

# source<sup>NW</sup>

WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY

## CANAL WATCH

How central Manchester is overcoming the fear of crime to join the nation's canal renaissance.

## SPEAKING OUT

The new techniques giving a voice to the victims of serial regeneration in the Northwest.

## DERBYSHIRE LIFE

The small town in the High Peak that's become a test bed for the government's Liveability plans.

PLUS news, reviews, interviews and comment



SUMMIT  
2005  
delivering  
sustainable  
communities

## SPECIAL ISSUE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



Promoting sustainable water use is one of Unilever's three global sustainability initiatives, alongside sustainable agriculture and sustainable fishing.

Reliable, safe water is vital for us, our suppliers and our customers.

That's why we're proud to sponsor the Unilever Dragonfly awards, recognising the volunteers whose efforts are revitalising the rivers and riversides of the Northwest.

And why we continue to support the Mersey Basin Campaign, which for almost 20 years has played a crucial role in the transformation of the region's watercourses.

Whaley Bridge County Primary School, winner of a Unilever Dragonfly Award 2004

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Unilever



Ask a politician, an environmentalist and a regeneration expert to define sustainable development and

you're likely to get three very different answers. In fact, ask a hundred ordinary people and you're likely to get a hundred different answers.

That's if you can find a hundred ordinary people who've heard of sustainable development.

Believe it or not, sustainable development is actually the buzzword in some circles. Which is why the arrival of John Prescott's Delivering Sustainable Communities Summit has so many people falling over themselves to be in Manchester at the end of January. A neat trick in itself.

But what all these people do agree on is that sustainable development is important. A general definition was offered recently by the excellent Right Reverend James Jones, Archbishop of Liverpool, who described it as "enjoying the earth's resources without jeopardising the welfare of future generations." (Interview on page 16). It's when it comes to the details that opinions diverge.

Source NW marks the Delivering Sustainable Communities summit by looking at the key issues behind sustainable development, from public participation to liveability and the fear of crime, along with comment from regeneration leader Ian MacArthur. **Matthew Sutcliffe**, editor  
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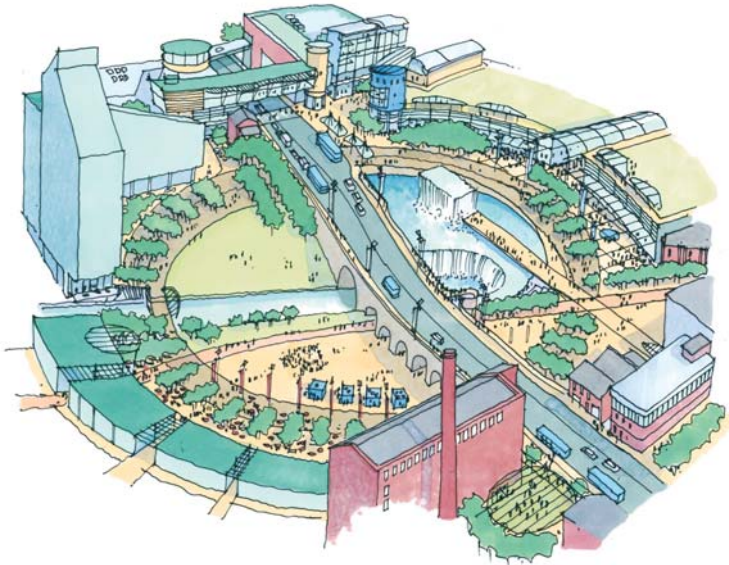
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#### PLANS FOR A WATER- THEMED STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE

“Stockport is already in an enviable position, and with a buoyant and thriving economy, we are now best placed to transform the area into one of the region’s prime locations,” said Stockport Council leader Mark Hunter.

“Future Stockport’s bold and ambitious improvements will reflect the talent, heritage and ideas of its people, and of course, keep the essential character of Stockport and much of its historic and natural uniqueness.”

Although more commonly associated with Liverpool, the Mersey starts in Stockport at the confluence of the rivers Tame and Goyt and the river would become the focus for regeneration.

Ironically, the current Merseyway shopping centre is actually built on massive stilts over the river, completely hiding it from view. But when Stockport town centre was redeveloped in the 1960s the Mersey was still polluted. Now the river is seen as an asset thanks to huge improvements in its water quality.

Sarah Wallbank, European project manager for the Mersey Basin Campaign said: “Opening up the Mersey in Stockport will transform what is currently a forgotten river into a focal point for the city.”

Stockport Council used an inflatable building, the Stockpod, to consult the public as it toured the area. The ambitious proposals build on recent regeneration work and efforts to make the town’s rivers more accessible.

Chris Wilkinson of the Northwest Development Agency said: “The vision for Future Stockport is the result of forward-thinking and a strong working partnership. The NWDA recognise the town’s role in the Greater Manchester sub-region’s economy and is pleased that its potential and ambition can be realised through this master planning exercise.”

## Merseyway makes way for Mersey

The River Mersey is set to star in the half billion pound transformation of Stockport town centre.

The River Mersey is the inspiration for a £500 million plan to regenerate Stockport town centre. The Future Stockport proposals would make the town home to the largest waterfall feature in the UK, while previously hidden stretches of the Mersey would be opened up.

The master plan envisages a complete transformation of the town centre, with improvements to existing retail areas and a brand new retail promenade. The outdated bus station would be replaced with a new transport interchange, with a moving walkway linking the railway station to a modern bus station and the proposed Metrolink network.

The town’s Mersey Square would be completely redesigned to accommodate the newly visible river and water feature, and a series of walkways and a new riverside park would be created.

A thousand new homes with city-style living in mind are proposed along the Mersey and in retail areas, including a new 250 home urban village at Hopes Carr.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

[www.stockport.gov.uk/vision](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/vision)

### SOUND BITES

**S** Preston residents have voiced their opposition to plans for a waste plant at the city’s dock. Lancashire County Council want to build a plant capable of processing over 100,000 tonnes of waste per year, but locals say that the plan is not in keeping with the current development of the docks. Preston City Council could still block the proposal, which would bring 80-90 lorry loads of waste through the city every day. Opponents of the plans would prefer the plant to be located on a site near the M6, closer to the landfill site in Leyland.

**S** Consumer watchdog WaterVoice has responded angrily to a suggestion made in a DTI report for the future creation of a combined National Utilities Consumer Council covering the water, gas, post, telecoms and electricity industries. WaterVoice cites the Water Act 2003 as recognising the unique position of the water industry. The suggestion follows the announcement in 2004 that WaterVoice will be replaced by a new Consumer Council for Water (CCW) by Autumn this year. Unlike WaterVoice the CCW will be independent from Ofwat, with the central team moving out of the Birmingham offices they currently share with the industry regulator. The Northwest office will merge with Yorkshire and Northumbria as the number of regional offices is reduced to six. [More information: www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)

**S** The Northwest Regional Development Agency has pledged £2.5 million towards a showpiece development to replace the doomed Fourth Grace building on Liverpool waterfront. Plans for the Mann Island site include a new Museum of Liverpool, an extension of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and a new public space. The £15 million canal scheme planned by British Waterways could be completed in time for the city’s 2008 Capital of Culture festivities and will provide access to the entire dock system from a link point at Stanley Dock, allowing boats to reach Albert Dock via the Pier Head. [www.merseybasin.org.uk/press.asp](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk/press.asp)

**S** Fears that a second wind farm off the Wirral coast might interfere with shipping are unfounded, according to new research. A major exercise in the Irish Sea brought together commercial shipping vessels and leisure boats, as well as rescue units, to find out if wind farms posed problems for vital navigation equipment. Engineers found that most equipment worked successfully, although radars on some small vessels were affected. The news brings plans for the 200 turbine wind farm a step closer despite opposition from some west Wirral residents, who argue that the farms spoil their view of the sea. [More information: www.merseybasin.org.uk/press.asp](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk/press.asp)

**S** The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) has published “Biodiversity By Design: A guide to sustainable communities”. The guide is the first in a series by the TCPA following the government’s publication of the Sustainable Communities programme. It uses examples from across Europe – including, in the Northwest, Salford and Warrington – to highlight successes and failures in previous attempts at sustainable development. TCPA director Gideon Amos said, “We can only seriously tackle the loss of species, habitats and rising CO<sub>2</sub> emissions if we take the opportunities new development offers to reverse these damaging trends.” The guide is available in print and online. [www.tcpa.org.uk](http://www.tcpa.org.uk)

## Mixed waters

Ofwat's long awaited decision settles the fate of water for another five years.

The news that water prices will rise to fund continued investment in the water infrastructure and environmental improvements has provoked mixed reactions.

The average household water bill in the Northwest will rise £53 by 2010, starting with an £8 rise next April, water industry regulator Ofwat has confirmed. The increase is larger than expected, but still short of the £101 rise requested by United Utilities, the region's water company. Bills will rise from £269 to £322 by 2009-10, a 20% price rise not including inflation.

The increase will help United Utilities to invest £2.5 billion in the water infrastructure over the next five years.

Ofwat's Philip Fletcher, director general of water services, said: "Although the increase is higher than our draft decision, it is still lower than United Utilities asked for. We have challenged the [company's] costs to ensure customers continue to receive value for money from their water and sewerage services."



Bob Armstrong, managing director of United Utilities' Customer Sales, expressed some concern about the issues but stressed that customers come first. "Our focus remains on delivering value for money for our customers, improving our services to them and continuing to play our part in improving the environment across the North West.

"We do, however, remain concerned about the level of funding proposed for specific issues like odour and sewer flooding which we know are particularly important to our customers in the region."

Meanwhile the Environment Agency in the Northwest lamented Ofwat's decision, saying that only a quarter of the money for investments will be used for environmental improvements. Sewer improvement projects in Manchester, Preston, Lancaster and Carnforth are now likely to be scrapped.

### "Ofwat should have gone further to ensure that new European standards can be met."

Walter Menzies, chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign, welcomed Ofwat's decision to back higher than anticipated investment but warned that "short term-ism will cost us all in the long run."

"Ofwat should have gone further to ensure that tough new European standards can be met," he said.

But Maurice Terry, chairman of consumer body WaterVoice, was unimpressed with the price rises, stating, "This is bad news for the millions of water customers who will find these increases neither affordable nor acceptable."

However, similar projects along the Rivers Irwell, Darwen and Calder and at Lake Windermere will go ahead as planned.

Clive Gaskell, the Environment Agency's strategic environmental planning manager for the Northwest, said: "We are now facing the real likelihood of the region's waters not coming up to European standards in the future. While we do welcome the improvements that the funding for schemes like these will bring, it falls far short of what the region actually needs. A clean environment is essential to the region's image, and will help to assist its future prosperity."

**MORE INFORMATION:** [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)

**S** The acclaimed Emscher Park on Germany's River Ruhr could inspire a **regional park on Cheshire's River Weaver**, according to reports from a recent conference. Walter Menzies, the Mersey Basin Campaign's chief executive who moderated the first half of the conference said: "The Emscher Park is an inspiration. There is no better way to demonstrate that the economy is the wholly owned subsidiary of the environment, than by developing world class regional parks in a region with such potential as the England's Northwest." RENEW, the region's new Centre of Excellence for regeneration, is following up the conference by developing best practice links between the various Northwest regional park proposals.

**S** A new **riverside walkway at Chester's Old Port** is due to be completed by spring. The pedestrian and cycle route is part of a wider scheme to create a continuous route along the entire length of the River Dee in the Old Port, as well as improve flood defences. Chester City Council are behind the project, backed by the NWDA amongst others. Councillor Jim Latham said, "Some sections of the wooden boardwalk are suspended over the historic river wall using a cantilever structure, while others are actually suspended over the water itself, helping to create a pier effect." **More information:** [www.chester.gov.uk](http://www.chester.gov.uk)

**S** The **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers** will launch its new community action guide, **Environments for All**, at a reception at Manchester's reinigorated Arndale centre on February 1st. The launch coincides with the year's hot regeneration ticket, the Developing Sustainable Communities summit, being held across town. Based on years of experience with different communities and BTCV's recent diversity programme, the guide features many examples of good practice in action. Jonathon Porritt, chair of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, says in the guides foreword: "This book will help you to discover new ways and new ideas for energising, facilitating, running and participating in community projects." **www.btcv.org/shop**

**S** United Utilities has announced plans to **help customers having genuine difficulty paying their water bill**, with £15 million to be made available over the next 5 years through a charitable trust. The company's chief executive John Roberts said, "The trust is expected to be up and running early this year. It will help customers by clearing outstanding water arrears and other bills. In addition, it will also support advice on financial matters and financial literacy work in our region." United Utilities also announced a new system for tracking customers who have the means to pay but who are not doing so.

**S** And finally, a shameless plug for the **new website from the Mersey Basin Campaign** – the environmental and regeneration partnership that publishes this magazine – sponsored by Shell UK. While the big brown envelopes containing Source NW land on desks around the region but four times a year, the website is updated with news stories and events on an almost daily basis. Also featured is information on our network of action partnerships, a research database, fact sheets about water related topics in the Northwest and a detailed About Us section. **More information:** [www.merseybasin.org.uk](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk)

## Suspension bridge

The suspense over the proposed new Mersey crossing could be over within a matter of months. The new bridge, rebranded The Mersey Gateway late last year, would be the first to span the river in over forty years. Extra studies were sent to the Department for Transport last November, looking at issues including tolling, the environmental impact of the bridge on the river and its impact on the road network. A final decision is expected from the government early this year. Supporters say the bridge would help improve access to Liverpool John Lennon airport, relieve pressure on existing roads and create a better route into Liverpool. If approved, it could be open by 2012.



MORE INFORMATION:  
www.merseycrossing.co.uk

## Region's top volunteers recognised

The winners of the 2004 Unilever Dragonfly Awards have been announced from amongst almost 50 nominations, the strongest ever field of entries.

The awards are run by the Mersey Basin Campaign and are unique in rewarding the outstanding contribution of people in the voluntary and community sector towards enhancing the watersides and watercourses of the Northwest.

Winners were presented with a trophy and a cash prize to fund a future river improvement project of their choice at the Campaign's annual voluntary sector forum.

Overall winners were Stockport based Friends of Woodbank & Vernon Parks, a group dedicated to the upkeep of their local parks who recently completed a scheme to improve access to the park's pond. Chris Hudson, membership secretary of the group, said, "It was brilliant to win the award. The area looks so much better now it's been opened up. Before it was difficult to access but now anyone can come along."

Group winners were Friends of Clayton Vale, who have worked enthusiastically to improve east Manchester's Clayton Vale for the benefit of the local community. Councillor Mark Hackett of Manchester City Council said, "I am delighted that the Friends of Clayton Vale have been recognised for their hard work and enthusiasm."

Whaley Bridge County Primary School in Derbyshire received the schools award. The school has created wild areas around their site and encouraged biodiversity. "We're absolutely delighted to receive this award," said headteacher Rick Heyes. "The hard work of teacher Claire Farrell, parents and children has made a huge difference."

The individual winner was John Fleet of Birch Green Volunteer Group in Skelmersdale. John dedicates his time to improving the area and rarely a day goes by when he isn't out planting or digging. "I was gob-smacked to be honest," said John, "very surprised. I'm grateful for the award, but I'm just doing what I do."

## Resources: [www.cleanersafergreener.gov.uk](http://www.cleanersafergreener.gov.uk)



Cleaner Safer Greener Communities is a website based on the idea of 'liveability', the latest trend in developing sustainable communities. The concept was proposed in the US by the Clinton administration, and at its heart is the removal of the visible signs of urban decay.

The aim is to make communities better places to live by encouraging local groups to make an active contribution to their neighbourhoods, increasing civic pride and reducing the risk of crime.

The website acts as a resource rather than a comprehensive guide. It consists of four sections, each providing information about the main issues.

In the Cleaner section you'll find a set of links relating to litter, graffiti, fly posting and chewing gum, as well as information about clean ups. One of the bigger sections, it relies heavily on government initiatives for its content and the information is often little more than a paragraph with a link to the appropriate website.

Using the same format, the Safer section provides details of initiatives relating to vandalism, begging, prostitution, harassment and abandoned vehicles. The Greener section gives the user the

choice of parks, the countryside or the streets.

Where the site comes into its own is the Communities section. Once you've decided whether you're a business, volunteer or charity (to mention just a few) the site gives you a tailor made list of places to find funding, project ideas, training and support.

The site is logically laid out and allows users to switch between sections easily. The links open in a new window and the design is imaginative and effective.

But the site disappoints in its lack of local resources. A website about communities surely needs a list of regional resources for users, rather than links to a series of national initiatives.

The site offers news and links to information rather than practical advice, and should prove invaluable to groups searching for funding or which want to start a new project but need backing. It's useful, easy to use and attractive.

If there's a criticism, it's that there's a sense of an opportunity missed. The bulk of the site fails to live up to the standard set by the Community section or to create a truly comprehensive one stop shop for advice on cleaning up our streets and making our communities safer.

# Europe comes to the Northwest

## EC environment leader lists top environmental threats.

Catherine Day, the influential Irish Director General of the Environment at the European Commission, has called on Tony Blair to use the UK's presidency of both the G8 and EU next year as an opportunity to make a "very public commitment to doing something about climate change."

Speaking during a visit to the Northwest recently, she delivered a detailed list of the challenges facing Europe's environment.

As well as backing the growing consensus that climate change is the leading environmental challenge of the day, she said that halting the alarming decline in Europe's biodiversity and the need to make sustainable use of resources are Europe's top environmental priorities.

Day went on to say that the biggest threat to continued improvements in water quality is the issue of diffuse pollution – pollution such as agricultural run off of pesticides and fertilisers or contaminants washed off urban streets.

An audience of 200 of the region's leading environment and regeneration figures heard Day open the door to the UK water industry over proposals in the far reaching EU Water Framework Directive, at the Mersey Basin Campaign



CATHERINE DAY WITH PROFESSOR PETER BATEY, CHAIR OF THE MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN

annual conference.

On the issue of what the Directive will classify as 'priority substances' – substances such as some heavy metals that the EC wants to see reduced or removed from the environment – Day added, "we are open to suggestions and ideas. We have not finalised what we are going to propose yet so we're still in the business of listening and talking and trying to strike what is not an easy balance.

"The concern of the industry [in the UK] is that if we set standards which are too strict... then the costs could be very high," she said.

"We are aware of this, we are aware of the need to try to strike the right balance between the economic costs of pursuing water quality and the feasibility of achieving high water quality standards at a reasonable economic cost."

**MORE INFORMATION:** [www.merseybasin.org.uk](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk)

## Small town opportunities

Some of the Northwest's most enthusiastic supporters of waterside regeneration met at an event at The Lowry arts centre recently, where they were promptly told by Will Horsfall of Trafford Borough Council that small towns are failing to make the most of key waterside opportunities.

"Landmark buildings such as the Imperial War Museum North in Trafford are appearing on watersides across the country, but most of them are on prestigious city centre sites. Small towns need to follow the example," said Horsfall.

"In too many places waterside locations are still completely ignored."

No empty words these, coming from Will Horsfall, who knows what he's talking about better than most.

He told delegates about Trafford Council's redevelopment of a site next to the historic Bridgewater Canal in Sale town centre, one of the towns that make up the borough of Trafford. Now known appropriately as Sale Waterside and only recently fully opened, the development has already attracted a Northwest Business Environment Award and a prestigious Best Practice in Regeneration award from BURA.

Horsfall's was the opening presentation at an event entitled "Water as a Catalyst for Regeneration". His comments were enthusiastically received and kicked off a day of well informed and wide ranging discussion.

January 25

### National Social Enterprise Conference

Manchester hosts a conference to promote good practice in social enterprise.

*Venue:* MICC, Manchester

*More information:* [Karen.Crosland@nwda.co.uk](mailto:Karen.Crosland@nwda.co.uk)

January 25 – 27

### Envirenergy in the North West 2005

An annual free event providing an opportunity for companies to discover the latest developments in the fields of energy, the environment and waste minimisation.

*Venue:* Old Trafford football stadium, Trafford

*More information:* [www.envirenergy.org.uk](http://www.envirenergy.org.uk)

January 31 – February 2

### Delivering Sustainable Communities Summit

By far the year's major sustainable development conference. Two thousand delegates are expected to hear speeches from John Prescott, Gordon Brown and Charles Clarke.

*Venue:* GMEX, Manchester

*More information:* [01564 797620 summit@rslive.co.uk](mailto:01564 797620 summit@rslive.co.uk)

February 10

### North West Transport Lecture: Land, Sea and Air Strategic Opportunities

An Institute of Highways & Transportation lecture sponsored by the NWDA. This will discuss transport issues associated with the new airports White Paper, which incorporates the use of canals.

*Venue:* Village Hotel, Warrington

*Contact:* [jsmythe@pba.co.uk](mailto:jsmythe@pba.co.uk)

February 24

### Developing Good Governance

Aimed at trustees, this conference will address key issues in developing effective governance on voluntary sector committees and boards. It will also look at the impact of the Charities Bill on trusteeship and cover areas of good practice.

*Venue:* St Thomas Centre, Manchester

*More Information:* [David.Sutcliffe@gmco.org.uk](mailto:David.Sutcliffe@gmco.org.uk)

*More Information:* [0161 277 1011 david.sutcliffe@gmco.org.uk](mailto:0161 277 1011 david.sutcliffe@gmco.org.uk)

February 24

### Northwest State of the Region Dinner

*Location:* Radisson Edwardian, Peter Street, Manchester

*More information:* [Mike.Hughes@nwda.co.uk](mailto:Mike.Hughes@nwda.co.uk)

March 8

### Business in the Community National Conference

A conference and learning event on corporate social responsibility, including a workshop on new opportunities through social, ethical and environmental standards. Speakers include United Utilities CEO John Roberts and television presenter Angela Rippon.

*Venue:* City of Manchester Stadium, Manchester

*More information:* [ronee.gunn@bitc.org.uk](mailto:ronee.gunn@bitc.org.uk)



June 3

### Northwest Business Environment Awards 2005

The region's leading awards event for environmental excellence, providing an opportunity for businesses to gain recognition for their achievements. A joint NWDA and Mersey Basin Campaign event.

*Venue:* Old Trafford Football Stadium, Trafford

*More information:*

[Matthew.Sutcliffe](mailto:Matthew.Sutcliffe@merseybasin.org.uk)

0161 242 8208

[m.sutcliffe@merseybasin.org.uk](mailto:m.sutcliffe@merseybasin.org.uk)

Luke Chant presents a two page round up of events and activities from MWH Mersey Basin Week 2004.

## Flying the flag for volunteers

Thousands turn out for opening and closing events.



A spectacular lantern parade at Hollingworth Lake near Rochdale marked the start of MWH Mersey Basin Week 2004. The event was also a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the lake and saw a lively twilight procession of lantern sculptures with the added attraction of music, dance and costumes. The day ended with a rhythm and fire light show.

Judy Alderson, a countryside ranger based at the lake who co-ordinated the event, commented: "The lantern parade was a huge success and not just a one day wonder. It was the product of months of volunteer workshops, led by Judy

Connor, the community artist. It was a community event in the truest sense."

MWH Mersey Basin Week is an annual event that provides funding for volunteer projects in order to improve the Northwest's rivers and watercourses. Volunteers of all ages come together to improve and enjoy their local riversides, streams and canals.

Bev Mitchell, who as community support co-ordinator for the Mersey Basin Campaign, co-ordinated the

## Who you gonna call?

Volunteers rescue river blocked by rubbish



FIRE FIGHTERS VOLUNTEER TO DIRT BUST

A clean up in Lancashire as part of MWH Mersey Basin Week has revealed a previously hidden water feature. The feature had been built for children to play in over 15 years ago but was buried under more than 100 tonnes of silt and dirt at Birch Green in Skelmersdale.

The discovery was made during the Dirtbusters clean up campaign. The paddling area, built in the 1980s, had become blocked and the build up of dirt began.

Garry Peter, amenities officer at West Lancashire District Council, knew about the area and led its reclamation. A hosepipe operated by fire service volunteers was used to clear the area, alongside a mini digger, and the play area has now been reinstated.

Of the event Garry said: "With the help of a number of agencies and local people including the Mersey Basin Campaign we have managed to return an old water feature that had been covered up with years of silt back to its former glory. Once again the people of Birch Green can enjoy the use and amenity of this area, to the benefit of the whole community."

As well as Green Watch from Skelmersdale fire station, volunteers from Asda, Action Douglas &

Yarrow, the Environment Agency, West Lancashire District Council and others joined the clean up, facilitated by Lancashire Constabulary and Birch Green Residents Association.

Thirty tonnes of rubbish and green waste were removed from a tributary of the River Tawd in Skelmersdale on just the second day of the three week campaign to restore the site to its former glory. Judith Allnutt of Action Douglas & Yarrow said, "The river was in an awful state with the amount of rubbish actually blocking its channel and forcing it to change course."

She added, "I was thrilled with the camaraderie that built up throughout the three weeks and also the success of a project involving so many different agencies. It's a brilliant example of the partnership approach."

As well as the clean up, an education day held at two schools helped to raise awareness of environmental issues amongst local children.

### Mersey Basin Campaign corporate sponsors include



week's events, said: "The lantern parade at Hollingworth Lake exceeded everyone's expectations. It was a great tribute to the staff at the lake that two and half thousand people took part and it was a wonderful way to start the week. Even the rain held off."

A record number of schools and youth groups were involved in this year's MWH Mersey Basin Week, with over 3000 young people taking part in events across the region. "You have to keep searching out new groups of people who

haven't already been brought in as part of the week. This year we targeted schools and youth organisations and I was overwhelmed with the response," said Bev Mitchell. In all, over 250 events took place, up from 180 in 2003.

Hollingworth Lake was also the setting for the week's closing event, the first MWH Mersey Basin Week Regatta. The event saw twenty boats of all shapes and sizes from around the region compete in a series of races at Hollingworth Lake Sailing Club. It is hoped that the regatta will become a regular fixture of the week.



SCHOOLCHILDREN ARRIVE AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER ALT

**S** Chantelle Edwards of Nature in Focus worked on a number of MWH Mersey Basin Week events. Using a special camera she is able to show the creatures found in samples of river or pond water on a TV screen. She worked with **Action Ribble Estuary** to hold workshops at Lea Endowed Primary School in Preston. Co-ordinator Lesley Cryer said: "The school is very keen on environmental projects and the children really enjoyed catching water creatures to watch through the microscope. They were fascinated to see them on the large screen."

**S** Fifty-seven volunteers helped in a day of planting at Woodbank Park pond in Stockport, in conjunction with **Action Etherow & Goyt**. The planting was part of an ongoing project at the pond, which also involved clearing out dead material and assessing the pond's potential for further habitat improvement.

**S** **Action Rossendale River's** Claire Sims also worked with Chantelle Edwards in Lancashire. She took a group of children from Edenfield Primary School to Dearden Clough where they searched for land 'minibeasts' as well as taking samples from Dearden Brook. Chantelle worked with the children to identify the minibeasts they had caught.

**S** **Action Bollin Valley** in Cheshire held a series of sustainability workshops during the week, which saw almost 1000 children from 20 schools taking part. Co-ordinator Emma Houghton said: "The most popular workshops, as expected, were the unusual and fun ones such as litter monsters and willow weaving, but, having said that, most of the workshops were booked and very well received."

**S** **Action Medlock & Tame** co-ordinator Sarah McMahon helped to organise a further five events in Greater Manchester, including a nine mile walk aimed at Beating the Bounds of the Medlock and Tame Valley, organised through the Stepping Out health group.

## Walk of discovery on River Alt

Sixty schoolchildren from Bedford Primary School in Bootle enjoyed a fun packed educational day out along the River Alt in Merseyside. The children were taught about the wildlife, land use, geology, pollution and characteristics of the river on a guided tour by Brendan Cassin, Action Alt co-ordinator. They also raced Donny the duck and friends down the river to measure its flow rate.

Ruth Braithwaite, deputy head of Bedford Primary School said, "The River Alt trip was a fantastic experience for the children. Not only did they learn a great deal about the River Alt and its environment, but they had a fun day out too, including the staff! Thanks to everyone who helped organise the day."

The education trips were delivered in partnership between Groundwork St Helens, Knowsley, Sefton and Liverpool, Action Alt and the Mersey Basin Campaign.

## LOCAL SOUND BITES

**S** Louise Williams of **Action Irwell** organised a rivers day for schools at Clifton Country Park, in conjunction with the Salford Ranger Service. Two groups of schoolchildren enjoyed a pond dipping session, scavenger hunt and making minibeast masks. "The children were really interested in the pond dipping session, where they had to identify the different creatures they found," said Louise.

**S** Volunteers from local company Unilever helped in the restoration of reed beds at Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve on the Wirral during MWH Mersey Basin Week. The continuing project is funded by Unilever Faberge, with work aimed at encouraging a variety of wildlife to flourish. **Action Wirral Rivers** worked with the Wirral Ranger service to organise the activities, which included digging new pools and ditches.

**S** Manchester based co-ordinators from the **Mersey Basin Campaign** teamed up with volunteers from the Royal Mail and Lorenz Canal Services to help clean up the city's Castlefield area.

Long overlooked, Manchester's canals are coming out from the shadows.

Words Mark Hillsdon. Photograph Len Grant.

# CANALWATCH

Canals in the modern city have never had a very good press. More often than not described as stagnant and litter-strewn, with banks perpetually lined with factories (derelict) and railway sidings (disused), it's little surprise that city burghers have tried to cover all trace of them, hiding them away like an embarrassing relative from a bygone age.

Manchester has about five miles of waterfront including the River Irwell, but for years only the foolhardy would venture along the badly lit towpaths of the Rochdale and Ashton canals, that snake through the city centre.

But gradually things have changed as the true worth of canals, and their potential for bringing new life back into city centres, has been realised. And in the same way that a zero

tolerance approach is helping to reclaim the streets, Manchester's canals are also benefiting from a 'people first' approach.

Action Manchester Waterways has been central to this renaissance, working closely with the likes of the police, businesses, Manchester City Council and the City Centre Management Company to revitalise the city's waterways.

As development co-ordinator Hazel Lord explains: "People like water and sitting near water – it's calming. Developers are now



**CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT JUSTINE CURRAN, PC COLIN HEIL AND SARAH FLYNN OF THE MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN**

introducing canal side walkways and areas for office workers to sit and eat their lunch, integrating the surrounding environment into their developments."

Margaret Fletcher, chair of the Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal Society, agrees. "The more the canals are actually used, the less crime there tends to be, simply because people are around."

City Centre Canal Watch is helping in this fight against crime by enlisting the help of local residents and businesspeople to monitor the stretch of the waterway close to them and report any incidents to the police.

Inspector Stuart Barton is in charge of the area policing team in the city centre. He believes that Canal Watch is already having an impact, and that what little crime does still take place is now very low level.

"We need to provide a reassurance to people who have never been down there before and that's what we aim to do," he explains. "We'll keep walking along the canals, showing that presence and making ourselves available. And if people report matters to us, we'll deal with them."

And it's hoped that the new safer, cleaner Manchester canals will also attract more narrow boaters, many of whom have been wary of passing through a major city centre.

The rebirth of Manchester's canals is already evident in Castlefield and along Canal Street, once no-go areas but now "shining beacons" of what can be achieved with imagination and vision, says Lord.

There are ongoing plans to transform other stretches of the canal network too, with better access, signposting, footpaths and security. Heritage trails, and the artistic lighting of historic buildings are also planned.

"It's about opening the canals up as a feature of the city rather than covering them up, which is what has been done for such a long time," says Lord.

Steve Connolly, the regional chair of the Inland Waterways Association, believes that the mile of the Rochdale Canal from Piccadilly Basin to Castlefield offers pedestrians an alternative way of walking across the city centre. "People are absolutely gob-smacked," he enthuses. "They pop out at one of the exit points and think 'Bloody hell, I'm here.' I've been past here a million times in my car and never knew it existed." That's heart warming when you hear that."

Until recently few would have been so impressed with Piccadilly Undercroft, a cavernous space where the Rochdale Canal passes beneath the Rodwell Tower office block near Piccadilly station. But this too has been transformed. A mural now blocks off the dark tunnels where ne'er-do-wells once lurked, the lighting has been revamped and CCTV introduced.

There's also a new PA system that allows the police to actually speak to people from a city centre control room and as a result, says Barton, crime has dropped dramatically.

"We can give warnings and reassurances," he continues. "It's done wonders for us down there as far as deterring people and moving people on."

And significantly it's all been done with an eye on the future. "It's perhaps not a short cut or somewhere you would walk at night at the moment," says Lord, "but as the Piccadilly Basin area develops, particularly residentially, it will open up that area so there will be lots of people walking through."

Fletcher's passion is the Manchester Bury and Bolton Canal, which enters Manchester as the River Irwell. The canal is currently being restored but to Fletcher: "it's the fact that there are so many benefits from the restoration that's going to be important, rather than just the canal itself." Over £180 million in private investment is being used to bring 40 hectares of land along its banks into use, creating 1,300 new homes and over 6,000 jobs.

Back in the city, many of the old warehouses that line Manchester's canals could easily have gone the same way as the chimneys that once dotted the skyline, but the red brick buildings work next to the water – they're in the right place – which is why development companies are buying them up and canal side living is at a premium.

A recent report on the restored Rochdale Canal shows that since 1990 up to £260 million has been invested in commercial developments alongside the canal, and a large proportion of this has been residential.

But a few words of caution. Connolly warns of creating "dark canyons" where there's no thought of working with or encompassing the canal but where developers construct: "big tall buildings right on the edge of the canal, with the backs facing the water, to get the maximum space."

Lord is sympathetic to this view. "It's all very well putting up these buildings everywhere but it's got to be done sustainably, they've got to last, and there's got to be a use for them, otherwise we'll end up back where we started ten years ago, with buildings sat along the canal that aren't doing anything."

David Roberts, a director of the Igloo Regeneration Fund, believes that canals can bring significant benefits as long as developers understand that urban regeneration needs to connect back to the history of a site.

Igloo is part of a partnership working on New Islington in Ancoats. It's an area Roberts describes as bounded by two canals, not that much notice was taken of either of them when it was redeveloped in the 1970s and people relocated to it. "It tried to provide smart new homes for council tenants but it didn't work as urban design because it turned its back on the history of the area.

"If you're really going to make canals work as part of the community, then get people to use them, and bring activity, vitality and vibrancy back to the area." **S**



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## People are full of ideas, but how do you listen to the right ones?

**It's Friday afternoon** at Mersey Vale primary school in Stockport and 32 ten-year olds are crowding round a flipchart at the front of their classroom, busily placing coloured stickers in jumbled lines on a big piece of paper.

Having been asked what they want to see on the land beside their local river, table by table, groups of pupils gather eagerly around the flipchart. Each is given three round stickers, red for girls, green for boys, which represent three 'votes'. They can choose between more play areas, better safety, wildlife areas, fishing facilities, picnic tables and cycle paths. They can also offer up their own ideas, which Sarah Wallbank of the Mersey Basin Campaign immediately writes up on a sticker before placing it in a separate category on the flipchart. Each child is then given a single glittery sticker, which they are invited to place over the 'vote' that is their favourite option.

Catherine Yates, 10, says she thinks a better bridge should be built to replace the existing one, "because when you stand on it, it wobbles. It goes over the river so it's not so good." Her classmate Connor Daley joins in, saying, "It's smelly and polluted too."

"And it's too dark with no streetlights," adds Catherine. Sophie Broad says she voted for a play area and really wants "climbing frames, swings, a roundabout and monkey bars."

The entire process of finding out what the class wants to see happening along their local riverside land takes no more than 15 minutes. The technique being used is known as participatory appraisal; fairly new to the UK, it was pioneered in developing countries to help local people feed into decision-making on community initiatives.

"The main features are that it's user friendly, accessible to everyone, and you don't have to be a confident person who is able to stand up in a room and say your point of view," says Sarah Wallbank, who designed this consultation

to discover how the people of Heaton Mersey want to regenerate the derelict land next to the River Mersey through the European funded Artery project.

"Participatory appraisal aims to reach beyond the usual suspects – the people in any community who are always active and vocal. It doesn't take up much of your time, and we go to where people are, we don't rely on them to come to us."

Asking school children to vote on ideas is just one step in an in-depth consultation process, which Sarah hopes will reach at least 10% of the local population. She has also organised consultation meetings with local resident associations, businesses, fishing and cycling clubs, and will be reaching out to a far wider audience – many of whom have never been asked their opinion before.

The principle of asking local people what they want is now a central criterion in many funding applications. This may seem to make perfect sense, but it has not always been the case. With hundreds of millions of pounds of public money already spent over several decades to regenerate derelict areas of the Northwest, the question now being asked is, how effective has this really been for the communities themselves?

The new thinking goes like this: serial regeneration that takes only nominal account of local needs and priorities is unlikely to be sustainable – for example, an undirected mass mail-out of a questionnaire may offer a nod to public consultation, but it will not explore the deeper issues, or make use of the in-depth local knowledge, that exist within communities.

Carole Parker, partnership co-ordinator of the Mersey Waterfront regional park, explains that there is growing awareness that vested interests have a valid right to be involved in public decision making.

"We believe that people must be at the heart of what the money is spent on. This work is being done because of the public; they are the whole point of what we do."

[continued over]

# SPEAKING

Words Louise Tickle

Photographs Mersey Waterfront, Terry Mealey



# OUT

Working for the Mersey Waterfront on a detailed public consultation exercise is Manchester-based consultancy, Vision 21. Helen Bidwell leads the team which has randomly selected residents in the Wirral, Liverpool, Sefton and Halton and invited them onto newly created 'people's panels'; three-day, paid workshops which are carefully constructed to

discover and engage with participants' ideas and to develop their skills as consultees for the future.

Several months on from the first set of panels and now working on follow-up sessions, Helen Bidwell explains the plus points.

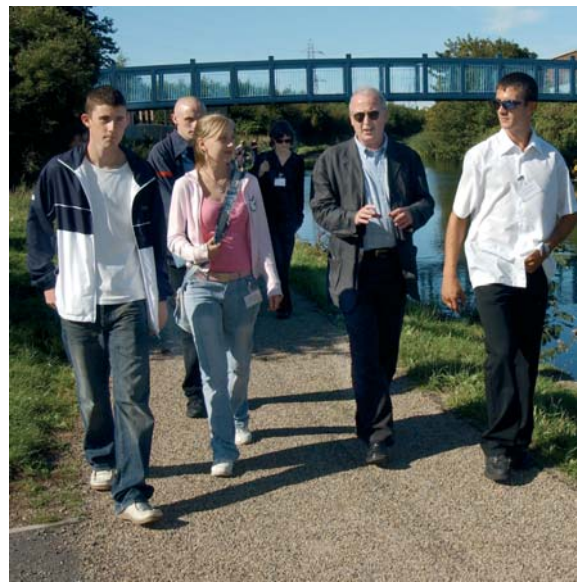
"It gives people a substantial period to get the information they need, and time to digest that information, while having somebody there on hand they can ask. They will

become an expert on what is proposed in their community.

"They set their own ground rules for the way the sessions are run, and we do all sorts of exercises and activities to get people comfortable speaking in front of others. We also use different methods to suit different people. That helps us in finding out everyone's point of view."

Four panel sessions have already been completed, exploring a range of proposals that are still at an early enough stage for suggestions and criticisms to be incorporated.

One such proposal, called Pride in the Promenades, is led



by Iain Taylor of the Mersey Basin Campaign. He recalls the experience of having local residents put his project under the microscope with something of a rueful chuckle.

"No two people's panels are going to be the same. I'd been and presented to the Wirral panel, and luckily they really liked the Promenades idea and gave loads of enthusiastic feedback," he explains. "The Liverpool panel was a completely different kettle of fish and I was quizzed heavily. It was interesting as an experience, because I think it's essential to be put on the spot and for local people to ask tough questions. I worked hard in that session and gave very honest answers. You've got to be honest with people at the end of the day, and I think finally I won them over to considering the idea."

Kristina Mullins, who lives on the waterfront in New Ferry, participated in the Wirral panel and says it offered a useful opportunity to tell funders things they don't know. "It was enjoyable, informative, very democratic and a good process because it gave us the chance to feed in."

Though disappointed that her area is not part of the current regeneration plans, Mullins feels that at least her input has highlighted problems that had not been considered before and may influence future proposals. But, she says, keeping people informed who have already given their time

**"We're going to be like a dog with a bone - we're making it very clear to the agencies seeking our funding that they must take what the people's panels have said on board"**

and ideas is crucial to ensuring communities retain a sense of ownership.

"It matters, certainly – it's very important to me to be kept informed, to know if they've listened to our report and taken account of our views."

After all this expensive consultation though, surely it could be anticipated that children want play areas, adults want better safety and less pollution and parents with babies need clean toilets to change nappies?

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**ABOVE AND OPPOSITE:  
SPECIAL PEOPLE'S PANELS  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON  
SITE VISITS IN LIVERPOOL**



## 60-second expert

- Serial regeneration that takes no account of local needs is increasingly seen by major funders as unsustainable.
- Money for regeneration projects is now increasingly linked to in-depth public consultation.
- Various methods of consulting communities are being developed in the Northwest.
- People's panels on Merseyside have required groups of up to 16 local people to commit to three days of workshops on a paid basis. Sourced randomly, they aim to get beyond 'the usual suspects'. Panel members become experts on the issue in hand and develop skills that mean they can be effective consultees in the future.
- Participatory appraisal is a system in which people are consulted in the places where they naturally gather. It offers a simple, easily accessible way to give an opinion without people needing to feel confident to stand up and speak out in public.
- Stakeholder mapping identifies as many interest groups as possible with the aim of correctly targeting a carefully formulated questionnaire. This is then used to home in on groups who have particular knowledge of an issue or area.
- All involved agree that feedback and follow-up is necessary after the consultation and that when action is taken, communities must feel that their views have been taken into account.

Couldn't expert professionals get round a table and work out at least reasonably accurately what is needed?

"I'm sure they could come up with a proportion of it, but not sure they could come up with all of it," says Helen Bidwell at Vision 21. "Local people know what happens in their area; we could think that they really need a supermarket on a vacant field, but they may feel they need a sports centre. If you provide something communities don't want or need, they won't use it and it's not sustainable."

"Also," she laughs, "all these regeneration consultants may be experts but you can get too involved in something, and then just by asking someone from outside, you get an unbiased perspective."

Caroline Riley of the Mersey Basin Campaign agrees. She is working with the Environment Agency, which has committed to increase public participation in the Ribble Basin pilot project, part of the far reaching European Water Framework Directive. The method she uses is called stakeholder mapping, which brings rigour and a degree of independence to identifying all parties who might have an interest in the water environment of the Ribble.

The initial process was to canvass opinion widely on the many stakeholders who might exist. After identifying 16 broad categories of stakeholders, these were broken down into sub-categories and a great deal of research time, sometimes on the ground, was invested to find the most appropriate contact.

Could the same result have been obtained through existing knowledge?

"Well, the Environment Agency had a starting list of stakeholders, but I knew we could find more," says Riley. "I can't promise that stakeholder mapping has identified them all, but I

think we've gone a lot further than we could have without it."

However, stakeholder mapping isn't meant to reach everyone – instead it aims to identify those who are most likely to feel strongly that they have something to say.

When you do reach the right people, it should follow that the quality of their response is better.



With the Ribble pilot consultation this proved it be the case. Anticipating a 5% response rate to the questionnaire she sent out, Riley was delighted that the actual rate has been 35%. But, she warns, the research that goes into the mapping process must be backed up by careful thought in formulating the questionnaire, because once it has been sent out, people cannot be asked again.


"It creates a very informed place from which to begin, but it's only a tool to start off the dialogue," she says. "We then looked at the areas and issues that people said mattered to them, and matched various groups to a series of workshops so we could work out what their vision was for the Ribble."

That vision is now a document that will be incorporated into the plan for the Ribble.

Will it make any difference? Riley sounds a bit shocked at the question and explains firmly that ignoring public participation is not an option because it is built into the Water Framework Directive.

At the Mersey Waterfront, Carole Parker is equally adamant that the opinions that communities have taken the time to offer must be taken into account.

"We're going to be like a dog with a bone – we're making it very clear to the agencies seeking our funding that they must take what the people's panels have said on board," she says.

Making sure that people believe their input is getting results is important too, says Sarah Wallbank in Heaton Mersey. "You need to keep the people who've been involved in the loop. The idea is that we'll move very quickly, so they know that their ideas are being developed and being taken note of. By October 2006, when this consultation comes to an end, residents here will see something real has happened that they've contributed to." 



## TURNING POINTS

**1970**

Graduates from Exeter University with a degree in Theology. Gains a PGCE in drama and divinity and teaches religious education at a school in Kent from 1971-74.

**1994**

After 12 years in parish ministry in Bristol and Croydon, becomes Bishop of Hull.

**1998**

Appointed Bishop of Liverpool. Becomes deeply involved in the city's urban regeneration, chairing its New Deal for Communities programme for four years.

**2000**

Inspired to look into environmental issues after speaking to teenagers at the largest schools in the Diocese of Liverpool and finding that the environment topped their list of concerns for the future.

**2002**

Takes the opportunity of his study leave to re-examine the Bible and look at the relationship between ecology and Christianity, leading to his book "Jesus and the Earth" in 2003.

HAS THE ENVIRONMENT  
GOT A PRAYER?

When the Right Reverend James Jones speaks, it's with the cadence of a man well used to delivering the Sunday sermon at Liverpool's Anglican cathedral. His words are carefully considered and his comments well thought out.

So when he says, "I think we've got to sit up and take notice of the leading scientists who say that we are in a critical situation," it's difficult to disagree.

In his book "Jesus and the Earth" the Bishop quotes Sir Martin Reese, the Astronomer Royal, who concludes that we have only a 50-50 chance of surviving the coming century.

He may be less pessimistic for our future than some of his counterparts in the realm of science, but the Bishop is clearly concerned. We have been and continue to be, he says, profligate with our use of the Earth's resources.

"The Earth is evidently not a limitless larder," he says. "We've got to be careful how we use it, how we conserve and sustain it."

Appropriately enough in the run up to Christmas, we're meeting at an inn. Or at least, the city centre Marriott hotel in Liverpool, the city where the Right Reverend James Jones has been a dedicated and popular Bishop since 1998.

He graduated with a degree in Theology from Exeter University in 1970 and quickly went on to train as a teacher of

sponsored by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Dioceses and due to open in 2005, the faith based academy is the first to take the environment as its specialism.

In fact, it was in schools that the Bishop's interest in the environment gained momentum.

"In the millennium year 2000 I went around the whole diocese of Liverpool... I went into the biggest secondary school in every area and asked if I could meet as many 16-18 year olds as possible.

"It seemed to me that there was a generation gap; that the younger generation were much more concerned about the future of the planet than my generation. And that made me think very seriously what the Christian faith's attitude was to the environment."

Two years later, when the opportunity for study leave came along, he went back to the Bible to reread what it has to say about the environment. Out of that experience came his book "Jesus and the Earth", in which he joins calls for a radical reinterpretation of the Bible's message on our responsibility to the planet.

"We've got to recognise that we in the West consume much, much too much of the earth's resources.

"We've got to change the way that we live. And it's not just one thing; it's a completely different attitude to the earth's resources."

But how can such a dramatic shift to a more sustainable future be made?

"I think there are two approaches. One is personal lifestyle and the other is public policy. So I think that we need to encourage people on a personal level to live in a way that is more responsible."

At the same time, the Bishop has no qualms about exercising his democratic right to "call politicians to account." In a recent Guardian article he called for a change in the emphasis of taxation away from income and onto resources, in the hope of creating "businesses that use the minimum amount of resource in relation to labour."

The Bishop is a man who places the environment and social justice at the

**"We've got to change the way that we live; it's a completely different attitude to the earth's resources."**

religious education, teaching in a school in Kent from 1971-74. After a change of direction and 12 years in parish ministry in Bristol and Croydon, he was appointed Bishop of Hull in 1994.

Arriving four years later in Liverpool, where 45% of the parishes in the Diocese of Liverpool are Urban Priority Areas, he became deeply involved in the city's regeneration.

For four years he chaired Kensington Regeneration, Liverpool's New Deal for Communities programme, and championed community led regeneration in lectures, newspaper articles and broadcasts. He also chairs the board of one of the government's new city academies. Jointly

Asked if Christianity itself has encouraged our profligacy with the idea that we have "dominion" over the environment, he addresses the issue head on.

"I think the critics have a point," he says, but only because the Bible has been misinterpreted. "If you read the whole of the Bible, then it's clear that the human family has a responsibility to care for the earth and not exploit it."

So is the end of the Earth really nigh?

"I think in the end our lifestyle is the biggest threat to the environment," says the Bishop.

heart of his concept of sustainable development for the future. "Sustainable development is about enjoying the earth's resources without jeopardising the welfare of future generations," he says.

He's fond of quoting an African proverb: "We have borrowed the present from our children."

**MORE INFORMATION:**

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## Opinion: The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company rebukes criticism by Crosby MP Claire Curtis-Thomas.

The MP for Crosby, Claire Curtis-Thomas, jealously defends the environment of the Mersey Estuary. Her concerns in the face of a burgeoning port industry are shared by many. In the last edition of this magazine the MP whose constituency shares the shores of the river with some of the Port of Liverpool's most modern and busiest docks, criticised what she saw as a lack of environmental protection. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company's head of corporate affairs Eric Leatherbarrow applies a very different perspective to the evolution of one of Britain's great commercial waterways.

One constant has remained throughout the ebb and flow of the Mersey's long history. The use of the river as a commercial gateway to the world dates back nearly 800 years.

# SEA DEFENCE

So too does the evolution of the Port of Liverpool. Together they have brought centuries of work and wealth to the people dwelling on the shores of this international highway.

Today, fewer ships may be seen in the docks and far fewer people work on the waterfront. But the Port of Liverpool is handling more cargo than at any time in its history – more than 31 million tonnes a year compared with just 9 million tonnes 20 years ago. The bigger ships are turned around faster than ever by modern technology and many of the docks have been transformed to accommodate a flourishing contemporary mix of companies.

These enterprises employ approximately 5,000 people on the docks. But university studies reveal that Merseyside and the Northwest are as reliant as ever upon the port to generate employment. Commercial activities from warehousing to road haulage continue to depend upon the well being of the port. For every job on the quayside, several more are generated outside.

At the centre of the port community is the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, which owns the 2,000 acres of dockland on both sides of the river and carries statutory responsibility to maintain the Mersey's approaches and channels. It is the major driving force behind the port's contemporary success – a transition without precedent within the UK ports industry. In the past 20 years, Mersey Docks and the many other firms within the port community have invested some £250 million to develop facilities and services to meet the commercial needs of the Northwest.

It is no coincidence that Liverpool and neighbouring boroughs are enjoying economic revival in the wake of the port's own renaissance. Just as it is Mersey Docks which has brought cruise ships back to the Mersey – to the benefit of the city's tourism, retail and leisure industries – it is the wider port community with its many partners that has stimulated much of Liverpool's revival.

Though many of the developments in the port may not have generated headline grabbing numbers of jobs, all have contributed to employment both on site and in secondary roles. Their value should not be underestimated.

Overseeing the development of the port is a string of national and regional agencies and authorities and a plethora

of legislation. Though ports can develop shipping related facilities without local authority planning consent, they are no less subject to regulations, including those that safeguard the environment. Indeed, such projects as Seaforth Dock's cocoa terminal and the neighbouring animal feed facility are subject to environmental impact studies and the scrutiny of the Environment Agency, English Nature and others.

Mersey Docks' environmental performance is monitored by the independent Business in the Environment organisation, whose 2003 report ranked the company fifth in its commercial sector, alongside organisations such as British Airways and BAA and ahead of industry contemporary, Associated British Ports.

The River Mersey will continue to change. The port is currently carrying out an environmental impact study on a proposed river terminal for the new generation of giant container ships. Mersey Docks is looking to invest as much as £80 million in transforming a redundant triangle of water created by the development of Seaforth Dock in the late 1960s.



THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL IS BUSIER NOW THAN EVER BEFORE.

Reclaiming this site from the river created fresh water pools that became a watering point for migrating birds and a popular location among bird watchers. With Mersey Docks' agreement, the Lancashire Wildlife Trust has operated facilities for bird watchers for a number of years, just as sea anglers have been allowed to fish off the rocks used to create the river wall when Seaforth Dock was built.

That same river wall forms the platform for one of the Mersey's most notable waterfront features – the wind turbines which were anticipated by many with trepidation and protest, but since producing their first megawatt of environmentally friendly power, have generated only admiration and approval.

Sadly, the advent of international terrorism has forced further change on the river and the port, as it has on ports around the globe. At Liverpool the freedom of access for anglers, bird watchers and walkers has had to be restricted to enable the effective application of a stringent security regime to safeguard the port, the people who work on the docks and the wider community.

Those who deride such measures should think seriously on the events of September 11.

And those who refuse to recognise the need for commerce to flourish alongside the environment, should consider the consequences of such a partisan approach – the impoverishment of communities and lives on the banks of the Mersey and beyond.

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# DERBYSHIRE LIFE

The government's ideas on liveability are being put to the test in the High Peak.

Words Kevin Gopal

Photographs Courtesy of Ferguson McIlveen, Lomas & Co, High Peak Borough Council

Glossop's overlooked river is to be at the heart of a £2.3 million facelift for the Peak District town that will also spruce up its parks and town centre.

Glossop Brook is to be opened up as an alternative thoroughfare to the town's busy high street, which not only serves residents but also provides a route into the Peak District for thousands of tourists.

Glossop is one of 27 towns and cities in England to be piloting the government's Liveability scheme, which offers funding to local authorities to spend on improving public spaces – much neglected over many years.

An under-used asset, Glossop Brook runs through the town unseen from the still characterful but congested high street. The investment holds out the promise of a river more welcome to people and nature alike that will provide a new way of navigating Glossop and link the regeneration of two large mills at either end of the town and the rejuvenation of two parks.

Glossop's involvement in the Liveability project arose from the findings of a Countryside Agency assessment of the town, explains Paul Armstrong, business manager for economic development at High Peak Borough Council. The health check identified concerns about Glossop's environment, the quality of the town centre public realm, the condition of the parks and poor use of Glossop Brook.

"The message that came was that people didn't want to see major new investment without a real improvement in quality," says Armstrong "The town has some very attractive traditional high street and key heritage assets, our challenge was to pull them together through a comprehensive approach, at the heart of which was the Glossop Brook." As the council was looking for ways to address these issues

over a five to ten year period, along came the Liveability scheme, offering funding to a small local authority that lacked resources and access to other streams of regeneration spending. Armstrong says that focusing on the river linked the town centre with the parks and the mills due for redevelopment, giving a unique aspect to Glossop's Liveability bid.

"We asked how we can get better interaction with the river," says Armstrong. "At the moment access to the river is limited and generally poor."

Liveability's money comes with conditions: local authorities must find improvements to the way they deliver services; they must consult extensively with local communities; and they must work in genuine partnership with other organisations.

High Peak Borough Council can point to its excellent rating in the last comprehensive performance assessment as proof of its willingness to embrace service reform. The 300 people who in one day voiced opinions on the Liveability master plan at a display in Norfolk Square show the extent of consultation. Partnership working is achieved through Glossop Vision, which brings the borough and county authority together with – among others – the local town partnership, Glossop Volunteers' Bureau and the Mersey Basin Campaign.

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“Investment in public space is overdue,” says Mark Turner, deputy chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign, which helped High Peak Borough Council with the Liveability bid and is now assisting with the aspects of the project that involve Glossop Brook. “A lot of political time is spent on big-ticket things like education and health but many people don’t use those services or use them infrequently. But things like walking down the street or using the local park – we do these on a daily basis.”

There is a clear rationale for Mersey Basin Campaign’s involvement in Glossop’s Liveability project, according to Turner. “Logically and sensibly we should be linking in to this kind of work. We are interested in improving water quality and the waterside environment at a local level through the network of action partnerships that we have.

“This project fits with that agenda - trying to make sustainable changes with community support.”

Turner, who sits on Glossop Vision’s board, has praise for the local authority’s approach to partnership working. “It’s not just local authority councillors and a few officers in a traditional local authority huddle,” he says. “They are engaging other organisations including the local volunteer bureau and the private sector – they have brought in the local small traders’ association.”

A management plan for Glossop Brook is being drawn up by Action Etherow & Goyt, part of the Mersey Basin Campaign. The rivers Etherow and Goyt rise in the moorland areas of the Peak District and flow through Whaley Bridge, Hayfield, New Mills and Marple Bridge as well as Glossop before reaching Stockport, where they meet the River Tame, a confluence that marks that start of the River Mersey.

Mary Lee of Action Etherow & Goyt says the management plan is only being drawn up after extensive consultation with the local community, including youth groups, carried out by Red Rose Forest.

“There was a great deal of enthusiasm and interest,”

says Lee. “People are aware of the river but it’s closed off. If people are to use the riverside they have to have a reason to do so.”

Consultation among young people also went some way to scuppering the myth of disaffected teenagers with no interest in their surroundings. As well as calls to provide more for teenagers to do on the riverside, there were also concerns about litter, safety and play opportunities for younger children as well as some creative ideas such as floodlighting the river from underneath.

“We expected young people not to have much sense of social responsibility but we were surprised and encouraged that they had many of the same concerns as older people,” says Lee.

Flash flooding of Glossop Brook in 2002 that damaged Manor Park, Harehills and the town centre, according to Armstrong, “had a huge impact on psyche of people.” He continues: “While clean-up got underway quickly and the debris was shifted we were keen not to rush some repairs when more wide reaching regeneration might be possible.”

Lee says that now the town has recovered the floods provide an opportunity to have a “rethink and a redesign.”

Even as the management plan is being drawn up, activities on the riverside are gaining momentum. The environmental charity Groundwork is establishing a volunteer ranger scheme and Lee is helping set up a friends of the river group to ensure that improvements can be identified and implemented beyond the life of Liveability funding.

“The river channel is artificial,” says Lee. “It’s not attractive or wildlife-friendly. How to make it look and function better without compromising flood protection requirements is one of our challenges.

“The water quality is not bad and there are some fish in it. Is it possible to enhance the river and make it more conducive to wildlife?”

Consultation suggests that whatever changes are made should be as natural as possible. Armstrong summarises the message from residents: “Don’t formalise it too heavily. We don’t want an engineered riverbank, we want it quite natural. Yes to stone walls, no to concrete edgings.”

He adds: “It’s been interesting to see how people have connected with the landscape, keen to reflect the qualities of the Dark Peak.”

Glossop Brook runs through two notable areas of parkland, Manor



## 60-second expert

- Formerly a significant cotton mill town, Glossop combines the urban and rural – a gateway to the Peak District but close to Stockport and Manchester.
- Glossop is one of 27 English towns and cities piloting the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Liveability programme, offering funding to improve public spaces.
- To secure funding of £2.3 million, local authorities must also improve the way they provide existing services, show genuine partnership working and consult extensively with the community.
- Glossop Brook, which runs through the town, is regarded as an under-used asset.
- Glossop town centre retains much of its traditional character, a fact that local people want to build on with improvements in quality.
- Glossop's Liveability plans include improvements to the river and riverside, so that it becomes a new thoroughfare for the town. Transformation of the rail station area is also planned.
- The new river thoroughfare also links regeneration of two large mills and improvements to two parks.

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ABOVE MANOR PARK

Park, a significant formal park, and the more modest area of Harehills, positioned behind the town centre. Both offer the potential to attract visitors from outside the town, encouraging visitors to Glossop to stay longer and spend more.

Proposals for Manor Park, developed after suggestions from the Friends of Manor Park, focus on moving facilities around to make more sense, as well as improving wheelchair access.

Armstrong says: "At the moment the children's playground is next to the skate park so you've got the toddlers alongside the teenagers. The plan is make the park more user friendly, perhaps moving the toddlers play area next to the pavilion, shop and toilets, which is better for parents, while the teenagers get their own separate area."

Harehills, by contrast, full of mature trees and north-facing, has been described as "dark and dank" so work needs to be done to address safety concerns and bring more people into the park.

"The best looked-after sites are the ones that are looked after by the biggest range of the community," says Turner. "They are self-policing, people feel safe."

The priority for Harehills is to inject life into it, encouraging a wider range of people to use it as a green oasis on the edge of the town centre by improving its facilities.


The Liveability project extends to the high street and the town centre as well, where the aim of investment in public spaces is twofold: to encourage local people to shop in their own town rather than heading off to Stockport or Manchester, and to persuade the thousands of people on their way to established parts of the Peak District that Glossop can be something of a destination in its own right.

In Glossop's favour is a town centre that still retains its own character, with a range of vibrant independent retailers and a traditional market. Private-sector investment in the redevelopment of the Howard Town and Wren Nest mills at either end of the town should provide new retail and leisure attractions. But congestion and small but significant details such as poor signposting are a problem.

Chief among the remedies offered by Liveability is the transformation of the railway station area so that cars no longer dominate and it can become more of a public space. But residents are keen on doing the small things better, says Armstrong.

"People are keen to see an increase in general quality. Yes, ambitious schemes and visionary ideas are good but actually we would like to see better quality pavements, better quality street furniture. Don't be too ambitious, get the nuts and bolts right."

Liveability has brought the council and the community together for the first time, says Debbie Enever of Glossop Volunteer Bureau and a member of the Glossop Vision board. She has praise for the creative way that the local authority has encouraged participation.

The result is enthusiasm across the board. "Time is the only enemy," says Enever. "The will is there. I've not come across anyone who hasn't bought it. This is the first chance we have had to look at our open spaces. It's like lifting the lid." 

Two new studies look at why minority groups don't make better use of the Northwest's environment, rivers and waterways.

# ENVIRONMENTALLY EXCLUDED

Pressure is building for the public to be more involved in the work of regeneration experts and environmental managers. But groups such as ethnic minorities are far less likely than others to make the most of their local environment, especially their local water environment. At the other extreme, there are disabled people who want to get out in the environment but face a litany of barriers.

## Ethnic minorities

A recent study by Jenny Dodwell, a masters student at Lancaster University, looked at the attitudes of members of the Asian community towards their local environment, and especially the water environment, in the Lancashire towns of Blackburn and Darwen.

In 2001, minority ethnic groups accounted for over 22% of the population of Blackburn and Darwen, of whom 20.6% described themselves as either Asian or Asian British. They are regarded as being amongst the hardest to reach groups.

But by contacting Asian community centres Jenny was able to interview a total of 59 people, covering a range of ages, countries of origin and both genders.

Her study revealed that whilst members of ethnic minority groups do visit open spaces such as local parks, with some people also visiting local rivers and canals, the water environment on the whole maintains a low profile.

One of the study's most revealing conclusions is a lack of knowledge of the natural environment in general, as well as of the local water environment.

Among the reasons for people's negative views were lack of interest, fear of crime and safety, lack of time and the perception of dirty water and an unclean environment.

Indeed, 38% of respondents gave 'dirty' as the main reason for not visiting their local water environment. Typical comments included: "The last time I went I was 11. The smell, the dirt, it was... eww! I can't really be doing with places like that." And: "I haven't been but I think it would be mostly dirty and unsafe."

Many respondents were unaware of where their local water environment may be, or what benefit they may gain from visiting them. Many people were also put off by negative perceptions they had built up from second hand knowledge rather than personal experience.

Some respondents, however, did express interest in visiting open spaces and the countryside for relaxation, entertaining children, leisure time with friends and family and exercising.

Schools and local community groups played an important role in promoting and providing the opportunity to experience natural environments and open spaces.

## Disability barriers

A second recent study investigated the barriers faced by disabled people who want to enjoy equal access to the countryside. Despite a great desire to participate in outdoor activities, the study found that disabled groups are often overlooked.

According to the study, one of the major problems is a perception that disabled groups and the countryside don't fit together.

Two further problems also stood out – the need for more information on what activities are available and where, and the need for better physical access to the countryside, including the water environment.

Disabled people were also asked what activities would most interest them. Tree planting, environmental arts and guided boat trips topped the list, with the internet the most popular way of increasing contact.

The study was undertaken by Jonathan Grimshaw, a masters student at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The UK has over six million disabled people, or around 10% of the total population. However, the proportion of disabled people participating in

environmental management is far lower.

Jonathan interviewed members of disability organisations based within the catchment of the River Mersey, allowing him to tap into the network of action co-ordinators working around the region for the Mersey Basin Campaign.

Although the co-ordinators are locally based and currently work with many schools and voluntary sector organisations, the study found they have little contact with disabled groups.

Members of disabled groups commented, "There should be a consistent level of activities for disabled groups" and an increased level of support.

The Disability Discrimination Act is one step in trying to increase participation. It states that disabled people shouldn't be treated less favourably than able-bodied people when it comes to goods and services. The study asked members of disability organisations if the Act had helped to increase participation.

The responses it provoked were mixed, ranging from "providers still need to be more aware of it and are only doing the minimum required" to "it has allowed access to be improved and as a result allowed disabled participation to be encouraged."

For the future, there is still a lot more work for Jonathan to do, taking his research forward to look at a more groups and a wider range of activities and involvement.

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Details of both studies can be found in the new Mersey Basin Campaign Sustainable Water Management Research Database, developed as part of the new Mersey Basin Campaign website:  
[www.merseybasin.org.uk/researchdatabase.asp](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk/researchdatabase.asp)

The database is a comprehensive, searchable source of information that has been assembled as a resource for the research community. Its purpose is to inform researchers about individual projects focusing upon river basin management,

both completed and in progress, in the Northwest of England.

If you are running a project please visit the research section of the website to include it in the database.



**Opinion:** Despite our growing economy, creating wealth won't create communities that endure, says Ian MacArthur. Anyway, it's wealth, not poverty, which damages the environment.

# PAYING FOR THE WEALTH GAP

We can only hope to create sustainable communities if we firstly work to ensure social justice. They are two sides of the same coin, inextricably linked. The reduction of inequalities lies at the heart of our ambition and our endeavours to deliver development that is more sustainable.

In a very practical sense, only by driving out the unfairness in opportunities that still plagues our societies, by reducing very tangible inequalities, can we provide measurable progress towards the creation of, as the French would put it, "endurable" communities.

Despite our undoubted economic progress and the improvements in life

quality over the past fifty years, the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" has grown – and it's the gap that matters. We may be a wealthier country than fifty years ago, but the national bill for Prozac tells us that we're certainly no happier! So what is it that lies beneath?

Let's just stick with health for a moment; research now confirms that amongst the developed countries, it is not the richest societies that have the best health, but those that have the smallest income differences between rich and poor. Inequality and relative poverty have absolute effects: ultimately they increase death rates.

And we now know that the more egalitarian societies are also more socially cohesive. As well as inequality weakening the social fabric, damaging health and increasing crime rates, we now understand that social cohesion is crucial to the

quality of life.

Disadvantaged people living in disadvantaged places pay the highest price for economic, social and environmental failure. Today over one-third of the population lives in poor quality environments. Poor employment prospects, low educational achievements, high levels of crime and vandalism, poor quality housing, a lack of green space and little choice in transport or services all too often go together.

What life chances does a child have when they are born into such a neighbourhood? These landscapes of despair, on the margins of our economy, are inhabited by people who experience multiple and cumulative disadvantage. The human condition is a fragile one, and it takes very little to create debilitating 'status anxiety'.

The traditional approach to regeneration focuses on run down areas. Without doubt it has improved many communities and created beacons

of success. But it also creates even greater swathes of darkness, and where the shadows fall the riot zone grows – and its there that you will find Groundwork doing what it does best.

Creating strong sustainable communities must start from the grass roots. The best approach remains building linkages between economic, physical and social capital through the talents, drive and knowledge of local people.

The government's new Sustainable Communities plan provides a solid framework and aspirational vision for this fully engaged approach.

But I do think we need to question the current focus of our collective efforts in addressing the complex issues of social exclusion and sustainability, which are normally targeted at the most disadvantaged. On its own simply raising the baseline, or underpinning the poor and disadvantaged, will not make the difference we want – a difference that lasts.

We must recognise that the most unsustainable

communities in today's Britain aren't the ones that are targeted by the sustainable communities plan. It's the green and leafy suburbs where many of us live, that create the greatest amounts of waste, that over-consume and leave the heaviest and largest environmental footprint.

To turn a series of sustainable communities into a sustainable society we will need an approach that addresses both ends of this spectrum, and we need to go well beyond the physical appearance and condition as the precursor of action.

At Groundwork, we are convinced that the physical environment is a key mechanism to change the way people live – but it's of equal importance to ensure that the lifestyles we have and are driven to aspire to, also respect the environment around us. Put simply – through regeneration that is fair we might just achieve the new goal of social sustainability.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

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**Ian MacArthur** has been regional director of leading environmental regeneration organisation Groundwork North West since May 2003.

# MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN

WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY



Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005 Old Trafford Football Stadium

# NORTHWEST BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AWARDS 2005

# BIGGER BETTER CLEANER GREENER

The Northwest Business Environment Awards 2005 is the region's premium awards event in celebration of good business and environmental practice. Now in its third year, the event celebrates the work of companies that are achieving outstanding success while improving and protecting the environment.

Hosted by the Mersey Basin Campaign and the Northwest Regional Development Agency, the event will demonstrate how business success and environmental improvement can go hand in hand. Open to any company in the Northwest, large or small, the awards are an opportunity to gain recognition for your work, promote your achievements and impress customers and suppliers.

## ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGIES

Recognising innovation and excellence in environmental technologies and services. Environmental Technologies is a rapidly growing and significant business sector in the Northwest. Awards will be presented for both existing and future technologies.

## BEST ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICE

Recognising exceptional improvements in business performance achieved through good environmental management. The award is open to all business sectors.

## REGENERATION

Two awards, one recognising outstanding waterside developments and the other rewarding green social enterprise and business support for community environmental projects.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS

Recognising both environmental leadership and media reporting in the areas of sustainable business, regeneration and environmental improvements.

The awards event will be held at the Manchester United Football Stadium on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The event will contribute to the region's World Environment Day celebrations.

**TO ENTER THE AWARDS OR TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE AT THE EVENT, PLEASE CONTACT THE MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN**

by telephone on 0161 242 8200  
by email at [info@merseybasin.org.uk](mailto:info@merseybasin.org.uk)  
or download a form from [www.merseybasin.org.uk](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk)

closing date for entries 28 February 2005



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