

source^{NW}

WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY

PADDLE POWER

Cool off with our guide to water sports this summer.

GANGES OF THE NORTH

India's biggest festival arrives on a wintry River Mersey.

HOT SPOTS

Climate change puts the heat on tourism.

ELECTRIC CURRENT

Clean, green energy from an unexpected location.

COMMENT The NHS and the health of the nation

INTERVIEW Tony Dean, the EA's new regional director in the NW

Delivering for the Region

The Northwest Regional Development Agency: Ensuring England's Northwest becomes a leading region for sustainable development through:



- Promoting the use of renewable energy through initiatives such as the CIS Solar Tower project in Manchester, which aims to create 180,000 units of renewable electricity each year.



- Creating a better local environment and quality of life through the region's regeneration centre of excellence RENEW, which is pioneering fresh approaches to sustainable regeneration.

- Investing in the renewal of brownfield sites through projects such as Newlands, a major initiative that is transforming 430 hectares of brownfield land into durable community woodland.

- Improving the environmental performance of businesses through ENWORKS, a unique business support programme established to help businesses increase competitiveness and reduce their impact on the environment.

- Undertaking a major study into the effects of climate change in the region and its impact upon the tourism industry.

- Improving the long-term sustainability of the farming and agricultural industry through 'Farming Connect Cumbria', an innovative £9.8 million programme providing business and environmental advice to farmers.

For more information regarding the Agency's sustainable development work visit www.nwda.co.uk/sustainable



As we emerge from one of the driest winters on record to the news that levels of carbon

dioxide in the atmosphere are higher than for 350 million years, there's no doubt about it – climate change is here, and it's here to stay.

The last year has witnessed a remarkable convergence of scientific evidence that has all but blown apart any last vestiges of doubt (at least this side of the Bush administration). There are now several key questions, amongst them: how far will climate change affect us and what can we do to prepare for it; and can we avoid the 'tipping point' at which climate change begins to run out of control?

They're big questions, the answers to which won't really be known for decades. But there are tantalising clues. A new study from Sustainability Northwest, for example, looks at the impact of climate change on tourism in the region and asks how the industry can best prepare itself (see page 10).

Meanwhile, there are those who insist that the Northwest has what it takes to be at the forefront of the push for renewable energy – essential if we are to cut carbon dioxide emissions. We take a closer look on page 20.

It's early days in the fight against climate change, but it's comforting to know that the Northwest is doing its bit.

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Source^{NW} is the magazine of the Mersey Basin Campaign. The campaign works towards better water quality and sustainable waterside regeneration for the rivers and waterways of England's Northwest.

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No plans for water meters

Meters can save money and water, but won't be made compulsory in the Northwest.

A landmark decision to allow compulsory water metering in parts of the Southeast will not lead to households in the Northwest being forced to follow suit, says the region's water company.

United Utilities, the Northwest's water and wastewater company, has made clear that it has no plans for compulsory metering, despite reports in the press that several of the country's other large water utilities are believed to be preparing to install meters in customers' homes.

Media speculation that a wave of compulsory metering might sweep the country was sparked when Folkestone and Dover Water Services, one of the smallest water utilities in the country, was officially identified as a 'water scarcity' area and granted permission to introduce metering in the 64,000 homes it supplies.

The company expects to fit water meters in about 90 percent of the homes over a period of ten years, up from 40 percent at present. It says that on average metered homes use between 10-15 percent less water and that 70 percent of consumers will spend less or the same on water per year.

The water industry's representative body, Water UK, stressed that the decision is a one-off and said it "makes good sense."

As United Utilities points out, the situation in the Northwest is very different to the South and Southeast, which are expected to find it increasingly difficult to keep pace with water demand.

For one thing the Northwest has more rainfall – the area covered by Folkestone and Dover Water Services receives less rain than parts of the Middle East. The Northwest also has plenty of reservoirs, making the region much less reliant on abstracting groundwater.

While supplies of groundwater replenish relatively slowly after periods of low rainfall, reservoirs fill back up much more quickly.

“Water is a precious resource that we need to conserve.”

Reservoirs in the Northwest are currently around 90 percent full, about right for this time of year.

However, water meters can often save money, especially for people who use relatively little water, and people in the Northwest can voluntarily opt for a free one to be fitted by United Utilities.

A spokesperson for United Utilities said: "We always encourage our customers to recognise that water is a precious resource and to conserve it, whatever the time of year or level of the reservoirs."

In the longer term both the government and the water industry are keen to promote water

conservation. The water industry recently helped fund the creation of Waterwise, a not-for-profit company working to promote water efficiency. The Environment Minister, Elliot Morley, said: "It is easy to hope that action taken by someone else, somewhere else, means the rest of us can continue to take our water

supply for granted. The uncomfortable truth is that we cannot, and that action by every one of us in our own homes and workplaces can make a real difference."

MORE INFORMATION
www.defra.gov.uk
www.water.org.uk
www.waterwise.org.uk

ABOVE STILL FULL – THIRLMERE RESERVOIR. PHOTO COURTESY UNITED UTILITIES.

£25 million for farm clean up

Defra announces plans to tackle major source of pollution.

The government plans to spend £25 million encouraging farmers to cut pollution of rivers, lakes and estuaries, but will stop short of imposing mandatory changes to farming practices, even in especially sensitive areas.

Pollution caused by agriculture can have serious effects on water quality. Rain can wash additives such as fertilisers, pesticides and manure off farmland and into rivers and lakes in a process known as diffuse pollution. Farming is responsible for around 70 percent of nitrate pollution, 40 percent of phosphorus and almost all silt pollution in UK rivers and waters.

An overloading of nutrients lost from fields can boost the growth of algae, which in turn squeezes out plants and depletes oxygen levels, suffocating fish.

Treating the pollution is expensive: it is estimated that the cost of removing harmful pesticides and nitrates from drinking water is £7 a year for every water customer.

Under the two-year scheme, advisors will be appointed to work with farmers in each of the forty river catchments identified as most at risk in a national survey by the Environment Agency.

They face a daunting challenge. Defra has shied away from compulsory changes to farming practices so they will have to rely instead on their powers of persuasion, at least at first.

They will suggest limiting the use of fertilisers, manures and pesticides, fencing off watercourses and keeping livestock, which damage riverbanks, away from fields that are adjacent to rivers.

In the Northwest, the advisors will cover Bassenthwaite Lake and the rivers Eden, Wyre, Waver and Wampool.

The environment minister, Elliot Morley, said: "One of the greatest challenges we face in boosting the quality of our water environment is in tackling pollution from agriculture.

"We are playing our part by paying for a network of expert advisers to provide free advice...to help farmers to act. Now I am looking for a positive reaction from the farming industry."



The advisors will be able to offer one-to-one advice to individual farmers, as well as running programmes of workshops and demonstration projects.

However, they may soon be able to help farmers secure extra funding as well. Defra is already consulting on a proposal to spend a further £5 million to help farmers introduce small scale projects to reduce pollution. The scheme would run during 2007-2008 and cover between 30-50 percent of the costs of the projects, up to a maximum of £5,000 per farm. Fifteen specified items would be eligible, including sediment traps and ponds, fencing to protect watercourses and the relocation of gates.

The first of the forty advisors should start work in April.

MORE INFORMATION
www.defra.gov.uk
www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/policy/policyissues/diffuse.asp
 Download presentation on agricultural pollution from www.merseybasin.org.uk/page.asp?id=3021

PHOTO COURTESY ENVIRONMENT AGENCY.

SOUND BITES

Envirolink launches new directories. Two new directories are available from the region's experts in environmental technologies, Envirolink Northwest. The Water and Wastewater Supply Chain directory lists over 100 companies that provide a complete supply chain of technologies and services, all of which have been developed within the Northwest. The guide is a first for the region and offers the latest technologies from well established companies such as United Utilities, as well as from spinout companies from the region's universities. Meanwhile, the Microgeneration directory is the UK's first and points the way to technologies for generating small scale renewable energy in the region, including fuel cells, small wind turbines, photovoltaic cells and small scale hydroelectric power. Contact: I.bradwell@envirolinknorthwest.co.uk

Good cod! London's river Thames may have captured the limelight with the sad end of its errant northern bottle-nosed whale earlier this year, but Liverpool's Mersey estuary has turned out to be home to a giant cod. The enormous 27lb 13oz fish was captured by Liverpool angler Davey Roberts on a boat trip with fellow fisherman Alan Sharpe. The biggest specimen to be caught off the Mersey in recent history, the cod was lured with a tasty combination of black lug and squid, and hauled in on a pennel rig. Proof once again of the river's improving water quality.

Great lakes. Did you know: at 76 m Wastwater is the deepest lake in Cumbria, deep enough to submerge Nelson's Column with 20 m to spare; Thirlmere and Haweswater alone provide one-third of the drinking water for the entire Northwest; Bassenthwaite and Derwentwater are home to vendace, Britain's rarest freshwater fish, which are not found anywhere else in

England? All this and more can be found on a series of web pages devoted to Cumbria's lakes that have been created by the Environment Agency. www.environment-agency.gov.uk/nwenvironment and click on 'water' and then 'lakes'.

24-hour regeneration people. Tony Wilson, the man once better known for being behind The Happy Mondays and the 'Madchester' music scene, and his partner Yvette Livesey, a former Miss UK who organised the In The City music festival, have been appointed by Elevate East Lancashire to develop a series of their imaginative proposals for the area. The pair will build on their earlier work, Dreaming of Pennine Lancashire, which outlined a wish list of attention grabbing ideas.

Such as a fashion tower for Burnley and a football theme park in Blackburn. Wilson and Livesey will consult closely with local communities, the area's five local authorities, and key supporters including the Northwest Development Agency and the Lancashire Economic Partnership. www.elevate-eastlancs.co.uk

Waterside attraction. A derelict waterfront pub for sale in Liverpool is proving the value of a waterside location by attracting offers of up to £9 million. Although the pub is little more than a burned out shell the rapid regeneration of the waterfront has made it a hot property. The Kind Edward was bought for £150,000 five years ago – a bargain given its subsequent 600 percent increase in value.

But the owners, Marchant Properties, are happy to wait for the price to rise even further. The mind boggles at the likely price of a pint should the pub ever re-open.

All the news on climate change. When every day seems to bring fresh revelations about the dangers of climate change it can be hard to keep up with the headlines. Fear not, the Northwest Climate Group has begun producing a quarterly electronic newsletter that will help keep people abreast of climate change news in the Northwest and beyond. News from the group, its partners and the region, as well as other stories of relevance, are being covered in an easily accessible format, with short introductions linking to stories with more detail. To receive the newsletter, email Steven Glynn at s.glynn@snw.org.uk

Canal crooners? While it may be some years before gondolas complete with serenading gondoliers are gliding

along Manchester's canals, shoppers may be able to get about the city on water taxis a little sooner. Property developer Peel Holdings has been granted planning permission to build the city's first new canal in over a hundred years, a 600-metre link between Trafford Boulevard and the Manchester Ship Canal. Shoppers would be able to hop into water-taxis in the city centre and nip out past Salford Quays to the Trafford Centre.

Bright young things. Young people with ideas for practical water projects can win \$5,000 and the chance to attend an international event in Sweden as part of the Stockholm Junior Water Prize. National winners from 30 countries go on to the finals, held during World Water Week in August. The aim is to encourage young people's interest in issues concerning water and the environment. Last year, a South African team won for their revolutionary solution to minimise the need for water in small-scale irrigation. The UK heat is organised by CIWEM, with water company United Utilities paying for the UK's top team to attend the finals. www.siwi.org/sjwp/sjwpgeneral.html

Looking down on the coast

Sites along the Northwest coast from the Wirral to the Scottish border have been captured in a series of finely detailed aerial photographs. The pictures were snapped from a height of between 500-900 m on four flights along the coast on sunny summer days during the school holidays in 2003-4. Commissioned as part of the

ICREW project, they were computer enhanced to allow researchers to count how many people were on the beaches and in the sea at peak times. The information was then used to make recommendations to Defra on how to reclassify the region's bathing waters. Inland waters were also surveyed – see pages 14-17.

Cumbrian wind farm axed

Controversial plans for 27 wind turbines to be sited at Whinash between the A6 and M6 motorway in Cumbria have been rejected by ministers.

The scheme would have provided electricity for more than 45,000 homes and prevented 180,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from being discharged into the atmosphere every year.

But high profile celebrities including David Bellamy, Melvyn Bragg and Sir Chris Bonington came out in the anti-camp, citing the despoiling of a precious natural environment as cause for their opposition.

The decision has horrified the environmental lobby. Tony Juniper, director of Friends of the Earth, said that ministers should be ashamed.

"No wonder the government is failing to tackle

climate change. As each day goes by Labour's commitments to the environment become more and more unbelievable," he said.

"On the one hand ministers say they support renewable energy, and on the other turn down carefully worked up proposals that would have minimal environmental impacts while helping to fight climate change – the greatest threat of all."

Stephen Tindale, executive director of Greenpeace, said: "Climate change will ravage beautiful areas like the Lake District. I hope those responsible will be willing to explain to future generations how they played their part in allowing the savage grip of global warming to trash the countryside and claim hundreds of thousands of lives."

Following a public enquiry which heard passionately held arguments for and against the proposed wind farm, energy minister Malcolm Wicks and rural affairs minister Jim Knight decided in favour of the anti-turbine campaigners.

The public enquiry's inspector, David Rose, had concluded that damage to the landscape outweighed the benefits of renewable energy that would have been generated by the turbines, and recommended that the scheme be shelved.

MORE INFORMATION

www.wind4energy.co.uk/whinash.asp
www.nowhinashwindfarm.co.uk

Europe demands cleaner seas

Beaches across Europe will have to get cleaner after the European Parliament voted to introduce tougher standards for bathing waters.

But the stricter requirements will mean a big rise in the number of UK beaches failing to meet the most basic water quality tests, the Environment Agency (EA) has warned.

The Bathing Waters Directive is the latest in a stream of directives from Brussels that are raising environmental standards across the EU.

There will be three new categories for ranking water quality: 'excellent', 'good' and 'sufficient'. By 2015, EU countries will have to ensure that their bathing waters meet the 'sufficient' standard. Water quality testing will be streamlined and results will have to be posted online and displayed prominently

at bathing areas for easy public viewing.

Testing under current rules means that to achieve the basic mandatory quality standard, there must be no more than a 12-15 percent chance that someone who dips their head underwater will contract a minor illness; an ear infection or tummy upset, for example. The new directive means that this risk must be reduced to no more than eight percent for the 'sufficient' category, five percent for the 'good' category and three percent for the 'excellent' category.

In 2005, nine of the UK's beaches failed to reach the existing mandatory level. Under the new testing regime, says the EA, between 23 and 56 sites would have failed the most basic 'sufficient' standard.

However the new tests will only check levels of the two most common causes of infection – e.coli and intestinal enterococci – instead of the previous 19 contaminants.



The new 'sufficient' category has also come in for criticism. Richard Hardy, campaign director of Surfers Against Sewage, says it is too basic, mimics the old water quality standard and stops bathing waters from failing.

Minister sees green

Top projects get their fifteen minutes.

Elliot Morley, minister for climate change and the environment, recently enjoyed a whistle stop tour of Manchester and Merseyside before giving the keynote presentation at a summit on climate change in Liverpool.

Mr Morley told delegates: "This is a top priority for the government, but government cannot act alone. All sectors of the economy must understand the potential impacts of climate change and their responsibilities for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and I praise all organisations in this region for taking up the challenge."

It was all systems go earlier in the day as Mr Morley switched on the first micro-wind turbines now standing proudly atop the 13-storey CIS building in Manchester's Portland Street. When completed, the scheme is expected to be the largest-ever commercial application of micro-wind turbines in the UK.

The minister was then whisked off to observe energy efficiency in action at the Stamford Brook sustainable housing development in Altrincham. Each of 710 houses has been designed to be ultra-efficient in its use of energy, water and building materials. The site sits on the edge of the National Trust's

Dunham Massey estate and the development is a unique partnership project between the National Trust, Redrow Homes and Taylor Woodrow Developments.

Next, the minister and his entourage wrapped up for a bracing walk along the waterfront at Speke Garston Coastal Reserve on Merseyside. Once a dismal stretch of derelict land, this flagship project within the Mersey Waterfront regional park is aiming to create a haven for wildlife and a £1 million sailing clubhouse to provide a leisure resource for the local community and employees of the neighbouring business park. The Mersey Basin Campaign is leading the project with support from landowner Peel Holdings, the Northwest Development Agency and Liverpool City Council, amongst others.

Mr Morley then thawed out at the exotic Palm House at Liverpool's Sefton Park, the venue for the evening's climate change summit hosted by regional think tank Sustainability Northwest. Noting that the Northwest is the first English region to take official action against the effects of global warming, Mr Morley said: "It is encouraging to see that the Northwest is taking climate change seriously."



Cruising again

Work has begun to reopen the first and most important section of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal, the last canal in Greater Manchester to be restored.

The initial 500 m stretch will reconnect the canal with the River Irwell through the £600 million Middlewood Locks commercial development in Salford that will include housing, hotels, restaurants, bars and leisure facilities.

Margaret Fletcher, chair of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal Society, said: "After many years of campaigning our aspirations are being realised. Boats will be able to

cruise onto the canal direct from the national waterway system for the first time in over forty years."

Economic studies predict that full restoration of the canal in the longer term will create more than 6,000 jobs, act as a catalyst for a further £180 million of private investment, bring 40 hectares of land back into use, and provide 150,000 m² of development space in addition to 1,300 new homes.

Funding of £4.2 million for the work has come from European Objective Two Funding, the Northwest Regional Development Agency and Salford City Council.

MORE INFORMATION
www.mbbc.org.uk

May 4 Improving Coastal and Recreational Waters for All (ICREW)
Improving Coastal and Recreational Waters for All (ICREW). Find out what ICREW has achieved over the past three years and talk to those involved in its implementation at the project's UK reception.

Venue: Urbis, Manchester

More Information: Michelle Brockley 01772 714 135

Michelle.brockley@environment-agency.gov.uk

June 9 Northwest Business Environment Awards 2006

The region's premier awards event in celebration of good business and environmental practice. The awards provide a platform for businesses to gain recognition as well as the opportunity to impress customers and suppliers with their achievements.

Venue: Palace Hotel, Manchester

More Information: Matthew Sutcliffe 0161 242 8208

m.sutcliffe@merseybasin.org.uk

June 22 North West Awards for Excellence Celebration Event

Business in the Community's Awards for Excellence aim to recognise the achievements of businesses in making a contribution to the community and protecting the environment. The event will attract over 200 business leaders from across the region and feature inspiring examples of the positive impact of businesses from within the region.

Venue: Princes Suite, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Liverpool

More Information: Alison Derbyshire 0161 233 7770

June 30 Mersey Estuary Forum

Partners from the private, public and voluntary sectors will be brought together to listen to a range of presentations and raise issues of their own on current topics relating to the Mersey Estuary and associated watercourses.

Venue: Maritime Museum, Albert Dock, Liverpool

More Information: Bev Mitchell 0161 242 8212

b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

From July 01 Clipper Race Returns

Liverpool welcomes home competitors in the round-the-world Clipper Race, having completed an arduous 35,000 miles and almost a year at sea. Crowds of people are expected to attend, cheering on the winner and runners-up. Check newspapers and websites as final dates are yet to be confirmed.

Venue: Liverpool World Heritage Waterfront

More Information: 0151 233 2008

July 13-14 The Regenerator Workforce Campaign

An essential event for all those working in regeneration in the Northwest. A chance for employers to learn about recruitment and training methods and to meet prospective employees, and for the candidates themselves to network and discover what fantastic opportunities the sector has to offer.

Venue: City of Manchester Stadium, New East Manchester

More Information: Sean Fleetwood 0207 539 4030

July 30 ITU Triathlon World Cup

Salford Quays plays host to the swimming leg of the triathlon, now a regular fixture on the sporting calendar. The event attracts thousands of spectators every year.

Venue: Salford Quays, Greater Manchester

More Information: www.trisalford.info

Hanging on by a claw

England's native crayfish are struggling to survive in the face of disease and competition.

Next time you order crayfish from the menu, it's worth considering that before ending up on your plate, your dinner might have inadvertently helped to decimate one of the UK's rarest freshwater creatures.

White-clawed crayfish used to thrive all over Britain, but pollution and habitat destruction, together with disease and fierce competition from signal crayfish, an aggressive non-native species, have led to a serious drop in numbers.

Now the Environment Agency (EA) is putting out a call to restaurateurs, tackle-shops and anglers to take extreme care when dealing with signal crayfish, which spread crayfish plague. Signal crayfish are immune to the disease, but for their white-clawed cousins it is invariably fatal. The disease is transferred by spores that travel easily on any medium as long as it stays damp, including fishing gear and muddy vehicles.

Introduced from America, the larger, plumper signal crayfish are favoured by chefs, who often keep them in a pond outside so they can be cooked fresh,

explains the EA's biodiversity officer Cathy Ovens. "Unfortunately, they're very good at escaping, and they can survive out of water for a reasonable amount of time. This gives them the chance to find a watercourse and hop back in. If they're carrying plague spores, these will then infect the white-clawed crayfish, and at that point it's all over really."

The EA is putting up posters and sending leaflets to people likely to come into contact with the signal crayfish. Chefs will be asked to consider taking crayfish off the menu entirely, or switching to the dead variety. Fishermen will be asked to wash thoroughly and to dry or disinfect all equipment before using it again as a precaution against transferring the spores.

Populations of the indigenous white-clawed crayfish are hanging on - but only just - in Cumbria's River Lune catchment. The Environment Agency has also said it is



extremely concerned that sightings of signal crayfish have been confirmed in St John's Beck near Threlkeld. It was the first time crayfish, native or non-native, have been found in this catchment of the Derwent, which is an international and nationally important river system designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation.

Investigations are continuing into the extent and source of the influx of signal crayfish, and the EA is discussing with English Nature the option of population control or eradication.

MORE INFORMATION

To report a crayfish sighting call the Environment Agency on 0870 850 8082.

Thirty year leak finally plugged

A derelict park pond in the centre of Rochdale that had been empty since the 1970s has been brought back to life within a fortnight as the park undergoes a complete refurbishment.

The pond in Broadfield Park had been empty since construction work on a nearby road caused it to spring a leak. For thirty years it had contained little but damp silt, rats and rubbish.

A major plan of refurbishment recently got under way at the park, but the pond was the only thing left out. So Bob Bevan, the park warden, contacted Mike Cummings of Action Irk & Roch to see if he could lend a hand. Mike managed to draw in £9,000 of funding from the Environment Agency to pay for work by the contractors,

Aquatic Management Services. Workers have removed a dilapidated island from the pond, created new banks, dug out all the silt and debris, created a new walkway and, crucially, brought in 100 tonnes of clay to make the pond watertight once again.

Rochdale council has been so impressed that it has stumped up a further £8,000 to pay for the restoration of the area around the pond, which will feature new paths and a wildflower meadow.

"A wildflower meadow is pretty adventurous for a town centre park," says Mike. "But come summer it'll look superb."



SOUND BITES

S More fish swimming in River Alt. The River Alt in Merseyside could be home to more fish than ever before, an Environment Agency (EA) survey has revealed. In its most recent trawl of the river at Bull Bridge in Aintree, 12 different species were found including chub, roach, carp and pike. The highlight was the discovery of three small sea trout. "Sea trout are similar to salmon - we only usually find them in rivers where the water quality is good and their presence tells us that the water is the Alt is getting cleaner and cleaner," explained the EA's ecological appraisal officer Carole Grundy. "The results were the best we've ever recorded for the Alt - good news for wildlife and people alike."

S Community policing at its best. A film showcasing an environmental clean-up in Skelmersdale has proved so inspiring that it is being used to help train community police officers. "Cleaner, Greener, Safer, Bluer" was commissioned by the Mersey Basin Campaign, and shows how a local community police officer, PC Kath Jukes, inspired a partnership between the local council, schools, Asda and residents to hoik out tonnes of rubbish from a polluted stream in a wooded area known as the Clough. Now that the stream is running freely, the community is using the Clough and PC Kath Jukes has been recognised with a Year of the Volunteer 2005 medal for her enthusiasm and commitment.

S The dam builders. A fourth earth dam has been constructed at Drumburgh Moss National Nature Reserve to form pools that will help to support rare wildlife. Belinda Lloyd of the Cumbria Wildlife Trust explained: "If the water level drops too much, the bog will dry out causing rare mosses to be supplanted by other plants. The more water we can keep in, the more the bog will expand and help to protect this fragile wildlife habitat." The dams also serve as footpaths from which visitors can observe common darter, black darter and blue-tailed damselflies. Breeding birds

include stonechat, reed bunting and curlew. Snipe is often seen in winter, and barn owls and merlin regularly hunt over the reserve.

S Vans have eyes. Litterbugs beware. You may be being watched. Lesley Cryer of Action Ribble Estuary has been out and about at Preston Dock with local litter wardens in their 'We are watching you' van - and woe betide anyone found dropping rubbish. "At around 12.30 the car park at McDonalds became very busy and we quickly caught a lad pushing his drink container in a hedge,

a woman dropping a cigarette packet and a mother spitting out her chewing gum," said Lesley. Though there is an amnesty for people caught littering when the van is around, they are politely asked via loudspeaker to pick up their rubbish and reminded that they could be fined £50 in future.

S Green grants. If you're busy thinking up great green ideas to improve your local community in Merseyside, you could be eligible for a grant of up to £2,000 from the Green Machine. Priority areas include greening up an urban area, nature conservation, environmental art, recycling and reducing pollution.

currently not easily accessible except by car. Hopefully this will encourage more people to arrive at the station under their own steam or to take public transport.

Ashton Hayes primary school has also been quick off the mark. Head teacher Rob Ford has met with the council's sustainability officer to discuss installing demonstration solar thermal panels and a micro wind turbine to help cut the school's carbon emissions. Improvements to its oil-fired heating boiler are also under investigation, with one option being the use of biodiesel to replace conventional fuel oil.

Some individual residents have already taken action. Local couple Ian and Lu Strudwick immediately allocated 2,500 newly planted trees to the Ashton Hayes carbon sink. They are also developing the new Delamere Forest Touring Park into one of the UK's most sustainable campsites, with solar thermal water heating, wood-fired central heating and recycled materials utilised in the construction.

Other householders are considering installing their own renewable energy generation equipment. Solartwin, which provides solar water heating systems, has already surveyed and quoted for six properties in the village, and has offered no-obligation quotes for anyone who contacts them.

Recycling efforts are meanwhile in full swing; the village topped the local recycling league in February with an impressive 28 percent of all waste being recycled, an increase of 1.5 percent on January's figure.

Taking the first steps to going carbon neutral means assessing what kind of nasties the village is already putting into the atmosphere. Discovering this will be the job of students at Chester University's Department of Geography and Development Studies, a partner of the project, which wants to use it as part of a new Masters degree in Sustainable Development, as well as for work-based learning for its undergraduates.

Students will spend six weeks in the village this May to determine its existing baseline carbon dioxide emissions. Once that baseline is established, improvements in emissions can be accurately measured as the project gathers pace.

MORE INFORMATION

www.goingcarbonneutral.co.uk

PHOTO COURTESY CHESTER CHRONICLE.



Cheshire village goes green and clean

Community aims to become the first carbon neutral village in the country.

The residents of Ashton Hayes in Cheshire have been quaffing English 'champagne' in celebration of their decision to turn the village carbon neutral.

Sadly, the grapes that produce the celebratory bubbly can only grow in England as a result of climate change.

At a public meeting at the end of January attended by almost half the village's 1,000 residents, Ashton Hayes committed to help halt the creep of global warming by reducing its environmental footprint and offsetting as much of its carbon emissions as possible.

The launch of 'Ashton Hayes - Going Carbon Neutral' received wide press coverage in local newspapers and on regional television and radio news. Local businesses, schools,

community groups and Chester City Council have all said they will back the effort.

"There's been tremendous support from local businesses who have already said they'll sponsor the project to the tune of £1,700," said Garry Charnock, whose idea it was to turn Ashton Hayes into England's first carbon neutral village. "Eliminating our carbon footprint will take time but we will help everyone who is willing to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through simple, and sometimes cost-saving measures."

Leader of the parish council Naomi Dynem explained why this ambitious goal is worth making the effort. "We want to show our children, grandchildren and future generations that we have done our best to stop Ashton Hayes contributing to global warning," she said.

Chester City Council is already looking for ways to help. The first step will be a safe new footpath to Mouldsworth railway station,

HOT



SPOTS

What will climate change mean for tourism?

Words

Paul Unger

Photographs courtesy

Northwest

Development

Agency

Britainonview.com

Might climate change have a silver lining?

It'd be nice to think so, even if it sounds unlikely when every day seems to bring more bad news for the environment and even George Bush accepts the need to wean the world off fossil fuels. Climate change means warmer weather, goes the argument, and warmer weather will mean brighter summers for the UK and, more specifically, a tourism bonanza for the Northwest.

Not so, says a new report. The likelihood of a boom in tourism fuelled by climate change is "at best uncertain", warns the report, *Climate Change and the Visitor Economy*.

The report is the first to investigate the likely impact of shifting weather patterns on the domestic tourist industry. It focuses on the Northwest and was launched at the Lowry centre in Salford in March. It was commissioned by Sustainability Northwest and funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural

Many observers agree that the allure of the Mediterranean as Europe's top holiday destination will begin to fade once summer temperatures hit uncomfortable highs due to climate change. Northern European countries are likely to benefit but, the report points out, there is little evidence that Brits would give up a holiday abroad to stay in the UK. We would just choose other foreign destinations.

In fact, our visitor behaviour is more mapped out by bank holidays and school holidays than the weather.

But where the impact of climate change is likely to be felt, says the report, is at many of our best known and dearly loved tourist destinations. It predicts more frequent moorland wildfires in the Peak District National Park as a result of hotter, drier summers, and more severe damage to footpaths in the Lake District due to wetter winters.

And as Mark Atherton, head of environment and sustainable development at the NWDA, points out, protecting the environment is not the only consideration.

“If we are to adapt to the future potential impacts of climate change on our region and its economy, businesses and policy makers need to begin considering this issue now.”

Affairs, the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and the Environment Agency.

Says Darryn McEvoy, manager of the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology at the University of Manchester, which carried out the research: "We wanted to understand whether there is as strong a link as expected between climate and visitor activity. People seem to make this automatic assumption that we will have an economic boom but the findings were much more ambiguous."

"Climate change is a business issue. The region's tourism sector is worth approximately £7 billion to the economy. At least 37,000 jobs and £770 million of Gross Value Added [the difference between the value of goods and services produced and the cost of raw materials] are contributed from environmentally driven tourism.

"If we are to adapt to the future potential impacts of climate change on our region and its economy, businesses and policy makers need to begin considering this issue now."

[CONTINUED OVER]

PICTURE:
FROM BRITAINONVIEW.COM

To protect the environment and the tourism economy we need to be prepared, says the report. So the researchers tried to predict the changes we can expect to see in the future. They found that there are numerous climatic changes confidently predicted to hit home in the coming decades:

- Average temperature rises – although summer temperature increases more in the Southeast than in the Northwest
- High temperature extremes become more common
- Low temperature extremes become less common
- Sea-surface temperature warms
- The growing season lengthens
- Winter rainfall increases
- Snowfall decreases
- Summer soil moisture decreases
- Sea-level rises
- Extremes of sea-level become more frequent

Adding to the problem is the fact that the weather is not the only thing that is going to change. Society and the economy will also have moved on and the challenge of protecting the environment will be made harder by shifting socio-economic trends.

Tourism in the UK is expected to grow as disposable incomes increase, the number of retired people rises and we look to exploit greater levels of leisure time.

Meanwhile, technological advances such as warmer clothing and better equipment mean

that people are less likely to be put off from visiting the great outdoors by the cold and wet. But wet weather makes the landscape more vulnerable to erosion, and climate change predicts more winter rain. That's bad news for footpaths in the Lake District and other popular upland walking destinations, which could see thousands more tramping feet just when the landscape itself is most vulnerable.

That said, scientific forecasts of climate change in the Northwest and predictions of socio-economic trends turn out to be easier than pinpointing past visitor behaviour. Indeed, research into past links between the weather and visitor activity was severely hampered by a lack of data. Few tourist attractions in the region have precise records available.

Researchers had to rely on data from Chester Zoo, which had detailed visitor numbers going back 27 years that could be set against temperature and rainfall from a local weather station.

Darryn McEvoy explained this lack of information was a surprising and frustrating aspect of the report: "If you run a tourist attraction and want to prepare for change you will need to have better prepared data. A lot of places just repeated the year before's data.

"No other industry would fail to produce accurate data like this.

PHOTOGRAPH BELOW:
SAND DUNES AT FORMBY POINT, SEFTON

Valuing the visitor

- In the Northwest, 6.7 million people live in a region that contains 32 National Nature Reserves, four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, three National Parks and one Heritage Coast.
- Trips to the Northwest have increased by 40 percent since 1990.
- The visitor economy generates £7 billion of expenditure and supports 150,000 jobs.
- There are 260 million visitor trips made in the Northwest per year, 90 percent of which are day trips.

The tourism industry is too important not to have all the necessary facts and figures at hand."

Even so, it's clear that allowing more people access to the landscape while continuing to protect it will be the big challenge this century.

The report recommends prevention as a better response than waiting for problems to occur but concedes this "will require significant resources."

Repairing a small section of Lake District path can cost as much as £30,000 and the prevention alternative of using footpath managers, or 'linesmen', to anticipate damage is not cheap either.

Finding and funding solutions is a delicate matter and policy frameworks and strong local management bodies, such as the existing Lake District National Park Authority, will be needed on a more widespread scale as problems arise.

The complexity of managing our natural landscape is there for all to see.

In extreme cases, there may be a need to manage demand from visitors in a more restrictive way. The majority of fires in the Peak District, for instance, are started by human

negligence and closure of the moors may be considered at times of high risk. This would then throw up the problems of lost revenue and the impact on both landowners and visitors. There would be concerns about having fewer people to spot fires and report them and the increased risk of fires spreading.

Sustainability Northwest and its partners are examining ways of taking the research forward.

Steven Glynn, project manager at Sustainability Northwest, says: "The research project has been very successful in terms of highlighting the number of issues we need to address in order to ensure that the visitor economy can be sustainable in the long term."

A silver lining to climate change? Unfortunately, where the environment meets tourism the situation is a complex and uncertain one, and such hopes are little more than wishful thinking.

MORE INFORMATION:
www.snw.org.uk/tourism

Paul Unger is a freelance journalist specialising in environmental issues and property, based in Merseyside.

60-second expert

- Climate change is likely to have a major impact on the tourism and leisure industries in the Northwest.
- The Climate Change and the Visitor Economy report is the first in the UK to systematically assess the likely impacts of climate change on the sector.
- Climate change is likely to limit the ability of popular natural landscapes such as the Lake District and Peak District to accommodate increasing numbers of visitors.
- One solution to this threat to natural landscapes is to improve the attraction of less vulnerable places such as Delamere Forest.
- Protecting the landscape and sustaining visitor access is likely to require significant investment.
- Climate proofing the visitor economy will mean planning for change and creating effective partnerships.
- However, changes in society such as how people spend their leisure time are more likely to influence the tourist economy than climate.

Case Study 1:

Formby Point

The report pays special attention to the famous sand dunes at Formby Point on the Sefton coast near Southport.

As well as attracting large numbers of visitors the dunes act as a coastal defence. With a rise in sea level of between 7 cm and 67 cm predicted in the Northwest by 2080 the dune system's importance as a coastal defence will intensify.

Increased trampling over the dunes' grasses by visitors escaping from hotter and grimmer cities, plus a rising water table, mean the management of the area is crucial in the near future.

Fortunately, measures are being put in place to anticipate just these climate changes, as Mersey Waterfront director Louise Hopkins, explained: "Climate Change is a reality and there are, of course, serious implications for us all, but it also presents opportunities in areas like Formby Point, which is one of the Northwest's most important and popular coastal locations. In these areas we need to proactively consider and plan for

the effects of climate change to ensure we are all prepared for both the threats and the opportunities it will bring.

"Formby Point houses a 220-hectare nature reserve managed by The National Trust. What we must all seek to achieve is the right balance between what is desirable for our visitor economy and what is going to be possible with the changes brought about by climate change.

"We have already seen increasing levels of erosion here. It is gradually shifting dunes inland and squeezing valuable wildlife habitats. Key challenges will include managing access, use of the dunes for recreation, mitigating the loss of dune habitats and re-planning car parking and visitor access.

"For this reason, the Mersey Waterfront team and Mersey Forest are involved in a scheme to re-route a two-mile stretch of the Sefton Coastal Footpath. The first phase of the work has been completed, while further work is being finished in the autumn."



Case Study 2:

Manchester City Centre

People visiting, living or working in city centres could find themselves swapping suits for shorts in the future. The report warns that unless they are made bearable with more parks, shade and shelter, then the predicted hotter, drier summers will make life in city centres increasingly sticky.

Residents and visitors may leave the city during the most uncomfortable periods or avoid it all together, the report asserts.

That's bad news for a city like Manchester, an increasingly popular destination for short breaks, which saw jobs in tourism jump by 27 percent between 1999-2004, but where one in ten summer days may be over 29°C by the 2080s compared to 23°C today.

There is currently a lack of shading in Manchester city centre, which the council is addressing through an expensive tree-planting campaign. While trees will help cool the city's overheated streets, property developers will be expected to increase the use of awnings and make better use of the rivers and waterways of the city.

A questionnaire conducted for the study found that most people thought that the quality of public spaces in Manchester city centre could be considered average at best. Those areas that were seen in the best light included Piccadilly Gardens, Exchange Square and Castlefield.

However, states the report, given the relatively low rate at which buildings are redesigned or rebuilt, more creative solutions may be necessary. These include covered walkways and the strategic pedestrianisation and greening of roads in the centre.





GANGES OF THE NORTH

The Gods take a dip as a wintry River Mersey stands in for the holy Ganges.



PHOTOGRAPHS LEFT:
LOADING UP;
ALL THE IDOLS BEFORE SEND OFF

It's not often that you get to see a Goddess being chucked into the River Mersey, not to mention then watching the watery end of her four sons and daughters who were thrown in after her.

But then, this was a unique event; the very first time in the UK that the Hindu celebration of the Durga puja had culminated in a full ceremonial immersion of the Goddess Durga – though a fast-flowing stretch of the Mersey in Manchester had to stand in for the mighty River Ganges.

The Durga puja is enthusiastically celebrated all over India, where tens of thousands of idols of the Goddess and her children are made from wood and plaster every year. But it is in Bengal that the festival reaches its apogee. Every October, Bengalis in their homeland and throughout the world observe a fortnight's celebrations that focus around social events bringing families and communities closer together. At the centre of the puja is the Goddess Durga, the Mother Goddess. Married to Lord Shiva, the God of destruction, she lives high in the Himalayan mountains, where the River Ganges, the holiest of India's many holy rivers, gushes forth from a sacred glacier. Durga is said to come down to the lowlands once a year with her children, Laxmi, Saraswati, Kartick and the elephant-headed Ganesh, to visit her earthly family.

After her visit, she must return to the mountains. Fabulous painted idols of the warrior goddess and her children are therefore immersed in the Ganges, which is believed to originate from the matted hair of

“In Calcutta, you know, it would be very grand, but here, the River Mersey will have to do.”

her husband, Lord Shiva. This has special significance in Bengal's biggest city, Calcutta, through which flows the Hooghly River, a wide and languorous branch of the Ganges. The two weeks of the Durga puja culminate in families taking their idols to the Hooghly and setting off in boats complete with colourful paper lanterns and splendid picnic feasts. As a major social occasion, the Goddess and her children are given a grand and emotional send-off. Drums, gongs and bells play all along the riverbanks, dancers shimmy and sway, and one by one, the idols are cast into the river and drift away, disintegrating into sticks and clay until there is nothing left but a few sparkly sequins and a swirl of red vermilion on the water's surface.

Back in Manchester however, it's a bitterly cold autumn day and there's damp in the air as the photographer, Don McPhee, and I emerge from the car and knock at the front door of a neat house on a quiet, orderly estate in Bramhall. If you didn't know, this could be any Sunday on any estate you care to mention. But today, the glittering colours of the Indian subcontinent are about to explode into a grey English afternoon.

[CONTINUED OVER]

PHOTOGRAPH:
THE IDOLS AFTER BEING
CAST INTO THE RIVER



One by one, the idols are cast into the river and drift away, until there is nothing left but a swirl of red vermilion on the water's surface.



We are calling on Mr Biswas of the Greater Manchester Bengali Hindu Cultural Association. He has secured permission from the Environment Agency to cast his organisation's specially commissioned idols into the Mersey, and they are about to be loaded on a truck ready for transportation to the river.

As the removal van arrives at his house and the idols are brought out of the garage, Mr Biswas explains that these particular deities were made by skilled craftspeople in Calcutta and shipped over at great expense.

"The main mother goddess, Durga, she has ten arms, and she sits on the figure of the lion because she is so powerful. She slayed the green demon, called Mahishasura, and that is why her foot is upon it."

The figure of the Goddess does indeed look ferocious. She has a spear grasped firmly in one of her ten hands, which you can well imagine her plunging into the body of the demon. Each of her other hands carries a weapon, and there is vermilion powder on her forehead, indicating that she is married. As she and the models of her sons and daughters are carried out, the ordinariness of the housing estate is suddenly eclipsed as the deep golds, blues, greens, pinks, yellows and reds of the idols glow out brilliantly from the pavement upon which they are being tenderly set down.

The man whose van has been hired for the idols' final journey is looking somewhat bemused as he contemplates the day's cargo.

The man whose van has been hired for the idols' final journey is looking somewhat bemused as he contemplates the day's cargo. A couple of lads arrive to help load up and Mr Biswas hurries round to oversee the operation.

"It doesn't matter if you damage it a bit because it's going in the water anyway," he says with admirable practicality.

And so, as the van doors clang shut, we set off towards Fletcher Moss park in Didsbury to watch the final stages of the Durga puja with many of the local Bengali community, who arrive wearing sensible jumpers and big overcoats, furry boots and woolly hats. As Mr Biswas explains, in Calcutta everyone would be wearing party clothes, but here in Manchester, one has to adapt. I wonder to myself if it would be worth asking the Goddess to beg whichever is the appropriate God to hold off on the rain, as a large picnic table is already being set up

by some of the women, and is soon groaning with bhajis, rice dishes and samosas ready for the post-immersion lunch.

Several elderly men are already standing together on the riverbank where the Mersey twists and curves around the park. They look excited and pleased that finally this long-awaited day has come. Sushil Mandal explains that although this is to be the first immersion, the Durga puja has been organised as a community celebration in Manchester since 1993.

"We began in Wilbraham Road in Chorlton, at Gita Bhavan, a Hindu temple. Now we have moved to Ghandi Hav, in Withington," he says.

"For the Durga puja, we do eight days celebration every autumn; we gather and pray and do rituals that the priests perform. We offer flowers. It is a big social event! You don't see people for a year and then you come to the hall and there are maybe 400 people there, every night. We cook food, we do a sing-along. It is similar to Christmas, a big gathering."

Families from the Hindu community are now collecting along the banks and suddenly the low sound of drums reverberates through the chilly air. There is ragged cheering and clapping as the idols are carried up towards the river, borne high on their shoulders by a group of young men. A couple of joggers glance curiously at the assembled throng and the exotically glittering deities as they pass, and a brown-spotted dalmatian sniffs inquisitively at the idols until, thankfully, he decides to wander off before putting himself in the Gods'

bad books for all eternity. Suddenly, it's all systems go. The drums bang louder and faster, and the idols are swiftly manoeuvred down the steep banks towards the water. With a great deal of cheering now, each intricately made deity is thrown face down into the river, and

Gazing down from the bridge, the deities disappear one by one around a meander in the river

is carried away by the current. It seems sad to see them go; indeed, earlier at Mr Biswas's house, Dr Bharati Kar, general secretary of the association, had explained that everyone feels a pang as the Goddess leaves for another year, much as one feels when a member of the family goes home after a visit, not to be seen again for many months.

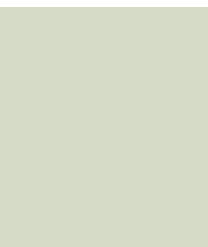
Gazing down from the bridge, the deities disappear one by one around a meander in the river. One gets stuck in the weeds and is energetically and most unceremoniously pushed back into the current with a stick.

As the last idol vanishes into the distance, the crowd makes its way back along the riverbank to where the smell of samosas and curries has imbued the damp air with tantalising aromas. As we walk towards our lunch, Mr Biswas is clearly delighted that the UK's first ever immersion of the Goddess has gone so smoothly. He seems a little wistful though, as he remembers the night-time processions, decorations, dancing and vibrant colours of the celebrations in his homeland.

"In Calcutta, you know, it would be very grand, but here, the River Mersey will have to do."

There's no arguing that a grey autumn day can't compete with the heat and vibrancy of the subcontinent, but who knows, next year the Goddess may choose to visit bringing an Indian summer with her.

Louise Tickle is a freelance journalist based near Manchester who writes regularly for *The Guardian*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Times*, with a particular interest in social justice, the environment and fair trade.





Words Matthew Sutcliffe

Green Leader

Tony Dean, the Environment Agency's new regional director in the Northwest, talks to Matthew Sutcliffe.

When Tony Dean says that his style of leadership is "consultative", he isn't kidding. When he took over as head of the Environment Agency (EA) in the Northwest in December last year his first priority was to meet as many of the 1,200 people who work for him as possible. In a three day marathon of meeting and greeting he managed to introduce himself to almost all the staff at the EA's Warrington based headquarters.

That just left the hundreds of staff spread out around the region in offices and depots from Chester to Penrith. Most of those got a handshake before the end of February.

"That is how you find out what is actually happening on the ground, straight from the people who are there, because they will tell you direct to your face and things don't get lost in translation," says Dean.

There is a limit to his desire for consensus, however. "I like to take people with me," he says. "But if it comes down to an issue where we can't do that then I'm quite happy to jump in and make a leadership decision on my own."

Dean's role will be pivotal if the environment in the Northwest is to continue improving. The Environment Agency not only monitors and gathers vast amounts of data on the state of the environment, but also enforces environmental regulations. It's not afraid to land offenders in court.

There are, says Dean, four "foundation stones" on which the EA will build: financial performance, operational performance, health and safety and customer service.

These hint strongly at Dean's true background. Instead of coming up through the ranks at the agency, he was parachuted into one of its top jobs after building a successful career in business. Starting out in the chemicals industry he worked his way up to the position of general manager before being head hunted for a job on the board of Cleanaway, a large waste management company. He ultimately became managing director of its hazardous waste business based in Ellesmere Port, where he oversaw the installation of a £40 million state-of-the-art incinerator.

"We disposed of some of the nastiest chemicals – ones that can be made into chemical weapons. To safely get rid of 80,000 tonnes a year of very, very nasty chemicals is a great boon to the environment."

As Dean points out, "Sometimes people on the public sector side of the environment don't give enough credit to people working in potentially polluting industries, who are just as likely to feel strongly about the environment as they do. There were members of Greenpeace working in the chemicals firm where I worked." The switch to the public sector came when he got the job of regional director in the EA's Midlands area. But he commuted to work

"People in industry are just as likely to feel strongly about the environment."

weekly from Cheshire, where he still lives, making his new job a kind of homecoming. So what can businesses in the Northwest expect from a man who used to be one of their own?

"We're going to influence more and regulate less ourselves," he says. As Dean sees it, with the EA taking on more and more work it just doesn't have the resources to send environmental inspectors into all the newly affected sectors. The key for the future will be to work better with the agency's partner organisations, and regulate industrial sites on a risk-assessed basis, auditing the success of companies' own environmental improvement plans in many cases.

But perhaps the EA's most critical private sector relationship is with one of the region's biggest businesses, the water and electricity

supplier United Utilities. Dean candidly admits that the EA has a "very strange relationship with United Utilities where we both have the environment at heart, but we also have to remember that we are policing some of their operations. So that's a difficult tightrope to walk."

Dean therefore wants a bit of common sense and compromise at the highest level on both sides. "I'd like to see it become a very strong relationship where we work together on matters of mutual environmental interest," he says.

TURNING POINTS

1975 – Graduates from Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge with a Masters degree in chemical engineering and joins Coal Products Ltd as a graduate trainee.

1987 – Rises to the position of general manager at Coal Products' largest site, in Derbyshire.

1990 – Joins the board of Cleanaway Ltd, becoming managing director of its hazardous waste business four years later.

2001 – Founds Dean Weeks Consultants, an environmental consultancy firm.

2003 – Appointed regional director of the Environment Agency in the Midlands.

2005 – Moves to the Environment Agency's Northwest office as regional director.

Words Joanne Birtwistle
Photograph Karen Wright

Capitalism can save the world

Green crusader finds his philosophy evolving.

Every once in a while there emerges a business leader

whose conversion to the cause of environmentalism sends ripples through the global economy. Think of Jeff Immelt or Lee Scott, chief executives of General Electric and Walmart respectively.

Rarely, however, does the miracle happen in reverse. As yet, few leaders in the environment movement have openly embraced capitalism as anything other than their natural enemy.

Can it be true then, that Jonathon Porritt OBE, chair of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, former leader of Friends of the Earth, one-time pillar of the Green Party, founder of Forum for the Future and for many years Britain's best known environmentalist, has seen the light?

If his latest book is anything to go by, it seems he has. Published late last year, *Capitalism: as if the world matters*, is a marked departure from his previous stance.

In it, the man who admits that he spent 20 years "campaigning against everything under the sun", argues that capitalism is now "the only game in town" and that environmentalists need to learn to work with it.

Speaking at the Mersey Basin Campaign conference in Liverpool soon after the book's launch, he said: "When you mention the environment people generally think of a set of static physical assets that need to be protected from the degradations of a threatening economy. This is an extremely static and defensive way of conceptualising what the environment actually is." Porritt says that sustainable

development – the grown up, more comprehensive successor to plain old environmentalism – is an economic concept. And as such, the environment can be the friend of business. "We need to think about the environment in much more proactive terms... That the environment might actually be a principal source of wealth creation rather than the thing that stops wealth creators doing what they want to do."

But how does this theory translate for businesses in the Northwest?

"In the Northwest there is still a huge amount of contaminated land," says Porritt. "The Northwest Development Agency and other bodies have made significant progress on beginning to clean up that legacy but it is a reminder to business that...you can't just dump these costs on to the environment and not expect to pay for it at some stage in the

"The business case for this is very strong and companies that get good at doing it will prosper."

future. We are now paying a major clean up bill for the sins of past generations."

But Porritt understands that businesses would be "in a pickle" if they have to bear additional costs over and above their competitors. He sees regulation as the solution. "Although regulation, I'm sorry to say, has become a rather unpopular word with many businesses. The truth is that without regulation you can't create these level playing fields."

In these times of high energy costs, Porritt says that companies are going to have to make significant new investments in energy efficiency for economic as well as environmental reasons. He points to Pilkington as a Northwest company that is reaping the benefits of its early investments in energy efficiency: "Relative to other glass manufacturers in the rest of the world their energy costs are much lower; they've done very well on that score."



JONATHAN PORRITT SPEAKING AT THE MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

As an example of how regulation can be good for business, he says that Pilkington stands to benefit because it is producing the right kind of glass needed to meet new thermal efficiency standards in homes and offices.

But there are also companies that have shown business leadership and demonstrated serious commitment to sustainable development over the years.

"United Utilities [the region's water and electricity company] has done a huge amount to demonstrate what sustainable development looks like in practice," says Porritt. "It has made substantial strides in terms of increased efficiencies in its own businesses, and it manages its land assets much more sensitively now, from an ecological and biodiversity point of view. Companies like that demonstrate that a huge amount can be done without jeopardising one's commercial position."

But what about small and medium-sized businesses? Porritt says: "You can't go to an SME and say 'help us

save the world, we are in a bit of trouble', they are going to say 'well so am I'. So you've got to pitch the argument as 'be a better business. Be more efficient'. That stuff is absolutely critical as a business driver."

The argument for sustainable development is very much about efficiency, competitiveness and the bottom line, says Porritt. "You just look at the hard edged analysis of the amounts of money saved through better waste management and energy efficiency. Billions of pounds can be taken off the bottom line for SMEs."

Perhaps it is because his green credentials are so far above reproach that Porritt can talk about business in a way many of his peers find difficult. A sign of his new thinking is that he no longer labels himself an environmental leader, preferring to say instead that he is a 'sustainable development advocate'. With luck, his new brand of advocacy is one that more people will feel able to follow.

MORE INFORMATION:

Capitalism: as if the world matters is available from Earthscan books, priced £17.99.



Words Matthew Sutcliffe

Photographs courtesy

Mersey Docks and Harbour

ELECTRIC CURRENT

Opening a window on the future of renewable energy.



As they speed along the M60 motorway and over the serpentine Barton Bridge fly-over, enjoying views of that temple to retail therapy, the Trafford Centre, most people are unaware that beneath them on the Manchester Ship Canal whirs a small hydroelectric plant. Perhaps it even powers some of those blue lights on the Trafford centre.

The plant, owned by Warrington based Novera Energy UK, has been quietly doing its bit for renewable energy for over a decade, but produces a maximum of only 660 kilowatts of electricity. It's barely enough to make a tiny dent in the government's target to produce 10 percent of the nation's electricity from renewable sources by 2010.

With over a third of all the carbon dioxide released every year in Britain coming from the burning of fossil fuels to generate electricity, renewables are a vital weapon in the fight against climate change.

Just downstream from the Barton hydroelectric scheme, the River Mersey surges into the Ship Canal. A few kilometres further on the river branches off from the canal again and both continue their separate journeys towards Liverpool. The difference is that the river is fast becoming a magnet for renewable energy. Over the next few years, schemes on the Mersey could even chart a course for technologies in which Britain aims to be a world leader.

Next to the river in Liverpool six large wind turbines already line the Seaforth Dock wall. Built in 1999 by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, next year they will be joined by five more even bigger turbines costing around £12 million. Standing almost 100 m tall, with blades 45 m long, the new turbines will each generate up to 3 megawatts (MW) of electricity, five times the

power of the existing ones. Much of it is expected to be used locally – it's enough to power a town the size of Crosby or Wallasey.

Last year the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company was acquired by Peel Holdings, which also owns Peel Environmental (based, coincidentally, in the Trafford Centre), a company with interests in renewable energy. As Peel Environmental's director, Richard Brewster, says: "Mersey Docks and Harbour had the foresight to invest in wind power well before the current explosion of interest."

In stark contrast to other wind farm proposals, which face celebrity-backed 'no' campaigns, the new turbines have provoked barely a murmur on Merseyside. Says Mersey Docks chief engineer, Tim Bownes: "We listened closely to what people had to say before submitting our proposals. We believe the new turbines will prove as much a complementary river front feature as the established units...[which] are now regarded as something of an attraction."

It helps that the turbines are surrounded by docks rather than countryside and that they are a kilometre from the nearest houses.

Another, much larger, wind farm is due to be built offshore in Liverpool Bay by the end of summer 2007. Burbo Bank will consist of twenty-five turbines, each capable of producing 3.6 MW, erected on a sandbank that has formed against a retaining wall built a hundred years ago to stabilise the river's navigable channel. They will produce enough power to supply around 72,500 homes – that's 12 percent of the homes in Merseyside.

"Year in and year out technology improves and turbines get more efficient," explains Adrian Maddocks of SeaScape Energy, which is building Burbo Bank. "Today's turbines are self-regulating and fully computer operated, with better generators, gearing, control systems and reliability."

They are also bigger, allowing them to benefit significantly from economies of scale.

Britain has the best wind supply in Europe, with the Northwest particularly blessed. Offshore, construction is easier if the water is shallow – again, the Northwest is lucky. The result is that the Northwest has been flagged up by the government as one of the

"It's really a feasibility study at this point," says Richard Brewster, who is also at pains to stress that this is not a resurrection of the old idea to build a barrage across the river and that the environmental impact of the technologies being looked at will be carefully considered from the start.

Five new wind turbines at Liverpool Dock could power a town the size of Crosby.

three locations with most potential for wind energy, alongside the Wash and the Thames Estuary.

There is one obvious resource on the Mersey that no one has yet tapped for renewable energy, however, and that's the river itself.

In November last year Peel Holdings and the Northwest Development Agency announced a major new study into marine renewable energy on the Mersey. The announcement was made at the Mersey Basin Campaign's annual conference and the initial results are due to be unveiled at this year's conference. The study aims to evaluate all the emerging marine renewables technologies, which fall mainly into two camps: wave power or tidal stream power.

Even so, there's no hiding the fact that this is the first step on the road to what could eventually be a very big project. As with wind power, the Northwest is in an enviable position, and nowhere more so than the Mersey. Its 8–10m tidal range is one of the biggest in Europe, producing powerful tidal streams that could turn out to be ideal for driving underwater turbines. The advantage is that the tide, unlike the wind, is entirely reliable.

Many in the renewables industry also warn against a repeat of what happened with wind energy, when Britain missed out on a golden opportunity to capitalise on its blustery weather by failing to invest at the crucial early stages of development. The forward thinking Danes, meanwhile, forged ahead. Now British companies must wait nine months for turbines while Danish manufacturers struggle to keep pace with exploding worldwide demand.

"The problem is that marine renewables are not yet commercially viable," says Chris Shearlock of Envirolink Northwest. There are barely a handful of prototypes up and running in scattered locations from Cornwall to Ireland and Scotland.

In the long run though, says Shearlock: "The odds of wave and tidal power coming to fruition and being used are very good, because there's a combination of an abundant and reliable resource and real need."

With onshore and offshore wind farms under development and the added potential for marine renewables, what is happening on the Mersey presents a microcosm of developments around the region, and the nation. New wind farms at Scout Moor in Lancashire and offshore near Barrow, the Solway Firth and North Wales are all in the pipeline. There is even talk of a bridge across Morecambe Bay that would act as an electricity producing barrage.

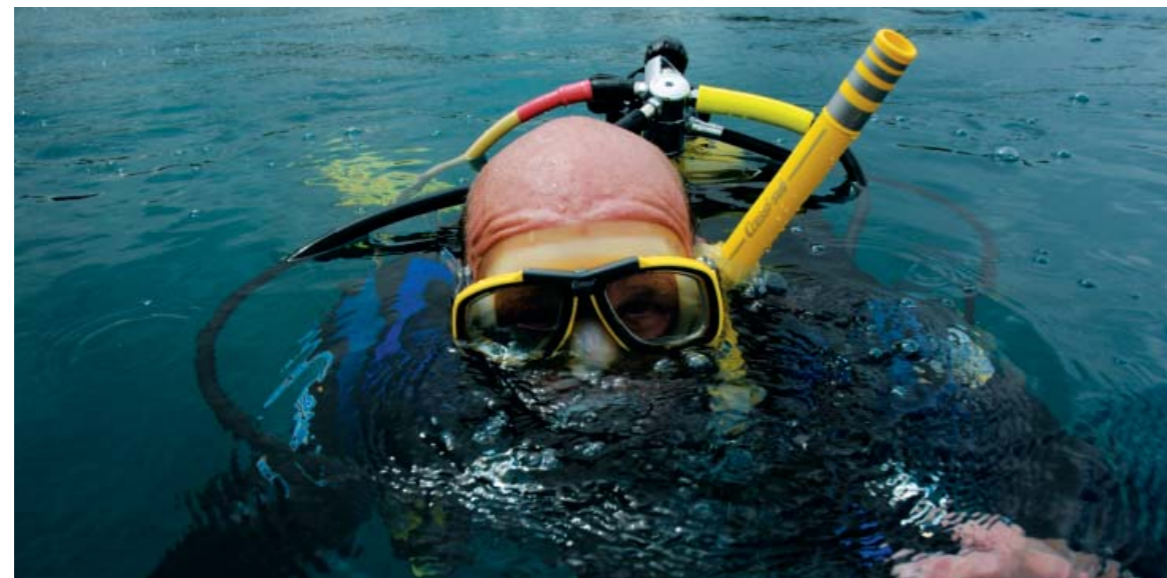
As Richard Brewster says: "If marine power takes off, people are going to be looking at all the estuaries around the UK. I'd like to think that we're at the cutting edge, putting the Northwest on the map."

MORE INFORMATION:

- www.envirolinknorthwest.co.uk
- www.seascape-energy.co.uk
- www.merseydocks.co.uk
- www.renewablesnorthwest.co.uk
- www.noveraenergy.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHS: WIND TURBINES ON SEAFORTH DOCK, LIVERPOOL.

In the Northwest you're never far from the thrill - or the chill - of watersports, as our adventurers find out.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
SAILING AT TORSIDE, DERBYSHIRE.
CANOEING ON THE ROCHDALE CANAL, LANCASHIRE.
DIVING AT CAPENWRAY DIVE CENTRE, LANCASHIRE.
WINDSURFING AT TORSIDE, DERBYSHIRE.

Words Louise Tickle

Photographs Dave Willis

PADDLE POWER

It was after about five minutes of paddling our kayaks that John Platt turned round, grinned and said, "It'll be about now that you'll be feeling your fingers burning, I reckon."

He wasn't wrong. Our fingertips were outraged by the cold, and we were in genuine pain as we held tight to the freezing metal paddles with our hands bare of any protection against the icy drips of water running down the pole. Gloves, John had advised us, would be a bit pointless as they'd get soaked straightaway and exacerbate the chill. Still, he reassured us, give it another ten minutes and our hands would feel warmer. They wouldn't actually be any warmer mind you; the capillaries would simply shut down and they would go numb. I couldn't wait.

Earlier that morning tiny snowflakes were falling as my friend and fellow adventurer Sue and I, both complete watersport novices, set off from Cheshire for Cumbria. Approaching Derwentwater the sky was steely grey, and wrapped up like two Eskimos, we slid carefully into our kayaks, stretched the splash-decks around the holes in the top and clumsily flailed our paddles about in the water to progress in a most ungainly fashion towards the centre of the lake.

The view you get of the world from the perspective of the water is somehow different from hiking, cycling or driving around an area, and being on a boat in the middle of a deep basin surrounded by the Lakeland Fells is an experience not to be missed.

[CONTINUED OVER]



A



B



C



D



E



F

John Platt and his wife Sarah, owners and operators of the Platty+ watersports centre on Derwentwater, get to enjoy the view from the lake more often than most. Platty+ is one of over 40 centres that feature on a comprehensive new web-based guide to watersports in the Northwest. The interactive guide is the product of a major three year project to identify, reclassify and now promote the region's recreational waters. The work was part of the ICREW project, involving partners in the UK, France, Portugal and Spain and funded from the European Interreg IIIb pot. The new guide is hosted on the www.merseybasin.org.uk website and reveals that Platty+ offers a variety of watery experiences for beginners and experts alike.

Had there been a bit of a bluster blowing along the lake, we could have hopped into a dinghy and learned how to tack, gybe and rescue a 'man overboard'. Usually, thankfully, a buoy stands in for a real human being as I suspect Sue would have balked at being chucked over the side given the icy water temperature. However, there was no wind that day, so it was paddle power for us.

Platty+ also offers dragon boating in a long, colourful canoe-style vessel with a ferocious dragon head snarling from the prow. These boats can fit up to 20 people and are ideal for family groups or work parties. For speed demons, the centre also runs power boating sessions just off the Cumbrian coast; not only popular with watersports professionals, power boating can also offer a huge buzz for those amongst us who know they would thrill to the heady rush of zipping at speed through the waves.

Tuition, John says, is always tailored to individual need, so whether you simply want to potter about the lake in a canoe or are looking to develop specific skills, Platty+ will arrange sessions to suit. And though you certainly don't have to get certificates and qualifications, the centre is recognised by the Royal Yachting Association as a teaching establishment and approved by the British Canoe Union.

I started paddling energetically and the little kayak powered across the lake till I ran out of puff.

I had earlier been insistent that I wanted to learn how to accomplish the upside-down-in-the-water tumble that I had seen kayakers do in races down whitewater rivers on the telly. When I mentioned this to John on the phone, there had been a lengthy silence. Honestly, I said, I didn't mind the cold and was brave enough to give it a go.

"Well," he'd said slowly. "There's brave, and then there's foolish."

"And suicidal," added a friend to whom I'd mooted the idea.

By the time Sue reminded me of the way that legs ache painfully when you paddle for a few minutes in a cold sea, I was feeling somewhat less certain that I wanted to hang about upside down in a wintry lake. And very kindly, after all my earlier pestering, John let the matter rest.

Instead, he taught us how to make the most efficient use of our bodies in paddling the kayaks, bending and levering our paddles from the waist, and keeping the pole tight in to the sides of the boat. To go really fast, he explained, you should imagine trying to punch a balloon suspended off the front of the kayak. I started punching my paddle energetically at a non-existent balloon, and true

enough, the little kayak powered across the lake until I ran out of puff and my arms wilted like a boiled lettuce leaf.

After a break for hot chocolate, thoughtfully brought along by John to re-energise our wobbly muscles, we drifted across Derwentwater in almost total silence. The clouds lifted till there was nearly enough blue sky to make a pair of sailor's trousers, and a silver glimmer of sunlight shot across the water. Otters can sometimes be seen on the lake if you come out early enough, their slick, supple bodies rippling through the water as they dive for fish. John pointed out that it's not only the most elusive creatures that offer spectacular wildlife sights: when mayflies hatch for their single day of glory, the lake surface is abuzz with the beating of fragile, lace-like wings as the mayflies search for a mate before laying their eggs and fading away, all in the space of a precious 24 hours.

Two hours of steady paddling later and Sue and I were exhausted but hugely exhilarated. There really

is nothing quite like messing about on the water, and John could clearly have carried on all day. Having once paddled 125 miles in just 18 hours to come home an impressive fifth in the Devizes to Westminster Kayak Marathon, he had barely noticed picking up his paddle on this little trip. Reluctantly, we headed back to Platty+ HQ, a green-painted wooden building discreetly sited on the lakeshore. It was time for another steaming mug of hot chocolate and a rapid change out of our soggy clothes.

The Northwest might be famous for its rainy days, but the upside of that lies in our deep, glitteringly beautiful lakes, tranquil canals and wide, tumbling rivers rushing away west to the sea. If you've ever thought you might want to gaze across a reservoir at dawn, or see the flash of a kingfisher diving for its dinner, this could be your chance to get closer to the water and become part of a whole new world.

Whether it's scudding across choppy water on a windsurfer or leaning perilously far out on a racing dinghy, learning to dive the mysterious depths to explore a shipwreck or simply paddling your kayak gently along the lakeshore, somewhere close by there will be a watersport on offer that's so much fun it'll make you catch your breath.

MAKING A SPLASH

A – Windsurfing on Derwentwater, Cumbria.

B – Canoeing on the Ashton Canal, Greater Manchester.

C – Wake boarding at Cowm Reservoir, Lancashire.

D – Sailing on Pennington Flash, Cheshire.

E – Sculling at Warrington Rowing Club.

F – Enjoying the water sports at Keswick, Cumbria.

I've promised myself that this spring, summer and autumn, I'll be back to see the changing light on the lake, and to watch the colours of the fells moving from muted tones of brown and green through to fresh, brilliant emerald and later on to mauve as the heather flowers on the hillsides.

MORE INFORMATION:

www.merseybasin.org.uk

www.plattyplus.co.uk

Ship canal gets £1 million study

Research to look for the most cost effective clean up options.

To mix a metaphor, the water in the Manchester Ship Canal has long been a thorn in the side of local water company United Utilities (UU).

The 35-mile stretch of almost stagnant water is heavily polluted from years of industrial discharges. The problem is compounded every time there is a major storm, when sewage overflows straight into the channel.

With UU required to meet tough new environmental standards introduced by several EU directives over the last few years, including the European Freshwater Fish Directive (FFD), the problem isn't going to go away.

One early suggestion, which has now been rejected on the grounds of cost and effectiveness, was to construct a vast football-field sized container tank at Davyhulme. This would hold the extra rainwater during storms, preventing it from overflowing into the canal and allowing it to be treated and discharged later.

Now, in an effort to help work out a way to meet the FFD, water regulator Ofwat has agreed to allow UU to fund a £1 million research study. It will undertake a cost-benefit analysis of what the water company can do with respect to installing wastewater treatment works and storm water drainage.

However, several so-far unresolved questions still arise that will not be dealt with in the study.

As a very slow moving canal, contaminated sediments sink to the bottom and suck oxygen from the



water. Every year, 200,000 tonnes of the stuff is dredged out. At some point, it might seem, the canal should finally be clean. But so far, it hasn't worked like that. So it doesn't matter how clean the water is going into the canal. It won't meet the FFD.

Where is the dirty sediment coming from? It is conjectured that it is being swept into the canal from tributaries polluted by industrial, agricultural and road run-off. And if that were so, it would be a far more difficult problem to solve than building a giant tank at Davyhulme to treat sewage overflows.

Survey charts return of Otters

Cumbria's thriving otter population is amongst the strongest in the country, according to a newly released survey from the Environment Agency.

Rather than trying to actually catch sight of the elusive animals, Environment Agency officers looked for spraints – otter droppings – at 222 sites in western Cumbria during May last year. Spraints were positively identified at over half the sites.

"The results were absolutely excellent," says Judith Bennett, a biodiversity officer with the Environment Agency. "They show a massive increase since the first survey of the area in 1998."

The surveys are carried out over the course of one or two days in the summer. "By doing the survey in just a couple of days we get a snapshot of otter activity that tells us a lot about how they are spreading out, even though we can't say exactly how many there are living in an area," says Bennett.

The first confirmation that the otter population was increasing rapidly came in 2002, when the second survey of western Cumbria found spraints at 89 out of 208 sites, up from just 19 four years earlier.

Starting in the 1950s populations of otters around the country began to plummet, in part due to the use of new and polluting pesticides. By the 1970s the situation had become critical and in 1978 otters were given full legal protection in England and Wales.

However, explains Bennett, some otters did survive, primarily in Scotland and the Southwest, but also in pockets in Cumbria, such as on the River Eden. As water quality has improved, otters have gained legal protection and the amount of fish in rivers has increased, numbers have increased steadily.

Since 1998 the Environment Agency has tracked the otters' return through a rolling programme of surveys across three areas in Cumbria – western Cumbria, south Cumbria and the catchment of the River Eden. This year is the turn of south Cumbria, while next year the survey will cover the River Eden. After that, if the results are as good as the agency anticipates, the surveys may become less frequent.

Says Bennett: "Otters are top of the food chain, so when you see a healthy otter population it's a strong indication that everything else in the river – fish, invertebrates – is also healthy."

HEALTH OF THE NATION

Opinion: There is one organisational colossus in this country that can, and should, do more for its citizens, environment and economy.

Which retailer's bulging cash registers gobble up one in every eight pounds spent in Britain, made profits of over £2 billion last year and is so big it faces calls for an anti-monopoly investigation? Answer – Tesco.

Given the company's position as the nation's dominant retailer and the fact that it sells so much of the food we eat, you'd be forgiven for thinking that it has a pretty unassailable influence on the health of the nation.

But there is another organisation whose impact on the nation's health – of its citizens, its economy and even its environment – dwarfs that of even Tesco. One that is so pervasive that we simply take it for granted. So here's another quick quiz – what organisation has a budget of around £90 billion and employs over one million people in the UK, spending around £8 billion and employing

Then there's procurement, an important issue given the health service's gargantuan budget. As a purchaser, it contributes up to ten percent of GDP in the Northwest alone and can have a huge impact on local regeneration. The NHS should be spending its money in ways that don't damage the environment but do benefit the local economy and communities. Health and wealth go together.

Meanwhile the NHS produces over half a million tonnes of waste and uses 50 billion litres of water a year. The wider health sector produces about 3.5 million tonnes of CO2 a year. By managing its facilities better so that it uses less energy and water and produces less waste, the NHS can have a considerable impact on protecting our environment.

But while it's one thing to improve an old hospital, in fact the NHS has embarked upon an extraordinary building programme costing billions of pounds. For one thing, we now have a better understanding of how to

What organisation employs over one million people in the UK?

over 120,000 people in the Northwest alone? Answer – the NHS.

Yet the NHS is in the grip of massive changes, driven in no small part by the biggest funding increases in its 58 year history and a tough regime of target setting.

These changes are bringing unprecedented opportunities with them. But if the NHS is serious about realising them, it has to understand and take responsibility for its real position as a powerful driver in the local, regional and national economy. Equally, other organisations and partners need to share that view and understand how to make the most of it.

So the news that the Sustainable Development Commission has taken the concept of corporate citizenship and applied it to the NHS should find a warm welcome. Its recommendations cover six main topics.

Let's take transport first. Staff, patients and visitors to the NHS currently travel over 25 billion km a year and over 80 percent of that distance is covered by car. Leaving the car behind and walking or using public transport would cut pollution, reduce carbon emissions and help tackle obesity and heart disease, which would in turn reduce the pressure on health services.

design and build hospitals and healthcare facilities that actually help people get better quicker. New facilities also bring new jobs and business opportunities for local people. If the health service's new buildings also incorporate the latest in green construction techniques, then from day one they will also produce less waste, use less energy and, ultimately, save money.

Next on the list is employment and skills. People who have jobs tend to be healthier and the NHS is the largest employer in Europe – and often the largest local employer. It has a huge responsibility to local communities in recruiting, training and retaining local people, which in turn is a key part of local regeneration and tackling the determinants of ill health.

Last but by no means least comes community engagement. NHS organisations are very much part of their local communities and people must be involved in helping to plan and deliver their own local healthcare. At the same time the NHS has a major role in helping local people and local communities find collaborative and innovative ways of building social cohesion.

All in all, if there is one organisation that has the most impact on the health and well being of the people of this country and our environment it is not Tesco. It is the NHS. We are at a point of awesome and unprecedented change in the NHS, and awesome and unprecedented opportunity for true sustainable development.



Beatrice Fraenkel is chair of RENEW Northwest and chairman of South Liverpool Primary Care Trust.

waste - can you handle it?

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www.environment-agency.gov.uk/waste

