

# source<sup>NW</sup>

WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY

## BACK TO THE LAND

Why we love our allotments.

### SAVING RATTY

In search of the humble water vole.

### WEIR-ED AND WONDERFUL

Is the Northwest hydropower heaven?



# Unilever Dragonfly Awards 2008 Nomination Form



Do you know an unsung hero who deserves a pat on the back? Could your school or voluntary group use a cash prize to put towards an environmental project?

Unilever & the Mersey Basin Campaign are looking for this year's best environmental volunteers – groups and individuals who've shown exceptional commitment, worked with their community, and delivered an innovative or exciting project in their area.

The judges have **£6000 worth of prize money** to hand out to help volunteers fund new and ongoing projects that support the aims of the Mersey Basin Campaign; improved water quality, waterside regeneration and community engagement.

As well as the category winners, the judges will select an overall winner, who will receive a unique trophy and a cheque for **£2500**. Category winners will each receive a trophy and **£1000** towards their work. All nominees must be based in the Mersey or Ribble river areas.

### HOW TO ENTER

We've tried to keep the nomination process simple. Just use the boxes below to tell us who you are, who you'd like to nominate, and why you think they should win an award. Feel free to add extra sheets if you need them, and to send us photos, reports, press cuttings or anything else you think will help the judges to build up a picture of the work that's being done.



We're looking for nominations in three categories:

- 1 Young people.
- 2 Individual.
- 3 Group.



## NOMINATIONS

If you would like to make a nomination please complete and return this form by 12th September 2008.

Please return your completed form to:  
Bev Mitchell, Community Support Coordinator,  
Mersey Basin Campaign,  
Fourways House,  
57 Hilton Street,  
Manchester M1 2EJ.

or email to:  
b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

### PART ONE: About yourself

Name
Address
Telephone
Email

### PART TWO: About your nominee(s)

Name of the group or individual you'd like to nominate
Category you're entering (please tick one) <input type="checkbox"/> YOUNG PEOPLE <input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL <input type="checkbox"/> GROUP
Finally, please use additional sheets to explain why you think they deserve an award. Send your sheet, along with this form to Bev Mitchel using the contact details to the left of these boxes.



The late great Tony Wilson and his partner Yvette Livesey once graced the cover of

this magazine. They are the only celebrities I've ever managed to feature in Source, and Wilson fired off the most expletive filled email I have ever received in my life because of it.

He was right, too. We'd reviewed a report he and Livesey had produced on the regeneration of East Lancashire, in which we were gently mocking of some of their ideas. We had, however, completely failed to talk to either of them. And then put them on the cover.

Hence Tony's typically forthright email. I kept it, of course, and am now oddly proud of it. It taught me to take my editorial responsibilities far more seriously.

One of those ideas that raised a chuckle at the time was that the earthy allotment owners of towns like Blackburn and Burnley and Bolton might be encouraged to erect designer sheds on their plots. Regeneration by allotment beautification seemed a truly novel concept.

Almost inevitably, Wilson was right all along. Now, three years after their report, Dreaming of Pennine Lancashire, he and Livesey's insight has proved visionary, and allotments are enjoying a resurgence in popularity. Our original reporter revisits the theme in a wonderful story starting on page 12.

Matthew Sutcliffe, editor  
m.sutcliffe@merseybasin.org.uk

Source<sup>NW</sup> 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.

# CONTENTS

## Features

### 12 BACK TO THE LAND

Once about as trendy as a bale of twine, allotments are enjoying a remarkable resurgence. **David Ward** reports on the battle to save them from development and meets the people who have fallen under the allotment spell.

### 16 WEIR-ED AND WONDERFUL

The Northwest has huge untapped potential for low carbon energy – by returning to its waterpowered roots. **Jason Teasdale** reports from New Mills.

### 22 SAVING RATTY

One of Britain's most threatened species is enjoying a cautious recovery thanks to dedicated protection. **Jim Fair** searches both town and country for the reclusive water vole.

## 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

How Tipkinder Park helped a budding Olympian with her BMX dreams.

### 11 HOW GREEN IS MY...SCHOOL?

How a Cumbria school aced its eco-exams.

### 20 SPOTLIGHT

One of Britain's leading environmentalists tells us where the environmental movement is heading.

### 21 BUSINESS

How rising global oil prices are creating opportunities for one Northwest business.

### 27 SHARP END

Reject the glib green promises of 'greenwash', urges **Steve Connor**.



12



16



22

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# Kiss me quick

How do Northwest beaches rank against the best in the country this summer?

The organisation behind the world's most prestigious seaside awards says its time for holidaymakers to fall back in love with our traditional English resorts – despite not granting a single Blue Flag award to a Northwest beach.

Keep Britain Tidy, which runs the international awards scheme in the UK, handed out a near-record 82 Blue Flags this summer, but none in the Northwest. The number awarded around the country has nearly doubled in the last six years, but was three less than last year.

“Now is the time for the English to rekindle their passion for traditional beach holidays in this country.”

Blue Flags are only given to beaches that are litter-free and have good access, top-notch facilities and clean seawater.

However, three Northwest beaches, Blackpool South, Ainsdale and Southport, did win Quality Beach Awards. These are given to the best beaches in the country that are well managed but may not reach Blue Flag standards for water quality.

Keep Britain Tidy chief executive, Phil Barton, said: “We keep being told that our love affair with the seaside has been on the rocks. But as far as we are concerned England's beach resorts go from strength to strength.

“Now is the time for the English to rekindle their passion for traditional beach holidays in this country. “We are challenging people to avoid overseas air travel and be kind to the environment by holidaying at home.”

Air travel is one of the fastest growing sources of carbon emissions.

**Beaches at Southport, Ainsdale and Blackpool have won Quality Beach Awards.**

Dickie Felton, media manager at Keep Britain Tidy, added: “We'd love to see beaches like Blackpool and Southport getting Blue Flags and there's every chance they will do in the near future.”

According to the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), which produces the country's other beach bible, the Good Beach Guide, last year's record breaking wet summer was to blame for falling water quality.



This year's guide shows a ten percent fall in the number of beaches around the country reaching the highest water quality standards – the largest drop in the guide's 21-year history.

Thomas Bell, MCS coastal pollution officer, said: “These latest

results buck the long term trend of cleaner bathing water but we're pinning the blame squarely on last summer's exceptionally bad weather.

“Heavy rain sweeps pollutants like raw sewage, street debris and animal waste directly from the land into rivers and the sea.

The latest Good Beach Guide still manages to recommend 443 beaches – more than double the number recommended in the 2000 edition, suggesting that the £20 billion invested by the water industry has brought permanent benefit to Britain's beaches.

It also welcomes the completion by United Utilities of storm water storage schemes at Southport, New Brighton and Presall.

## SOUND BITES

**S Mellow yellow.** A 12m high, bright yellow flower sculpture topped with a 3m wide bloom made of yellow Perspex petals which gently flutter and light up in the wind, is being erected on the banks of the River Mersey in Widnes. Different petals will illuminate depending on the direction of the breeze, producing an “ever-changing and dynamic” display, say the artwork's creators. As odd as the Future Flower may sound, the regeneration bosses who launched a six-month international search for the

£125,000 design may be onto a winner. The company behind the flower, London-based Tonkin Liu, is best known for its award winning Singing Ringing Tree panopticon overlooking Burnley.

**S Tipped over.** An old dumping ground in St Helens is disappearing beneath lush woodland as part of a £2.1 million regeneration scheme. The Forestry Commission poured 11,000 tonnes of earth onto the Brickfields site, readying it to be planted with mature trees. Small hills have been created, with leisure trails, wildflower meadows and wetland habitats to follow. Residents' groups are busy creating designs for four entrances. St Helens council is hoping the project will improve the town's image and so help secure economic investment. Funding was provided by the Northwest Regional Development Agency and the Forestry Commission through the Newlands scheme. [www.forestry.gov.uk/newlands](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newlands)

**S The young ones.** Not all students are living in rundown rental properties – 323 of the luckier ones recently moved into new

eco-friendly rooms at the University of Lancaster. The timber framed townhouses and flats were built using a low waste, energy efficient process, and the scheme includes rooftop solar thermal panels to heat water. The wood used in the construction comes from sustainably managed forests and the buildings are highly insulated. Inside, a smart ventilation system supplies fresh air whilst also recovering heat. Paints, coatings and preservatives have been kept to a minimum or replaced with low toxic alternatives.

**S Flying black.** A pair of ravens have returned to breed at a Northwest oil refinery for the fifth consecutive year. Shell's vast Stanlow refinery on the Mersey Estuary may not seem an obvious wildlife haven, but in fact the site encompasses large areas of semi-wild land where nature flourishes undisturbed. Otters and longhorn cattle have also called the site home in recent years. Stanlow's wildlife consultant Malcolm Ingham, a wildlife officer with Wirral Borough Council, said: “This is fantastic news for the species. Ravens are rare around the Wirral area, even scarcer than the

# State of the environment

Snapshot of region's environment reveals more good news than bad.



The Northwest's environment is on the mend but faces challenges in every field, says a new report from the Environment Agency.

Air and water quality are improving, wildlife is returning, recycling is on the up, pollution has been cut and the rise in waste sent to landfill sites has slowed.

But half a million people are vulnerable to flooding, carbon emissions are creeping up and water meters must be used more widely to encourage people to use less water.

The Environment Agency's regional director, Tony Dean, said: "The State of the Environment report helps us to take stock of the progress we're making with our partners towards improving the Northwest environment, but we're also working hard to prepare the region for the impacts of climate change."

He added: "We want to make sure the region's growth is sustainable and delivered in such a way that the homes and businesses of the future are fully equipped to adapt to the inevitable impacts of our changing climate."

peregrine falcon, which has also bred at Stanlow in recent years."

**S The truth is in there.** Does an alien spaceship lie undiscovered within the murky depths of the River Mersey? The Ministry of Defence has made public documents detailing hundreds of alleged sightings of UFOs between 1978 and 1987. Among them is a letter from a man who, having been visited by aliens since the age of seven, claims to have witnessed a UFO being shot down over the River Mersey. Eventually, his alien friend Algar agreed to meet government representatives, but was unfortunately slain by another alien race at the 11th hour. Admittedly, life has been steadily returning to the once grossly polluted river for over

## UPS & DOWNS

### AIR

- ▲ Industrial air pollution is substantially reduced and incidents of serious air pollution are significantly fewer than in the past.
- ▼ More cars, air travel and half a million new homes will put pressure on air quality.

### WATER

- ▲ Water quality across the whole Northwest continues to improve, with the clean up of the Mersey a particular success.
- ▲ Most bathing waters now meet minimum EU standards.
- ▼ Growth in the number of homes will add to pollution.
- ▼ Water quality in many rivers remains challenging, especially in urban areas.
- ▼ Nutrients washed off farmland continue to upset the natural balance of many watercourses.
- ▼ Tighter standards demanded by the EU Water Framework Directive will be challenging to meet.

### LAND

- ▲ Over 80% of new homes built in the Northwest in 2007 were on brownfield land, and the trend should continue.
- ▲ Farmers are adopting Environmental Stewardship schemes.
- ▼ The Northwest still has more derelict land than any other region, along with many sites contaminated by industry.

### WILDLIFE

- ▲ Birds are flourishing on the expanded salt marshes of the River Ribble, an internationally important habitat.
- ▲ Otters are returning to the region's waterways.
- ▲ Salmon are returning to the River Mersey in ever increasing numbers.
- ▼ Stocks of eels and freshwater pearls are declining.
- ▼ Invasive species such as Signal crayfish threaten to decimate native species.

### BUSINESS

- ▲ The number of pollution incidents has halved since 2002.
- ▼ Many businesses still do more little more than meet their minimum environmental requirements, meaning small businesses often miss out on opportunities to improve their resource efficiency.

### WASTE

- ▲ Kerbside collections have spurred a significant increase in recycling.
- ▲ Growth in waste sent to landfill sites has stabilised and less biodegradable waste is going to landfill.
- ▼ More waste per person is generated in the Northwest than any other region, and commercial waste is on the rise.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

- ▲ Greenhouse gas emissions from large industrial sites have been decreasing since 1998.

- ▲ Climate change is being factored into policy decisions at the regional level and the Northwest has a climate change action plan.
- ▲ More renewable energy is being installed, with more planned for the future.
- ▼ Greenhouse gas emissions from the region's heavy industrial sites have begun to creep back up.
- ▼ More cars, houses, flights and electrical equipment will lead to higher carbon emissions.

### FLOODING

- ▲ Spending on flood protection rose to £54 million last year and will rise over the next three years.
- ▲ All local authorities now have strategic flood risk policies.
- ▼ Drainage must be improved – the trend for paving over gardens increases flood risks.

20 years, but an extra terrestrial visitor would be stretching the point. Unless they just really like the Beatles.

**S Light bulb moment.** Kudos goes to the Northwest's economic regeneration body, the Northwest Regional Development Agency, for showing very visible leadership on environmental issues. And it has its own leadership to thank. According to a press release it was none other than the agency's chief executive, Steven Broomhead, whose idea it was to help power the Warrington head office using sustainable energy. Hence the 25m high wind turbine now feeding power directly into the building, saving nearly 10 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

**S EcoMosque.** Britain's first EcoMosque will be built next to the University of Salford, on the banks of the River Irwell. EcoMosque is being developed by Regenesi<sup>2</sup>, a Muslim social enterprise based in Manchester, which

describes it as a return to the original principles at the heart of what a Mosque should be. "The idea is inspired by the first mosque in Islam, built by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina as the hub for a thriving, socially conscious community," says Zahid Hussain, chief operating officer of Regenesi<sup>2</sup>. Like the Prophet's mosque, EcoMosque emphasises self-reliance and social enterprise while adding the new goal of sustainability.

**S Renewable assets.** Cumbria's woodlands, mountains, waterfalls, rivers and lakes are a treasure trove of renewable energy sources and it's time to reap the benefits of the county's unique topography. That was the urgent message from campaigning group Cumbria Green Business Forum (CGBF) at a public meeting earlier this summer. The group's chair, former BBC environment journalist John Barwise, said: "Rising fuel bills and energy prices are beginning to bite but most of us still don't know much about renewable energy or which systems work best. Wind power, solar power, mini-hydro schemes and heat pumps are already being used across Cumbria, helping to cut fuel bills and reduce the effects of climate change."



## Green award for industrialist



### Admired industrialist and entrepreneur

**Joe Dwek** has been crowned the Northwest's most inspirational business leader on environmental issues.

Dwek took this year's Environmental Leadership category of the Northwest Business Environment Awards.

Walter Menzies, chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign, which hosts the awards, said: "Joe Dwek is a force to be reckoned with as a champion of Northwest business and the environment.

"Through his advice to central government and his many regional leadership roles

no other business leader has achieved more in mainstreaming the environment as a massive opportunity for business."

Dwek has been an influential chair of several regional environmental organisations, including Envirolink Northwest, ENWORKS

and the Mersey Basin Campaign. He is a member of the board of the Northwest Regional Development Agency and leads its environment sub-committee.

Todd Holden, director of ENWORKS, said: "Joe energetically stimulates and provokes debate, new thinking and – most important of all – action.

"He continues to be a powerful advocate of the green industrial revolution in the interest of the Northwest region, its environment, its businesses and its people."

Other winners at the awards included Axion Recycling, Biwater Treatment, Senator International, Southwaite Green eco-holiday cottages and the Westmorland Gazette.

## The magic number

Manchester based **Co-operative Financial Services** is the UK's third greenest company, according to a survey by The Times.

Landing the number three slot is quite an achievement for a company with nearly 10,000 employees in over 140 offices around the country – staff gave the company a score of 91 per cent for its eco-activities.

Two years ago the company completed the transformation of the 120m, 25-storey landmark Co-operative Insurance Solar Tower in Manchester with the installation of more than 7,000 photovoltaic panels, Britain's largest solar power installation.

Last year it put 19 micro-wind turbines on the roof of its 13-storey Portland Street building in the same city.

The bank also offers a credit card that gives consumers a lower rate of interest for designated ethical purchases and, the first time they use it, the Co-op pledges to buy and protect half an acre of Brazilian rainforest in the customer's name.

## Water wheels

**Manchester's Metrolink** has become the first tram system in the UK to be powered by hydro-electricity.

The trams produce no carbon emissions at ground level and Metrolink says the new energy supply will make them even more environmentally friendly.

A deal has been signed with Scottish and Southern Energy to supply the power. Philip Purdy, Metrolink director, said: "About a quarter of the UK's carbon emissions come from transport, and we want to do our bit to reduce them.

"Anyone who travels on Metrolink instead of using their car is already helping to fight climate change as trams are nearly four times better for the environment."

Metrolink is also launching a 'big bang' expansion programme that will see it almost double in size following government approval of £575 million worth of funding.



The new lines will cover almost 20 miles and should increase the number of trips passengers make each day from 55,000 to more than 90,000, helping tackle both carbon emissions and road congestion.

The project is being funded by councils in Greater Manchester and the Department for Transport.



## Battling the bottle

Responding to the rising environmental impact of bottled water, Northwest water supplier United Utilities has launched its Tap into Water campaign, hoping to persuade people to drink tap water instead. According to the campaign:

- Bottled water creates around 1.5 million tonnes of plastic waste each year that can take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade.
- Water is heavy and transporting it creates more than 33,500 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year – equivalent to the annual energy consumption of 6,000 homes.
- The rising popularity of bottled water means around three billion bottles are now bought annually in the UK.
- Blind taste tests show that most people can't tell the difference between bottled water and tap.
- Bottled water is 500 times more expensive than tap water – the Consumer Council for Water says an adult drinking the recommended eight glasses a day would pay £1 a year from the tap compared to £500 for a mid-range bottled water.
- The Northwest boasts some of the highest quality tap water anywhere in the world. Over 500,000 water samples are analysed each year – more than 99.9% of tests at customers' taps meet stringent national and European standards.
- There are no proven health benefits of bottled water over tap, although the health benefits of keeping well hydrated are well understood.
- Between 2000 and 2006 United Utilities invested £700 million in improving drinking water quality.

## Winds of change

Natural variability in the Earth's atmosphere could be masking the overall effect of climate change, say scientists from the University of Liverpool.

Researchers studying oceans around the globe have previously found that surface temperatures have risen over the last 30 years in accord with global warming.

But new research focusing on the North Atlantic suggests that natural changes in the atmosphere also play a role.

Working with scientists in the US, the Liverpool team analysed 50 years of North Atlantic temperature records and used computer models

to reveal a more complex pattern of heat exchange between ocean and atmosphere than initially expected.

Professor Ric Williams explained: "We found that changes in the heat stored in the North Atlantic corresponded to changes in natural and cyclical winds above it.

"These local changes in heat storage are typically ten times larger than any global warming trend. We now need to look at why changes are occurring in wind circulation, as this in itself could be linked to global warming effects."

Although natural variability appears to be masking global warming in the ocean, scientists still believe that climate change is occurring, pointing to signs such as rising surface and atmospheric temperatures, reduced summer sea ice in the Arctic and melting glaciers.

### 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](http://www.nurec2008.com)

### September 6–11 BA Festival of Science

Europe's biggest celebration of science, engineering and technology this year visits Liverpool, promising talks, plays, debates, hands-on activities and more. Find out about the science of superheroes, which Beatles memory is most magical and what happens when science and culture collide. Hundreds of top scientists reveal the latest developments in research.

**Venue:** Various in Liverpool

**More information:** Joanne Coleman 020 7019 4936

### September 17–19 Impacts of Pollution in a Changing Urban Environment

Conference looking at the need for integrated frameworks, policies, methodologies, tools and solutions for sustainable management of pollution in changing urban environments.

**Venue:** University of Manchester

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

### October 3–12 MWH Mersey Basin Week

Over 300 environmental projects, activities and events taking place throughout the Northwest. Ranging from guided walks and children's activities to clean ups and woodland management. Small grants are available for local groups wanting to organise their own events.

**Venue:** Various

**More information:** Bev Mitchell 0161 242 8212 [www.merseybasin.org.uk](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk)

### October (TBC) Northwest Tidal Energy Conference

One day conference examining the significant untapped potential for tidal renewable energy in the Northwest, and marking the launch of the Northwest Tidal Energy Group. Featuring presentations on the region's leading tidal energy proposals, including the Mersey Estuary, Solway Firth and Morecambe Bay.

**Venue:** TBC

**More information:** Iain Taylor 0161 629 8366

### November 3–5 WaterfrontExpo

The only platform for professionals involved in waterfront design, regeneration, development, construction and management to meet, analyse and share current thinking and best practice on the wide range of issues confronting this specialised area.

**Venue:** Liverpool Arena & Convention Centre

**More information:** [www.waterfrontexpo.com](http://www.waterfrontexpo.com)

# Löve

Why I love... my Blondie t-shirt.

By Rachel Edwards, student and club promoter.



“There’s fabulous talent on the Manchester style scene, so together with my friend Harriet, I decided to start up a fashion club night called Strut to showcase some of the most creative labels and boutiques.

That was popular, but you’re always trying to think of something new to keep the punters coming. We had heard about ‘swishing’ parties that were starting up in London, where, instead of always buying new stuff to wear, people bring items of clothing to a party to swap. One London club night called Swaparama Razamataz even has people literally taking their kit off, a piece at a time, and then – hopefully – find something to replace it! Obviously there’s a recycling element to it, as well as it being a fun night out where you get to go home with a new outfit for free.

We decided to call our club night Swap Shop. We didn’t want to go quite as far as getting people to strip off – the idea was to bring a bag and take home a bag. We didn’t make the eco thing the main focus because we thought that might feel off-putting to our target audience. Instead, we advertised on the basis of great bands and DJs and angled it as a brilliant night out where you might just pick up a really quirky, interesting piece of clothing as well as getting rid of all that stuff you never wear cluttering up your wardrobe.

We got far more people than we’d expected: 170 turned up one night. Some brought suitcases and black bin liners full to the brim. When midnight came, we poured all the bags onto the floor and people just went nuts, with guys trying on girls’ stuff and everyone leaving dressed in something different to when they’d arrived. My best swap was a really cool Blondie t-shirt.”

[www.myspace.com/strutmanchester](http://www.myspace.com/strutmanchester)

# Hate

Why I hate... air conditioning.

By John Walker, partner at architects Walker Simpson.



“Climate change makes keeping cool more and more of a problem. When humans lived on the savannah, we’d go and sit under a tree to cool off. Caves are good too – the thermal mass of the rock provides a stable environment that regulates air temperature, which is one reason why caves have been

used as shelters for thousands of years. Water works in much the same way, gaining and losing heat relatively slowly, and cooling the air flowing across it.

Get to the 20th century however, and it was all about the white heat of technology and solving problems by mechanical means. The difficulty is that conditioning air with machines, as we do now, uses lots of energy, which releases CO<sup>2</sup>.

What we’re looking to do now in designing buildings for the 21st century is to replicate the cave system, the tree-shade system and the air-over-water system of cooling. That’s achieved by a combination of methods: one is by designing in plenty of thermal mass. This has traditionally been done by using big slabs of rock or concrete in buildings, which works well but has its own problems: making cement is very energy hungry. But work is now being done on using friendlier aggregates in concrete, unfired clay bricks and ‘rammed earth’.

You can also put small windows on the south facing sides of buildings and create shady courtyards. Then you build so as to encourage the air to run across the cool courtyard, with maybe a small water feature in the middle – that creates a passive airflow system that cools and conditions the air without the need for any machinery.

We need to stay cool without burning up the planet; revisiting and re-using the knowledge we’ve had for millennia, combined with generating energy using zero carbon sources, is a positive way forward.”

## WORDS + NUMBERS

### One third

Amount of UK small businesses that think – incorrectly – that the regulations of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive don’t apply to them, according to research by the Environment Agency.

### 429

Number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Northwest.

### 222

Number of UK windfarms still at the planning stage, enough to produce 9,200 MW of electricity. Gordon Brown has pledged to speed up the planning process.

### £14 million

Amount of business the Manchester based Co-op Bank turned away in 2007 because of its ethical policy on not dealing with oppressive regimes, makers of military hardware and the like.

### 15,000

Number of lorry journeys that could be taken off the road each year by switching freight to the Manchester Ship Canal, according to Seaborn Container Line, thus reducing carbon emissions and road congestion.

### 2

The number of Demoiselle Crane chicks that hatched at Martin Mere wildfowl and wetland reserve in Lancashire this summer, the first time the centre has successfully bred the species.



## Talking of...Britain's rarest bird

**I give up, what is Britain's rarest bird?** That dubious distinction is most probably held by the hen harrier, only 15 breeding pairs of which are known to remain in England. Even that's an improvement compared to 1900, when it clung on in just a few remote Scottish islands.

**Who could harm such magnificent creatures?** Surprisingly enough, gamekeepers. It seems the hen harrier is most magnificent as a hunting machine, with a five foot wing span and talons strong enough to lift a small lamb. Unfortunately, it has an equally magnificent appetite, with a

particular taste for tender young grouse. The same grouse that landowners pay a small fortune to ensure are well stocked on their shooting estates. Which is where the gamekeepers come in.

**Just doing their jobs, eh?** Exactly so, but that doesn't satisfy the conservationists. The RSPB claims hen harriers are the most persecuted birds in Britain.

**My heart is sinking, is there any good news?** Funny you should ask. Helped by Natural England and others, bird lovers and gamekeepers have brokered a truce in the bird's one stronghold in England – Bowland moor in Lancashire. It's hoped that by nurturing the birds here, they can begin to spread out to the rest of the country. Last year

three harrier nests were found on the moor – this year there were five nests with 38 eggs. One of the nests starred in a webcast, with the chicks hatching live on camera in May.

**My heart is soaring, but why Lancashire?** As well as being one of Britain's loveliest upland landscapes, huge swathes are in the hands of unusually enlightened landowners, including the Queen...

**God bless you, ma'am!** ...and those lovely people at United Utilities and Natural England. The last two, along with the RSPB and Lancashire County Council, are co-operating on the Hen Harrier Recovery Project. United Utilities in particular has some truly innovative land restoration projects underway on the moor. So here at least, the hen harrier's prospects are taking off.

## How to...erect a wind farm

"It's just like putting together a big Meccarno set," says Richard Dibley, development manager at Peel Wind Power, of the project currently underway to erect four giant new wind turbines at Liverpool docks. At 135m tall from base to blade, the turbines will be the largest onshore wind farm in the country. The combined 10 megawatts of electricity they are expected to produce will be enough to supply around 6,000 homes – much of the power will be sold to a local supplier serving nearby communities.

The four huge N90 turbines were built in Germany by Nordex. As Richard explains: "The blades

have a span of 45m and needed to be transported by specialist trailers equipped to be flexible in order to turn corners." Once loaded onto ships the parts are transported to the dockside in Liverpool, where specialist rigging is set up to lift them into place. "The base on which the turbines will stand is the most difficult and time-consuming part of the project, as we have to pile deep down into the bedrock before we can begin to build," says Richard. "The blades at the end are the finishing touches."

This is the second wind farm to be developed by Peel Wind Power, following the success of a six turbine farm built in 1999 at the nearby Seaforth Dock, which generates around 3.6 megawatts.

"The wind farm will have a lifespan of 25 years; after that the turbines are



de-commissioned and taken down" says Richard.

The wind farm should be finished by the end of 2008 and producing energy by spring 2009. And as long as Richard's Meccarno analogy holds true there shouldn't be any problems – coincidentally, the miniature metals kits were invented in Liverpool in 1898.

## Coming...and Going

Manchester Enterprises, the economic development agency for Greater Manchester, has appointed **Steve Turner** as head of carbon economy. The newly created role will address how the Manchester city-region can drive forward its economic development, whilst improving the uptake of renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions. He will also work on

the agency's 'mini Stern' economic review of the effect of climate change on economic priorities for the city. Steve previously led Lancashire County Council's work on climate change and represented Northwest local authorities on the UK Climate Impacts Programme.

**Chris Matthews** has progressed to head of environment and sustainability at United Utilities, the Northwest's water and

wastewater company. Chris was formally the company's carbon manager – the first post of its kind at a UK water company. He said: "My job is to embed sustainable performance across the whole of the company. I'll be making sure that realistic but challenging plans are in place for biodiversity, carbon management, waste management and sustainable procurement, among others, with clear measures that will tell us if we're successful or not."

The company is currently recruiting for a replacement carbon manager.



A local enthusiast shows off his skills.

It may have produced an Olympic hopeful, but Crewe's BMX track had seen better days.

The Tipkinder Park course was where 19-year-old Beijing Olympics contender Shanaze Reade – a three-times world and eight-times European champion – honed her skills as a member of the Cheshire Ghostriders bike club.

But developments within the sport meant the small track was no longer suitable for training more advanced riders and could not host race meets. Local teens and children were also desperate for a skatepark.

So when the time came for park improvements three years ago, the two extreme sports were a key part of the plan.

Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council agreed to put in £250,000 and brought in Groundwork Cheshire to manage the project.

The lack of skate provision in the town meant the skatepark was prioritised, to give youngsters something to keep them off the streets.

## Beijing Olympics contender Shanaze Reade honed her BMX skills at the park.

While the team got to work on surveys and drainage investigations, detailed consultations were held with young people to find out what they needed.

Project manager Peter Heberlet says: "We made contact with about 50 young skaters aged between about 10 and 20. We found some in and around town while they were out on their skateboards, and contacted others through websites.

"They talked to us about what they wanted from a skatepark – which was important because there are different sorts of skating. From that we decided what kind of jumps to put in, and what surface to use.

"The young people wanted a range of levels – so little kids would be able to use the park as well as the older skaters."

The resulting brief was sent to companies. Their drawings and 3D images were then shown to the skaters, who were asked to rate each one.

# Ghostriders in the park

A Crewe park that nurtured Olympic ambitions is keeping kids off the streets. Ciara Leeming reports.



The firm with the highest score won the contract. About 10 youths stayed involved through the building phase – attending meetings, testing jumps and suggesting changes, until the facility was ready in September 2006.

While this was happening, Groundwork was raising money for the track project, which could not be funded by the local authority. BMX racing is now an Olympic event. A demonstration sport in Athens four years ago, it becomes a full sport for the first time this summer. Shanaze – who cut her teeth at Tipkinder – has qualified to compete in Beijing.

It took six months of fundraising to find the necessary £200,000 from sources including Barclays Spaces For Sport, WREN and Cheshire County Council.

The Ghostriders were involved throughout, and Groundwork was in regular consultation with the sport's governing body, British Cycling, to ensure the work met its national standards.

Two BMX riders worked closely with designers, doing trial rides and agreeing minor improvements. Shanaze – who travels the world for race meets – also tried the course out while it was being built.

The floodlit 300m track is now fit for training for the 2008 and 2012 Olympics, one of only a handful in the region. It was officially opened in January and hosted its first race meet in May.

"It was a regional Northwest race with 100 competitors ranging in age from seven years old to adults," says Peter. "You couldn't have had that kind of standard of meet there before."

Shanaze for one is pleased with the results, which she hopes will encourage more young people to get involved in BMXing – which remains a niche sport, albeit one that's growing in popularity.

"BMX racing has taken me all over the world and I am confident that I will be competing in this year's Beijing Olympic Games," she says. "I hope to encourage and welcome more local people to BMX racing with the Cheshire Ghostriders BMX Club."

## BEST & WORST

### BEST

"Creating a BMX track isn't a perfect science and everyone has completely different views on how the course should be, which meant making decisions could take longer than we expected. Once we'd made a decision we'd stick to it, as going back and fiddling would cost more money."

### WORST

"The biggest problem turned out to be the weather. The BMX project was finished almost six months late, and at one point we had to stop work for three months because of the rain. It was a challenge to keep the young people enthused when we had little to show for our work."

# How green is my... school?

Edwin Colyer puts Cockermouth School and its award winning eco-centre to the test.



It starts with Bob the Builder – “Reduce, reuse, recycle!” his team chants to the watching toddlers. And when they arrive at school, children now find that the curriculum also embraces environmental awareness, and increasingly informs the ethos of schools themselves.

Take Cockermouth School in Cumbria, for example. Here pupils don’t just hear the green gospel, they see it in action every day. The Mike Wilde Eco-Centre, with its wind turbine, photovoltaic array and segum grass roof, is unmissable. Officially opened last September, its innovative architecture, construction and day-to-day running are cleverly designed to minimise its environmental impact. Bob would be proud.

Mike Wilde, the school’s former head who died last year of cancer, wanted an inspirational building. “It was Mike’s dream,” says Joan Ellis, development manager at the school.

“Mike realised we needed more space, but he wanted a new style of building. He wanted something that would inspire youngsters – not just about the environment and sustainable buildings, but also inspire them to learn.”

Designs for the eco-centre topped a shortlist of 80 projects in the Teaching Environments for the Future scheme in 2003. Awarded a £1.3 million grant, the finished building comprises a 250-seater auditorium (able to accommodate an entire year group), with ten teaching and learning ‘pods’ for smaller groups. There is a staff resources room, kitchen, science preparation area and plenty of storage. And to one side a ‘mini Eden Project’ – four biomes stocked with plants for Mediterranean, arid and local climates.

But whether it is the copper cladding made from old domestic water tanks, or the rainwater harvesting for toilet flushing and the biomes, there is nothing in this building that has not been scrutinised for its environmental impact. The carpet is 85 per cent recycled yarn; the chairs 95 per cent recycled plastics. Even your breath is recycled as the stale air from the auditorium is pumped into the biomes to enrich their atmosphere with carbon dioxide. And the pond doubles up as a green security feature (think castles and moats).

Unsurprisingly the building has won several prizes, including an ENCAMS Eco-Schools Green Flag and, last month, a NW Business Environment Award. Roger Burton, from jmarchitects in Manchester, and one of the award’s judges, says that the building fully embraces sustainable construction.

“They have built something that works really well for the school. They’ve approached

it with enthusiasm, and come up with a neat, interesting solution.

“But it is not just sustainable performance with respect to the environment, it is also sustainable in the community,” Burton continues. “It is a flexible space and its use is maximised by the school and the local community.”

**“Mike wanted a new style of building that would inspire youngsters about the environment, and to learn.”**

Steve Pollington of consultants White Young Green, who worked on the eco-centre, calculates that the building required 40 per cent less energy to make when compared to conventional construction materials and methods. And day-to-day it generates more energy than it uses, supplying its surplus electricity to the school’s design and technology department.

The green message that emanates from schools has far reaching implications. Several schools in Cumbria are looking at sustainable practices, whilst Cockermouth School now tries to apply environmental criteria to all its purchases. But superb as it is, Cockermouth School is only one of a growing number that is taking inspiration from the environment. Others, like Kingsmeade in Cheshire and St Brigits in Manchester, can be found all around the Northwest. Thanks to schools like these (and Bob the Builder, of course), the next generation is learning to grow up green.



Allotments are back in demand, thanks to a new breed of enthusiast. Trouble is, developers are also keen on a nice city plot. Over a million have been lost.

# BACK to the LAND

Kathryn Forster and Michael





Ron Smith

**It's Sunday afternoon and the rain is coming down in Mancunian buckets. Down on the Ivygreen Road allotments in Chorlton, there's not much you can do except shelter beneath a humble roof, sit back and watch your spuds grow.**

Which is exactly what Ron Smith is doing. Except that his roof is not all that humble. His hut at the far side of the site (which, regularly washed by the nearby Mersey before the flood defences were built, appears as fertile as the valley of the Nile) is not so much a shed as a commodious villa constructed entirely from materials retrieved from skips: green front door with stained glass panel; double glazed windows; newly constructed veranda; fireplace (decorative only).

On the wall hangs an ironic portrait of Bill and Ben, the flowerpot men, a map of southern Canada and an image of a prize-winning racehorse. There is also a carpet beater, a cabinet bearing a bottle of HP sauce, a table on which a candle in a bottle burns and a shelf of gardening books. Plus a copy of Gray's Anatomy, which suggests that plot holders may come here for a little basic surgery when the weather is bad.

Smith is taking his ease in one of two maroon velour Parker Knoll armchairs (his is a recliner), opening the occasional can of lager and dreaming of his next camping trip to Canada (hence the map). He talks of growing up in Chorlton, of playing by the river and of how he learned his gardening skills from his dad.

He relishes the joy of growing fine food and eating it while it is as fresh as can be, of watching the birds on this green oasis just off a grid of terraced streets, of meeting all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds among the bean poles and fruit bushes. He seems a very happy man.

The hut is a social centre. Veteran Ivygreener Jim Chapman used to pop in most days for a whisky, before he died a couple of years ago (his concrete greenhouse has been restored and re-erected on the site's community area). Now Greg Bowey, elderflower connoisseur, and Mark Flowers (known as Potter for reasons that are not entirely clear) drop in.

Flowers took on his allotment five years ago when about six plots were unused and demand was slack. Now Ivygreen has more than 60 eager gardeners on its waiting list. "The plot is not on a big enough scale to save me much money but you can't beat the quality and taste," says Flowers. "And you come down and see good people. It's a little bit of time to yourself. I can come straight from work – I'm a teacher – and spend half an hour here and then go home completely relaxed. It's good for the soul."

Allotments in their present form have been with us for about 150 years and were established to help the urban poor provide food for their families. Estimates suggest that there were almost a million and a half plots when Britain was digging for victory during the second world war but the present total is thought to be around 300,000, with many already lost to developers who long to stick desirable semis where compost heaps once stood. There is a now an upswing of interest (hence the Ivygreen waiting list) fuelled in part by concerns about food quality and cost.

**"I spend half an hour here and go home completely relaxed. It's good for the soul."**

But the 21st century allotment appears to have another function: it is a utopian refuge with a social structure built on cooperation and collaboration. Or at the very least a place where you might enjoy swapping the odd vicia faba for a maris piper or two. And the new allotmenter does not fit the stereotype of some old bloke with loam under his nails, a cloth cap and a way with curly kale. Many, having put away their spades, take to their computers to pass on tips and post proud pictures of sprouting carrots.

Catherine Braithwaite, a busy fine arts publicist with a large plot at the back of her garden in Flixton, Greater Manchester, got digging three years ago. "I agreed to take on the plot on a sunny day in August and said to myself, 'Yes, I can do that'. It was overgrown with head-high grass and brambles, under which I discovered fruit bushes – raspberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants.

[CONTINUED OVER]



Josh Steiner & baby



Sarah Cobbe

Most of the allotment is cultivated now – we are just planting out the final third and I have bought a second-hand greenhouse for £25.

“I try to go every weekend and perhaps pop out for an hour or two on a working day through the week. It sounds a bit hippyish, but there are only natural sounds there and I feel a great sense of peace. My job can be quite stressful with editors and clients shouting at me. But when I go out and do some digging, I feel that the connection with the soil is a very calming experience. It seems now to be more about getting away from everything than growing the veg. You are working with people but not disturbed by them. It’s a very meditative experience, as good as a yoga class for helping me switch off completely.”

**“It’s a very meditative experience, as good as a yoga class.”**

The therapeutic value of digging, hoeing, weeding and growing is recognised on Merseyside, where the Family Refugee Support Project has helped refugees and asylum seekers find some kind of inner peace through allotment work, while avoiding the enforced idleness demanded by the asylum decision process.

The scheme was established in 2001 by Swiss-born psychotherapist Margrit Ruegg and had at one point seven plots worked by 18 families from around the world who had suffered trauma or post-traumatic stress.

The scheme was featured in three short films for Channel 4, out of which grew the 2007 feature film *Grow Your Own*. Scripted by Carl Hunter and Liverpool writer Frank Cottrell Boyce, the film tells how a fictional allotment tended by locals becomes a microcosm of Britain as Iranian, Zimbabwean and Chinese migrants arrive to take over plots.

Back in Manchester and within a wreath’s throw of the immense Southern Cemetery, another project is exploring a collective approach to allotment cultivation. The Lost Plot, developed following permaculture workshops three years ago, is worked by a group rather than an individual. “It’s a flexible community model,” says Josh Steiner of Manchester-based Action For Sustainable Living. “There are three or four really committed people involved at any one time and they take responsibility for watering. Now it’s up and running, I feel I will be connected to this piece of land for years to come. My baby’s placenta is buried there, with a tree to mark the spot.”

Clare Walker, standing by a shed containing two ancient volumes of the *Popular Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, explains that she signed up in June 2007 after seeing a notice in *Unicorn*, the grocery that is Chorlton’s shrine to organic broccoli and Fairtrade porridge. “I’d been chatting to friends about wanting to do a bit more gardening – I’ve always grown tomatoes and wigwams of beans but I wanted to do more. There was a meeting the next day so I thought ‘Wow – serendipity’. I went to the meeting and came down here on a Sunday.

“I want to be with people who know more than I do. And I love digging and weeding – I’m not afraid of hard work. And the benefit at the end is that you get to take home some fabulous fruit and veg. I put these broad beans

in a few weeks ago and it looked as if they were never going to come up. Now there are flowers on them. It’s tremendous.”

Walker has become a Lost Plot missionary. “We want to recruit more people to come in who wouldn’t normally know about allotments or who wouldn’t think they had the opportunity to go for one or wanted a go before taking on an allotment of their own.”

The Lost Plot boasts a curious sculpture featuring a plant-filled bath, a loo and several washbasins. Ivygreen has nothing quite so dramatic on its well-tended acres but there are glimpses of allotmenter individuality. Sarah Cobbe, site secretary and plot holder for 15 years, has potatoes growing out of an old linen basket, French beans about to leap up the frame of an old patio umbrella and lettuces flourishing in cloches converted from old water cooler bottles. And then there are her scarecrows: a couple of pound-shop Easter bunnies with outsize ears which you would think would dive for cover at first sight of a blue tit, let alone a crow.

Perhaps they are a lucky charm, bringing blessings on Cobbe’s two plots which each year deliver strawberries, marrows, courgettes,



Chris Cyprus



gooseberries, asparagus, onions, sweet corn, broad beans, cherries, blueberries, raspberries, blackcurrants, blackberries, herbs and almost any other fruit or veg you can think of. “Sometimes I’ll come down in the evening intending to pick something for tea. I intend being here for ten minutes and end up staying for three hours. On a summer’s evening you can be here till the sun goes down. It’s just really lovely.

“It’s enjoyable and nice to feel you are achieving something, being close to the earth – all those sort of cliché things really. I don’t do it to save money but I’m sure I am when you think of the cost of soft fruit. Yesterday I dug some new potatoes up and cooked them for tea. It was great.”

Artist Chris Cyprus, based in Mossley, Tameside, would probably enjoy the Lost Plot sculpture and Cobbe’s bunnies. But they will have to wait. “I’ve always had this thing about sheds – the colours, the shapes, the textures. They’re like time capsules, aren’t they? Then I started finding sheds on allotments. It grew into an obsession and I painted nothing else for two years. Now I’ve got an allotment myself.”

Influenced by Van Gogh’s paintings of farm workers, he has introduced into his allotment paintings people with backs bent as they weed or lift a fork. “It’s like escapism, isn’t it? I’m not into football or pubs or anything like that. I was looking at society, at the rapid over-development of the town where I live. I found that the people on the allotment were not chavs or anything. They are very relaxed, caring-sharing sort of people. Maybe I was doing a bit of soul searching underneath it all.”

## Developers long to stick desirable semis where compost heaps once stood.

But the allotment world is not all Arcadian bliss because there are predators lurking at the gates to the plots. In 1996, Manchester City Council declared as “surplus to requirements” 88 allotments at Edge Lane in Openshaw. But the plot holders fought a long running battle and ministers eventually decided that the sale of the site was not justified. There is now a waiting list for plots and this year the rescue team won an Allotment Society cup for its resistance campaign.

It’s not an isolated case. Diggers from the Eastleigh and Bishopstoke Allotments Association in Hampshire fought doggedly for almost five years to stop their local council selling two sites to a developer. They went as far as seeking leave for a judicial review but still lost, exposing as far from perfect the legal protection allotments are supposed to enjoy. The council now has its eyes on a third site.

Meanwhile, on plots so far free from attack, the digging, planting and harvesting goes happily on. By now the sun should have come out at Ivygreen and Ron Smith will have risen from his Parker Knoll to do what needs to be done. Perhaps, back home and taking his ease after a Radox bath, he will have logged on and read this message from an anonymous blogger in Accrington: “I saw a wren up the allotment today. It was only about four feet away from me whilst I was weeing.” We can only hope for the sake of the cabbages that he or she means weeding.

**David Ward is one of the Northwest’s most experienced and respected journalists. For over 30 years he was the Guardian’s Northern correspondent. He now divides his time between freelance writing and working for the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick.**



# WEIR-ED AND WONDERFUL

It's a case of back to the future for the carbon-cutting mill towns of the Northwest, which have huge potential for a modern version of waterpower.

Words Jason Teasdale



Steve Welsh of Water Power Enterprises

The Northwest's latest hydro-electricity project, now about to generate its first sparks of energy, is a scheme both weir-ed and wonderful.

The town of New Mills in Derbyshire is the test site for a technology that could revolutionise the way the North's former mill towns get their power; not from some distant fossil fuel or nuclear plant, but from the rivers at their heart.

Last spring an Archimedean screw eight metres long and two and a half metres wide arrived in New Mills to be winched into place among the ruins of Torr Mill – specifically, alongside its weir. It will transport some of the River Goyt's flow across the drop in water level, turning the screw as it would a turbine and generating 70kw of power in the process.

The Torrs Hydro New Mills scheme could provide a template for post-industrial sites across the region and bring back into use weirs built by long-gone mill owners who needed power for their spinning machines. Water Power Enterprises (h2oPE) manages the project and aims to

operate 25 such schemes across the region by 2015, enough to power 5,000 homes.

This summer saw the chiefs of Britain's energy industry warn a Commons committee that household bills could rise by 40 per cent. Around the same time, prime minister Gordon Brown announced moves to speed-up connection of renewable energy projects to the national grid – a cause of huge delays in proposed developments.

h2oPE managing director Steve Welsh said hydro schemes are well placed to benefit: "Water contains much more energy than wind – the amount of time a wind power scheme operates at full capacity is just twenty-five per cent, for hydro schemes that figure is forty-five per cent. And hydro schemes last around forty years whereas wind turbines operate for only around twenty-five years. For a £250,000 one-off cost you can power seventy homes for twenty-five years."

In absolute terms the returns aren't huge, but there is a strong case for using energy from a local resource – up to seven per cent of the electricity generated at a power station is lost in its transmission.

A report for the Northwest Regional Development Agency describes small scale hydro power as "a potentially large opportunity for the region" due to its climate and

The North's former mill towns could get their power not from some distant fossil fuel or nuclear plant, but from the rivers at their heart.

topography: any hydroelectrical scheme's output, whether it be wheel, turbine or screw, depends on the water's drop-height and its volume per second. The wet, hilly Northwest is ideal.

The government hopes to get ten per cent of the UK's electricity from renewable sources by 2010 and fifteen per cent by 2020. It currently stands at just two per cent.

Its main mechanism for doing this is the Renewable Obligation Certificate (ROC). It works like this – power suppliers must source an increasing proportion of electricity from renewables and, if they can't produce it themselves, they must buy ROCs from those who do. Not doing so means potential fines.

Small scale hydro projects (defined by the Environment Agency as those with less than five megawatts of generating capacity) should play a significant part in meeting these targets, but there are fewer than you might think.

[CONTINUED OVER]

## Installation of the Archimedean Screw at Torr Mill Wier



## “We are really just putting back an updated form of the technology that was here.”

Despite the apparent suitability of our region, data from 2006 recorded just 16 active hydro projects here. Meanwhile the Environment Agency, which grants the necessary water abstraction papers, has issued around 37 such licenses across the Northwest, though not all may have been used. A recent report for Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance found just two active projects in the county and noted that even the potential in this slopeless landscape isn't being met. More encouragingly, the report identified 14 planned schemes for the county.

Its author, Manchester University postgraduate student Evelyn Bateman, said development cash is the main obstacle and usually only stretches to a feasibility study: “Funding is needed to push these schemes forward, but where you can get it is difficult to say – there is no clear guidance.”

One of the most interesting aspects of the Torrs Hydro New Mills scheme is the way it was funded. Part of the £250,000 cost was met by a £135,000 grant and a £61,000 loan, but the rest was raised through a share offer taken up by around 200, mainly local, people. A maximum of 7.5 per cent of the scheme's profits can be paid back to shareholders, while the rest will be poured into a community fund that should generate an annual social dividend of around £6,000 and be used, for example, to fund energy saving grants.

Richard Body, a director of Torrs Hydro New Mills, said: “When income is low it will not be the community which suffers, it will be the shareholders! And I strongly support the idea that the money we generate could be put into feasibility studies and funding for another hydro scheme in the same area. A lot of people are already asking if we plan to do this again.

“The only opposition we have ever had was from one person who felt it was so small an amount of electricity that it was not worth losing the view. But I think that, while the view has changed, it has been enhanced. We are really just putting back an updated form of the technology that was here.”

Such deep-seated community support is invaluable in overcoming physical and legal barriers to development. Even with an encouraging feasibility report, such projects can whither when reality bites and enthusiasm fades, Bateman said: “There are many different factors to a micro hydro scheme; cost-benefit analysis, flow engineering, how funding might work – it is quite complicated.”

To illustrate the point the Environment Agency publishes a 50-page booklet to assist its staff with hydropower proposals. Although the agency insists it will “take a positive view of reasonable and well designed proposals” the booklet covers potential pitfalls in planning, land ownership, environmental assessment, fisheries, flooding, conservation, recreation, angling and water resource and quality alterations. Little wonder so many projects flounder.

It's a familiar tale for Body. He said anyone planning such a scheme must anticipate reams of legal paperwork: “Everything has to be right; we did not want to get ten years down the line and find out that we never actually owned the scheme!

“It has meant a lot of work for the directors, more than we anticipated, but that is mainly because we wanted to be involved. We wanted local people to feel that the scheme belongs to them.”

If those whose mill has long gone can do it, what of those still lucky enough to have a building in place?

The first records of a water wheel at Quarry Bank Mill near Wilmslow in Cheshire date back to 1784 – it was once the largest and most powerful in the country. Over the centuries it has been replaced several times and the machinery remains intact and is still used for demonstrations. But the National Trust, which runs the property, is keen on going further. Bob Hardiker, visitor services manager, said: “We intend to carry out a feasibility study into the potential for generating electricity from the waterwheel. We hope to have the results of the study within the next 12 months, leading to power generation within two years.”



Elsewhere, Staveley Mill Yard in Cumbria, a thriving business park founded in 1995 by David Brockbank on the back of his family's declining cotton business, has been green for generations.

## Cumbria's River Kent may be the best source of small scale hydropower in England.

The nearby River Kent has been providing power to the area's mills since the 1600s and is said to be among the most powerful in England – dropping from the greatest height over the shortest distance. No wonder that 30 mills once hugged its banks. Now only Staveley remains but, even in its present guise, it has use for the Kent's power – the second hand water turbine installed by Brockbank's father 50 years ago is still running today.

Brockbank shares his father's pragmatic view of the river: "You might as well use it since it's flowing past the door. We have been doing it

for 300 years. It's common sense and that's why we have done it."

He isn't keen on the term 'green' but sees his role more in terms of shepherding a local resource: "We live in a beautiful part of the world, we have lived here all our lives and we respect and understand it."

Brockbank says the present turbine produces 25kw of power that can be exported to the grid: "But we now use all our own power because there is a bakery operating 24 hours a day on site. At night a hundred per cent of the energy we use is produced here, during the day time just ten per cent, so we have to import power."

Sadly it's not the only form of importation associated with such small scale projects. New Mills had to ship in its Archimedean screw from Germany, and a strong euro meant it cost £10,000 more than planned.

It's a shame so much innovation is taking place overseas, but specialist industries that grew up in this part of the world to service hydropower schemes do exist. Companies like Kendal-based Gilkes, which installed its first water turbine in 1856. The company has since worked in more than 80 countries and has offices in Texas and Japan.

Chris Brett, design engineer at neighbouring Inter Hydro Technology, which acted as design consultants for the Backbarrow Hydro Scheme on Cumbria's River Leven, confirmed the industry is enjoying a renaissance. "We are seeing an increase in

work at the moment. There are a number of companies active in this field here in the UK and each will see at least 100 schemes each year from a feasibility point of view. Anywhere where there used to be a mill... could be brought back into service."

Brett puts the resurgence down to the green energy push, but added: "There is some resistance to wind turbines which were, until recently, seen as a panacea, while solar and photovoltaic energy will never do much here in the UK. So that leaves water and there is a lot of potential here in the Northwest. You won't find any massive schemes like Glendoe [a 100MW scheme now being built in Scotland] but the government is pushing for distributed energy rather than centrally produced, so there is an opportunity for schemes dotted around the Northwest to make their own contribution."

From August, New Mills will begin making its contribution. An agreement has just been signed to supply the town's Co-op supermarket, but Body says that even before the screw makes its first revolution it will be fulfilling a purpose. "I hoped that we would inspire others and kick start a debate over the use of weirs. You can argue that it is not a great deal of electricity, and that is true, but it is not just about clean energy – it is also an income that the community will be getting. There is a great deal of pride here in New Mills at this scheme."

**Jason Teasdale has worked on regional newspapers including the Liverpool Post and the Liverpool Echo. He is the former environment correspondent at the Northwest Enquirer.**



Interview Mark Hillsdon

## Time for change

He spent almost 20 years helping to mould environmentalism in the UK – now Tony Juniper elucidates the movement's future.

Tony Juniper is feeding his chickens when I call. You'd be forgiven for thinking that, as he prepares to call time on his six years as executive director of Friends of the Earth, the chickens will be seeing a lot more of Juniper over the coming months.

Juniper certainly isn't leaving Friends of the Earth under a cloud. When he hands over to Andy Atkins, who arrives from the Tearfund later this summer, Juniper's passion for the environment, and the movement that he's done so much to shape, will be as great as ever.

It's a passion that was sparked in 1990 when he visited Brazil in search of the last wild Spix's Macaw (he's a world authority on macaws). He found the bird, but the journey brought him face-to-face with the reality of what was happening to the world's rainforests. It's a moment he describes as his epiphany.

Later that year he joined Friends of the Earth's rainforest campaign, and so began an 18-year commitment to the organisation. It has spanned an era of unprecedented change in the public's perception of environmental issues, with the green agenda edging in from the fringes to the centre of British politics.

**Public support is crucial if the movement is to take its next great leap forward.**

"One thing that I think we've really achieved is to reposition the environmental agenda," explains Juniper from his home in Cambridge, where he lives with his wife and three children. "I think a fantastic mainstreaming has taken place."

And this public support, he argues, is crucial if the movement is to take its next great leap forward.

"One of the great debates within the environmental movement over the last few years has been whether to put efforts into getting individuals to make lifestyle changes or whether we should be arguing for governments to enact new policies," he says.

"It needs to be both – one of the things that is very clear, even given heightened public awareness, is that

most people won't even do the basic things. Most people are still flying a lot, they are still buying 4x4 cars, some people are still resistant to recycling, some people don't even have energy efficient light bulbs.

And no amount of public awareness raising is going to change that. So we need laws to change the cars, the light bulbs, and the aviation policy for them, so they naturally start to do the right thing.

**"Even when politicians won't lead, they very often follow."**

"But the policies won't change, and government won't put in the new rules, until there's public consent."

In the past, says Juniper, green victories over issues such as acid rain and CFCs didn't really affect the day-to-day lives of most people. Climate change is different – as shown by Friends of the Earth's Big Ask campaign, which despite political resistance has delivered a new act of parliament on climate change and the first legal framework of its kind in the world.

"The government wasn't keen on this idea to begin with and the case was made through a combination of good argument and, crucially, massive public backing for change. So even when politicians won't lead, they very often follow. And if we can create the conditions whereby the public will see the need for change, I think we can do an awful lot."

Of course Juniper is pragmatic enough to know that this is only the beginning. "Yes there are going to be deficiencies with this bill and one of the things we are fighting hard for at the moment is the inclusion of international aviation and shipping (emissions).

The government says it doesn't want to have those numbers in the carbon budget; we think that's mad and I'm confident we can still win that argument."

One way of helping to influence the argument is, of course, to do so from within. And Juniper doesn't rule out standing for parliament one day – intriguingly he joined the Green party for the first time earlier this year.

"It's possible," he says. "I'm certainly going to be staying with the issues and may think about going towards politics."

Until then Juniper's diary is full. In between speaking engagements and writing commissions, he'll be working for the Prince of Wales' Rainforest Project, as well as a new sustainability group at Cambridge University. Which is all good news for the environment, but perhaps not such good news for his chickens.

**Tony Juniper on Manchester's proposed £3 billion transport revolution, which includes congestion charging:**

"If we want motorists in Manchester to drive less, there must be an improvement in alternatives to the car such as better public transport and cycling facilities. We must wean ourselves off our addiction to oil. Congestion charging can play a significant role in developing a clean, safe and prosperous future."

# Pump it up

Engineer **David Thompson** spotted a gap in the market to help cut people's heating bills using renewable energy. Now his Bolton based company is growing fast.

**David Thompson, a heating engineer with over 30 years experience, started Groundheat Installations when he spotted a need for an installation company with expertise in ground heat pump technology.**

Four years ago he repaired his first ground heat pump while working for a central heating and plumbing company in Bolton.

"I spoke to the heat pump supplier, while fixing it. They had the sole import license from Sweden and they invited me to Oxford to see the product – at the time the supplier was only selling five a month," says Thompson.

Thompson started selling and fitting heat pumps for his employer. Back then, the supplier's mark up meant the units were expensive – only customers using the pumps to heat a large swimming pool could expect a pay back.

Despite the seemingly niche

client base, Thompson set up Groundheat Installations in 2006, focusing solely on installing and fitting the ground heat pumps. The Horwich-based company has grown fast – from a turnover of £60,000 in 2006 to £250,000 in 2007. It employs four and a half staff.

**Turnover has grown fast – to £250,000 in 2007**

"We installed twenty units over the first couple of years, but we've installed another twenty in the last twelve months alone," says Thompson. "And we had no mark up on units themselves in that first year while developing business."

One barrier was that the heat pump's manufacturer lacked experience at fitting them. Thompson found he was able to make the pumps work more efficiently by improving the way they are installed, cutting the payback time. One client was paying £3,000 a year on gas to heat his swimming pool – installing a

heat pump cost him £12,000. "The heat pump got his gas bill down to £1,500 a year. I kept fiddling with it and got that down further to £750 a year," says Thompson.

The company is now partnering with Worcester Bosch, which puts sales leads through to it. Thompson says Bosch is after volume sales and the unit price of a heat pump has come down considerably.

Groundheat Installations has also opened a showroom for customers to see how the equipment works. "We have large prints of all the installations and demos with the equipment so that people know what to expect," says Thompson.

The company has worked with schools and health clubs and Thompson is keen to do more commercial work. He says that businesses could make considerable cost savings, particularly with rising energy prices. But the architects employed by clients can be a hurdle because, according to Thompson, they have preconceived ideas about the technology.

"They've heard of heat pumps that have been fitted incorrectly or in unsuitable situations and rubbish them straight away. I'm just a heating engineer as far as they are concerned. That's why we need the gallery to demonstrate how it all works," he says. "But we are still on a learning curve because there are always different applications."

Thompson is in the process of patenting the use of solar panels to re-heat the ground in winter, combining the two technologies in a novel way to maintain the efficiency of the system throughout the year.

"It can be used when there isn't the space to lay reams of piping along the ground. So rather than digging three 50 meter trenches, now I can do it with two 15 meter trenches and heat with solar," says Thompson.

**Joanne Birtwistle is a reporter for Crain's Manchester Business magazine.**

## How it works

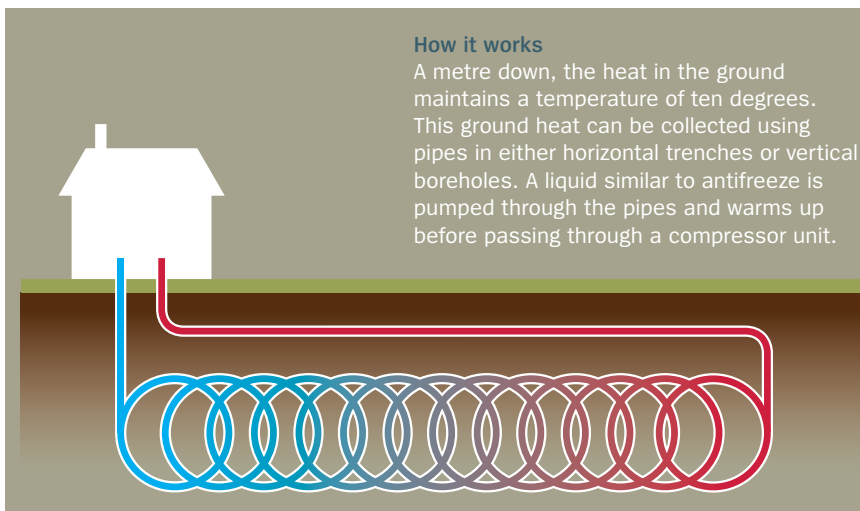
A metre down, the heat in the ground maintains a temperature of ten degrees. This ground heat can be collected using pipes in either horizontal trenches or vertical boreholes. A liquid similar to antifreeze is pumped through the pipes and warms up before passing through a compressor unit.

This extracts the heat at high temperature and uses it to warm water for radiators, for example. The cooled antifreeze then circulates to warm up again.

The same process can also be used to extract heat from ground water such as lakes.

For every unit of energy used to power the system, around three and a half units are produced. And heat pumps have a 25-year lifespan, 15 more than a condensing boiler.

Correct installation is vital for the technology to work at its optimum. "The liquid in the pipes chills the ground, so if you get the ground loops or bore holes wrong it can freeze the ground and the efficiency of the system will drop right off. That's where the expertise comes in," says Thompson.



# SAVING RATTY



It's exactly a century since Wind in the Willows became a childhood classic. Since then, the animal that inspired one of its best-loved characters, 'dear old Ratty', has all but disappeared. James Fair visits two schemes working to protect the beguiling water vole.

**Coming off the M6 at junction 25 and taking the A49 into Wigan isn't the most obvious path to tread for a heart-warming nature ramble.**

A few miles before you reach the town centre, you peel off to the right and head down Carr Lane, a redbrick housing estate offering little hope that a wildlife wonderland is just around the corner.

The sharp-eyed traveller, however, might notice gangs of shimmering starlings foraging for grubs on the well-kept lawns, and wonder where they came from.

At the end of Carr Lane is Hawkey Hall High School, a specialist engineering college. Nearby Westwood power station was demolished as recently as 1989, while Ince Moss Colliery closed in 1962. Remote and rural Lancashire this isn't: one of the last places you'd expect to be a hotspot for Britain's fastest declining mammal – the water vole, or Ratty of *Wind in the Willows* fame, whose hundredth birthday publishers are celebrating this year.

Behind the school is a series of large lakes, which formed when the ground above the colliery subsided, and which now make up a local nature reserve called Wigan Flashes.

I arrive here on a warm June morning to be met by Richard Gardner, one of two conservation officers working for the North West Lowlands Water Vole Project.

Wigan Flashes consists of willow and birch copses, reedbeds, ditches and the open lakes (or flashes). We set off down a path and soon come to a concrete bridge that spans a slow moving stream with tall sedges growing from the riverbed and dense rushes and grasses on either side.

## The surest sign that water voles are about are their droppings.

In the middle of the stream lies a wooden plank, something not entirely unexpected in this post-industrial landscape. "There's your first sign that water voles are present," Richard says; and as I peer a little closer, I see the plank has two or three small piles of brown, lozenge-shaped droppings. "A latrine," he adds with satisfaction.

Having worked as a journalist for BBC Wildlife magazine for the best part of nine years, I am now accustomed to the boundless pleasure that anyone involved in studying wildlife gets from finding animal poop – indeed, I feel a surge of excitement myself, these days, at the simple discovery of a fox scat. It goes with the territory.

For Richard, who will spend the best part of the next three years surveying sites for signs of water voles all over Cheshire and Lancashire, finding droppings will be his fastest route to building up a picture of where they are present and where they are not. Water voles leave the droppings as territorial markers, a signal to others that they are around – for males, it may be a question of warding off potential rivals, for females a way of pulling in suitors.

The project has been funded through the Sita Trust, the Landfill Communities Fund, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, United Utilities and the Environment Agency. And as well as surveying sites, Richard is offering advice to landowners about how best to manage areas for water voles, with grants available through higher-level environmental stewardship schemes.

We have barely gone a few yards along the stream when Richard points to the ground. "There's your second sign," he says, and I see a hole in the ground where the vegetation within a 10cm radius is short and brown. It's a water vole burrow, and the short grass shows where they have been feeding. As we carry on, there are burrows every few yards (some of them will be part of the same network). "This is great," says Richard. "Last time I was here, there were only five burrows, so it shows they are doing well."

[CONTINUED OVER]





Jenny Holden



The calamitous decline of the once-common water vole in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century epitomises just how unthinkingly ignorant we were – and still are, in some cases – about our impact on wildlife.

We destroyed their habitat by concreting riverbanks; we overstocked pastures so that their burrows caved in and their food source was grazed; and finally – just to make sure – we released thousands of non-native American mink, which unlike native predators such as otters or stoats, could both get into their burrows to eat their kits and hunt them in the water. Poor Ratty didn't stand a chance, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was estimated the water vole had disappeared from 94 per cent of its range.

## There's gunfire echoing off a distant fell – an unlikely place to find a rare, shy mammal.

The fact that water voles are thriving here in Wigan Flashes suggests, then, that mink are largely absent. And while most people who come out for an early morning stroll with their dog probably won't glimpse a water vole, there are those that do. "Some people are really fascinated by them," Richard says. "They're very cute, and to see them munching away is really something. I think it's important that people connect with them – there is a danger that they could be seen as a cost, because they are a protected species."

Wigan Flashes isn't just important for its water voles, either. With 70 hectares of reedbed, it has 0.5 per cent of the entire freshwater reedbed habitat in the UK.

The site is also being managed for bitterns, and they are starting to have some success. Cetti's warblers, a nationally scarce migrant, are here too, and in the winter it's a congregating spot for wildfowl. "Only ten or fifteen years ago, this place was like the Wild West," reserve warden Helen Sephton tells me. "People thought they could use it as they liked. There was hunting, shooting, fishing and burnt-out cars." So, it's also evidence that a community can 'retake' an area and find pride in their wildlife.

A week earlier, and nearly a hundred miles north, I found myself visiting an equally unlikely site in which to find a rare, shy British mammal.

There's gunfire going off in short bursts, which echoes disturbingly off a distant fell. I'm standing by a small, mountain stream in the MOD's training estate of Warcop in the Eden river valley. With me is Jenny Holden, who runs the Cumbria Water Vole Project.

While Richard Gardner has been employed to survey the Wigan area for water voles, up here Jenny has a different task. It's already known that water voles have disappeared from most of Cumbria, apart from a few isolated populations in the northern Pennines. But sites like Warcop – military training exercises not withstanding – provide excellent habitat for them, so Jenny is in the second year of a three-year project to release captive-bred water voles. The hope is that they will recolonise the area and eventually spread into other sites within the Eden catchment.

Jenny is putting out some data-loggers today, so that she can get some information on what the 71 water voles she released here a couple of weeks ago are up to. Each animal has had a microprocessor inserted under its skin. If and when it passes through a metal loop (carefully placed by a latrine, so there's a good chance at least one water vole will), this will be recorded by the logger.

## Jenny sees the water vole first – the best way is to just sit by the river and wait.

"The reason this site was chosen was because the MOD is not about to go anywhere and it is committed to its conservation activity," Jenny says. One aspect of this is mink control, which the MOD is carrying out, in part because it has a black grouse project that's dependent on reducing predator numbers.



A data-logger

It's Jenny, of course, who sees the water vole first. The best way to see them is just to sit by the side of the stream and wait, so as the day warms up, that's just what we do. But I'm having one of those horrible, myopic moments that would cause me to miss an elephant in a flowerbed.

Thankfully, the creature obligingly swims out into the centre of the stream, and even though I am staring at its backside, I can immediately tell from the small, rounded ears and short, furry tail that this isn't a rat. It pulls into an overhanging ledge and out of sight. Later, we encounter another water vole (or possibly the same one), which dives into the stream with the distinctive, diagnostic 'plop'.

"Did you enjoy that?" Jenny asks, but since I'm grinning like a loon, it's pretty obvious what the answer is. It's the first time I've seen a water vole, and there's something undeniably life affirming about watching a small, furry mammal .

The sighting is proof, in some small way, that environmental ills can be redressed.



Setting up a data logger

that swims like a clockwork toy. But it's more than that – the sighting is proof, in some small way, that environmental ills can be redressed.

Later, we drive up to Alston Moor to see if we can find any of that North Pennine population. Though we have no luck there, on the way back we stop in the village of Melmerby, best known for its organic bakery and café. Just down the road, there's a lovely babbling brook with verdant grass and wildflowers growing profusely on either side. It feels like a throwback to a distant era, and sure enough, as we inspect the site, two water voles – this year's youngsters, Jenny thinks – appear briefly, a sign of the future in more ways than one.

**James Fair has worked for BBC Wildlife magazine for the past nine years and has also written travel articles for the Sunday Times, Telegraph and Guardian. In a previous life, he ran a rainforest reserve in Ecuador and brought up a baby bear in Bolivia.**



## HOW TO SPOT A WATER VOLE

- First, you need to find a slow moving river or stream with lush bankside vegetation. Look for reeds, sedges, bullrushes and grasses, though water voles are catholic in their taste and are known to feed on at least 227 different plant species.
- Ideally, the bank will be quite steep, so that they can dig burrows into it, with small ledge-like mudflats at the bottom, where they can feed. But upland water voles will do well in faster-moving water courses, while lowland water voles can also live alongside canals.
- Second, look for burrows along the riverbank. There may be two or three close together (part of a network) and they will have a diameter of about 10 to 15cm. If the vegetation around the burrow has been closely cropped, you're in luck.
- The surest sign that water voles are about are their droppings, which they often leave in large piles (known as latrines) on stones and rocks in the middle of streams as territorial markers. The droppings are smooth, lozenge-shaped and greenish-brown (though the colour is quite variable). Rat droppings are larger, darker and more knobbly.
- Finally – if you are confident there are water voles about – sit and wait. They make a distinctive plop when they dive (rats don't), and despite their name, they don't swim especially well. They are about the size of a brown rat, but with a much blunter nose, smaller, more rounded ears and a shorter, furry (not scaly) tail.

## WATER VOLE FACTS

- Like rats and mice, water voles are rodents. As their name suggests, they are at home in water, and would have once inhabited slow moving rivers and streams throughout mainland Britain.
- Research carried out in the late 1980s first pointed to the water vole's dramatic decline. It showed they had disappeared from 67 per cent of their traditional habitat and estimated they would have gone from 94 per cent of their range by the end of the 20th century, with habitat loss and predation by American mink being the main factors in their plummeting numbers.
- There are two distinctive water vole races in the UK. Lowland water voles are the kind found in Lancashire and Cheshire, while upland water voles are found in the North Pennines and areas of Scotland.
- Earlier this year, Defra amended the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, extending protection to include water voles themselves – prior to this only the water vole's habitat was protected, despite the huge population loss in the past two decades. They are now a Biodiversity Action Plan species, and the aim is to restore them to their former widespread distribution by 2010.
- On average, a water vole will only live for five months, with an estimated 70 to 80 per cent mortality over the winter. But a female water vole can have several litters a year with up to five kits in a litter, and those born early in the year may even be breeding towards the end of the season.



## She Bikes MCR

Source talks to Nes Brierley of I Bike MCR, a grassroots group of Manchester cyclists who stage an annual bike festival. Nes is a cycling advocate, instructor and enthusiast, as well as being Bike It officer for Sustrans.

### Q So, how much of your life is lived in the saddle?

I'm a volunteer for *I Bike MCR*, organising the annual festival, an independent event that aims to strengthen the cycling community in the city as well as raising the issues that concern Manchester's cyclists. We work towards a car and capitalist-free city.

On top of that, I regularly organise free bike maintenance classes, cycle skills lessons and bike-building workshops, as well as other activities promoting cycling.

But it doesn't stop there. For light relief I founded the Manchester Dropouts bike polo team, which I still play for. I also initiated The Spokes – the UK's only bicycle dance troupe. We're a group of women who are passionate about encouraging cycling, especially amongst women and girls.

### Q How did you first get involved in sustainable transport?

I've always been passionate about it, but particularly since I first went cycle touring. Using my bike to travel around Ireland – over the mountains and through beautiful valleys – gave me a chance to experience how special riding a bike can be. A bike gives you a connection with your surroundings, letting you feel the wind in your face, and smell the new-mown grass or the salty sea air. It encourages you to socialise with strangers, and to go places that a car just can't take you. It's really a reflection of how I want to live my life – to the full, experiencing and truly living every moment rather than letting it all go by in a blur.

Q How easy is it to bike Manchester? Is it really accessible to everyone? It's very easy really. It's flat, and there are lots of other bike riders around, so you

don't tend to feel alienated. Events like the *I Bike MCR* festival, bike polo matches and the monthly Critical Mass rides (which depart from the Central Library at 6pm on the last Friday of each month) mean that it's easy to get involved and feel supported.

I think society sometimes makes us feel that we've got to rush around and get everywhere quickly, but if you count the cost, it really isn't worth it.

Q What about younger cyclists? Well, that's my day job. I work as the Bike It Officer for Rochdale and Stockport. Research has shown that 90 per cent of kids own a bike, and 30 per cent WANT to cycle to school, but only one per cent actually do it. I work with children and teachers in twelve schools to help identify what's stopping the other 29 per cent, and encourage them to overcome those barriers.

Q Why is sustainable transport so important? That's a huge question! I guess because we all need to take responsibility for our own actions. We need to start taking sustainability seriously, and stop looking for someone else to clean up our mess.

The average Briton travelled 5,354 miles per year by car between 1999 and 2001 – and a quarter of those trips were under two miles, an easy walk or bike ride. Traffic is increasing all the time, and the government's response is to build more roads. But the simplest way to reduce both traffic and road use is for

each of us to cut down on our car journeys – and instead to walk, cycle or take the train.

It can be a really empowering thing to take action like this, especially for children, in a world where it's easy to feel as though there's too much to do for one person to make a difference.

Q So, it's time to be honest, how many bikes have you actually got? Around twelve. But they're all really necessary! I've got one for bike polo, one for cycle touring, a racing bike, a mountain bike, a lovely little shopper, a social bike (also known as a pub bike...), a road bike and an old Pashley post bike. There are a few more, and then I've got at least twelve kids' bikes for The Spokes bicycle dance troupe.

Q Before you cycle off into the sunset, what's your vision for the future? I hope to create a stronger, supportive bicycle community in Manchester – one that demands some respect from other road users, which I don't think we get now. I dream of a less car-dominated city, with more people biking Manchester.

Steve Connor examines the phenomenon of greenwash, the emergence of eco-brands and the status of the sustainable corporation.

# BRAND EARTH

Steve Connor is CEO of Creative Concern, Manchester's leading issues-based communications consultancy, working with clients in the private, public and voluntary sectors.



In 1970 the arch monetarist Milton Friedman delivered a hefty thwack around the head to the burgeoning social responsibility movement. His now famous essay, required reading for rapacious business students worldwide, appeared in the *New York Times*. Milton stated: "there is one and only one social responsibility of business, to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game."

Ethical Corporation magazine – a good read – spoke on his death in 2006 of the service Friedman had done for the world of corporate social responsibility (CSR). He made progressives in business sharpen up their act and add some rigour to their thinking, said the magazine.

They're probably right and in some ways I may even be with Friedman on this one (at which point my oldest friends and colleagues will no doubt faint). My only major shift would be in what defines the 'rules of the game'. Friedman's stricture was legal compliance; mine would be about the corporation's wider contract with society.

When you read the latest news report on 'green brands' or 'ethical consumers' or 'fashionistas who wear hemp' you realise that this

dialogue on corporate responsibility has been ongoing since King Magnus IV of Sweden created the oldest limited company – Stora Kopparberg mining corp – in 1347.

We live in a dissonant fug for too much of the time and yet still reserve the right to judge corporations.

There is nothing new in corporations seeking profit but that pursuit has, from day one, been set against a context of wider social good. As a society we continue to fasten a judgemental eye on corporations. A poll by GdK NOP in May revealed that consumers rank the Northwest's very own Co-operative Group as

We are powerful, but we have to exert that power.

the most ethical corporation, retaining the top spot that it held in 2007. Next up come the Body Shop and M&S, with Innocent Drinks and Divine entering the top ten for the first time.

Importantly though, the survey reveals some skepticism in the marketplace: just 18 per cent of the 3,000 consumers interviewed, compared to 21 per cent in 2007, believed that business ethics have improved in Britain.

Those two new entries into the top ten,

Innocent and Divine, are telling. They are brands – and products – that are constructed from the ground up as 'eco-brands'. They tap into a market appetite for sustainable products that has clearly entered the mainstream.

So can all of this be labelled 'greenwash'? From the corporation that uses the gobbledygook of CSR 'benchmarking' or 'continued improvement matrices' to the conspicuous consumption that makes us feel better about using more of the Earth's resources, is this another inflection of the free market capitalism which Friedman so adored but which a massive 82 per cent of us still view with suspicion?

Perhaps. If you want to take a more empowered look at what is or isn't greenwash, then I'd urge you to download the greenwash guide recently published by our good friends at Futerra. As ever it's a pleasing combination of intelligent analysis with a tip-strip you can bluetack to your computer screen. My closing comment would be this, however.

It's not just corporations that have a contract with society: we have one too. People drive cars, eat meat,

buy cheap clothes and do too little to reflect their own values in their daily lives. We live in a dissonant fug for too much of the time and yet still reserve the right to judge corporations. If we shift our behaviour then the marketplace changes too. The brightest and the best in the business world know this.

We are powerful, but we have to exert that power. We are complicit, and that should be in our frame of reference too. It's a hippy mantra but Ghandi was right: you must be the change you wish to see in the world.

# Liverpool – the perfect host for WaterfrontExpo 2008

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The famous Liverpool waterfront is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Liverpool is the European Capital of Culture 2008, and the Port of Liverpool is the UK's largest Freeport Zone, handling in excess of 34 million tonnes annually.

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WaterfrontExpo is the only platform for professionals involved in waterfront design, regeneration, development, construction and management to meet, analyse and share current thinking and best practice on the wide range of issues confronting this specialised area.

This year's conference will cover topics including leisure, tourism, retail, residential and commercial property, infrastructure, transport and communications.

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