

source^{NW}

WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY

TURNING UP THE AMP

Who's repairing the environment, and who's footing the bill?

WATER FEATURES

Great public art is all about location, location, location.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Saving the planet never felt so good.

GERMAN FOR INSPIRATION

The rush for regional parks in the Northwest.

PLUS news, reviews,
interviews and comment



As well as providing your water services, we also help keep the seas in the North West clean.

 **United Utilities**
Supplying life's essentials
Water Power Telecoms Home Services

At United Utilities we don't just provide clean water to your taps. We also take away your wastewater, clean it and return it safely to the environment. The region's coastal water is cleaner now than at any time since the industrial revolution. So much so that 36 out of 37 bathing areas now meet strict European Union standards, compared with just six in 1988.



Moving home is apparently one of the top five most stressful things you can do, even though it's worth

the hassle to move somewhere better. That might explain the furrowed brows around the Mersey Basin Campaign's offices earlier this year. The Campaign has left its home of 20 years atop City Tower in Manchester and moved across Piccadilly to new offices in a converted red brick warehouse, Fourways House. The move puts us close to the Rochdale Canal, which seems appropriate for an organisation that's all about water quality and waterside regeneration.

It's also the first step in creating a new community of organisations focused on regeneration, the environment and sustainability. Fourways House will soon host a gathering of nine such organisations, including Sustainability Northwest, Groundwork Northwest, Enworks, Renewables Northwest and the Healthy Waterways Trust. Sharing our knowledge and experience should help us to work together more closely and more effectively, making an identifiable home for regeneration and environmental expertise in the region.

We'll miss the best views in Manchester – on a clear day from the top of City Tower you can see the Pennines on one side and the Cheshire plain stretching off on the other – but we think it's worth it.

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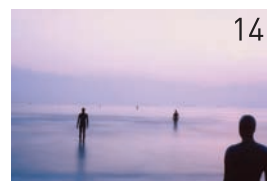
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Full sail ahead

An ambitious new home for Liverpool Sailing Club reveals a city learning to love its river again.

Against all odds Liverpool Sailing Club looks set to rise from the ashes of its demolished clubhouse, based on the Mersey Estuary near Speke Hall, having secured a grant of almost £500,000 from Sport England.

The money all but guarantees the completion of a landmark new clubhouse well before Liverpool's Capital of Culture year in 2008. It is the final piece in a complex funding package that also includes cash from the Northwest Regional Development Agency and almost £500,000 from the EU.

Tom Workman, a member of Liverpool Sailing Club since 1966 and now its joint president, said: "Now that the cash is in place, exciting times are ahead. When our base is rebuilt it will be the fulfilment of all our dreams."

Liverpool based architects Cass Associates have designed a landmark building that the sailing club says will be the antithesis of the traditional, snooty clubhouse, with a family friendly atmosphere and high performance training facilities.

Formed in 1958, Liverpool Sailing Club faced a troubled period after the relocation of Liverpool Airport in 1986 left the clubhouse isolated and exposed. Suffering from years of vandalism, fly tipping and numerous arson attacks the original clubhouse was eventually demolished last year.

"The old base was completely destroyed," explains Tom. "Vandals caused over £300,000 worth of damage. We were completely self sufficient but we went from having everything

to nothing." In its heyday of the 1960s and 70s, Liverpool Sailing Club boasted hundreds of members, but the destruction of the clubhouse and the ensuing years of inactivity saw membership trickle away, reaching an eventual low of just 80.

Despite such adversity the club has weathered the storm. Tom Workman and fellow members have worked tirelessly with the Mersey Basin Campaign, landowners Peel Holdings and the Northwest Development Agency to resurrect the club. A sustained programme of school visits and the use of blokarts, which are similar to land yachts, has simultaneously introduced many youngsters to the joys of sailing and injected new blood into the club's membership, which now stands at 200 and is still growing.

Situated in an area of high social deprivation, this sense of inclusion is key to the club's future, explains Tom.

"We want the club to be rebuilt not only for our members but also as part of a thriving community where anyone who wants to can come and learn about sailing."

Support for the club's redevelopment also comes from an EU funded regeneration project called Artery, which aims to revitalise post-industrial waterside land in Germany, Holland and the UK.

The Mersey Basin Campaign's Sarah Wallbank, UK co-ordinator for the Artery project, said: "The new clubhouse will be resurrected on its original location, but 6.5 hectares of land all around it on the Mersey Estuary will be transformed into a new coastal reserve."

With Liverpool gearing up for the Capital of Culture celebrations in 2008, it's a fortuitous coincidence that the same year also marks the sailing club's fiftieth anniversary. As Tom says: "We want to fill the river with people and boats, the like of which hasn't been seen since the days of the liners."

ILLUSTRATION

LIVERPOOL SAILING CLUB'S WATERSIDE ELEVATION

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SOUND BITES

S Development of a new **Regional Economic Strategy (RES)** is underway by the Northwest Development Agency. As the document that guides the distribution of the agency's three year £1.5 billion budget, the RES is a weighty tome. A consultation process runs from July until September, and the final draft will be presented to the government in December before its launch in January 2006. [More information: www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)

S Beaches in the Northwest are amongst the most litter strewn in the country, according to a report from the **Marine Conservation Society**. The annual Beachwatch survey, carried out by over 3,000 volunteers, revealed that only the heavily toured beaches of the Southwest have more litter than our own. Despite years of improvement in water quality, cleanliness and facilities, almost 3,000 items of litter per kilometre were found on the region's beaches. Of particular concern is a doubling since 1994 in the amount of plastic litter, which persists for years in the environment and can break down into microscopic pieces that are eaten by marine animals. Over a third of all litter came from tourists. [More information: www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)

S The first phase of a new scheme to revamp all 65 km of towpath along the historic **Bridgewater Canal** in Cheshire and Manchester has been launched, sponsored by the Mersey Basin Campaign. The scheme aims to attract over 600,000 visitors and bring as much as £6 million into the local economy by the end of its seven year construction period. The redevelopment of the neglected route will boast improved access and lighting, as well as providing education and visitor information, with heritage and arts programmes aimed at engaging the community. [More information: Iain Taylor 0161 242 8209](http://www.merseybasin.org.uk)

S Northwest based household goods giant **Unilever**, producer of everything from Pot Noodle to Lynx deodorant, has been named the UK's most admired company for its social and environmental responsibility. Unilever topped a survey of the country's 220 biggest publicly quoted companies for Management Today magazine. It shouldn't be a surprise – founded in 1874 by William Hesketh Lever to make soap, the company has a tradition of social responsibility that lives on today. Over a hundred years ago Lord Hesketh built Port Sunlight, a village on the Wirral that provided better living standards for his staff, while last year Unilever invested over £9 million worth of cash, goods and staff time in community projects. [More information: www.unilever.com](http://www.unilever.com)

S The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has published a free brochure and CD ROM of almost 15 years of government-funded research on the marine environment. The publication makes available research conducted before the launch of the Defra website. Hundreds of copies of **Delivering the Evidence for Marine Policy: innovative research in the marine environment 1989-2004**, have been distributed in order to broadcast the research to marine specialists. [More information: www.cefas.co.uk/publications/marine1989-2004/default.htm](http://www.cefas.co.uk/publications/marine1989-2004/default.htm)

Climate of extremes

New reports fuel concerns over climate change in the Northwest and nationally.

Two new reports launched within weeks of each other paint a dramatic picture of the changing climate both in the UK and the Northwest and forecast more extreme weather for the coming century.

The studies draw together strong evidence for climate change over the last 50 years and support earlier research indicating that the Northwest faces higher temperatures, regular droughts, more flooding and increasingly unpredictable weather.

Recent evidence is easy to find. The summer heat wave and drought of 2003 brought the highest UK temperature ever of 38.5° C, while that autumn the long-submerged village of Mardale reappeared from the depths of Haweswater reservoir in Cumbria as water levels dipped to almost 50 per cent below average.

"We've already seen average temperatures at Manchester airport rise by almost half a degree in less than a decade," said Steven Glynn of Sustainability Northwest, whose report, *Climate Change in the Northwest and its Impacts*, was produced for the Northwest Climate Group.

The last ten years include six of the ten hottest on record, as well as one of the wettest.

"Figures also show a 20 per cent decrease in summer rainfall over the last century, more periods of heavy rainfall, a rise in the sea level at Liverpool of 6cm in the last fifty years and more flooding. These are all trends that are likely to continue and get worse."

A new report from the Environment Agency, *The Climate is Changing: Time to Get Ready*, portrays similar changes.

It points out that a ten year old child has already

witnessed some of the most extreme weather ever seen in the UK. It will have lived through six of the ten hottest years on record, as well as one of the wettest, the year 2000. And one week into 2005, storm force gales wrought havoc across the North of England and Scotland, bringing the most serious flooding in nearly 200 years to Carlisle.

Meanwhile, by drawing together evidence from 30 recent studies on climate change, Glynn's work provides a compelling summary of the likely changes ahead in the Northwest.

"In the worst case scenario, by the end of the century we could be experiencing 60 per cent less rainfall in summer but 30 per cent more in winter, making both droughts and floods more likely at different times of the year."

By the 2080s, the kind of flooding that today only occurs once a century could be an almost annual event in the Northwest.

"There is a choice," said the Environment Agency's chief executive, Barbara Young. "The severity of the situation today's ten year olds will face in their 40s and 50s and

beyond depends on us making radical changes in effort now. Delay now would mean our current generation of children facing dangerously damaging climate change that may well prove impossible, or simply too costly, to reverse."

S One of the world's leading experts on wetlands, whose previous experience has taken him to the Falklands, Iraq and Vietnam, where he showed that the restoration of the Mekong Delta wetlands could help alleviate poverty, is to lead a new initiative to protect rivers, estuaries and the marine environment at the University of Liverpool. Professor Edward Maltby will head the **Institute for Sustainable Water, Integrated Management and Ecosystem Research (SWIMMER)**. "SWIMMER will provide a focus for the considerable scientific and technical expertise, which exists throughout the university," said Professor Maltby.

S A controversial 10mph speed limit imposed on England's largest lake, Windermere, was broken within minutes of being introduced. Protesters from the **Windermere Action Force** made a dash down the full length of the lake at speeds of up to 36 mph. The Lake District National Park Authority, which imposed the speed limit, said it would help return the lake to tranquillity. The protesters, meanwhile, condemned it as unjust and claimed it would damage the local economy by deterring water sports enthusiasts. They say a full programme of protests is scheduled for the rest of the year.

S The government is to create a new agency responsible for conserving and enhancing the English landscape and wildlife. Called **Natural England** and operating under the strap line *For People, Places and Nature*, the new agency will bring together English Nature, parts of the Countryside Agency and most of the Rural Development Service. Margaret Beckett, secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, said: "Natural England will play a key role in fulfilling the government's commitment to a better quality of life for everyone in both rural and urban areas." Subject to parliamentary agreement it will be formally established by January 2007.

S A quiet revolution is sweeping across the city of Manchester. A plan to become **'Britain's Greenest City'** has been passed by the city council, with bold measures proposed to reduce Manchester's impact on the environment; there are a series of robust targets – ten in total – covering greenhouse gas emissions, contaminated land, recycling, car use and a continued commitment to being a Fairtrade city. Under the auspices of the Manchester: Knowledge Capital initiative, plans are afoot for a "green energy revolution", with Manchester transforming the way a modern city region uses, and generates, its power.

MORE INFORMATION:

Climate Change in the Northwest and its Impacts can be downloaded from www.snw.org.uk

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Tyndall Centre North
0161 306 3700

Centre for Urban Regional Ecology
0161 275 6938



Peddy Herbert is Manchester's undisputed carnival king. Dozens of costumes for this year's East Feast parade are being made in the living room of his Ancoats home. It's a massive undertaking even for this 68-year old veteran of carnival culture, whose story is told in the new East magazine. Capturing the stories uncovered by East Manchester's rapid transformation before they disappear, East revels in its large format and gorgeous photography. No surprise, then, that it's the brainchild of Len Grant, the king chronicler of Manchester's regeneration over the past decade, whose photographs regularly turn up in exhibitions and books about the city.

MORE INFORMATION:

East magazine 0161 223 1155



Resources:

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

Here you will find the new UK Sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future*, which was launched by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Margaret Beckett, on March 7th. At the launch, Tony Blair said: "By joining up thinking and action across all levels of government and by setting long term objectives the government is dedicated to securing the future for all. I want to use this new strategy as a catalyst for action – to secure the future for all of us."

The government's previous sustainable development strategy, launched in 1999, was full of good intentions. Six years later, however, it remains largely unimplemented. Encouragingly, the new strategy represents a real step forward in delivering the changes that need to be made if sustainable development is to become more reality than mythology.

To its credit, the strategy is focused. The government has identified priorities – sustainable consumption and production; climate change and energy; natural resources

and enhancing the environment; creating sustainable communities and a fairer world. Targets have been set and commitments made.

One clear benefit to the strategy is that it provides a touchstone that will help guide the longer term priorities of those of us in the environmental and regeneration business. It also comes at a timely moment for the Northwest region. Work has begun on developing the new regional economic strategy and it goes without saying that sustainable development must be at the heart of this, with specific commitments and the emphasis on delivery.

Commentary on the strategy – and identification of its 250 commitments – can be found on the website of the government's advisory body on issues of sustainability, the Sustainable Development Commission, at www.sd-commission.org.uk.



Walter Menzies is a member of the UK Sustainable Development Commission

International planning network to push water issues

A project designed to help local authority planners across Europe understand the impact of the EU's sweeping new Water Framework Directive has been launched at an international conference in Hanover.

The European Network of Municipalities and Rivers (ENMaR) is funded by INTERREG IIIC, an EU mechanism to encourage interregional cooperation, and is aimed at integrating land management and water management under the new Directive.

Delegates from the UK, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Latvia spent three days together planning for the next three years through a series of workshops on the project's key issues, including spatial planning and water services. The Mersey Basin Campaign, responsible for setting up the ENMaR network in the UK, led the spatial planning workshop with University of Manchester lecturers Dr Joe Howe and Dr Jeremy Carter.

The Water Framework Directive is one of the most far reaching pieces of environmental legislation to ever come out of the EU and its impact on local authorities is likely to be considerable. Even so, most remain in the dark about its implications.

Caroline Riley of the Mersey Basin Campaign, said: "We saw that there was a problem that needed addressing. The Latvian and German partners had found the same thing independently, so we decided to set up a project to help make the Directive work."

The project's solution is to establish networks in five EU regions to form an overall European network of over 100 local authorities. It will hold regional workshops in the UK and Europe to discuss the impact of the new EU water policy on

local authorities and how they should react. It will then publish a guide based on the project's results and findings, which will be available to all interested local authorities and stakeholders.

At the European level, the impact of ENMaR will be a contribution to improved interregional working and better understanding of the various issues facing different regions throughout the EU. At the local level, it will bring together the key parties needed to integrate land management and the holistic management of a river basin.

MORE INFORMATION:

Caroline Riley 0161 242 8206

Northwest projects win national regeneration awards

Three regeneration projects based in the Northwest have been commended at the prestigious Waterways Renaissance Awards 2005, at Madame Tussauds in London.

Canals Then and Now, a project based in Ashton-Under-Lyne, won the award for education and learning. The project teaches primary school pupils about local canals and their history. They learn about waterside safety and can go on boat trips, waterside walks and visits to the Portland Basin Museum, all free of charge.

Manchester City Council's Manchester Waterways Strategy and the refurbishment of Hayhurst Swing Bridge in Northwich, Cheshire, both received commendations.

The Manchester Waterways Strategy, launched in March 2004, aims to transform the city's rivers and canals and fully integrate them into every walk of life in the city. Hayhurst Swing Bridge was built in 1898 and received a £3.5 million refurbishment and repair.

The awards are organised annually by The Waterways Trust and the British Urban Regeneration Association.

MORE INFORMATION: www.bura.org.uk

Big Chip

The sister website to this publication – www.merseybasin.org.uk – ranks amongst the best in the Northwest, according to the Big Chip Awards. With over 20 separate categories, the Big Chip awards are the Oscars of the region's digital media, even though still only in their seventh year – a reminder of the phenomenal growth of the digital industry. Organised by Manchester Digital and hosted by Mr Manchester himself, Anthony H Wilson, in the retro splendour of New Century Hall, the awards attracted a boisterous crowd. The category for best not-for-profit website was won by Refuge, the national charity that supports women and children against domestic violence, with the Campaign's website – sponsored by Shell UK – coming in as runner up. "There's no shame in coming second to Refuge's superb website," said the Campaign's Iain Taylor. "To be considered alongside the region's best is a great achievement."



Sea Liverpool

On October 20th, 1805 the Royal Navy, under Admiral Nelson, defeated Napoleon's combined French and Spanish armada, thus saving Britain from the threat of invasion in the legendary Battle of Trafalgar.

In tribute to the two hundredth anniversary of the famous victory, and to celebrate the bond with the sea that has shaped the history and culture of our island nation for thousands of years, 2005 is the year of Sea Britain.

To commemorate its maritime history Liverpool is hosting a string of events throughout the year as part of Sea Britain.

The Mersey River Festival, now in its twenty-fifth year, is one of Europe's premier maritime celebrations and this year it will add to its busy schedule with events co-ordinated as part of Sea Britain. Taking place from June 10th-13th, the festival features military displays by the Royal Marine Commandos, the distinctive tall ships, racing yachts, street theatre and the international shanty festival.

Other events taking place as part of Sea Liverpool include a special sixtieth anniversary celebration of the Allies' victory in Europe during the Second World War, Slavery Remembrance Day, the start of the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race and a visit from replica eighteenth century Man-O-War, The Grand Turk.

Led by the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, Sea Britain aims to raise awareness of Britain's maritime heritage and persuade people to have a go at water sports and leisure activities. It will promote involvement in the marine environment and marine conservation, as well as publicising Britain's coasts and islands as tourist locations.

MORE INFORMATION: www.merseyriverfestival.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPH THE GRAND TURK

June 3

Northwest Business Environment Awards 2005

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

Venue: Old Trafford Football Stadium, Manchester

More information: Matthew Sutcliffe 0161 242 8208 m.sutcliffe@merseybasin.org.uk

June 4-5

World Environment Day Northwest open days

Almost 30 sites of environmental interest will be open around the region to celebrate World Environment Day 2005, giving the public unprecedented access to locations that are normally restricted or out of bounds. See also our story on page 20.

Venue: various

More information: Denise Patfield 0161 242 8200

June 5-11

Environment Week at Liverpool Cathedral

Liverpool Cathedral and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), will be hosting a full programme of events from June 5th to mark World Environment Day. Highlights will include a major environmental exhibition with the theme Everything we do affects our world, as well as Operation Eden Day, a celebration of faith-based approaches to sustainable communities.

Venue: Liverpool Anglican Cathedral

More information: Mrs Sam Dawson 0151 702 7255

June 10

Mersey Estuary Forum

Partners from the private, public and voluntary sectors will be brought together to listen to a range of presentations and raise issues of their own on current topics relating to the Mersey Estuary and associated watercourses. Will include an opportunity to visit locations within the estuary that are being developed as part of Mersey Waterfront.

Venue: Maritime Museum, Albert Dock, Liverpool

More information: Bev Mitchell 0161 242 8212 b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

June 15

Cheshire Water Forum

Speakers from organisations including the Environment Agency, British Waterways and United Utilities will discuss the topics of recreation and tourism, water quality, waterside regeneration and biodiversity in Cheshire.

Venue: Crewe Alexandra football ground

More information: Bev Mitchell 0161 242 8212 b.mitchell@merseybasin.org.uk

June 18-21

Mersey River Festival/Sea Britain

The largest free maritime festival of its kind in Europe, featuring the usual mix of tall ships, racing yachts, the international shanty festival, military displays, street theatre and more.

Venue: Liverpool docklands and waterfront

More information: www.merseyriverfestival.co.uk

June 21

3rd CIWEM Water Framework Directive Conference

The Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management's third conference consists of six events, including discussions on climate change and a look at approaches to flood risk in our region.

Venue: Peter Jost Enterprise Centre,

Liverpool John Moores University

More information: Dr. Rafid Alkhaddar 0151 231 3627 r.m.alkhaddar@livjm.ac.uk www.ciwem.com

July 31

Salford Triathlon ITU World Cup

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

Venue: Salford Quays, Greater Manchester

More information: www.trisalford.info

Hard times ahead for Britain's rarest waterside tree

Since the summer of 2000 a virulent disease has been infecting the Manchester Poplar, killing most within three years.



Only five years ago the Black Poplar was thought to be one of the country's rarest native trees. Dedicated individuals and organisations throughout the UK were busy taking cuttings and replanting new trees to maintain the population. Then a major genetic study of the related Manchester Poplar turned up some startling new evidence – the Manchester Poplar was actually a male cutting of a native Black Poplar and therefore directly linked to it.

But the rapid spread of a deadly fungal infection now threatens to decimate both populations in a way not seen since the rampages of Dutch elm disease.

The confusion dates back to the Victorians and the search for a tree that could withstand Manchester's smoggy industrial air, for use in the city's new parks and cemeteries. A tree that became known as the Manchester Poplar was one of the few capable of surviving the conditions and it quickly became the tree of choice for Manchester and its surrounding industrial areas.

"We think there are about 7,000 Black Poplars in the UK outside Scotland, but with the discovery of the Manchester Poplar the number virtually doubled overnight," said Jon

Steele, assistant woodland officer at Red Rose Forest, who is leading on the issue.

The wild Black Poplar often grows on watersides and until the study it was thought that it was most likely to be found in isolation. It was known that the Manchester Poplar was closely planted in large numbers in many places, so it was assumed the two species were only distantly related. The study by Dr Fiona Cooper debunked both myths.

But herein lies the problem. Although there are large numbers of the Manchester Poplar,

genetically they are almost identical.

"All the subsequent Manchester Poplars go back to the single original cutting, meaning they are all clones of it," said Jon. "We'd long been aware that a disease which killed one tree would probably kill the whole lot." And unfortunately, since the summer of 2000, this fear has been realized, with a virulent disease infecting the trees that in most cases kills them in less than three years.

The disease has been diagnosed as a fungus, poplar scab. Although it is thought that a few trees may survive, the majority of Greater Manchester's Black Poplars are expected to succumb – some 1,500 have already been felled – and there are fears for the wild UK population.

Local authorities and others who have Manchester Poplars on their land are assessing the health of their trees and watching for the brown leaves and early defoliation that are the disease's first symptoms. Unfortunately, felling diseased trees is the only course of action.

Where the loss has been particularly severe the trees are likely to be replaced. New native Black Poplars of different genetic origin are also being planted to see if they are any more resistant to the disease than the Manchester Poplar clone.

Thankfully tree cover in Greater Manchester is increasing. It has doubled since 1980 and over two million trees have been planted in Red Rose Forest since the early 1990s.

MORE INFORMATION: Jon Steele 0161 872 1660

Tougher protection for water voles

Moves to strengthen the legal protection given to the UK's declining water vole population have the backing of staff at the Dibbinsdale Nature Reserve on the Wirral, home to a small colony of the threatened mammals.

Water voles are one of 11 species that the government's natural science adviser, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, says should now be protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act.

"The water vole population has collapsed by around 90% across the country during the past ten years," said Paul Corner, Action Wirral Rivers co-ordinator, who works with local rangers at the nature reserve. "So by giving the animals themselves protection, not just the places they live, as is the case now, the new proposals are obviously a step in the right direction."

A major implication of the revised law would be greater protection from land developers. The option to move the animals to new areas, which it is claimed often fails, would probably no longer be available.

"The water voles at Dibbinsdale already have a very high level of legal protection because it's a Site of Special Scientific Interest," commented Paul. "What we'd like to see is the population in other areas getting similar protection."

Evidence of a small colony of water voles was discovered at Dibbinsdale two years ago and it has been carefully monitored ever since.

"We will be surveying the water voles early this summer to see if the population is active during the breeding season," said Paul. "Initial searches have uncovered some encouraging signs, so it is hopeful that we have a successful breeding population."

MORE INFORMATION: Paul Corner 0151 343 9869



Mersey Basin Campaign corporate sponsors include



Back in business

Restored historic canal basin rejoins booming canal network.

Two centuries ago Bugsworth Basin in Derbyshire was the largest and busiest inland port on Britain's narrow-canal system. Built by renowned canal and tramway engineer Benjamin Outram, the 14 mile Peak Forest Canal opened in 1799 and Bugsworth Basin, its head of navigation, became a thriving transshipment point for the limestone and gritstone cut from Derbyshire's quarries.

So when on Easter Saturday this year the 150 year old narrowboat Maria returned to her Bugsworth home to be loaded with 16 tonnes of limestone for work on the Ashton Canal, it was something of a return to former glory. Altogether a hundred and one narrowboats made the pilgrimage to the re-opening of the historic site, just outside the Peak District town of Whaley Bridge.

Volunteers from the Inland Waterways Protection Society (IWPS) have helped restore the basin over the past three decades, patiently and determinedly clearing the channel, repairing towpaths, building a new facilities block and overseeing the reconstruction of three bridges to the original 1830s designs.

Today Bugsworth Basin is recognised as a world class site of industrial archaeology and is a Scheduled Listed Monument. But, in a pattern repeated across the country, the inexorable growth of the railways during the nineteenth century saw the gradual decline and eventual abandonment of the site in 1927. It wasn't until the stirrings of volunteer efforts began in earnest in the 1970s that the disappearance of the country's canals became less inevitable.

Today, canals in Britain are reopening faster than they were being completed during the canal building boom itself.

Don Baines began helping with the work in 1979. "In those days we were scratching a living in terms of funding. Back in the 80s you could get money to fill in a canal, but not

to dig one out again. That didn't happen 'til the early 90s," said Don.

When the restoration started in the late 1960s the canal was completely silted and overgrown, and ironically one of the biggest challenges has been to make it watertight again. "We worked for a long time on a stretch of the canal called Teapot Row," explains Don. "We'd let the water in, then go over to the cottages next to it and wait to see whose cellar filled up with water."

But as Ian Edgar, chair of the IWPS, admits: "There came a point where the magnitude of the task came outside the scope of our volunteers' experience. Large sums of money had to be raised and the professionals had to take over. The society is very grateful to British Waterways and its commitment to the restoration of Bugsworth Basin."

It was British Waterways that managed the two year engineering programme that finally completed the restoration work. Funding for the £1.2 million scheme came through English Heritage, The Countryside Agency, East Midlands Development Agency, Derbyshire County Council, European Regional Development Funding and British Waterways. Together British Waterways and the IWPS are planning further improvements at Bugsworth, including the restoration of the upper basin, links to the Peak Forest Tramway project and the construction of replica working buildings to create a living museum.



SOME OF THE 101 NARROWBOATS AT THE REOPENING OF BUGSWORTH BASIN.

MORE INFORMATION:

Ian Edgar 01663 732493
www.waterscape.com

S February's **Wigan Tree Week** received some high profile endorsements as 11 trees were planted along Stadium Way next to the River Douglas. Wigan Athletic's Per Frandsen and mayor John Hilton turned out to plant the trees, funded by the International Tree Foundation. Judith Allnutt, Action Douglas & Yarrow co-ordinator, was delighted by the press interest: "The crowning glory was the presence of a video camera recording the event for Wigan Athletic Television. So as well as appearing in the programme for the home match against Ipswich we have been seen by 16,744 fans on the big screens before the match." **More information:** Judith Allnutt 01772 877 389

S Staff from **The Up and Under Group**, who specialise in working in difficult-to-reach places, have volunteered to remove debris from a 200m long gorge on the River Darwen in Lancashire, despite having to brave sheer drops of 10m and more.

S A grant of £19,000 from the Environment Agency (EA) has given the green light to a project to protect **Eaves Brook** in Grange Park, Preston, which suffers from fly-tipping and pollution. The grant allows further improvements to the brook, which now includes the creation of meanders and re-profiling of the banks, renewing bridges, enlarging a pond and installing a dipping platform. The Lancashire Wildlife Trust has begun to draw up a management plan for Grange valley, which was designated as a local nature reserve last year. Action Ribble Estuary will work with the trust to encourage community involvement with the neglected brook. "I hope that schools and local groups can be involved as much as possible in this work," said Action Ribble Estuary co-ordinator Lesley Cryer. The project will help demonstrate ways to engage the public as part of the EA's work on the European Water Framework Directive, including the launch of a Ribble Vision booklet.

More information: Lesley Cryer 01772 877 122

S ...in March the **Wildlife Trust** led 30 volunteers in a clean up that removed the inevitable shopping trolleys, as well as a bike frame, pram, car exhaust and a full size furry bear fancy dress outfit from Eaves Brook.

LOCAL SOUND BITES

S **Sindsley Brook** in Swinton has been given a new lease of life after a major five day clean up. Contractors Atlas worked with Groundwork Manchester, Salford & Trafford to improve fencing and remove seven skips full of fly-tipped waste from the brook, which runs through Wardley Industrial Estate. Action Worsley Brooks provided £2,000 towards the work. Project co-ordinator Gemma Tomlinson said: "Combating the problem at Sindsley Brook and deterring the fly-tippers will require long term solutions, as well as clean ups to remove the rubbish in the short term. I'm glad we managed to stir up public interest in the issue." **More information:** Gemma Tomlinson 0161 242 8214

S **Challenge Manchester**, the city's massive spring cleaning project, was joined by two clean ups on the city's canals organised by Action Manchester Waterways. Volunteers from British Waterways, the council and the Mersey Basin Campaign helped to pick litter, paint railings and finish off some new lock gates. A second clean up involved volunteers from Ernst & Young cleaning up Castelfield as part of their graduate recruitment scheme.



True finance

In the 15 years to 1989 average water and sewerage bills in England and Wales rose by 2% a year in real terms; in the 15 years following privatisation in 1989 they rose by an average of 1.5% per year.

Since 1990 United Utilities has invested £7.5 billion in service and environmental improvements in the Northwest.

By March 2004, the accumulated debt of the water industry to the capital markets was £21 billion.

What we spend our money on (figs 2003-04)

Mobile phones £12 billion
Satellite TV £5.5 billion
Cosmetics £1 billion
Beer £18 billion
Mains water £3.8 billion
Sewerage £4.1 billion

Survey courtesy Water UK (sources Carphone Warehouse, TNS, Euromonitor, Ofwat, water companies)

TURNING UP THE AMP

The debating is over and five year's worth of environmental investment is on its way.

Words Louise Tickle Photographs courtesy United Utilities

When local water company United Utilities' (UU) yearly bill landed on doormats across the Northwest in April this year, customers may have noticed that the cost of water services had gone up. On the other hand, they may not have felt the pinch too keenly, because the rise is only £10 over the next 12 months, with the average bill increasing from £269 to just £279. However, by 2010 prices will have gone up almost a fifth, rising to £322.

So what are we going to get for our money?

The answer appears to be that some people will notice big improvements, while for others the changes will be less obvious. The lucky ones will find that their local beach or stream is cleaner than before and, whether they realise it or not, many people will be connected to better sewers and have cleaner drinking water (it's worth noting that Britain already has some of the safest tap water in the world).

Some people, however, remain frustrated at both the pace and scope of the improvements to the Northwest's environment. The Environment Agency (EA) in particular, which regulates river and bathing water quality, has criticised both United Utilities and the water industry regulator, Ofwat, for its refusal to back a number of projects that it says are essential if we are to meet new EU water quality requirements.

The system United Utilities inherited when the water industry was privatised in 1989 was far from ideal. At the time, the shocking amount of water leaking out from aging pipes was the headline grabbing story, especially when it exacerbated the threat of drought, but it wasn't the only problem. Much of the system was in urgent need of overhauling. United Utilities points out that since 1990 it has invested £7.5 billion in service and environmental improvements, including some £3 billion in just the last five years – that's the equivalent of £1.3 million every day since privatisation. The results have been dramatic – salmon have been spotted in the River Mersey, for example, which is cleaner than at any time since the industrial revolution.

During the latest five-year programme of works – Asset Management Plan 4, or AMP4, running from 2005-2010 – the rises in water charges approved by Ofwat will help United Utilities to fund a further £2.9 billion of investment and

maintain its huge base of assets. Complex engineering works will be undertaken in a staged programme of works, making for improvements to drinking water quality, sewer flooding, odour control and river and bathing water quality (see case studies).

Even so, thanks to its long history of industrialisation, the Northwest still has some of the most degraded aquatic environments anywhere in the country. Changing standards – and expectations – mean this is no longer acceptable. UU has been charged with investing to upgrade its wastewater works, partly to modernise some older wastewater treatment works – to tackle the issue of periodic unpleasant smells, for instance – but also so that the quality of effluent discharged into our streams, rivers and canals complies with tough new EU laws.

This is not simply a point about observing legal obligations that have been signed up to by the UK government; Walter Menzies, chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign, warns that the quality of the Northwest's environment – including its water environment – is crucial when it comes to attracting economic investment. To shake off its 'dirty old man of the North' image, success stories like that of Salford Quays will have to be replicated across the region, he says.

Whether it will be, depends on who you talk to. Exactly which improvements have been given the green light – and how much our bills will go up in order to pay for them – was the outcome of long and frequently contentious negotiations between the water companies, environmentalists, consumer groups, the Environment Agency and the water industry regulator, Ofwat, which had the task of making the final decisions.

Now, however, with the talking over and the dust settling, the priorities for investment are in place. At the same time that the new water charges came into effect in April, so too did the fourth Asset Management Plan, AMP4. Amongst other projects, work to upgrade sewers along the Rivers Irwell, Darwen and Calder and at Lake Windermere will go ahead as planned.

[continued over]

Case study 1 – AMP4 investment going ahead Coming up smelling of roses

For those residents of Stockport who have been troubled by the whiff of ammonia emanating from a local sewage works on and off for years, the new round of investment ushered in by AMP4 brings good news.

United Utilities has already carried out improvement work at the site, but the existing plant has components that date back to the 1920s. It will cost around £20 million to upgrade, with the plant's old treatment system replaced with state of the art technology. Rather than try to deal with odours once they have been generated during the treatment process, the new system will help to prevent smells being created in the first place.

Preliminary work is already underway and it is hoped that all construction will be complete by 2007.

60-second expert

April 2005 and customers in the Northwest receive water bills with an average £10 annual increase.

By 2010 the cost of the region's water will have risen by almost a fifth on 2003-04.

This price rise is to fund a £2.9 billion programme of investment and maintenance works by local water company United Utilities over the five years to 2010.

£1.54 billion will go on maintaining the water supply and sewage system, £1.19 billion on improving drinking water and waste water quality, and £0.14 billion goes on improving service performance.

A number of projects proposed by the Environment Agency for the 2005-10 pricing period have been rejected by the water regulator, Ofwat, on the basis that they cost too much compared to the benefit they would bring.

In truth though, the picture of the work that will be carried out over the next five years still exists only in broad brushstrokes. With so much money to be spent and a string of major engineering projects to be completed, the next step is applying the detailed planning.

Kevin Deegan, who is responsible for United Utilities' wastewater improvement programme, said: "When you look at the detail, we've got in the order of 2,500 major capital projects to complete between now and March 2010. This means that on average we have to start more than one project every day for the next five years – and we can't just turn up on a Monday and start digging.

"Not only have we got to meet the targets set by our regulators, we've got to meet the expectations of customers. We can't dig up whole towns in one go, we can't work around the clock in a built-up area, we need to take account of anything from a village fete to the nesting season of birds or the breeding season of fish."

Not everyone is satisfied with the new investment programme, however. The Environment Agency for one is critical of the way that Ofwat has funded AMP4. It points out that only a quarter of the money for investments will be used for environmental improvements. Sewer improvement projects in Manchester, Preston, Lancaster and Carnforth are now likely to be scrapped.

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

The lucky ones will find that their local beach or stream is cleaner than before, and many people will be connected to better sewers and have cleaner drinking water.

image, and will help to assist its future prosperity."

Part of the problem seems to be that there are two regulators involved with clashing priorities. The EA must ensure that the UK is legally compliant with EU environmental legislation, while until recently the economic regulator, Ofwat, has had no obligation to take environmental concerns into

account and has acted accordingly.

At the water industry's representative body, Water UK, economic regulation adviser Robert Weedon says that it's far from a satisfactory state of affairs, explaining somewhat ruefully that "there's always been a difficult tension between the Environment Agency and Ofwat regarding the environment programme. There's two parts to it – the parts that have to be done and the discretionary stuff. Only this second part should be subject to cost benefit considerations. But Ofwat regards the whole thing as subject to cost benefit. The water companies are caught in between the two of them. Our position is that the regulators should coordinate themselves a bit better."

Whether they do or don't, in the future, Ofwat will come under more pressure to take note of overarching EU legislation such as the Water Framework Directive, which has targets that must be achieved by 2015. Walter Menzies at the Mersey Basin Campaign points out that Ofwat has been given a formal duty to take sustainable development into consideration: "That is a good thing. It will help us to advance the arguments."

What we know for certain is that over the next five years we will be paying higher water bills, but we'll also have better services and a cleaner environment. What we won't have is a return to a perfectly pristine environment or an end to the need for more investment. That's an expectation that is certainly unrealistic. So long as the ravages

of the industrial revolution mean that the Northwest's environment still needs repairing, difficult questions like how much it will cost, who will pay for it and what the money should be spent on, will never be far away. 5

Case study 2 – AMP 3 sewage upgrade complete Small changes, big difference

Rivers in Cumbria are suddenly bursting with life as freshwater shrimps, crayfish, breeding salmon and birds at the top of the riverine food-chain flourish in the newly clean waters of the Eden Valley.

It's all the result of a £5 million scheme to replace outdated sewerage systems in seven of Cumbria's most beautiful villages, part of United Utilities' investment programme for the five year period between 2000-2005.

Old septic tanks that served Calthwaite, Edenhall, Little Salkeld, Blencarn, Sandford, Murton and Kaber used to discharge untreated sewage into nearby streams. All have been replaced by small processing plants that treat water to a high standard before the effluent is allowed to discharge into the local water environment.

At Edenhall, where pollution was most serious, a reed bed filtration system has also been created to clean storm water discharges that pass through the plant.

Most of the new treatment works have been built below ground. Only the control buildings are visible, and these have been faced with stone to lessen their visual impact. Martin Hutchinson, chairman of Kaber parish council says that local people are pleased. "We are a very traditional village and would not have liked anything intrusive. But it has been discreetly sited, in the best place it could be, and will soon have blended in."

Case study 3 – AMP4 investigation before funding is agreed Clean-up of Ship Canal hangs in the balance

The most contentious of all the environmental proposals not to be approved by Ofwat as part of United Utilities' 2004-2005 Asset Management Plan is the storm sewage overflow at Davyhulme in Greater Manchester.

With heavy rain causing sewers to flood and enormous volumes of contaminated water to be discharged directly into the Manchester Ship Canal, the Environment Agency says that the Northwest – and thus the UK – will fail to meet its legal obligations under the EU's Freshwater Fish Directive and

the Urban Wastewater Directive.

The solution proposed by the EA was to build an enormous holding tank to contain storm overflows until the local sewage works could treat them for safe discharge. But the tank would have to measure a vast 58m x 58m x 58 metres, and the estimated cost of construction was £100 million.

Ofwat balked at allowing this in UU's capital investment programme – to pay for it, water charges would have had to increase further. The decision not to fund the works has been fiercely contested by the EA, and the Davyhulme

project is now the subject of an investigation into whether a lower-cost solution can be found – and which can offer equal environmental benefits to the canal's water quality and the aquatic life that depends on it.

Ofwat therefore refused to fund investment in these works through price increases to customers, and United Utilities will not be able to carry them out.

The EA says this means the Northwest will not comply with a number of EU directives on water quality and will thus be in breach of its legal obligations.

Because of this, the EA has just begun to use its powers to reissue discharge consents for a number of sites with water quality requirements that United Utilities cannot comply with.

These licenses are being appealed, and once the result of the appeals are published – which may take several years – Ofwat may have to reconsider funding particular projects.

MORE INFORMATION:

www.unitedutilites.com
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
www.ofwat.gov.uk

Louise Tickle is a Cheshire based freelance journalist who writes for the Guardian and the Times, amongst others.



You can see it from the sky – according to a visiting Belgian journalist. Whilst viewing a neon-lit beast during Manchester’s Cowparade in 2004, the gentleman swore that he had seen artist Michael Trainor’s much larger and slowly revolving mirrorball from a plane passing over Blackpool prom. Let’s give him the benefit of the doubt, at 6m in diameter and covered in 47,000 tiny mirrors this disco-ball on steroids is hardly shy about itself. Perfect for an artwork making obvious reference to the glitzy music hall traditions of this old tart of British seaside towns.

But that’s only part of it. Stand beach side and all those mirrors as they spin catch the real, organic Blackpool illuminations, the interplay of light from sea and sky. In other words the position of the mirrorball is vital to its success.

Stuck on a high street in say, St Helens, it would be impressive because of its scale but it wouldn’t work well in terms of pure and startling glitter.

So does a waterside location matter to an artwork?

Trainor, who is currently an expert commentator on Twentieth Century Roadshow on BBC One, believes that it might help. “There is an elemental charm to being near water. Water has incredible, light reflective qualities, it has movement, if you get the mood right water might enhance an artwork and an artwork might enhance its waterside location.”

Fellow artist from Manchester’s Art

WATER

Do the Northwest’s coasts, rivers and canals provide the great locations that great public art needs?

Words Jonathan Schofield

Photographs Nic Gaunt, Joel Chester Fildes

LEFT TO RIGHT

THE SOUND OF THE WIND LOOKS LIKE THIS BY STEPHEN HURREL

THEY SHOOT HORSES DON’T THEY BY MICHAEL TRAINOR



Department, Liam Curtin, who together with John Gooding has provided High Water Organ not far from the mirrorball in Blackpool, agrees. “We like to be by water, we probably came from it after all. Humans appreciate the undulating theme, the motion, the play of light on water.”

Amongst the many (hundreds probably) of recent artworks placed by the waterside *They Shoot Horses Don't They* (the curious name for the mirrorball) and *High Tide Organ*, part of Blackpool's Great Promenade Show, are amongst the best. Whilst the first reflects the light qualities of sea the second becomes part of it.

High Tide Organ is according to Curtin, “an interaction with the sea, playing definite pitches and musical chords through the movement of the tides.” It achieves this by capturing through a series of pipes the sound of the rising water and relaying this to the promenade via a 15m tower. The result is a haunting sound, like whale song perhaps, which manages to be alien yet at the same time unthreatening, comforting, rhythmic. Curtin describes it as “the sea breathing.” The tower itself could be the prow of a Viking ship, the curve of an underwater plant, a collapsing wave or even a sea monster.

[continued over]

FEATURES



Other recent flurries of artistic activity along coasts, canalsides and river banks in the Northwest include those at Whitehaven Quay in Cumbria, the Tern Project at Morecambe, the River Lune Millennium Park scheme running north east from Lancaster, and the Irwell Sculpture Trail running north from Salford. There are many more individual artworks that find themselves washed up on watersides too.

From summer 2005 to autumn 2006 we're going to get a proper jaw-dropper though. Antony Gormley, famous for *The Angel of the North* at Gateshead, will install his *Another Place* on Crosby and Waterloo Beach. This is made up of 100 life-size iron figures rising out of the sea and the sand, some semi-submerged, some fully exposed, with the sea also providing a vast elemental backcloth. It's a work that has previously been exhibited in Belgium, Norway and Germany to critical acclaim. Gormley himself has described it as "the place we imagine when we want to escape. Each body-form with its own arena – alone and together." If art – and this is what great art has to do – must transcend the moment and take us to 'another place', then Gormley's work achieves this effortlessly.

Kate Murphy of South Sefton Partnership, who helped persuade Gormley that the Northwest was the right place for his first UK showing of the work, believes the site spoke for itself. "We brought Antony up to show him the site we proposed and he loved it. It occupies that interesting area between a working dock and open coast, between countryside and a populated and industrial hinterland, perfect for *Another Place*."



**BIKE STANDS BY CHRIS BRAMMALL
AT WHITEHAVEN HARBOUR**



Not that the agency's motives are entirely aesthetic. As Murphy says, "It will put the area on the UK cultural map throughout the eighteen months it is here. It will draw attention to businesses, leisure and culture activities and lead to other regeneration in the area. There are all sorts of opportunities."

The figures probably back her up. Stavanger in Norway, served by a tiny population in comparison to that which neighbours Crosby and Waterloo, got 700,000 visitors when it displayed *Another Place*. Sefton is modestly hoping for 600,000 in 18 months. It'll smash it.

Using art to lever in prestige and money is a very modern attitude, very accountable. There is a concern that this may go too far. It can seem that art can only be justified if it contributes to the economy. Art for art's sake, money for God's sake – as a local band once sang.

The town of Morecambe has made a living out of this. Key to the strategy has been Graham Ibbeson's statue of Eric Morecambe, the town's famous comedic son, caught in that *Bring me sunshine* dance moment. There have been coach trips to see the unashamedly popularist attempt to rebrand what remains a declining town. Nearby on the Stone Jetty are scattered birds and seagull

**BIRDS BY BRIAN FELL
AT MORECAMBE**

sculptures by Brian Fell, David Kemp and Shona Kilnoch to 'celebrate Morecambe Bay and its wildlife'. The patterns on the jetty include games for the kids to play. It's all good fun and a bit of a laugh and has undoubtedly boosted the town's ailing economy.

There are problems with this approach though. As Liam Curtin says, "The Eric statue, fair enough, people love it, it's popular. But I wonder about the birds on the pier, there are real birds all around and they're better than the sculptures. This is very much a committee approach, like putting a picture of a church on a church."

Michael Trainor is equally dismissive and calls this work litter-arti, in other words the shortest leap of the imagination, a literal interpretation of a place that ends up littering the area in which it's sited. The problem is highlighted by one of this writer's favourite waterside artworks, Richard Caink's *In the Picture* from 1997 on the Irwell Sculpture Trail near Ramsbottom – sadly now decaying. It depicts a 5m by 6m timber picture frame, with the meander of the River Irwell and the hills



**ARENA BY RITA McBRIDE
ON THE IRWELL SCULPTURE TRAIL**

If art – and this is what great art has to do – must transcend the moment and take us to 'another place', then Gormley's work achieves this effortlessly.

and trees behind. It makes an artwork out of a living scene. But then Caink couldn't resist sticking some logs and stumps round about showing bits and bobs of industry referring to a riot in a nearby mill in the 1820s. Why? How does that make the work any better? How would anybody know what these silly things are referring too unless told? Fortunately the logs don't destroy the view through the frame too much.

We might even have to worry about Eric. Will he be as popular in fifty years, when most of us who saw the Morecambe and Wise Show as they appeared fresh in the 1970s, are dead or doddering? Will the statue eventually be as meaningless as say the one of Oliver Heywood, nineteenth century banker and charitable good-egg, in Manchester's Albert Square is today? It's uncertain whether posterity will appreciate Eric as much as the 1930s artwork in Morecambe's nearby Midland Hotel, including Eric Gill's sculpture and reliefs, Tegetmeier's paintings of the sea-god Triton and Marion Dorn's mosaics.

It's easy to forget the older water-related artwork. One of the best in the region is Mitzi Cunliffe's, 11m by 7m, untitled relief on the side of Heaton Park pumping station from 1955. This marks the completion of the aqueduct from Haweswater in the Lake District to Manchester and is a stylised and fluid depiction of water issuing from a mountain and workers constructing the pipeline. Going further back many of the works we regard as engineering triumphs have over time revealed also an innate artistry. Chief amongst these are Jesse Hartley's buildings for the Port



of Liverpool from the nineteenth century. In the Albert Dock – check out the sweep of brick and iron in the undercroft – and in his gate towers and dock walls, a deep sense of how to make functional form inspirational is revealed. Ultimately though, waterside locations and art are two different matters. Water will always have its charms: even the grimmest industrial canal, as Salfordian minstrel Ewan McColl recalled in *Dirty Old Town*, can become a place of refuge as he 'dreamed a dream by the old canal.' Water, as this article has already pointed out, has got everything going for it.

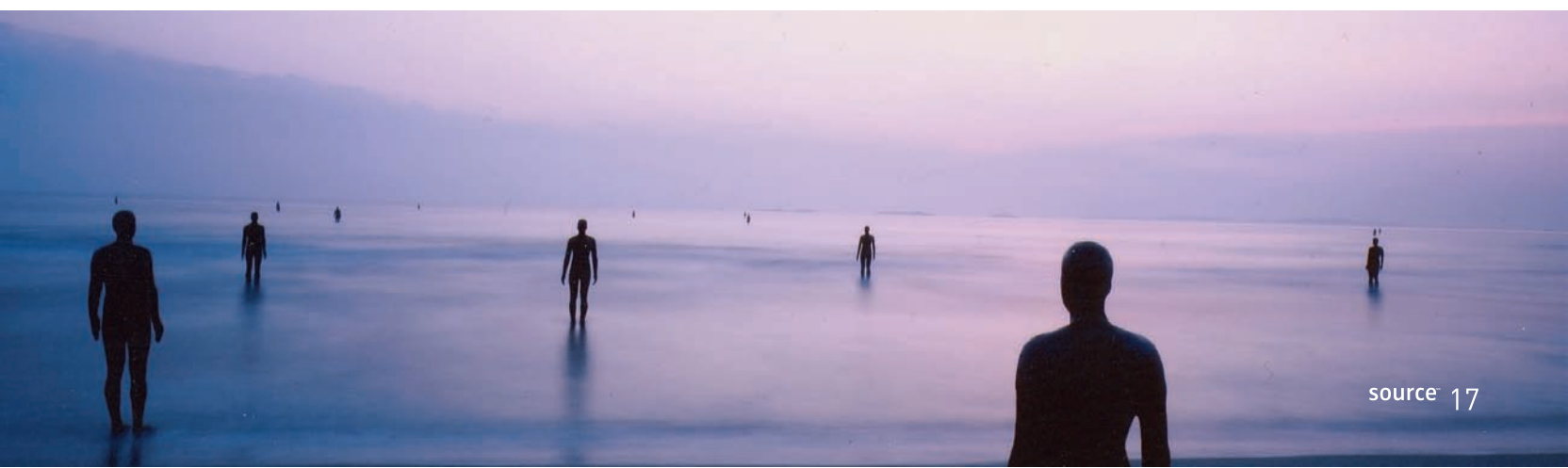
But art isn't like that. Like all human works it isn't inevitably beautiful or awesome, it can be good, bad, indifferent, pointless, annoying, astonishing – you name it. Poor art can never be enhanced by water, only by being removed out of sight. But when good art comes together with the right waterside then you do get magic.

Of course it's all in the eye of the beholder, but for this writer, much of Blackpool's Great Promenade Show has enchantment, whilst Gormley's *Another Place* on Crosby beach will be simply spellbinding. The view of 100 human forms climbing from the sea and the sand and spilling down the beach will not be forgotten quickly whatever the motives behind locating the work there. [S](#)



Jonathan Schofield has been City Life Guidebooks editor since 2000 and has also contributed many other feature articles on subjects from art to architecture. He also writes for publications such as *The Observer* and *The Independent*.

TOP GRAHAM IBBESON'S ERIC STATUE (WITH ADMIRERS)
 BOTTOM IN THE PICTURE BY IAN CAINK, ON THE IRWELL
 SCULPTURE TRAIL



THE MAN WHO MADE EDEN



TURNING POINTS

1973

Studies archaeology and anthropology at Durham University.

1978

Now living in London, tours unsuccessfully with his band; uses unbooked recording time at Abbey Road studios.

1981

Produces and releases a hit record, *Midnight Blue*, by opera singer Louise Tucker.

1987

Retires to Cornwall to build a recording studio but is soon sidetracked into what becomes The Lost Gardens of Heligan.

2001

Eden Project opens its doors and is soon a roaring success.

Tim Smit must be one of the most popular men in Britain, statistically speaking. Smit is the Dutch-born former music producer who turned out to be the visionary behind both the wildly popular Eden Project and the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall. Between them the two attractions draw in over two million visitors a year. Eden alone has generated almost half a billion pounds for the Southwest economy since it opened in March 2001.

Smit is in the Northwest to talk about the success of Eden to a group of regeneration professionals at the City of Manchester stadium, having spent the day meeting various dignitaries who no doubt hope some of his Midas touch will rub off on them.

On stage that evening though, there's the sense that Smit is the charismatic outsider. While he is relaxed in jeans and a sweatshirt, the professionals in the audience are in their suits and business clothes.

It's unlikely Smit has ever been one to wear a suit. At university in the 70s he joined a band and later rode the punk boom. By 1978 he was living in London and playing with a new band on a tour that he describes as "stunningly unsuccessful." Soon, however, he was writing and producing for other artists and in 1981 he released a record called *Midnight Blue* by opera singer Louise Tucker. It sold seven million copies, reached number one in thirteen countries and spawned two platinum selling albums. Twiggy, the Nolan Sisters, Alvin Stardust and – perhaps the pinnacle – Barry Manilow were soon beating a path to his studio.

It couldn't last though. Not least because Smit hated flying and loathed his regular trips to Heathrow. So in 1987, having made a small fortune, he moved to Cornwall, entered semi-retirement and started building his own recording studio, intending to concentrate on film music.

In one of those apparently innocent moments around which lives pivot, however, he met a neighbour who had inherited a dilapidated estate. Smit recalls: "It was so overgrown we cut our way in and it was basically as it had been for seventy years ... I'd been there for forty minutes and I decided I was going to give up the music industry and restore this place." After much hard work, the estate became the Lost Gardens of Heligan.

Before Heligan was finished, the germ of an idea for another, much grander project had already taken root in Smit's imagination. Long fascinated by the lost civilisations of science fiction and the Lost World of Arthur Conan Doyle, he felt sure something akin to Heligan could be created within the vast open pits left by the Cornish clay industry.

The story of how Smit and his cohorts gathered around themselves a team of enviable drive and ability and ultimately turned a disused scar in the land into arguably the most successful of all the millennium projects is an epic tale.

As Smit says: "We always set out to build a place that whether you were in Beijing or Calcutta or Rio, you see one picture of it and you say 'Eden Project UK'."

Smit has always been attracted to big ideas. "The reason I like big is because I have a fundamental belief that humans are really, really clever little creatures, but the way to get the best out of people is to get all the talents around the table and then light the blue touch paper. The greatest skill is making a big group of people believe in something big and fantastic because it excites them."

The reason Eden has been a success, says Smit, is precisely because it excites people.

"The problem is that most people who are interested in the environment are not very good communicators and most of the big environmental projects that have been opened as tourist projects have gone bust. And the reason is actually quite simple. They're boring, they're badly put together and they make people feel very negative about themselves and the world."

By contrast, the Eden Project, with its huge geodesic domes, exotic plants, imaginative artworks and summer concerts, hits the wow factor hard and creates a kind of theatre of the environment. At the same time, however, Eden is serious about its scientific work – but in typically Smit style, "we are a bona fide scientific foundation but we're not embarrassed to be rock and roll about it."

"Economics shows that if you do one great thing, it will yield far more to everybody than ten crap things."

So why is the Eden Project the exception and not the rule?

"I think Britain does celebrate its own mediocrity. I think we've got a muggins culture where money is spread around equally in some sort of misguided sense that this is democratic or fair. When in fact, economics shows that if you do one great thing, it will yield far more to everybody than ten crap things."

Smit argues that what's needed is even bigger thinking. "I think we should invest in something really monstrous, like building the Severn barrage to get wave power. Something which is a new statement for a new generation. And Britain has a tradition of leading that sort of stuff.

"What would be tragic is if Britain has a loss of courage and feels that that was its past but not its future."



Short-listed for the upcoming Northwest Business Environment Awards, an innovative sludge treatment technology is helping to ease the strain on the region's environment.

FLUSHED WITH SUCCESS

In the Northwest 53,000 people are employed in the environmental technologies sector, with businesses yielding an annual turnover of £2.3 billion by restoring the region's damaged environment. Now in its third year, the Northwest Business Environment Awards will again be celebrating good business and environmental practice in the region on June 3rd at the Old Trafford Football Stadium.

United Utilities (UU) and its partner Monsal, short-listed for the Best Environmental Technology Award, have developed a groundbreaking process for the treatment of wastewater sludge. It might not sound glamorous, but after rapid development it's already cutting costs, opening up new business opportunities and helping the environment.

Current wastewater treatment methods put the sludge straight into a large digester tank, which works like an artificial stomach to stabilise the waste. But this means that different specialised bacteria are competing against each other.

"Normally we don't just take food and swallow it," says UU biosolids programme manager Shanthi Rasaratnam. "We chew it first, releasing saliva which has enzymes. They start to break down the food and condition it before it even gets to our stomachs. That is exactly what we have done here by separating the first stage of the process."

During the process developed by UU, called High Rate Enzyme Hydrolysis (HREH), a 'mouth' or front digester manipulates key parameters including temperature, nutrient supply, hydraulic conditions and pH levels to raise the concentration of enzymes that digest pathogens. Killing almost 100% of pathogens, the HREH digester is up to eight times more effective than conventional systems.

The HREH system is set up in front of the main digesters in a series of steel tanks. "The beauty of this is you don't have to take existing plants and replace them. This is a front end process to the existing digester," says Rasaratnam.

And although the quality of the end product from existing digesters was acceptable, the massively reduced pathogen levels means the treated, nutrient-rich sludge is even safer, improving public perception of its use in agriculture.

"Behind the scenes we are spending millions and millions of pounds managing this process," says Rasaratnam.

"Environmental technology to deal with sludge treatment is a big area. In fact, half of the total operating costs of the wastewater business are associated with dealing with the by-product of sludge. It's a massive area for us and for all water companies so any new technology innovation makes a huge difference to us and the rest of the industry."

The HREH process was discovered back in 2000 when Dr Son Le, UU biosolids project manager, was carrying out routine laboratory testing of the sludge digestion process and found that warming the sludge hugely reduced its pathogen levels. The team at UU developed this discovery and worked with specialist environmental technology company Monsal to engineer a new HREH digester tank.

With the help of Monsal, UU has already adapted two of its digester plants, the first being the Macclesfield plant in 2003. Having proved successful, UU went on to convert the Bromborough plant in 2004. "We made improvements after the first plant and that was even better," says Rasaratnam. Two more plants in Blackburn and Crewe are due to be completed by the end of this year. Says Rasaratnam: "It is quite remarkable to go from concept to building multi-million pound plants within a five year period."

"People are normally very reluctant to put lots of money into a new idea because they are not sure if it will work. So to have given the confidence to the directors of the company to take that risk, to have been successful, and now to be finding interest from elsewhere, all that is down to the work within our team and I feel very proud."

ABOVE HREH DIGESTER TANKS AT BROMBOROUGH

BELOW SHANTHI RASARATNAM



"Half of the total operating costs of the wastewater business are associated with dealing with the by-product of sludge."

Because HREH greatly improves digestion, process time is reduced; meaning capacity and throughput can be raised. The amount of methane gas given out is also increased, which can be burned to produce more electricity. The original process was already self-powering, explains Rasaratnam, "but the excess energy now being produced (25% to 40% more than with conventional plants) means that we can produce electricity for the rest of the plant."

"Also, as you are able to convert more of the sludge into gas, the amount of solid that is left to be recycled for use in agriculture is reduced. So transport costs come down too."

Jackie Seddon is the chief executive of Envirolink Northwest, an industry-led, not-for-profit organisation formed in 2000 to develop the Northwest's environmental technology and services sector. A member of the panel judging the Business Environment awards, she comments: "UU has demonstrated a smart adaptation of existing technologies to improve quality and comply with stringent EU regulations; it is safe, cost effective and environmentally friendly. They have developed a truly sustainable solution to a major business problem."

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WORLD ENVI

After going unnoticed in the Northwest for over three decades, World Environment Day is back in the region for the second year in a row.

Global warming, pollution, destruction of habitats. Talk of the environment is so often doom and gloom, guaranteed to leave us feeling powerless, unmotivated, and guilty, guilty, guilty.

Fortunately, World Environment Day (WED) promises to dispel the depression. Instead of scare mongering, it is a day for celebration. The United Nations' flagship environmental

But WED is not just for businesses. The Mersey Basin Campaign is coordinating a variety of family-friendly events across the region, in an effort to raise public awareness. "This year we wanted to get people more involved," says the Campaign's Denise Patfield. "We wanted people to experience environmental issues from a different perspective than the usual stream clean-ups and tips on energy-saving at home. And we wanted to give those people involved in looking after the environment a chance to show off what they are doing."

Denise has arranged exclusive public open days in a wide range of venues – from quarries to nature reserves, paint manufacturers to waste management contractors. These are one off opportunities for you to peek behind the scenes and see good environmental management in unexpected places.

Manchester Airport, for example, is offering a unique opportunity to explore runway two. You won't get to run about on the tarmac, of course, but guided walks around the runway will reveal the variety and richness of wildlife habitats that exist or have been enhanced or created by the airport. These include woodland, wildflower areas and ponds. "The walks will be led by an expert guide and be a pleasant and friendly jaunt in the countryside," says Tim Walmseley, who is organizing the event. "WED provides a focus for many of our environmental activities and links them to an international event. This helps by making management, all staff on site and the local community aware that many of the issues we are dealing with here at the airport are common to other



To find out how easy it is to help protect the environment, see the Environment Agency's website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk and pledge to make a difference.

event, which takes place on June 5th each year, calls us to think positive: the environment supports life on earth; we should be thankful for what we have.

Each year a different city hosts the main WED celebration. This year it is San Francisco's turn, but you don't have to travel that far to take part. In the UK, the Northwest is taking a lead in organising a wide range of activities as part of the global event.

"The Northwest has some fantastic environmental assets," says Mark Atherton, head of environment and sustainable development at the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA). "Although some areas are still recovering from the Industrial Revolution, we have the opportunity as a region to capitalise on what we have. WED provides an opportunity to focus our attention on the region's environment, especially to promote good business practice in terms of corporate and social responsibility, resource management, efficiency and compliance with environmental legislation – all of which are important aspects of improving business productivity."



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Words Edwin Colyer

businesses and are on a 'world' scale."

If you don't fancy being caught up in a jumbo's jetstream, you might prefer a gentle breeze and a bit of kite flying instead? Beacon Country Park's open day is focused on alternative, unusual, even urban, sports. "We will give people a new venue or taste for a non traditional sport," says organiser Mark Byrne. "We hope to show people that the countryside isn't just about wildlife, farming and lazy days out, it's also about exciting and innovative activities that everyone can get involved in. For the region, we hope to show that there are many organisations and opportunities for involvement, bringing people into the countryside to enjoy it, and build an appreciation for it."

Good environmental management is not limited to the countryside, however. In Liverpool, you get to see a great example of eco-friendly construction at Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm. Its newest building is made of straw bales, has a living roof of sedum plants and collects rainwater for toilet flushing. Power is supplied by solar cells. The farm is hosting a fun day for the local Agenda 21 group. Activities will focus on recycling and sustainable living. Heswall Day Centre will also have a stall of handicrafts made from recyclable material. "This is a great opportunity to show what we are doing," says Heswall's Judith Townend, who is helping to run the event, "and a good chance for people to view the farm which is a wonderful place. People can have fun and hopefully get interested in the environment at the same time."



WBB Minerals in Cheshire, meanwhile, is letting the public have unprecedented access to its Dingle Bank quarry. Visitors can learn about the environmental activities of the company worldwide and join tours of the quarry workings. "Few people get a chance to see a working quarry operation, largely due to health and safety considerations," says WBB's Mike Hurley. "We got involved in WED to give members of the public a



better understanding of the source of primary raw materials used in the manufacture of everyday household items and an appreciation of methods of restoring quarry sites for long term future use. We want to show environmental best practice at work that reduces our impact and returns the land 'with interest' once quarrying ceases."

Denise Patfield is looking forward to the WED weekend. She is confident that the events will benefit all participants. "Companies and other hosts get good publicity and can show off about what they do for the environment, while visitors may begin to take on board some of the environmental issues that the open days raise. The WED open days will be inspirational for companies and the public in the northwest."

But they will be fun days too. And guilt-free. Guaranteed. **S**

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OPPOSITE PAGE
**HATTERSLEY COMMUNITY
MARKET GARDEN**

THIS PAGE
**TORSIDE RESERVOIR;
WOODLAND AT HMG PAINTS**

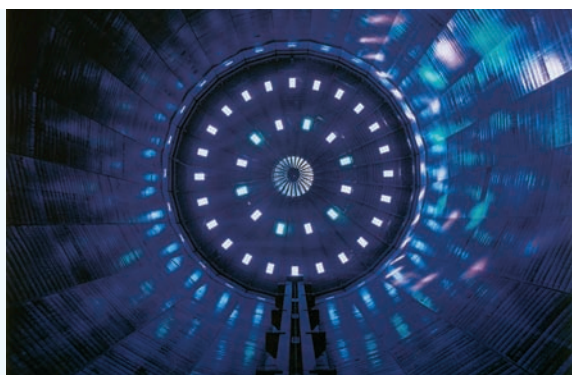
GERMAN

Emscher regional park in Germany proves that size, ambition
and imagination can be inspirational qualities.

Words Kevin Gopal Photographs Werner J Hannapel; British Waterways



FOR INSPIRATION



GASOMETER OBERHAUSEN &
HALDE BECKSTRASSE, BOTTRUP

The youths clambering in and around the gasometers and foundries on a huge tract of formerly industrial land in Germany's Ruhr region are not trespassing vandals. They are visitors to the world's most famous regional park.

Emscher Park, opened in 1989, is a bold attempt to re-use one of the largest industrial wastelands in the world. Built on ecological principles, the park offers a range of high quality recreation facilities for local people and tourists, as well as housing and offices.

And rather than attempting to erase the past, the authorities have used adventurous architecture to transform the gasometers and chimneys into working industrial monuments. The 12-storey Oberhausen gasometer is now a space for cultural events; another has become a diving school. And what was once a coalmine, coking plant and foundry is a leisure area with hiking trails and climbing walls. The park runs along nearly 60km of the River Emscher, an area that was the heart of Germany's economic miracle in the 1950s and 1960s but which had begun to decline in the 1970s, leaving massive areas of brownfield land scattered with disused industrial buildings. It's no surprise then that the regional park concept is held up as a solution for parts of England's Northwest – but it's possibly more of a surprise to find we already have them.

Two are already in operation and there are a further seven proposals on the table. With the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) having commissioned further

studies into the proposals, and the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) beginning to work on a strategy, regional parks are looking like an idea whose time has come. It's been nearly six years in gestation. Ian Wray, NWDA chief planner, says: "The idea was born in the 1999 regional economic strategy, which identified the need to take forward large-scale environmental projects that would benefit recreation and regeneration and have a good effect on the region's image."

Despite the opaque language used to describe regional parks – "strategic projects designed to create and manage a range of new regional park resources" – the definition was deliberately open-ended, allowing a variety of different proposals to emerge as long as they combined environmental and economic benefits close to urban areas. The first two to receive funding, East Lancashire Regional Park and Mersey Waterfront, both aspire to the long term and high quality nature of Emscher Park, but they are very different from the German flagship and from each other.

[continued over]

East Lancashire Regional Park, established in 2000, encompasses the districts of Ribble Valley, Pendle, Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Rossendale and Hyndburn. It has a population of over 500,000 – equivalent to a small city but based in a series of towns. With initial funding of £5 million from the NWDA, and a further £18 million from other public and private sector sources, the aim has been to give this city-sized population the centre that it has been missing. Chris Henshall of the Lancashire Economic Partnership (LEP), lead organisation for the park, says the idea of a regional park was being developed locally at the same time as it was emerging from the NWDA.

“We have fantastic landscapes, important industrial heritage and towns with character that have direct access to the countryside – the countryside comes into the towns.

“The aim has been to create a recognised heart for East Lancashire in a broad band of urban fringe around the towns.”

The priority has been to create a network of routes for walkers, cyclists and horseriders, based on existing paths, so that residents and tourists alike can make full use of the park.

Other activities in the first stage of the programme, which runs until 2007, are the reclamation of derelict land, woodland creation – the benefits of which will not be seen for 10-15 years – and a series of community projects.

Already the park is beginning to deliver some of the economic outputs demanded of it.

But it is the park’s Panopticons scheme that has drawn the most attention.

The Panopticons project manager, Pennine Arts, has been inviting bids to build a series of six landmarks for the twenty-first century in the Lancashire hills as “symbols of the area’s regeneration and pride”. The scheme follows the Emscher Park blueprint for high quality, distinctive design. The winning proposal for Hyndburn, for instance, is HIGH-form, by architect Peter Beard, consisting of five circular earth banks arranged in concentric rings. The formation is covered with a mix of local grasses and heathers and the furrows have been designed to catch rainwater and promote the growth of wetland grasses and associated fauna.

Equally dramatic are the projects planned for the Mersey Waterfront, the second regional park to be set up in the Northwest, with £8.8 million from the NWDA and, more recently, £13.25 million from the Objective One programme for the poorest parts of the EU.

Mersey Waterfront’s area covers roughly 140km of diverse maritime environment from Wirral to Halton to Liverpool to Sefton. As well as beaches, dunes, coastal woodlands, promenades, coastal marshes, golf clubs, sailing clubs, sand flats, marine lakes and working docks, it also covers the world-famous Liverpool city waterfront – now a World Heritage Site. Less well known is the fact that 90 per cent of the Mersey waterfront area is internationally important for nature conservation.

It took a visit by UK, US and Canadian experts from the International Countryside Exchange to help crystallise the potential of Merseyside’s leisure and tourism attractions, explains Louise Hopkins, Mersey Waterfront’s director.

“They came with a totally open mind and found that the gems were there in sufficient number and critical mass to create a powerful regional park but were under-used, neglected and not necessarily recognised as gems by the local population or tourists.”



TOP THE WEAVER VALLEY IN CHESHIRE:
AN AERIAL VIEW, DUTTON LOCKS AND
ANDERTON BOAT LIFT

BOTTOM ZECHE NORDSTERN, GELSENKIRCHEN
– PART OF EMSCHER PARK

The regional park and Merseyside's bio-manufacturing centre were the two big ideas put forward for NWDA funding by partners in Merseyside.

Mersey Waterfront's challenge, says Hopkins, was "to improve the quality and connect the gems so that people understood they form a much bigger whole."

As with the East Lancashire Regional Park, which also crosses over local authority boundaries but had the benefit of the LEP to guide it, Mersey Waterfront has been spearheaded by the Mersey Partnership, a public-private partnership that counts all of the area's councils among its members.

"The Mersey Partnership helped make the idea of regional parks credible with the NWDA, not least because it's the economic voice of Merseyside," says Hopkins. "The fact that we have a clear economic focus in our proposals whereas other regional parks are more environment-led has, I suspect, allowed us to move more quickly."

To build up credibility and demonstrate the range of activities possible, Mersey Waterfront, now nearly three years old, has largely concentrated on smaller projects, leaving flagship schemes until later. "From a new scrape at Marshside bird reserve to a major contribution to a cruise liner facility at Pier Head, they are real extremes but all about promoting the surprising value and diverse use of the waterfront," says Hopkins.

A maintenance team for the Halton waterfront not only cleans up litter and repairs vandalism but also carries out small-scale capital projects and provides help and information to visitors. People's panels shape the regional park programme. Both are evidence of the emphasis the Mersey Waterfront team is placing on securing the support of local people. This is not only because it is crucial in its own right. "If you are trying to attract new business, investment and tourism and the local people don't respect and cherish it, you are on a hiding to nothing," says Hopkins. "Merseyside people already have an incredible affiliation with the waterfront. If we can build on that Mersey Waterfront will go from strength to strength."

The next phase of the park will include a rolling programme of investment in the promenades at Otterspool and Egremont, on opposite banks of the Mersey, to bring them into the twenty-first century and up to international standards. This will be complemented by investment in the open spaces between and beyond the proms and into the areas of open coast.

In the meantime, Hopkins has some advice for the backers of other regional parks: get the right backing from a broad church of organisations; make very clear the economic benefits; get a strong governance structure in place; and have a very clear sense of place that people can understand.

The NWDA is giving support in principle to a further three proposals, which have been the subject of feasibility studies North West Coastal Trail, Ribble Estuary and Weaver Valley Regional Park. It also considers four more proposals to be of interest and has commissioned consultants to study them further – Morecambe Bay, Cumbria and the Furness Coast, Greenheart in Wigan, and Croal-Irwell. The NWRA is about to draw up an overarching framework for regional park development in three areas – the Northwest coast, the Mersey belt and East Lancashire. And the government's recently launched Northern Way strategy emphasises "green infrastructure" – the role that the spaces between the North's towns and cities can play in promoting economic and social

benefits. Backers of the regional parks have real reason to believe their plans will come to fruition.


The North West Coastal Trail would fill in the gaps in existing paths and facilities to create a route running from Chester to Carlisle; Ribble Estuary is based on the area's international designation as an important site for migrating and wintering birds. Morecambe Bay and Cumbria and the Furness Coast both would provide an alternative to more crowded Lakeland area. Greenheart, entirely within the Wigan area and based on the Wigan and Pennington flashes, is making progress even without the designation of a regional park. Supporters of Croal-Irwell, such as Nigel Blandford of the Red Rose Forest, likewise believe their proposal "stacks up by any other method."

Arguably the most distinctive proposal is the Weaver Valley Regional Park, which is based on Cheshire's industrial legacy as a centre for salt extraction and processing dating back to pre-Roman times. The Weaver, Dane and Wheelock valleys have a unique combination of waterways, archaeological remains, subsidence flashes, waste tips and cultural heritage. A park running for 25 miles down the centre of Cheshire from Runcorn to Crewe, say its backers, would support regeneration in and around the area's seven towns and promote tourism and recreation.

The scale of Cheshire's salt industry in the Weaver is unique in the UK – "a regional asset of enormous economic, recreational and educational potential that has yet to be realised," according to Ian Dale of Cheshire County Council, who is leading the Weaver Valley project. One of the ways the regional park proposals would make more of the area's distinctive history would be by rescuing the Lion Salt Works, which recently featured on the BBC's *Restoration* programme. A heritage trail running through the park would link important sites from the area's salt producing past in Middlewich, Nantwich, Northwich, Winsford and Frodsham.

An extensive network of canals was built in the Weaver Valley in the eighteenth century to enable ocean-going boats to import coal and export salt. Now there is an opportunity to link the navigable canals, owned and managed by British Waterways, to other canals and waterways, and also to address poor water quality in the lower part of the River Weaver. Opening up the waterways will also be a major part of the regeneration of local towns, boosting their potential for tourism.

The reclamation of derelict land will aid the process of regeneration and there is the potential to create new woodland and green space outside the towns, adding to the bio-diversity of the area.

The Weaver Park proposals also include improvements to transport and access, such as better routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders south of Winsford and around Crewe and completion of the Weaver Valley cycleway. Improved bus and rail services will encourage more use of public transport. Dale and his colleagues are patient. The regional park plans complement a number of existing regeneration and funding schemes that ensure progress will be made in the Weaver Valley regardless. "Funding is an issue but it's not a stumbling block," he says. But many believe the time has come for Weaver Valley to become the Northwest's next regional park. 

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SETTING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

In a region with a water environment as abused as the Northwest's, research is key for directing our efforts at improvement.



Three key areas of research should be prioritised to help drive continued improvements in water quality and waterside regeneration in the River Mersey, experts have agreed. The priorities are set out in a new research agenda that experts and academics say will allow research efforts in the Northwest to be focussed more effectively.

The agenda encourages researchers to tackle specific issues of water quality, sustainable waterside regeneration and public participation.

In terms of water quality researchers are increasingly concerned with the issue of fluvial sediments and the role they play in trapping and transporting pollutants in the water. A PhD study on the River Medlock and a yearlong monitoring effort on the River Irk focussing on phosphorous are already underway. More research is planned over the coming year on the Medlock, Irk and River Irwell, working with the Environmental Sedimentology Research Group at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The agenda also points the spotlight at those areas of water that have been heavily influenced by human activity. On both the River Mersey and River Ribble catchments extensive modifications over the years have altered large parts of the river systems. A workshop is planned so that the most urgent research needed to ensure that these water bodies reach the required 'good ecological potential' under the EU Water Framework Directive can be highlighted.

In 1999 Professor John Handley of the University of Manchester published his seminal research evaluating the impact of improved water quality on waterside regeneration. It found positive economic benefits from improved water quality – for example, increases in house prices.

regeneration more sustainable.

Finally, the agenda calls for more research on public awareness, education and communication. It acknowledges that there is a need to clarify assumptions about the public's attitude to the environment, and especially the water environment, asking whether people think it is clean or polluted.

The challenge in particular is to find ways to communicate with hard to reach groups such as ethnic minorities and the socially excluded, and to use the research as the basis on which to challenge negative perceptions.

A related theme is the need to better understand how fully a range of community, voluntary groups and individuals are involved in environmental activities. What mechanisms may be used to widen participation and to evaluate how effective that participation may be, especially in raising awareness?

The agenda is the product of extensive consultations with some of the region's leading experts on water quality and regeneration. A research workshop looking at issues of river basin management and the EU Water Framework Directive was held, along with a conference on the particular problems and solutions in the Northwest. Individual discussions with experts and stakeholders throughout the region also helped to shape the agenda.

Research shows that a cleaner environment leads to economic benefits, such as higher property values.

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Since 1999 waterside regeneration in the Northwest has raced ahead, providing a rich source of case studies. A key priority for today's research is therefore to follow up on Professor Handley's original work and to look at what lessons have been learnt about how to make waterside

Work will continue on the research agenda over the coming year, adding new themes and developing new projects.

Tayo Adebawale is the director of environmental specialist CIRKADIA. Her term as the first female chair of the North Western and North Wales branch of the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management ended in May.

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Opinion: It isn't enough for the minority of people who are committed to sustainability and environmentalism to keep it for their private lives. It's our responsibility to act sustainably in all spheres of life and embrace the concept that...

LESS IS MORE



Just recently I attended an excellent political debate hosted by Sustainability Northwest. Politicians from the different parties were questioned about a range of challenging, complex environmental and sustainability issues facing the Northwest. Open and passionate debate ensued (the lack of political bent to some of it was indeed encouraging). It was apparent that real progress could be made towards achieving realistic regional sustainable solutions, to meet the challenges ahead. It was agreed that by working together in 'true partnership' (that in itself being quite a challenge) and engaging with communities, progress could be made.

But perhaps that's the easy bit?

“Do we need more of the stick and less of the carrot?”

There's plenty to debate when it comes to sustainability, but then talk is cheap.

For real progress to be made do we need more of the stick, rather than the carrot? Do we need to admit that a true dichotomy exists? Should we just

accept that there are those who care about the environment and sustainability and are willing and able to do their bit; and those for whom, for whatever reason, other issues are far more pressing?

Perhaps that's too simplistic, but bear with me. Which group do you most identify with? Or is it the Jekyll and Hyde approach? A sustainable ethos at home, which goes out the window on entering the office, or vice versa.

Coming back to the dichotomy, let's look at the 'doing your bit' group. More than likely it includes many people reading this article. Perhaps outside of work, we try contentiously to reduce, re-use and recycle waste. We use energy more efficiently, compost, cycle instead of drive, insulate our home, buy organic and fair trade goods, purchase ethical investments, get to know our neighbours, get

involved in local community activities. The list goes on and on.

Just imagine, if it was a given, that whatever you bought was produced in the most sustainable way, or that all food sold in shops was nutritious and good for you, with no or minimum

preservatives, additives, colours. That when you went to a DIY shop all the goods were made in a sustainable manner, from paints to light fittings.

Yes, I'm talking about less choice not more. Going one step further one could argue: why should the 'doing your bit' group have to spend time, often literally searching for those products which harm the environment less? Why should shops be generally filled with a much, much larger percentage of goods having scant concern for sustainability, compared to the much, much smaller percentage that do. Or why should those in the 'doing your bit' group have to pay the cost of working towards a more sustainable future (is that not like paying for what organisations should be doing in the first place?) whilst the other half does not, but still benefits?

Let's stay with the 'doing your bit' group, but move to the work environment. One wonders if the work environment actively encourages the same environmental ethos in the office as at home. Do organisational policies and ethos actively encourage sustainable development in the professional domain? Do we as professionals act as advocates for sustainability, so to speak. Or is profit the king? If we as the 'willing' half of the dichotomy are not doing our bit in our professional lives, then how sustainable is the professional advice we give, or work we do? What hope is there for the other group?

So, should we embrace the heresy that we need less choice not more? Well yes, it could make both groups happier.



do you care about the world you live in?

do you want to improve your local environment?
then make your pledge this World Environment Day
and make a difference.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wed