

source^{NW}

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Cutting through the tangled nuclear debate.

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Simply answer this question: [how many iron statues look out over the Mersey as part of Antony Gormley's installation *Another Place*?](#)

Published by Bluecoat Press

Email the answer to
m.sutcliffe@merseybasin.org.uk

Available in bookshops or order online from
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WATERFRONT



Few issues in recent years have split the environmental movement like that of

'new nuclear'. Breaking with the mainstream, some very famous voices have been raised in support of the nuclear option. Sir David King, the government's former chief scientific advisor and a powerful advocate of action against climate change, is one. Even more strikingly, James Lovelock, the revered creator of the Gaia Hypothesis, is another.

The debate recently entered a new phase when a government White Paper opened the door to a new generation of nuclear reactors – something critics accuse the government of planning all along.

But as the spotlight shifts towards nuclear, will the money follow? Here in the Northwest the opportunities for offshore wind power and even tidal power from the River Mersey are among the best in the country: investment in renewables must be protected.

The 'new nuclear' debate centres on a simple question: can the UK reduce its carbon emissions without nuclear power? The question is simple – the answer is fiendishly complicated. So it's no surprise that in this issue of Source NW we do our bit to lay out the issues, before asking experts from around the region – and all sides of the debate – for their opinions.

Matthew Sutcliffe, editor
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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.

Cover **Water Pressures**, page 22. **Javier Fontanella/iStockphoto**

CONTENTS

Features

11 HOW GREEN IS MY... COFFIN?

Edwin Colyer answers one of life's trickier questions.

12 SPLITTING THE ATOM

Opinion is deeply divided in the heated debate over 'new nuclear'. As the government opens the door to a new generation of nuclear reactors, **Gareth Chadwick** gets behind the hype and lets leading Northwest experts have their say.

16 GREEN GETAWAYS

Pure luxury, outstanding scenery, fabulous food or just a quiet place to relax – our guide to the Northwest's best eco-escapes has it all.

22 WATER PRESSURES

Ever thought we could be 'exporting' drought? Or that the rainy Northwest might one day be short of water? As **Matthew Sutcliffe** discovers, the future for water is far from plain sailing.

Regulars

4 REGIONAL ROUND UP

News, sound bites, people, places, facts & figures and more from around the Northwest. Plus Love and Hate.

10 CASE NOTES

Slow to take root it may have been, but Burnley's Offshoots is a garden project that is growing strong.

20 SPOTLIGHT

Annie Merry tells us why, for her, the environment is matter of faith.

21 BUSINESS

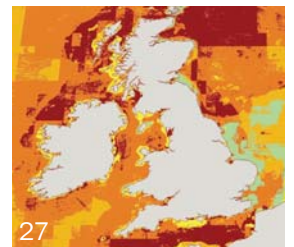
Has Source found the Northwest's coolest eco-building?

26 LOCAL HERO

It's a never-ending task, but **Carol Price** is determined to keep her local river spick and span.

27 SHARP END

Our ailing seas need protection – and **Sue Kidd** thinks the Maritime Act is a landmark opportunity.



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Website: www.merseybasin.org.uk

Design: Hemisphere, Manchester
Print: Gyroscope, Manchester

Source^{NW} is published quarterly by the Mersey Basin Campaign.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publishers. Comments, letters and corrections are welcomed and should be addressed to the editor. Source^{NW} is printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper using vegetable-based inks.

Source^{NW} is sponsored by



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For peat's sake

Is vast carbon sink a ticking time bomb?

Billions of heather seeds exploded across huge areas of exposed peat bogs this winter as helicopters buzzed over parts of the Peak District, dropping bales of 'brash' – cut heather – loaded with the seeds.

The hope is that with spring on the way some of those seeds are now sprouting, helping to protect a landscape that experts say is a vital but overlooked part of Britain's battle against climate change.

Peat is reckoned to store twice as much carbon as the world's forests, and the UK contains about 15 per cent of the world's peatlands. According to the National Trust, British peat bogs store carbon equivalent to 20 years of the nation's industrial emissions.

Healthy peat bogs absorb and store carbon, but if they dry out and degrade the beneficial process goes into reverse and they begin to release carbon, which ends up in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.

Thanks to its rainy climate the Northwest is an important area for peat bogs. As well as upland bogs it also contains much of the country's remaining lowland raised peat bogs – one at Winmarleigh in Lancashire still covers 103 hectares. But as Paul Thomas, a local conservation officer with Natural England, explains: "Half of the raised bogs in Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Lancashire have been lost through peat cutting alone. Only two per cent of Lancashire's lowland bogs remain in their natural state."

And after 200 years of drainage, industrial pollution, overgrazing and fires, upland areas such as the Peak District's Bleaklow and Kinder Scout are now also severely damaged. Scientists studying 1,350 hectares of



“Peak District bogs release 37,000 tonnes of carbon per year.”

degraded Peak District bogs belonging to the National Trust found it was releasing 37,000 tonnes of carbon per year – equivalent to emissions from 18,000 cars.

Bleaklow was among the areas 'seed bombed' over the winter. Mike Innerdale, property manager of the trust's High Peak estate, says that along with Kinder Scout it is "one of the most degraded peat moors in Britain. The idea is to turn it back from being a source of carbon dioxide to a sink."

The trust wants landowners to protect peat bogs by reversing the damage: blocking drainage gullies to rewet the land, reducing grazing, preventing fires and managing tourism.

As Paul Thomas says: "In the past peat bogs were seen as useless and there was a culture of drainage. Now we need to look beyond that."

Wetting their beds. United Utilities owns thousands of hectares of upland across the Northwest. Its Sustainable Catchment Management Plan (ScaMP) covers 20,000 hectares, including large expanses of degraded bogs.

The company is encouraging the tenant farmers who work the land to change their practices and is experimenting with different techniques for rewetting peat bogs.

"On flatter areas we are putting down heather brash," explains Ed Lawrence, one of the company's wildlife wardens. "This stabilises the peat surface, stops it washing away, getting too hot in summer or lifting off in frost in winter." The bogs can then be recolonised by heather and other moorland plants.

SOUND BITES

S King of the Canal. When the 3,130 tonne ship *Neptun* delivered her cargo of timber to Manchester Dry Docks recently, she became the biggest vessel to navigate the Manchester Ship Canal in 25 years. In the process, she removed 160 truck journeys from the road, reducing congestion and slashing CO₂ emissions. It's just the latest step in the canal's revival – the 36-mile long 'Big Ditch' has seen cargo increase by around 30 per cent in just three years. While waterborne cargo is still

minuscule compared to that which lumbers along our roads, backers say it has significant potential.

S Code red. Fears are growing that a deadly virus could threaten the survival of red squirrels in some of their last remaining strongholds in England, including the Northwest. Although the popular creatures remain a common sight in parts of Sefton, most famously in woodlands close to Formby beach, elsewhere they've been steadily pushed out by the larger, non-native North American grey squirrel – which carries the virus, but is not affected by it. So far at least 11 red squirrels have been found on land owned by the National Trust, and Andrew Brockbank, property manager for the National Trust at Freshfield in Formby, said it was "very worrying" for the estimated 200 red squirrels in that area.

S Art in the valley. Schoolchildren in east Manchester are creating artworks to brighten up the Medlock Valley as part of the area's massive regeneration programme. Pupils from Ashbury Meadow

Primary School worked with two community artists over six weeks, using photography, drawing, poetry and crafts to make their artworks. Community artist Chanje Kunda, said: "I really want to work with residents to make sure that the Medlock Valley and local people get the chance to shine and show the rest of the city what an amazing transformation has happened."

S Gold star. Solar panels and wind turbines will be installed at eight new schools in Merseyside and Cheshire to help fight global warming. Each school will receive around £500,000 to slash CO₂ emissions by around 60%. Other energy efficiency measures could include insulated windows, energy efficient light bulbs, heating from recycled wood pellets and using rainwater to flush toilets. The initiative builds on successes at Liverpool's pioneering St Francis of Assisi Academy – the first school in the country to specialise in caring for the environment. The announcement is the first step in the government's plans to make all schools entirely carbon neutral by 2016.

Towering ambitions

Mersey Observatory ‘lamp’ and ‘bowl’ set to join Gormley’s iron men.

Plans have been revealed for two of the most unusual and environmentally innovative buildings in Britain.

Between them the two structures would compose the Mersey Observatory, which backers want to build on an outcrop of land at the end of Crosby beach, home to the famous iron statues of Antony Gormley’s *Another Place*.

Plans for the Observatory by architects Duggan Morris recently won an international design competition, beating off over 90 entries from as far away as New York, Germany and China.

Unusually, the design calls for two complementary structures: a viewing tower and a separate café

and exhibition centre, which Duggan Morris call respectively the ‘lamp’ and ‘bowl’.

With detailed designs now being worked on, the architects and their engineers are exploring several unusual ideas.

Company director Joe Morris, said: “We’re looking at whether the tower could power its own lift. A tank on top of the tower would release water down through turbines to generate electricity when it is needed.

“Another option is to generate renewable energy from the strong tides on the River Mersey to help power the Observatory. We would build a pier out into the river near the tower and use turbines to charge big batteries.”

Other suggestions include warming the ‘bowl’ by collecting heat from deep underground. Specially coated glazing would reduce solar gain and help remove the need

Khan jewels. Brockholes Wetland and Woodland Nature Reserve, the ‘jewel in the crown’ of England’s largest eco-regeneration scheme, has announced a winning design for its new visitor centre. The striking design from Adam Khan Architects is inspired by an ancient marshland village and consists of a cluster of buildings constructed largely of wood and other sustainable materials. The judging panel, led by designer Wayne Hemingway, said Khan had embraced the brief to inspire people to visit the site. The visitor centre will sit at the heart of the 106 hectare reserve, which was purchased by Lancashire Wildlife Trust in 2006 with support from the £59 million Newlands project, Britain’s biggest eco-regeneration scheme.



for air conditioning, aided by the use of advanced techniques for natural ventilation.

The building would also incorporate common environmental improvements such as rainwater harvesting, extra thick insulation, photovoltaic panels and a green sedum roof.

“We want the Observatory’s environmental rating to be as high as it can possibly be,” said Joe Morris.

The Observatory tower would be subtly illuminated from inside and contains two viewing platforms giving stunning 360-degree views over Liverpool, Crosby beach and the River Mersey. A lift would carry people to an enclosed, all-weather viewing platform, from where a spiral ramp would lead to an open viewing platform at the very top of the Observatory.

The second, lower building would contain the support facilities including reception, exhibitions, information point, restaurant, café and toilets, as well as a rooftop ‘amphitheatre’ intended for closer views of the surrounding bird sanctuary.

Backers say the Observatory would be a major landmark on one of Merseyside’s key undeveloped sites.



S Blue Flags wave goodbye. Last year’s soggy summer is being blamed as three of the Northwest’s favourite beaches are to be denied their coveted Blue Flag status this summer. Last summer was the wettest on record and experts say that the extra rain caused sewers to overflow, leading to a sharp dip in bathing water quality at Southport, Ainsdale and Formby beaches. None of the beaches met the highest European standards for bathing water quality needed for Blue Flag status. It’s the first time in a decade that Formby beach has failed to meet the standard.

S VIP lounge. Most of us only spend a few hours there and rarely venture further than the duty free shops, but spare a thought for

the wildlife living around Manchester Airport. Life must be tough, right? Well, apparently not. It seems that the airport has spent a cool million over the last five years making life more bearable for the animals that inhabit the large areas of wild land around the runways. “We have a 15 year plan to maintain and protect all ecological species – especially great crested newts, bats and badgers,” said a spokesman. With air travel currently getting a turbulent ride from environmentalists, forward thinking Manchester deserves some credit for its actions.

S Added protection. Water voles are among the threatened species given added legal protection from April. The species has suffered more than a 90 per cent fall in numbers in less than 20 years. Roman snails, angel sharks, spiny seahorses and short-snouted seahorses join them on the list of creatures protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It’s now an offence to

kill or disturb the animals, and any developers trying to build on their habitat will have to catch every specimen and provide them with a new home. Projects to monitor and protect water voles are underway in Cheshire, Merseyside and Cumbria.

S Youthful exuberance. Jessica Smith, aged 13, of Southport, recently took on the role of budding TV presenter to make a video about climate change and demonstrate how she would tackle the problem. She even shot on location at local wind turbines. Her efforts won her an invitation to 10 Downing Street, where Gordon Brown named her the Northwest’s Climate Change Champion. She has already joined her young counterparts from each of the other eight English regions on an action packed fact-finding expedition to the Netherlands, witnessing the impacts of climate change on a low lying country and seeing Dutch adaptation techniques at first hand.



Stockport park scoops national award



Stockport's Mersey Vale Nature Park has scooped a prestigious prize, fighting off national competition to win the Strategy and Masterplanning category at the Waterways Renaissance Awards, run by The Waterways Trust and the British Urban Regeneration Association.

The project, developed by Stockport Council and the Mersey Basin Campaign – with help from the local community – created a brand new 23.5 hectare park on derelict riverside land at Heaton Mersey.

Thousands of tonnes of soil, wild flowers, new trees and landscaped ponds transformed the land into a nature-rich habitat with 6km of new footpaths, canoe access points to

the River Mersey, links to the Trans Pennine Trail, sculptured seating areas and enough open space for 30 football pitches.

Councillor Sue Derbyshire, executive member for regeneration, said: "More than £1 million has been invested at Heaton Mersey – part of our riverside regeneration projects – and when you look at Mersey Vale Nature Park now, it's hard to remember what a derelict space this once was.

"I would like to say "well done" to everyone involved in this award winning project."

Connect2 wins People's Millions

What links a bridge, footpaths and cyclepaths on the River Weaver in Northwich, a new bridge over the River Goyt in Stockport, and access improvements along the historic Bridgewater Canal between Sale and Stretford?

The answer: they're all set to benefit from a TV and internet vote that secured £50 million of Big Lottery funding for a nationwide scheme to make cycling and walking easier.

Connect2, the brainchild of national sustainable transport charity Sustrans, brings together 79 local projects from across the UK that aim to make travel by foot or bike simpler and more appealing. The scheme beat off competition from four other projects, securing 42 per cent of the public vote in the Big Lottery Fund: The People's £50 Million contest.

John Grimshaw, chief executive of Sustrans, said: "Connect2 has engendered a huge amount of goodwill from all sectors.

"It has confirmed our belief that people want to walk and cycle when given the right surroundings.

"The hard work starts now and there will be a huge amount to be done to ensure that we fulfill our obligations to the Big Lottery Fund.

"Ultimately the real winners will be those thousands of people who will now be able to Connect2 their shops, schools, workplaces and each other every day!"

Bluebells looking rosy

English woodlands will soon be awash with bluebells, when these delightful harbingers of spring reach their peak in April and May. Some of the loveliest are to be found in Cheshire, which this year celebrates a special Year of Gardens. Events are being held in several bluebell woods as part of the festivities – visit www.visitcheshire.com/site/year-of-gardens and click on Events for details. Ten years ago though, it was a very different story. Loss of woodland habitat, damage from trampling feet and, believe it or not, theft of wild bulbs, meant Cheshire's bluebells faced an uncertain future. Step in the Bluebell Recovery project. Run by the Mersey Forest, the project encourages community groups to collect bluebell seeds every summer. These are then cultivated into bulbs and replanted in woodlands, a process that can take up to six years. It's important work, as Britain is home to no less than a third of the world's bluebells. To get involved, contact josayers@merseyforest.org.uk.



A carbon neutral coalfield?

The North of England's first zero carbon community is to be created on the site of a former coalfield in Wigan. Around 650 pioneering carbon-neutral homes will be built at Bickershaw Colliery as part of the government's response to climate change.

The eco-village, whose homes must meet the most stringent level six standards on environmentally friendly development, is part of the Carbon Challenge, being run by national regeneration agency English Partnerships.

The challenge aims to speed up the construction of zero-carbon housing in the UK. It will allow house-builders to gain experience of working to the highest standards of the government's Code for Sustainable Homes, and help to

demonstrate that building carbon-neutral homes on a commercial scale can be economically viable.

Wigan's Carbon Challenge site is one of four in the UK, and its eco-village will form a major part of the transformation of Bickershaw Colliery, where plans are already in place for leisure facilities and open spaces.

The site, owned by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), is one of only two sites not owned by English Partnerships to be included in the Carbon Challenge, along with Brodsworth Colliery in Doncaster.

Peter White, NWDA executive director of development, commented: "The NWDA and its partners are committed to ensuring that the Northwest is at the forefront of climate change activity.

"The fact that Bickershaw Colliery is one of only two northern sites to be pioneering the Carbon Challenge demonstrates that the Northwest is once again leading the way."



Four Avocets got in early at Martin Mere wetlands in Lancashire to show how warmer springs are changing ancient migration habits. The group arrived at least three weeks ahead of schedule in February, the earliest wading birds ever to return to the site. Although it's impossible to say whether their surprise appearance is a direct result of climate change, staff say it fits with a pattern of warmer springs and earlier migrations.

Reserve manager Chris Tomlinson welcomed the travellers, saying: "It's great to see the Avocets back this early.

"We are very hopeful of a successful breeding season for the summer wading birds and we will potentially have another record year for Avocet breeding."

The reserve works hard to raise the number of breeding waders, which need wet grasslands to live and breed – one of the fastest disappearing habitats in the UK. Avocets first bred at Martin Mere in 2001, and numbers have gradually increased from three pairs to 17 in 2007.

Work will soon begin on new marshes to provide more nesting habitat.

PHOTOGRAPH
Ray Cottrell

January – December 2008 Cheshire Year of Gardens

A year-long festival celebrating gardens of distinction in Cheshire, with a vast array of garden events at different locations taking place across the year. Activities include garden tours, special garden openings, theatre and musical performances, as well as food and drink festivals, and more.

Venue: various

More information: www.visitcheshire.com/site/year-of-gardens

April 3 Small Hydropower Schemes in the North West

Hydropower is a mature and proven technology that helped to shape the landscape of Northwest England. This event looks at how hydropower can reclaim a place in the future mix of sustainable energy sources.

Venue: Rheged Centre, Cumbria

More information: Melanie Watts 0161 306 4626

May 8 Greater Manchester Waters Forum 2008

Examining the opportunities and challenges facing Greater Manchester's rivers, with presentations on Mediacity:UK, Mersey Vale Nature Park and the restoration of the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal. With an optional afternoon boat trip to view the waterside regeneration of the River Irwell and Manchester Ship Canal.

Venue: Manchester Town Hall

More information: Lucy Burton 0161 242 8218

l.burton@merseybasin.org.uk

May 22 Climate Change

The Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management promises up-to-the-minute presentations from leading speakers on issues vital to tackling climate change.

Venue: Lingley Mere, Warrington

More information: Glyn Ellis 01925 235961

glyn.ellis@mwhglobal.com

June 26 Northwest Business Environment Awards 2008

The only region-wide awards scheme celebrating the environmental achievements of businesses in the Northwest. Featuring high profile speakers from the business community and the environmental movement. The awards ceremony promises a glittering occasion as gongs are handed out in five categories.

Venue: The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

More information: Fouzia Bhatti 0161 242 8200

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July 28–29 Northern Urban Regeneration Exhibition and Conference

Over 40 industry leaders lend their expertise, share their knowledge and bring lively debate to the proceedings as part of this inaugural two-day event examining the regeneration challenges facing Northern towns and cities.

Venue: Liverpool Arena & Convention Centre

More information: 01323 472467 www.nurec2008.com

Löve

Why I love... compost. By Helen Middleton, business manager, Fairfield Materials Management.



“ Making compost out of waste is the way things are going: they’ve got to, because otherwise people will soon be paying vast sums to chuck perfectly good organic matter into landfill.

Fairfield Compost was set up in 2002 to divert compostable material away from landfill. We get most of our

raw material from the Smithfield Fruit and Vegetable Market in east Manchester. In the last four years, we’ve turned 20,000 tonnes of what had until recently been seen as useless rubbish into beautiful, rich crumbly compost that can be used in various interesting – and sometimes surprising – ways.

There’s allotments and gardens and landscaping of course, which a lot of our compost goes into. But it’s also possible to use compost in flood defence work. The mix is stuffed into “berms”, which are like very long, thick socks, and then placed in flood-risk areas. This isn’t necessarily to retain rising waters – though it can help – but primarily to prevent the topsoil from surrounding areas from leaching away when the floodwaters recede. The berms act as a filter, and also help to put nutrients back into the soil.

Compost can also be used in soil remediation on brownfield sites, which is a potential growth area as cities increasingly see development potential in their disused post-industrial spaces.

Our compost is peat-free of course: there’s no nutritional value in peat at all, it’s just used as a stable base to mix nutrients into. We’re also BSI PAS100 accredited, which means that strict quality standards are applied to ensure all viruses, pathogens and unwanted seeds are eradicated in the production process.

The best thing about compost is that it turns waste into goodness – understandably, people would rather pay our fee of £20 per tonne than cough up between £45 and £60 to dump their green waste in landfill.”

www.fairfieldcompost.co.uk

Hate



Why I hate... Canada geese. Mike Cummings, countryside ranger, Rochdale Council.

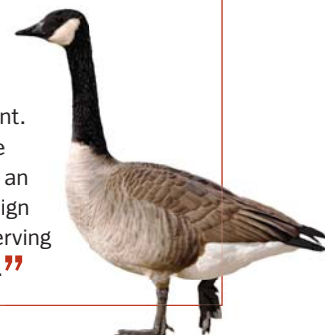
“ Canada geese were probably introduced to the UK in Victorian times by misguided collectors. They’re tundra birds, used to open water with short vegetation up to the edge, so a lot of the lakes and water features we’ve created to make our landscape ‘prettier’ are ideal habitat for them. Their populations have flourished, but they’re an invasive species, and their spread around the country is now harming native flora and fauna.

The biggest problem is that they poo a lot. Every six minutes or so in fact. And that encourages highly destructive blue-green algae blooms. In the water their poo breaks down into ammonia, which is readily absorbed by algae, encouraging it to grow. Geese are also exceptionally gregarious, so you’ll have huge flocks of them defecating en masse in lakes and ponds.

Blue-green algae can have serious human health issues and could also affect pet health. Of more widespread concern though is its effect on water ecology. The algae blocks light passing through the water, so other vegetation dies and then begins to rot. That then causes problems with the oxygenation of the water, so you get fish suffocating to death.

One thing we can do to help is to simply stop feeding these geese. Dipping their eggs in paraffin to kill the chicks is only successful if done in conjunction with other techniques, such as modifying their habitat: they don’t like being in an enclosed space where they can’t see the water, so you can plant up to the edge with rushes and hedging – leaving low gaps for native ducks and coots to access the water – and that helps to keep them away. They’re trying this method at Rhodes reservoir in Middleton, together with planting vegetation the geese find unpalatable, such as yellow flag iris, gypsywort and water mint.

Ultimately though, this is only going to move them on. Like grey squirrels, Canada geese are an object lesson in the dangers of introducing foreign species into a balanced ecology, and then observing fairly helplessly as the damaging results unfold.”



WORDS + NUMBERS

80%

The amount of the Northwest that is classed as countryside.

£133.5 million

Amount of money saved by the Royal Mail as a result of its Carbon Management Programme.

15%

Amount of people who have chosen not to buy a particular product in the last year because of ethical or environmental concerns, according to research by Ipsos Mori.

90%

Growth in CO₂ emissions from aviation since 1990, according to a report prepared by the Tyndall Centre on behalf of Friends of the Earth.

2,816

Possible increase in domestic energy consumption, measured in gigawatts, as a result of the nationwide switch to digital TV equipment, according to a government report.

1 million

The number of glass bottles used at the City of Manchester stadium each year – nearly all are sent for recycling.

Postcard from...Kings Dock arena

Isn't this where Ringo did his comeback show? Not quite. He was headlining the musical tribute to Liverpool that kicked off the city's year as Capital of Culture in January. It was the first show at the new Echo arena, the 10,000-seat venue that makes up half of the Kings Dock arena and convention centre, supported by a host of Liverpool's top musical talent, including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Sounds like quite a night... And by all accounts it was. What most

people don't realise is that the real star of the show could turn out to be the building itself. Because it's a vast and distinctive waterside venue designed by a renowned architect that managed to come in on time and (almost) on budget, opened with an acclaimed show and looks set to be financially sound from day one...unlike, say, the Millennium Dome? Try not to sound smug. Anyway, I'm thinking of its green credentials. It's CO₂ emissions have been slashed by 50 per cent and it incorporates a string of environmentally friendly features. It's cool to be green. Very cool. There's the super efficient insulation and air control

system, the high efficiency, motion-controlled lighting, a rainwater collection system that supplies 40 per cent of the water used to flush the toilets, and a local caterer in charge of the food who promises to use local produce to minimise food miles.

Yummy. Let's do lunch.

And while we're there we can check out the latest green addition – the first of five superbly elegant, low noise wind turbines that will supply around 10 per cent of the building's electricity. www.accliverpool.com



How to...wander lonely as a cloud

On April 15th 1802, walking home to Grasmere after passing the night with their friend Thomas Clarkson in nearby Eusmere, William and



Dorothy Wordsworth were skirting the shore of Ullswater at Glencoyne Bay. Here they came upon a scene that captivated them. Two years later, the memory of it would inspire William to create one of the most famous poems in the English language. As Dorothy wrote in her journal on that memorable day:

"I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever dancing ever changing."

The area is now known as Wordsworth Point and people have flocked to it in search of Wordsworth-like inspiration every spring for over 200 years. The beautiful but diminutive native daffodils – smaller than the modern

varieties commonly seen – are at their peak in late March and April.

About 20 miles north of Windermere, Ullswater is the second largest lake in the Lake District, at almost nine miles long, three quarters of a mile wide and up to 60m deep. It's a typical ribbon lake, long and narrow and defined by its distinctive 'z' shape; a remnant of the power of the last ice age, when glaciers scoured out and expanded an existing river valley, which then filled with the meltwater from the retreating ice.

It's also one of the Lake District's most beautiful lakes, with steep peaks crowding the waters edge and framing the striking views across and down the long valley. A perfect setting for "A host, of golden daffodils".

PHOTOGRAPH

Looking down on Ullswater from Gowbarrow Fell

Coming...and Going

Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance has appointed **Kate Radford** to the new post of climate change programme manager. Her key responsibility will be to deliver the Northwest Climate Change Action Plan in Cheshire and Warrington. Kate moves from the London Development Agency where she was project development manager for the climate change team.

ENCAMS – the Wigan-based organisation behind the Keep Britain Tidy campaign – has appointed a new chief executive. **Phil Barton** joins from RENEW, the Northwest's centre of excellence for sustainable communities. He's a seasoned pro in the environment sector, with a background at Defra, the Mersey Basin Campaign and Groundwork.

The head of a new £8.9 million initiative, Target: Well-being, took up the reigns in March. **Maggie Hulston** will lead the Heritage Lottery-funded scheme, which aims to get people in the Northwest more active, eating

more healthily and feeling better. She was previously co-executive director at Groundwork East Lancashire. With funding in the bag and 91 projects ready for the off, Maggie's challenge will be to get Target: Well-being up and running.

Professor Sir Peter Hall is to step down as the respected chair of Blackpool's urban regeneration company, ReBlackpool, to lead a funding bid to extend the town's famous tramway. The plan involves a revolutionary German technology: a hybrid tram that switches from electric to diesel power to run on non-electrified railways.



Growing strong

Ciara Leeming uncovers another of the Northwest's inspirational grass roots success stories.

It began as a tiny permaculture garden but has blossomed into a vibrant environmental education scheme that is on its way to being self-financing. Offshoots Permaculture Project, in the grounds of Burnley's Towneley Hall, has become an environmental haven since it was set up by a band of local enthusiasts in 1997.

Composting, vegetable growing and beekeeping are among the activities that are starting to make money for the project, which is run along the principles of permaculture – using eco-friendly agricultural practices and minimising waste.

The initiative started when a group of green-fingered locals persuaded Burnley Borough Council, Towneley's owner, to lease out a derelict kitchen garden for a peppercorn rent. It took two years to clear the woodland that had encroached onto the walled, one-acre site, and a detailed design was agreed before a spade so

much as touched the ground. Gradually – with the help of small ad-hoc grants – Offshoots began to take shape.

As time went on it became clear that full-time help was needed, so environmental charity Groundwork East Lancashire – now Groundwork Pennine Lancashire – agreed to take over.

Today, Offshoots employs a manager and two compost workers, runs numerous innovative eco-friendly initiatives, holds regular educational courses and works closely with local schools and colleges.

Its buildings are made from natural materials and fitted with wind turbines and solar panels. Bees from the hives pollinate the crops within its polytunnels and produce honey, honeycomb and wax, which are sold for profit. Trees grown organically from seed are sold for use in landscaping projects.

It also supplies a local community centre with organic vegetable boxes at discounted rates, and may soon sign a contract with the local primary care trust to provide vegetables for its “cook and eat” health education classes.

Manager Phil Dewhurst says that while most activities stem from the aim of financial security, all stick to permaculture's guiding ethos. He says: “Composting's a great example. We are targeting commercial companies via direct marketing and so far we have arrangements with organisations including the University of Central Lancashire.

“We pick up their waste in a transit van that's powered from waste vegetable oil, and we turn the waste into compost that goes back onto our garden, completing what I call the virtuous circle. This also earns us vital income.”

Another plan is to find the necessary funding to invest in a planking machine – which would help turn unwanted trees into usable timber and make money back for Offshoots. For Phil this is another example of permaculture in practice.

“The council's doing a lot of woodland management in Burnley's parks, but the removal of this wood is a major problem because there's no market for it. Some can be chipped and used as mulch but the rest has to be stockpiled, and starts to rot.

“Councils can't have bonfires anymore so a lot ends up in landfill, which is a terrible waste. This problem adds a lot to the cost of felling the trees in the first place.

“If Offshoots can access the £5,000 we need to buy this machine we can turn this problem into a solution. We'd turn the waste wood into timber that could then be supplied



cheaply to community groups.

“This is exactly what permaculture's about: working with the resources to hand and doing things in the most efficient way to minimise waste.”

Education is also key. Offshoots is visited by about 5,000 people every year – some attend permaculture courses, while others pop in while visiting nearby attractions. It is hoped that many will go home and apply its lessons to their own environment.

With the proportion of its budget that comes from grants steadily falling, Offshoots could realistically become financially independent over the next few years. Phil says: “We think if we continue to box clever for a couple of years we might be able to become entirely self-sufficient.

“If we managed it we'd be the first member of the Permaculture Association to do so. That would send a strong message that with a lot of effort and dedication, this approach can work.”

BEST & WORST

BEST

“Whatever the project, groups should apply proper design principles before they put a spade in the ground,” says Phil. “Design is a big part of permaculture and Offshoots remains very faithful to the original plans drawn up in 1997.”

WORST

Phil says: “Don't assume that just because you think something's a good idea, it will succeed. When we started providing domestic composting we told our funders we would serve 900 households, out of a town of 90,000 people. “But it was hard enough to get 450 homes to sign up, despite it being a free service with regular doorstep collections. We hadn't gauged the real level of desire.”



How green is my... coffin?

In the first of a new series of articles, Edwin Colyer answers the questions other environmental magazines somehow overlook.

If you are keen to reduce your environmental impact whilst you are alive, then why break the habit just because you are dead? With a little forward planning you can make sure that even your passing sticks to green principles.

Firstly, consider burial over cremation. In the UK roughly three-quarters of people are cremated rather than buried, not least because limited space in urban cemeteries and graveyards makes burials more expensive. But cremation is a potentially polluting process blamed for a significant proportion of the UK's heavy metals emissions, especially mercury from old tooth fillings – although the government has insisted that crematoria clean up their act by 2012.

Pollutants aside, cremation also uses a lot of energy. Cremation furnaces are heated to around 900°C using fossil fuels, and a cremation uses about the same amount of energy as a single person does in their home for an entire month. So opt for burial to reduce your carbon emissions in the afterlife.

Worried a cardboard box looks rather utilitarian?

Why not invite family and friends to decorate it?

But Alan Roby of Wigan-based Thorley Smith, a manufacturer and supplier to the funeral trade, warns that some burials are greener than others. “Most coffins are made from veneered chipboard which includes harmful chemicals, plus any embalming chemicals that have been used, which will end up in the ground. The coffin may have plastic handles and most coffins are also lined with plastic, a piece roughly 1.2m wide and 3m long to line the bottom, sides and ends.”

Roby has designed a handcrafted eco-friendly coffin made from solid pine sourced from FSC-approved forests in Europe. It uses no plastic. “Traditional coffins use butt joints which can leak, hence the need for a plastic liner,” he explains. “This coffin uses a different joint system and is completely leak-proof. There is no plastic and we use water-based lacquers and glue.”

If you want your funeral to be cheap as well as green, then a company in Bradford supplies budget cardboard coffins, which contain at least 25 per cent recycled material. Worried a large rectangular brown cardboard box looks rather utilitarian? Why not invite family and friends to decorate it?

“A few years ago no-one would have dreamed of a cardboard coffin. Now they are quite proud of it, and the statement it makes,” comments Rosie Grant from Natural Endings, which

specialises in green and alternative funerals and woodland burials in the Northwest of England. “Families try to organise funerals in a way that they think the person who died would have wanted. If the environment was important to someone in life, people prioritise environmental factors for the funeral too.”

If cardboard doesn't take your fancy, there are numerous other designs: coffins from willow, bamboo, even banana leaves. The bamboo coffins are certified Fairtrade and imported from China. Do they contain plastic? “We use cornstarch body bags,” says Grant, “and line coffins with a waxed, unbleached cotton liner.”

If you really want to minimise your environmental and carbon footprints, take the time now to do a thorough life cycle analysis: along with the materials used in your coffin you must also consider how much energy it takes to manufacture and transport (Rosie Grant says that shipping an adult bamboo coffin from China uses the same amount of fuel as your car does to do less than 10 miles). Do you want a cavalcade of funeral vehicles? If you choose a woodland burial, what about the extra miles your family and friends will travel to get there?

“The environmental issue in the funeral trade is not going away,” says Roby. “Historically funeral directors are traditional people and often the default options they offer families when organising funerals will not be green. But just as the younger generation thinks more about environmental issues, green practices will gradually become the norm, especially once funeral parlours see the commercial advantages.”

Rosie Grant adds: “People are discovering that funerals can be a celebration of life and shouldn't come at the expense of the environment. There are many green alternatives available.”

Natural Endings even has access to a rickshaw hearses. No one has requested it yet, but with green funerals becoming mainstream, it's only a matter of time.

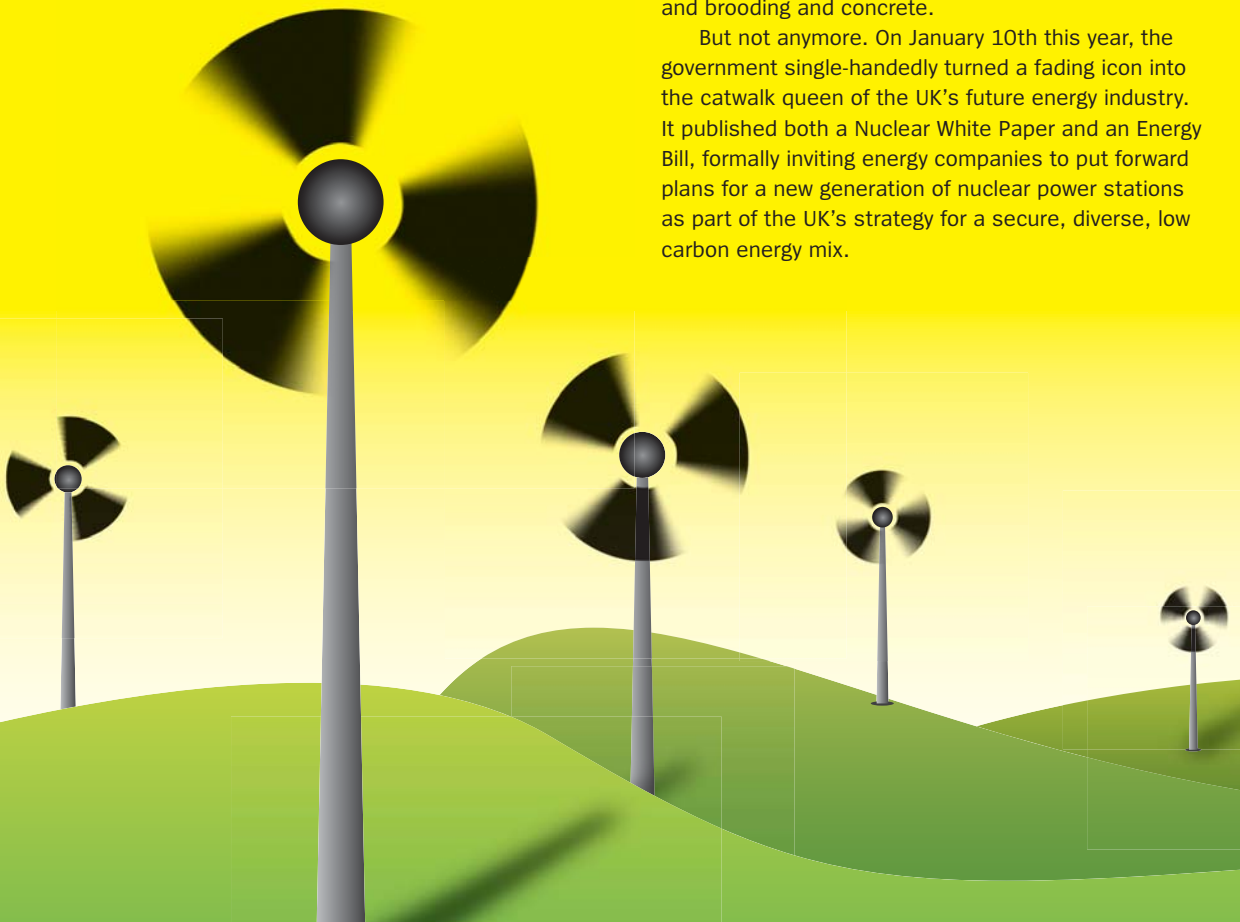
The government's backing for 'new nuclear' has stoked the fires of a difficult and contentious debate that has witnessed some very unexpected opinions. But with over a third of the UK's nuclear energy industry based in the Northwest, the region's experts are worth listening to.

SPLITTING

Words Gareth Chadwick

You used to know where you were with nuclear power. It was generally regarded – apart from within the industry itself – as a bit old hat. Huge, ominous nuclear reactors squatting around the remote edges of our coastline, legacies from the 1960s and 1970s that were quietly running themselves into history. The future was green and bright and modern and new, not grey and dull and brooding and concrete.

But not anymore. On January 10th this year, the government single-handedly turned a fading icon into the catwalk queen of the UK's future energy industry. It published both a Nuclear White Paper and an Energy Bill, formally inviting energy companies to put forward plans for a new generation of nuclear power stations as part of the UK's strategy for a secure, diverse, low carbon energy mix.



“The nuclear option is asking us to buy a second-hand solution that will not redefine how energy is produced. We need to be bolder.”

THE ATOM

On launching the policy, John Hutton, the energy secretary, said that “giving the go-ahead today that new nuclear power should play a role in providing the UK with clean, secure and affordable energy is in our country’s vital long term interest.”

There is a broad consensus that some sort of radical new strategy is required to develop the UK’s energy supply mix. Three powerful issues are converging. Firstly, around 20 per cent of our electricity currently comes from nuclear power plants, but most are nearing the end of their operational life. As they are decommissioned, the resulting ‘energy gap’ needs to be plugged. Another growing factor is energy security, particularly in light of recent gas supply problems in Eastern Europe and the UK’s rapidly cooling diplomatic relations with Russia, home to the world’s largest gas reserves. All this at a time when the UK has switched massively to gas fired power stations. Thirdly, there is the need to cut carbon emissions to combat climate change and meet our national and international commitments.

But there the consensus ends. To some, the government’s decision – not altogether unexpected, but certainly controversial – is a bold step towards this safe, secure, carbon-free future. To others, it is a misguided step backwards and a stab-in-the-back for the country’s renewable energy sector.

According to supporters of the nuclear option, the main benefits of nuclear power are that it is:

Low-carbon
minimising damaging climate change

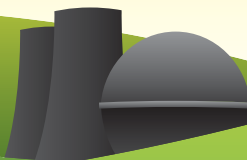
Affordable
currently one of the cheapest forms of low-carbon electricity generation

Dependable
a proven technology, currently supplying a fifth of our electricity

Safe
backed up by a highly effective regulatory framework

Secure
increases the diversity of our energy mix, reducing our dependence on any one technology or country for our energy.

Continued over



Undoubtedly, building a new nuclear plant on an existing nuclear site seems a relatively straightforward solution. It's a tried and tested technology, and at least while the plant is actually running, it is relatively cheap and more carbon friendly than traditional coal or gas fired power stations. It also means we aren't relying on precarious fossil fuel supply chains. And this time round the government won't be paying for nuclear power stations – instead, it is inviting private sector power companies to build them.

These arguments have some influential supporters, including, rather incongruously, Dr James Lovelock, one of the country's foremost environmentalists and the internationally renowned creator of the 'Gaia hypotheses', which views the earth as one single organism. In a speech to the International Conference in Paris in 2005, Lovelock declared: "Now that we've made the earth sick it won't be cured by alternative green remedies like wind turbines or biofuels, and this is why I recommend the appropriate medicine of nuclear energy

as a part of a sensible portfolio of energy sources."

But those against nuclear power are equally forceful in their reasons for opposition. And in putting its weight behind a new generation of nuclear power stations, the government effectively ignored the widespread uneasiness towards nuclear power among many independent energy experts, not to mention environmental organisations.

In its 2006 paper, *The Role of Nuclear Power in a Low Carbon Economy*, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), the government-funded independent watchdog on sustainable development, concluded that there was "no justification for bringing forward plans for a new nuclear power programme at this time, and that any such proposal would be incompatible with the government's own sustainable development strategy." It's a

conclusion which Professor Tim Jackson, the SDC's economics commissioner, vehemently reiterated following the government's announcement of its nuclear strategy in January.

Those against nuclear power argue that the inherent risks, costs and time needed to actually build just one new nuclear power station make it a disastrous solution to our energy problem.

Central to the risks is the question of what actually happens to the nuclear waste that is created. The government's only answer so far seems to be to rely on interim storage until it can come up with something better, whenever that may be.

The climate change expert...

Dr Kevin Anderson, research director at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change in Manchester:

"Personally, I'm ambivalent about whether nuclear power remains a major source of electricity generation within the UK. However, despite my ambivalence over nuclear power per se, I'm disturbed by the abysmal level of much of the debate – informed as it so often is by prejudice and ignorance.

The arguments commonly voiced by many of the antagonists are dangerously simplistic and highly misleading in terms of policy. For example, given that nuclear power provides only 3.6 per cent of our final energy consumption, the argument that the UK cannot meet its carbon dioxide targets without building a new generation of nuclear stations to replace the existing and aging generation is evidently wrong.

Similarly, the argument that nuclear power is too costly, does not take into account the security costs associated with attempting to maintain fossil fuel supplies from what are often perceived to be unstable regions of the world. How much, for example, have the UK's forays into Afghanistan and Iraq cost the taxpayer? Until such costs are factored into the analysis, economic comparisons between fossil fuels and nuclear are essentially meaningless."

The nuclear scientist...

Dr Paul Howarth, director of research at the Dalton Nuclear Institute, Manchester University:

"The Northwest is the spiritual home of the nuclear industry in the UK. The 'suits and boots' are all here: the regulators, the fuel fabricators, the enrichers, the waste management companies, most of the engineering support companies. The main sites are Heysham for generating; Sellafield for fuel reprocessing, waste management and, formerly, generation; enrichment at Capenhurst in Chester; and academia, not least ourselves at Manchester University.

For that reason, I don't think it necessarily matters if the Northwest gets a reactor. When Sizewell B was built, the engineering procurement team was based at Knutsford in Cheshire. It's very possible that we might see a repeat of that, that the engineering procurement, the design team, other high value jobs, are based here in the Northwest, even though construction is elsewhere.

As far as potential sites in the region, Heysham is a possibility and, in the longer term, Sellafield, too. There are certainly some attractions to Sellafield. For example, you could utilise the plutonium stockpile that is already there in the MOX burning reactors, avoiding the need to transport plutonium fuel around the country. The main issue to resolve, however, would be actually connecting Sellafield to the main super grid, because there isn't a connection currently."



The sheer length of time needed to get new nuclear power on-stream is also problematic. According to the government's own estimates, it will be around 2020 before the first nuclear power plant comes on line, making it largely irrelevant as a short term solution to the energy gap – which is expected to peak around 2017. Opponents also point out the massive costs of construction and, especially, decommissioning – the bill for safely retiring the current fleet of nuclear power plants has already risen to £73 billion.

The carbon efficiency of nuclear power has been questioned by several leading environmental organisations, which argue that if you factor in the emissions that result from actually procuring and building a nuclear power station, it is barely more carbon-friendly than gas. Finally, and perhaps most vociferously, opponents fear that a renewed focus on nuclear power will divert money and attention from the real priorities – reducing demand and switching to renewable energy.

The sustainable development expert...

Becky Willis, Cumbria-based independent researcher and vice-chair of the Sustainable Development Commission:

“There are two ways to reduce the energy gap, one is by increasing supply, the other is by reducing demand; by using energy more efficiently. Reducing demand would be tough, requiring the kind of effort and investment that we haven't yet seen, but it is possible.

You need an element of educating and persuading people and businesses at a personal level to be more energy efficient. A good example is the policy that stipulates that by 2016 all new-build houses have to be carbon-neutral. Policies like that can make a significant difference. But it's not just a question of exhortation. The kind of thing that would have a huge impact is if there was a real overhaul of the tax system and the energy effects of the tax system. If you introduced a policy that stipulated that the more energy efficient you are, the less tax you pay, not only would it encourage people to get their loft insulated, but it would also stimulate the market as a whole. It would require a Herculean effort, but its going to require a Herculean effort to get new nuclear power stations up and running. So it's not a choice between the easy option and the hard option. There are only hard options.”

The economic development agency...

Simon Sjenitzer, strategy director, Cumbria Vision:

“Cumbria has a huge stake in the nuclear issue. Around 36 per cent of the country's nuclear industry is based here. It's something that our communities, particularly in the west of the region, are reliant on and have built up strong links with over the past fifty years. To them, the nuclear industry means jobs, and well paid ones at that.

But nuclear is a global industry, and if there isn't the industry in this country to support those jobs, then they will go elsewhere – the United States, France, the Far East. That's one of the problems we face. We've done well in broadening our expertise away from just generation, with things like the Nuclear Academy bringing skills and training and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, but it's still a worry. If there's not going to be a new build nuclear power plant in this area – and Cumbria isn't currently on the list of potential first round locations – then people start looking elsewhere.

We're definitely signed up to nuclear though, as long as certain caveats are addressed. Perhaps the main one is what do we do with the waste? The government has got to make a proper, long term decision on that before we start firing these things up again.”



These arguments obviously have a huge impact on the whole country, but they have a particular pertinence to the Northwest, which is the main centre of the country's nuclear industry. In West Cumbria, in particular, the nuclear industry is the lynchpin of the local economy, the source of thousands of jobs. In Lancashire, too, it plays a hugely significant economic role. More broadly speaking, the Northwest prides itself on being the only region with expertise in the whole nuclear lifecycle, from uranium enrichment, through power generation, to decommissioning, including internationally renowned academic expertise in the region's universities.

One of the only certainties in the whole nuclear debate is that there is no definitive right or wrong answer. The issues, perhaps, are too complex to produce clear black or white solutions. *Source* spoke to some of the leading stakeholders from both sides of the nuclear debate here in the Northwest to ask what new nuclear will mean for the UK's energy sector, and for the region.

Gareth Chadwick is a Manchester-based freelance journalist with a special interest in environmental and ethical issues.

The concerned activist...

Steve Connor, chief executive of Manchester based 'green' marketing and communications agency Creative Concern:

“I don't think nuclear power is the answer to the energy gap, not least because it won't come on line until it is too late. Instead, we should be making a genuine, sustained and radical investment in renewable energy. Let's really go for it, let's invest in marine, tidal and wind power and get the energy mix of our renewables up from the slightly embarrassing single digit percentage points that we have got at the moment, to the kind of thing you can see in Scandinavia. In Denmark, for example, they are up to 25 to 30 per cent of the energy mix.

It's perfectly possible to plug the energy gap with renewables. If you look at wind power alone, there are enough wind energy projects either in planning, at proposal stage or held up by the crazy planning system that we have got, to plug that gap, and that's without even looking at some of the other renewable technologies. It is perfectly achievable; we just have to take that step. When we led the world into the industrial revolution, largely through the use of steam, we were an energy innovator. The nuclear option is asking us to buy a second-hand solution that will not redefine how energy is produced. We need to be bolder.”



MORE INFORMATION

www.defra.gov.uk
www.sd-commission.org.uk
<http://nuclearpower2007.direct.gov.uk/docs/WhitePaper.pdf>
www.nda.gov.uk
www.tyndall.ac.uk

GREEN GETAWAYS

Spring is in the air and with the warmer weather come thoughts of weekends away. Our **guide to great short breaks** in the Northwest has something for everyone – from fabulous countryside locations, beautiful B&Bs, luxurious hotels, chic rooms, friendly farms and mouth-watering meals, to pure indulgence. Oh, and they're all environmentally friendly too.

So relax and head for the hills this spring – the Lake District, Forest of Bowland and East Cheshire, just inside the Peak District national park boundary – each cater splendidly for hotel-junkies with an eco-conscience.

Words Louise Tickle



Moss Grove Organic Hotel:

Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9SW.
015394 35251. www.mossgrove.com

Special features: environmentally-friendly renovation of organic hotel run on sustainable principles.

You don't have to be grungy to be green, and this splendidly stylish organic and environmentally-aware hotel proves it beyond the whisper of a doubt. Step into any of the sumptuously decorated bedrooms and you'll know you're in for a treat.

Large-print, vibrant wallpapers give drama to each of the individually designed rooms, and beds are of the wider-than-they-are-long variety: all bedroom furniture has been handmade from reclaimed wood or leather. Have a gleeful little bounce up and down on your duck down duvet while waiting for the bath to run: bathrooms are luxuriously spacious and modern in style, tiled in calming neutrals with vast bathtubs and powerful showers.

If it's a special occasion, you can even ask for organic champagne and organic chocolates to be waiting for you, and all food and drink is either local, Fairtrade or organic.

But this is eco-friendly chic for those who want their luxury guilt-free.

The renovation of the large Victorian property was undertaken with rigorous attention to every last aspect of the hotel's environmental impact. It's insulated with Thermafleece (from sheep's wool), warmed by super-efficient boilers, and all the original, draughty windows were replaced by identical, double-glazed sash copies. Organic clay paints, with their rich depth of pigment, were used to decorate throughout.

Double room B+B from £125 per night

Lancrigg Vegetarian Country House Hotel:
Easedale, Grasmere LA22 9QN. 01533 531794.
www.lancrigg.co.uk

Special features: vegetarian and vegan food.

An old Victorian mansion set in wooded grounds, this hotel should be a first port of call for any veggie or vegan visiting the Lake District.

As one recent guest put it, "the novelty of having a choice of everything on the menu, rather than just the risotto, was simply fantastic!" All ingredients used in the restaurant and café are organic, and if you can't manage an overnight stay, afternoon tea looks well worth popping in for, with vegan and gluten-free options on offer.

The large, light-filled rooms have a homely, lived-in feel, and the friendly, attentive service is perfectly pitched. Bedrooms are individually decorated with some named after famous people who are linked to the hotel or who have stayed here – Coleridge was a regular visitor, and Darwin was a close friend of Sir John Richardson, an explorer who owned the house in the 19th century.

Double B+B from £65



Winder Hall Hotel: Low Lorton, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 9UP.
01900 85107. www.winderhall.co.uk

Special features: locally sourced, homegrown and Fairtrade produce; member of Slow Food UK.



Run with genuine foodie passion by chef-proprietor Nick Lawler and his family, this lovely old stone manor house is one of those rare places where you can just collapse, relax, lazily gaze at your dreamy surroundings, let go of all that city stressiness... and then sit up smartish to be served top-notch, utterly fresh, creatively cooked food.

As well as sweating over a hot stove to concoct fabulous dinners every night, Nick grows some of what arrives on your plate himself. Vegetables and herbs are nurtured here in the kitchen garden, and around the corner on the Lawler family's smallholding there are contented pigs a'snuffling and happy hens a'laying (Nick campaigns against battery hens) before, they, er, set off on their final journey.

Other produce is bought from small, mainly Cumbria-based suppliers. It's not just local farmers who are supported either – Nick made a decision to source Fairtrade accredited tea, coffee and hot chocolate, ensuring that small farmers in developing countries also benefit from being able to supply quality produce to paying guests.

Rooms are fresh, pretty and appealing, with either four-poster or antique brass beds and lovely leaded windows overlooking the gardens. Best to arrive for afternoon tea, sleep it off and then head downstairs again for dinner... you might have travelled far to get here, but your food won't have.

Double room B+B from £78



Gilpin Lodge Country House Hotel: Crook Road, Windermere LA23 3NE. 015394 88818.
www.gilpinlodge.co.uk

Special features: eco-architect designed garden lodges.

The six spacious, airy new Garden Suites at Gilpin Lodge all have a real wow-factor. The indoor styling has been accomplished with true pizzazz; soft neutrals highlighted with dramatic pops of vibrant colour. Each suite also has its own landscaped garden and outdoor cedarwood hot tub for romantic nighttime bathing under the stars.

All the suites have also been designed with environmental principles firmly in mind: there are south-facing windows for maximum solar gain, all wood used in their construction is FSC-certified, the structures are super-insulated and A-rated appliances have been installed throughout.

Garden suites from £145 (five night break) to £180 (one night break)



Stay in Woodcutter's Cottage and there's a wood burning stove fuelled by logs coppiced from the farm's own woodland.

Cloughbottom Cottages: Clough Bottom, Bashall Eaves, Near Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 3NA. 01254 826285. www.cloughbottom.co.uk

Special features: green accommodation on an organic farm.

Organic principles have been embedded into the way Harry and Jane Backhouse have farmed their 360 acres of land in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for the past 25 years, and Cloughbottom now produces its own organic-certified beef.

The stylishly designed self-catering cottages are a more recent venture: there are fabulous fabrics, leather armchairs and spanking new modern appliances in all three of them. Choose between the cosy 16th century Woodcutter's Cottage, the Grade II listed Coach House, or Saddle Barn. Full of character, they're reached down a winding leafy lane and have been renovated using local labour and natural and reclaimed materials.

Arrive feeling a bit peckish and you'll find a welcome hamper of locally sourced produce awaiting you: organic Lancashire cheese, Bowland milk, homemade tea bread, jams and chutney made with fruit picked from the farm's

own orchards, and Fairtrade tea and coffee. If you're lucky enough to stay in Woodcutter's Cottage, rather appropriately there's a wood burning stove fuelled by logs coppiced from the farm's own woodland (a carbon-neutral fuel source). There's low energy light bulbs – tick; double-glazing – tick; on-site composting – tick; green cleaning materials – tick; recycling facilities – tick, tick, tick (Ribble Valley doesn't do recycling in rural areas, so the Backhouse's have decided to sort out their own). No wonder the business is a Green Tourism Gold Award winner.

Jane will even provide home-cooked ready-meals made from local ingredients, seasonal veg from her organic garden and the farm's own organic beef. What's not to like?

Stay at Cloughbottom in Woodcutter's Cottage from £365 per week; other property prices on request.

Harrop Fold Farm: Rainow, Cheshire, SK10 5UU. 01625 5600585. www.harropfoldfarm.co.uk

Special features: locally sourced food.

Just inside the Peak District National Park boundary, yet still in Cheshire, Harrop Fold Farm accommodates a maximum of four guests in two rooms, and offers an immensely warm and friendly welcome.

The focus here is on offering the very best of local food, thus reducing food miles and helping local producers to thrive. Bed and breakfast guests can look forward to the farm's own free-range eggs and a variety of yummy homemade jams, and there's also a chance to sample the Stevenson's home cooking at dinner, when a seasonal menu is offered: the farm's own home-reared beef might well be on the menu, alongside Aga-baked cakes and biscuits.

If you're self-catering, then homemade meals from the Aga can be provided, or you can order a hamper crammed full of locally sourced goodies. Thoughtfully, the Stevensons also suggest that guests make use of Northern Harvest, an online food ordering service which will deliver squeakily fresh, Northwest-sourced fruit and vegetables. Local Bollington butcher Jeremy (his traditional red and white tiled shop is just a couple of miles down the road) sources all his meat from Cheshire and Derbyshire, and will drop orders on your cottage doorstep.

When you finally stagger back to your bedroom, stuffed of tummy and happy as Larry, the simple yet stylish décor doesn't disappoint. One room has a large oak four-poster bed; the other, bigger room has polished floorboards and double-aspect windows. There's cloudily soft down duvets and pillows, Molton Brown toiletries, wireless internet and complimentary wine, biscuits and chocolates, if by any chance you can manage another bite. Good thing you're in the middle of some of the UK's most glorious countryside so you can tramp it all off the next day.

B+B from £35 per person per night; self-catering rates on request.



Bleasdale Cottages: Lower Fairsnape Farm, Bleasdale, Bowland, Lancashire PR3 1UY. 01995 61343. www.bleasdalecottages.co.uk

Special features: eco-friendly accommodation, wildlife. Green Tourism Business Scheme Gold award winner.

Looking out over the stunning fell scenery of the Forest of Bowland, Mr and Mrs Gardner's new eco-accommodation is a real find. Old, tumbledown stone farm buildings have been reclaimed and renovated to a high standard and are both wonderfully comfortable and very green.

All central heating comes from an enormous wood pellet boiler, a carbon-neutral fuel source (Mr Gardner will show you all the valves and sprockets if you ask nicely). Self-catering guests are encouraged to compost all their kitchen waste, separate bins are provided for recycling and all washing and cleaning products used and provided in the accommodation are environmentally friendly.

Lower Fairsnape Farm has been managed for conservation over many years, and has won awards for its successful efforts to create suitable habitats for the rare Lapwing, a ground-nesting bird that, due to modern agricultural methods, often has difficulty finding safe sites to breed.

If you've never seen a hare before, this is definitely the place to come: Brown Hares abound here, and with their rich chestnut coat and black-tipped ears, can easily be seen running along the field edges in the soft light of early dawn and sunset. If you want to sleep in (the beds are fantastic) or are too busy eating your locally-sourced dinner at the nearby Three Fishes gastropub, wander outside at night, and you might catch a glimpse of a hungry hare nibbling away at its own dinner in the cold, silvery light of the moon.

B+B from £35 per person per night; self-catering rates on request.



Wander outside at night and you might catch a glimpse of a hungry hare nibbling away at its dinner in the cold, silvery light of the moon.

Louise Tickle is a Cheshire-based journalist who regularly contributes holiday and hotel reviews for the Guardian, Telegraph and Times. She says it's not as glamorous as it sounds.



Making a nature area at St. Luke's church in Crosby, Liverpool.

Interview Mark Hillsdon

You gotta have faith

Annie Merry, Director, Faiths4Change

Following a successful trial in Liverpool, a new multi-faith environmental project is rolling out across Merseyside, Manchester, Burnley and Preston.

Merry has always been involved with what she calls "positive social change", work which gives communities the power to bring about change themselves.

Her experience working at a homelessness project for young people in Bradford first opened her eyes to the way in which faith communities address social issues. She recalls a strong sense of social justice and a desire to offer a level of support that went beyond basic needs and tried to solve the root cause of the problem. It's no coincidence, she says, that the areas where Operation Eden flourished were also those where both faith and community spirit were particularly strong.

Funded by the Northwest Regional Development Agency, the Environment Agency and local authorities, Faiths4Change now has six full-time staff. Its remit has also widened to take in areas of Preston, Burnley and Greater Manchester, with much of the land and many of the buildings where projects take place provided by local faith communities themselves.

All the current projects include what Merry terms "deep sustainability" and there's an emphasis on encouraging people to develop a greater respect for natural resources.

There is also a greater skills agenda this time around, with much of the training now accredited to give volunteers the building blocks they need to move on to other things.

The current round of prospective projects range from reclaiming areas blighted by fly-tipping so they can be used to grow community food, to a feasibility study on installing solar panels on the roof of the Salvation Army's popular community centre in Preston.

Faiths4Change is also working with St Hugh's Roman Catholic Primary School in Liverpool, a school with pupils from over 26 countries, to support work on land donated by Liverpool City Council. The scheme involves designing and creating a garden that reflects the diverse heritage of the school's pupils, which will also be used by the local community.

In Burnley, the Faiths4Change Project Officer is based in the important multi-faith

partnership project Building Bridges Burnley, a joint Muslim and Christian organisation created after the town's race riots in 2001.

Ostensibly one of the local community projects in Burnley involves the reclamation of a stretch of canal but, says Merry, the benefits go much deeper. "It's about offering young people in a deprived area the chance to learn new skills, rather than a simple clean up campaign. It's enabling people to do something practical and then transfer these skills to other areas of their lives."

Merry believes there's a lot of common ground between faith communities on environmental and social action, and that Faiths4Change can act as a catalyst to bring them all together.

"It's about building relationships with your neighbours regardless of whether you have a faith or not," she says. "It's about getting to know each other as people and building the kind of communities where we all want to live."

When Annie Merry came across the advert for the post of project co-ordinator at Operation Eden she couldn't believe her luck. "In all honesty it was my dream job," she says. "It was a job that I'd wanted ten years before but which just didn't exist then."

Four years on, and Merry is now director of Faiths4Change, the successor to Eden, which has taken up the challenge of spearheading a range of multi-faith environmental projects in urban areas across the Northwest.

"The idea behind Eden was that all faith communities have something positive and strong to say on the environment," she explains. "They are all committed to caring for the earth."

Operation Eden was the brainchild of the Bishop of Liverpool, the Right Reverend James Jones, and operated across Merseyside in some of the most deprived areas of the country. And it proved a phenomenal success, bringing together over 1,500 volunteers and 200 different partners to work on 57 projects.

These involved volunteers from many different faith communities working in partnership with other local residents to create small scale environmental programmes, from growing food on disused land to cleaning up of a section of the Leeds Liverpool Canal in Bootle.

Eden brought people and the environment closer together, says Merry. It allowed communities to identify local problems, and then provided the support they needed to solve them. "It was the whole package," she says.

And crucially, by involving groups from different faiths in a common cause, it also helped to relieve local tensions, which were often fuelled by misunderstanding and ignorance.

TURNING POINTS

1990 Worked on a desert reclamation project in Spain and first became interested in how people and the environment had to learn to live together.

1995 began a BA (Hons) Peace Studies degree at Bradford specialising in conflict resolution.

2000 Completed an HNC in People Ecology and the Land.

2004 Took the role of project co-ordinator at Operation Eden.

Buzz building

Never before has a green, sustainable approach to business been so cool. But one firm of architects says that beyond the buzz, a sustainable approach to construction can have business benefits such as long-term cost savings – as well as helping our furry and feathered friends.

Unless you are a twitcher you've probably never even heard of the Black Redstart, one of the rarest birds in the country, with only 80 to 100 breeding pairs remaining. And within Manchester, the total population may be as low as just two or three pairs, according to the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project.

But architecture firm BDP is looking to change that as it builds its new Northern headquarters at Piccadilly Basin in Manchester city centre, complete with a 'green roof' designed specifically to attract these cute little birds.

The roof, created in consultation with the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project, uses recycled rubble and gravel taken from the building's own construction site and has been seeded with the Redstarts' favoured vegetation.

So you'd be forgiven for assuming that BDP is a firm of hippy designers with an office building shaped like a wigwam. But not a bit of it. The brand new Manchester office is every bit as chic, stylish and dramatic as you would expect of an international architecture practice that has won over 300 design awards.

BDP architect Gary Wilde designed the six-storey, 33,000 square foot office building on Ducie Street, which has been awarded an 'Excellent' rating in the BRE Environmental Assessment Method – a major achievement. It comes complete with natural ventilation, rainwater harvesting for toilet flushing, and a

concrete frame to allow for nighttime cooling. It is being built as part of a £250 million regeneration scheme from Town Centre Securities.

"We wanted to create a building that had a low-energy design approach," explains Wilde. "One of the ways of achieving that is to use natural ventilation. There are openings or windows on each of the facades to allow for cross ventilation. Coupled with that we also have windows that automatically open to control the temperature via the central building management system."

The building, which BDP will move into this summer, responds to both the context of its location in Piccadilly Basin and its immediate microclimate with a punctuated stainless steel façade that rises to form the roof of the building and contains its studio areas.

"That's designed to minimise solar gain into the building, but also to maximize privacy for the residential buildings opposite on Ducie Street," says Wilde. "On the north side we maximize the amount of light into the building and the views out of it."

Wilde says that finding the right location was key and the site's proximity to city centre transport hubs was an important consideration – reducing the need for the 270 employees who will work in the building to get there by car. This ethos is reinforced by the inclusion of shower facilities and a locker room to encourage staff to cycle to work.

It's all very *en vogue*. But Wilde says there's more to it than that. Regulatory red tape is fast turning green and the sustainability of any building will soon be a concern for all. "While it is a trendy and cool thing to be looking at sustainability at the moment, there is a clear need for buildings to react in a far better way to the environment," he says.

"Also, there is the EU's Energy Performance of Buildings Directive coming forward and I think it's something that prospective tenants for existing and new buildings will take much more notice of." Wilde likens it to buying a new fridge for your home, with the energy efficiency label on it. "With rising energy costs, I think it will be something which becomes a very important aspect when people are looking for space," he says. "There are clearly going to be lower energy costs, because of the building's design and because of the way the building responds to its microclimate."

And there is another business case for BDP. For a firm that has already won numerous awards for its sustainable projects on behalf of clients, the chance to design and build its own new office was the perfect opportunity to flag up its talent and expertise. "We are very much leading the field, so in terms of showcasing our ability it was the right thing to do," says Wilde.



What with our temperate climate and Mother Nature's mischievous tendency to douse us with a sudden downpour, it's no wonder that we Brits are famously obsessed with the weather. Here in the UK, and especially the damp Northwest, it seems that those generous clouds deliver rain bountiful enough to satisfy our every need. But could we in fact be squeezing Britain dry? And where does our water really come from?

Experts are warning that one day in the not too distant future England's green and pleasant land may be a lot less green. That's because if current trends and predictions hold true, we will be sucking more water from the ground, lakes, rivers and reservoirs than ever before, while less of it will be falling from the sky.

According to Waterwise, an independent NGO, the UK already has less water available per person than any other EU country apart from Cyprus and Belgium.

In fact, parts of the country are already water 'stressed', meaning they have barely enough supplies

cheap – a massive 10,000 litres costs only around £1. We each use an average of 150 litres of water per day. Compare that to the 130 litres the average German uses, or the 107 litres of the average Belgian, despite the fact that their lifestyles are barely any different from our own.

As Waterwise director Jacob Tompkins explains: "Water usage has been increasing by about one per cent a year on average since the 1930s. There are more households, and more opportunities to use water such as en suite bathrooms. There are also new appliances like power showers that use more water, and more people are on high pressure connections that give higher flows from taps."

He continues: "As well as the changes in our homes, there's the change in our habits. People wash more often than they did – both



“We need to balance our own needs with making sure there is enough water for aquatic life.”

to meet demand and that the natural environment is suffering as a consequence. The Southeast, in particular, is struggling to cope. A double whammy of high population and low rainfall (which varies considerably around the country, leaving London drier than Istanbul) means the Southeast has less water available per person than the Sudan or Syria.

What makes matters worse is that here in the UK we're also some of Europe's most profligate users of water. Blame that temperate climate for lulling us into a false sense of security and the fact that water is so

themselves and their clothes. In the past, not many people washed every day, but now a daily shower is the norm. Monday used to be washday; now it's every day. So the increasing efficiency of washing machines has been cancelled out by increased use."

What looks set to turn this trend into a problem is climate change – according to government assessments, the water industry will be the part of the UK economy worst affected by climate change. Experts think

ABOVE
United Utilities leak detection

OPPOSITE
A reservoir with a very low water level

We take our water too much for granted, say the experts. In the future, that will have to change.

WATER

that our reliably rainy climate will be a thing of the past, with changing rainfall patterns bringing wetter winters but drier summers. That might not sound too bad. But as Jo Bradley, principal officer for water resources at the Environment Agency in the Northwest, explains: “Household water use shoots up in summer because everyone is out watering their gardens and filling up paddling pools. At the same time, plants and animals need more water to grow and reproduce.”

The question is whether we will be able to meet rising demand and deal with the impacts of climate change, without damaging the environment.

“On average the UK has less water per person than Cyprus.”

Climate change is also likely to make the weather more extreme and even less predictable. One consequence could be an increase in severe storms bringing devastating flash floods. But another predicted impact is an increase in the frequency and severity of droughts – not good news for a country thirsty for more water.

“Climate change is potentially a very serious factor,” says Tom LeQuesne, policy advisor at the WWF.

“All of our rivers, estuaries and wetlands get damaged when we take too much water out, especially in summer when the pollution load often increases because there’s less water to dilute it. The combined effect can be very serious.”

And it’s a problem that can affect the whole country, as LeQuesne explains: “Southeast England is the most critical area, where there’s a real risk of running out of water. But it’s a myth that it only affects the Southeast. The Northwest is a classic example – it’s unlikely that the region is going to run out of water, but when supplies run short in summer it can become a problem.” For evidence, you need look no further back than the hot dry summer of 2003, when the long-drowned village of Mardale Green emerged above the receding waters of

Haweswater reservoir. Indeed, according to the Environment Agency, most of the Northwest already has no surplus surface water resources in summer.

The Environment Agency’s Jo Bradley says: “The problem is that if flows get too low then fish can’t move around and the habitats available for aquatic life are reduced hugely.”

Thankfully, the problem is not yet serious in the Northwest. Bradley estimates that there are currently no more than 10–15 sites around the whole region where so much water is being abstracted that it is affecting the environment.



“We’re blessed with an enormous number of huge reservoirs as well as a massive integrated water supply infrastructure that lets [water company] United Utilities move water around the region quite easily to where it’s needed.” Even with rising usage, Bradley expects UU to be able to meet

demand. But factor in climate change, and things get a lot more complicated.

“United Utilities manages its abstractions very well, but the danger is that it will be forced to maximise its abstraction permits, largely from the Lake District. But the Lake District is hugely important for wildlife, and its economy relies on the tourism brought in by its natural beauty.”

She continues: “There are lots of competing pressures on our water – households, industry, agriculture and recreation, as well as wildlife. It’s hard to balance all those needs.”

[Continued over](#)

Words [Matthew Sutcliffe](#)

PRESSURES



So is the unstoppable force of our increasing water use speeding head-on towards the immovable object of climate change? Fortunately, both the water companies and the government have recently been grappling with this question.

At the tail end of 2007, United Utilities (UU) released *where we are heading*, a strategic direction statement that attempts to plot the challenges ahead to 2035, and how the company plans to overcome them.

UU currently supplies the Northwest's 6.8 million people with around 2,000 million litres of water every day. One looming problem is straightforward enough – more people. The population is predicted to rise to 7.3 million by 2035. Another is that the number of households will rise even faster, jumping by an extra 640,000, an increase of almost a quarter. All those new houses will have to be connected to the water supply, a challenge in itself. But more worrying is the fact that smaller households use more water – *where we are heading* states that people living alone use around 40 per cent more water than people living in two-person households.

“Climate and population changes are going to have a growing impact on our operations in the years ahead, so it makes eminent sense for us to look much longer term,” says Graeme Sims, director of regulation at UU.

“In the future there are only three commodities that will matter – food, oil and water.”

“The entire basis of our plan is to understand the priorities of our customers and respond in a sustainable way. The key is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the quality of life of future generations.”

The company says it will do its bit by continuing to invest heavily in updating the Victorian infrastructure it inherited on privatisation in 1990. By 2010 it will have invested £11 billion over 20 years. And having met its government mandated leakage targets for the first time recently, it plans to cut leakage by a further 20 per cent. That will help the company meet demand by making sure that water actually reaches the end user.

But UU wants to go a step further. It wants to help actually push down the amount of water we use, bucking the national trend. Aiding it, says *where we are heading*, will be increasingly water-efficient dishwashers

and washing machines, along with a growing public acceptance of the need to use less water. Also key will be a widespread switch to water metering – already the norm in most of Europe. Metered homes use around ten per cent less water and currently around a quarter of Northwest homes have them. On existing trends this will rise to about 60 per cent by 2035, but UU wants to push the number higher.

It's a stance that is gathering support in high places. The government too has been gazing into its crystal ball, and in February released *Future Water*, its water strategy for England to 2030. It's an exhaustive and far reaching document, which dedicates an entire chapter to metering. Like UU, the

“We're calling for people to value and appreciate water properly.”



government raises the potential of 'smart' meters, which are able to charge different amounts for water according to different criteria. So water could be more expensive in summer when it's in short supply. Or prices could rise in blocks so that the more you use the more expensive it gets.

As Jacob Tompkins of Waterwise says: "We have the power and capacity to reduce water usage by about 25–30 per cent right now. What we need is full metering, incentive schemes such as vouchers for water efficient products, and information campaigns to persuade people to use less water."

"We need to shift our mindset from thinking of water as being free and readily available whenever we want, to it being a limited and precious resource. We're calling for people to value and appreciate water properly."

And if we don't? "We'll see

environmental degradation – according to the Environment Agency there is hardly any part of the country where degradation is not already happening," warns Tompkins. "If you look at Australia and the US you see the problems ahead; not long ago the state of Georgia was within a month of having to cut public supplies."

Tompkins has a final thought in a similar vein. Instead of seeing water as a regional or even national issue, he says, we must understand that it is fast becoming a global issue of major proportions. That's because the world's population is growing and getting richer, leading the UN to estimate that global water use will increase by 40 per cent over the next ten years. By 2025, an estimated 2.7 billion people will face severe water shortages.

As usual, those of us living in the richest countries are the biggest culprits. If you take into account not just the freshwater we use in our homes, but also the water that goes into producing the goods and food we consume, our daily usage leaps from 150 litres to a staggering 3,400 litres. This is the invisible water 'embedded' in goods during

Sucking it up

Embedded water in selected products. Measured by litres in a single portion, excluding most processing and all packaging.

Sheet of A4	10
Microchip	34
Cup of coffee	140
Glass of orange juice	170
Cotton T-shirt	4,100
Leather shoes	8,000

their production. Most of those goods and foods are imported, often from developing countries far less able to deal with the environmental and human impacts of water shortages than we are. It seems that by importing ever more products, we may unwittingly be 'exporting drought'.

Tompkins has the final word: "In the future there are only three commodities that will matter – food, oil and water."

PHOTOGRAPH

United Utilities improvement works in Preston.



Community camaraderie

Source talks to Carol Price, a Lancashire litterpicker who has mobilised her community to clean up their local stretch of the River Darwen at Hoghton Bottoms. March saw their fourteenth annual clean up, organised with support from Action Darwen Valley,



Lancashire County Council, the de Hoghton estate, City Skips and Sainsbury's to name just a few.

Q Can you tell us what volunteer work you've been doing on the River Darwen?

Basically it's a case of cleaning up the river, picking up plastic and anything that's lying around – when we go for walks with our dog and so on. I've organised an annual clean up every year for the past fourteen years too.

Q What motivated you to get involved?

I was embarrassed. Even though it wasn't my rubbish, I was horrified by the state of the place. That was it really, just a case of seeing that the rubbish needed to be picked up, and beginning to pick it up myself. That's how it started, and that's how it goes on.

It's selfish really, I do it because when it looks nicer it's a nicer place to live. It has the knock-on effect of making things better for other people who come here, and keeping the litter from reaching the beach and the sea, but it makes where I live look better and that's why I do it.

Q Was litter a bugbear of yours before you moved here to live beside the river?

I wasn't aware of it before, but we'd only been here a few weeks when we saw the bushes by the riverbank completely littered with shredded plastic. It was just obscene. Until then I hadn't realised the extent of the problem. Litter had been collecting there for decades, so the first few years of the clean up were horrendous, with stuff intertwined and tangled in barbed wire and brambles. It's a lot better now.

The Darwen litter trap has helped too, people here are amazed at how much it collects. They notice immediately when it's not working how much litter comes down, so there's an obvious benefit in that.

Q And you've managed to persuade your neighbours to join you for an annual clean up?

Yes, although many of them will only do it once because of the nature of the rubbish that you're pulling out, sanitary towels and so on, which is disgusting.

We try to make sure the clean up falls on a free day for most people. A local farmer lends us his tractor to squash everything down in the skip so that we can fit more in, and the gamekeeper from the de Hoghton estate brings his trailer along a couple of weeks later to move the bagged-up litter and larger debris.

We provide litter-pickers, rubber gloves, hand wipes and a picnic bag – everything you need for a grand day out!

Q Do you enjoy the day?

Well, I often say to my husband "Oh no, that damn river clean is looming!" I can't pretend it's always nice doing it, but when it's over you can see the benefit straight away – instant gratification.

It sounds corny, but there's a real community spirit and camaraderie on the day, a kind of fascination with the horror of what we're doing. It sounds bizarre but it can be fun because you're with likeminded people, and working for a common cause. Even when it's pouring down it brings out the Dunkirk spirit!

Q Is there one thing that would make it easier to keep the river clean?

The ideal would be for people not to throw litter in the river at all, but I think the main issue is the amount of packaging that's used. I don't think things like sanitary towels or crisp packets should be able to be washed up and not disintegrate for months and months on end.

I sound like an old fogey now, but when I was a girl you bought your sweets in a paper bag, and if you happened to drop it, it would turn to mush after a rain shower. There's stuff in that river now that's been there for decades, and was probably reusable in the first place. It just annoys me.

Q What's your proudest achievement on the Darwen?

We were given a Unilever Dragonfly Award for improving the environment, and we used the prize money to install a picnic bench on the riverside. When I see people sitting on that bench, enjoying a picnic, not leaving behind any litter, that's perfect. I go past and think, 'well, you don't know that I helped to get that bench'. I never say anything, but I get a real sense of satisfaction from seeing it, because that's just what the money was for.

MORE INFORMATION

If you'd like to get involved with cleaning up the River Darwen, please contact Sarah Whitman, Action Darwen Valley s.whitman@merseybasin.org.uk or 01772 877392



Sue Kidd is a senior lecturer in the Department of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool. She is also the chair of the North West Coastal Forum.

Opinion: As an island nation, our ailing seas desperately need statutory protection – the new Marine Act is a landmark opportunity.

SAVING OUR SEAS

If all goes to plan, 2009 will see the introduction of an unprecedented **Marine Act** that will herald a new era in our relationship with the sea and the coast. Following years of lobbying from the Marine Conservation Society and others, this landmark legislation chimes with a reawakened appreciation of our strong ties to the sea; that economically, environmentally and culturally, we are at heart a maritime nation. The popularity of the BBC's Coast series perfectly captures the mood of the moment.

Central to the Act is a new framework for marine planning which in many ways mirrors the system of planning for the land that was established 100 years ago. When the Housing and Town Planning Act was passed in 1909 it reflected widespread concern about the rapid pace of urban development, the loss of large areas of countryside and the problems associated with unregulated building.

Today similar concerns have extended to the sea. For while we may like to believe that our coastal and marine areas are some of the last truly wild places, in fact this is far from the truth. In February 2008 a new global atlas was published which maps human pressure on marine ecosystems. It reveals in glorious technicolour that UK coastal waters are amongst the most heavily impacted in the world.

This is no surprise. Age-old uses for the sea such as fishing and shipping have for many years been accompanied by oil and gas exploration, marine aggregate extraction and marine pipelines.

More recently, the seas have come to be seen as central to our

ambitions for developing renewable energy. Rapid investment in offshore wind power, along with growing research into tidal and wave energy, are adding still more competition for our marine resources.

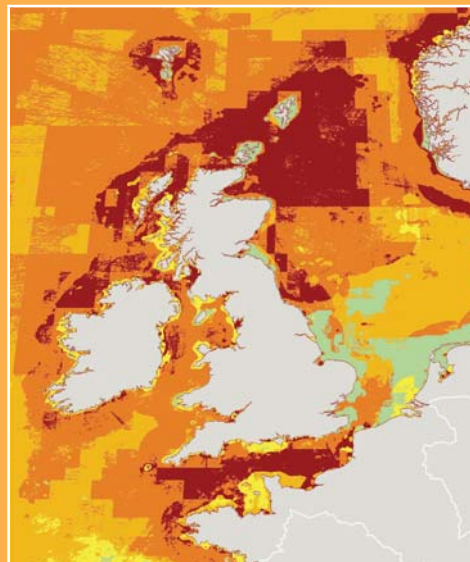
Similarly, areas below the seabed seem to offer extensive and highly secure sites to dispose of sensitive wastes – including carbon storage in our efforts to combat climate change.

Thankfully, there is a growing understanding of the unintended damage caused by the insensitive use of marine resources. And it has long been recognised that the regulatory framework for UK seas and coasts is ill equipped to deal with the scale of

We like to believe that our coastal and marine areas are some of the last truly wild places – this is far from the truth.

development pressure. All sides agree that a more integrated approach is needed.

In England, the Marine Act will establish a Marine Management Organisation charged with producing a new breed of marine plans. These will protect marine resources by laying



out priorities, guidance and environmental standards. And for the first time they will designate maritime conservation areas to help protect marine wildlife – currently, less than one per cent of our seas are fully protected.

The changes to our marine planning framework will be bold and significant. But it is the final element of the Marine Act that for many people will have the most impact. For late in the day it has been decided to broaden the scope of the legislation to extend public access to the UK's coast. It aims to provide continuous access, so far as practicable, around the whole of England's 4,500km coastline.

The details of what this might entail and how it will be achieved are still being finalised, although we know it will be delivered by Natural England, working with local

access authorities. But there can be little doubt that this aspect of the Act will be widely welcomed. The success of the National Trust's Neptune Coastline Campaign, which has so far brought over 700 miles of coast into National Trust ownership, reveals the significant extent of support for such an approach.

Here in the Northwest, the proposed legislation is providing a great boost to the region's ambitions to establish the North West Coastal Trail – a long distance multi-user route stretching from Chester to Carlisle. This 'golden thread' running along the Northwest coast will join together its varied attractions and link the emerging string of regional parks positioned along the coast. It has a central place in the North West Coastal Forum's ambitions to make the most of the region's coast.

In 1909 the Housing and Town Planning Act established a vital new regulatory framework for development on our land. Forty years later, the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act allowed us all to enjoy previously forbidden parts of our countryside.

In 2009, the Marine Act promises to repeat these landmark successes, this time for our coasts and seas.

Image courtesy University of California, Santa Barbara

**Awarding our green heroes
Book your place for awards night!**



Awarding our green heroes

The Northwest Business Environment Awards will reveal the green heroes of 2008 – the companies from across the Northwest that are taking positive steps to put the environment at the heart of their success.

We will be celebrating the region's carbon-crusaders; waste-recyclers; energy-savers; eco-builders; green-purchasers; green-technologists and eco-innovators!

It's the region's only gathering of green business heroes. Make sure you reserve your place at the Northwest Business Environment Awards 2008. Drinks on arrival, networking and awards presentation.

**Awards night 26th June 2008
Book your place**

Date: June 26th 2008

**Time: 4:30 – 5:30pm drinks
and registration
5:30 – 7pm awards ceremony
7– 8pm drinks and canapés**

**Place:
The Bridgewater Hall
Lower Mosley Street
Manchester
M2 3WS**

To book your place:

Call Fouzia Bhatti on: 0161 242 8200
Email: f.bhatti@merseybasin.org.uk
Book online at www.merseybasin.org.uk
Tickets: £30

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