltaic systems on many Oxfordshire schools, including Blewbury School.



**Solar energy
for schools**

The exciting news is that the Hub is one of seven environmental organisations to be short-listed for the prestigious UK Ashden Awards. The awards honour pioneering organisations that are doing inspiring things for the environment. Winners will be announced in early June. Fingers crossed!



Matthew Arnold School, Cumnor: a Low Carbon Hub project with a huge 100 kW solar array

Other projects on the shortlist include Beat the Cold from Stoke on Trent, who help households in fuel poverty, TGV (small hydro in Wales) and

Oxfordshire-based Enistic. For more details of the UK shortlist see www.ashden.org/awards/2015/uk

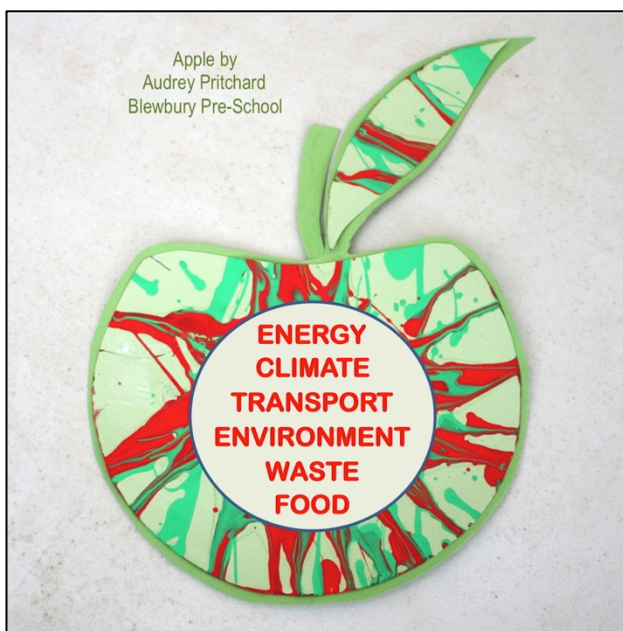
Ashden is a charity that champions and supports the leaders in sustainable energy to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon world. Ashden also awards international organisations, and gives travel awards for UK and international organisations (Reading buses have been shortlisted for a travel award). Since creation of the awards in 2001, their winners have transformed the lives of more than 45 million people in the UK and developing countries. Their solutions range from simple solar lanterns in Africa that allow children to do their homework after sunset, to low-carbon building innovators in the UK.

A total of 21 organisations from four continents have been shortlisted for the 2015 Ashden Awards. This number will be reduced to 11 winners by 11th June. But even being shortlisted for an award is a significant achievement; previous winners have been as large as Ecotricity, the Welsh National Trust and Leeds City Council: www.ashden.org/winners

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Sustainable Blewbury beer mats

Our Sustainable Blewbury bookmarks really needed replacing with some other small publicity items, so Mike Edmunds suggested designing apple beer mats in time for our recent quiz evening in aid of the Village Hall Refurbishment Fund. The interesting apple design was created by Audrey Pritchard at Blewbury Pre-School – definitely our youngest contributor! Please do help yourself to one of these lovely mementoes when you see them at future SB events.



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We welcome new members. If you are interested in getting involved please contact us at: info@sustainable-blewbury.org.uk