

Upper Severn News



October 2009

Community and Sustainability News from Newtown, Welshpool, Llanidloes and surrounding villages

Welcome to the new "Upper Severn News"

The Upper Severn News is a new newsletter serving the communities along the upper Severn, Llanidloes, Newtown and Welshpool and the surrounding villages.

The purpose of the newsletter is to be a free source of information for all people living in these communities who are interested in building and maintaining a vibrant and sustainable local community.

The communities of Llanidloes, Newtown and Welshpool form a natural social and economic unit, historically these communities have had very strong links because of the communication links along the river, and the natural barriers to communication formed by the surrounding hills.

The region has many natural advantages: good links to the rest of the UK, productive agricultural land, an impressive history of industry and commerce and a rich cultural history. It also has some disadvantages, a lack of career opportunities to keep young people in the area, low wages and an invisibility to governments in Cardiff and London.

In the 21st Century, there is a growing recognition of the value of society and community, values that had begun to deteriorate in the last part of the 20th century. With the growing awareness of a need to preserve and protect our environment, we are moving into a new era of people appreciating the environment around them and wanting to improve and enrich their community and environment and protect it for their children and grandchildren.

It is hoped that this newsletter will be a channel of information for groups and people wishing to take part in

this. Its themes are Sustainability, Localisation and Community Cohesion.

The newsletter will include features and reviews on local activities, organisations and charities, a diary of events, letters, and anything else that is of interest to the local community.

The newsletter will be produced monthly and will be uploaded at the website www.uppersevernnews.org.uk.

A small number of printed copies will be distributed round the towns in public places such as the library, doctors surgeries etc. The front page will be printed as a flyer and distributed to a variety of locations, giving information on how the full newsletter can be downloaded.

We are fortunate to have received funding from Awards for All for this project.

If you are part of a local group and would like to include information about your group in the newsletter, please email your information to info@uppersevernnews.org.uk



Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Community Diary | 2 |
| Renewable Energy study for Newtown. | 3 |
| Latest from Llani Car Club | 4 |
| Solar panels for Ponthafren | 5 |
| Recycling chip fat in Llanidloes. | 6 |
| Electric Bike Roadshow report | 7 |
| Llani Solar Open Day | 8 |

If you have community based activities that you would like us to include, please email any stories, including pictures, to editor@uppersevernnews.org.uk



This newsletter is produced and published by Newtown Action on Climate Change.

Newtown Action on Climate Change is a voluntary community group dedicated to raising awareness of climate change and helping people to reduce their carbon emissions.

If you would like to learn more about our activities, please contact us on info@newtown2020.org.uk

Community Diary

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| Wednesday 21st October 7.15 for 7.30 pm | Mid Wales Geology Club Meeting | Plas Dolerw, Newtown | Tim Harris, Senior Lecturer at Staffordshire University, will be talking on the Quaternary Landscape of Wales at our usual venue, Guests will be welcome. Prior to the meeting proper, the results of our Photographic Competition will be announced at about 7.20. | Bill Bagley, tel. 01686 413967 or Tony Thorp tel: 01686 624820 |
| Saturday 24th October 10am - 4pm | "Llani-solar Open Day | Llani-Solar offices, Llanidloes | Llani Solar Ltd has moved into new premises and as a celebration is holding an open day. The event will be formally opened by Mick Bates AM and will feature the latest technologies with working demonstrations of solar thermal, biomass, as well as heat pumps. There will be other displays such as the well known bicycle repair team, the Llani Car Club and information about other local green initiatives and businesses. | For more information email jo@llanisolar.co.uk or ring 01686 412552. |
| Sunday 25th October | Mid Wales Geology Club Field Trip | Plas Dolerw, Newtown | We will be visiting the best preserved pingo relics in Wales and looking at some remarkable structures in the Ordovician nearby. Participants must be members or temporary members. | Bill Bagley, tel. 01686 413967 or Tony Thorp tel: 01686 624820 |
| Wednesday 4th November 7.30pm | Newtown Garden Club | URC Church Hall, Newtown | Talk on 'Growing Under Cover', URC Church Hall | helenporter@phonecoop.coop |
| Sunday 8th November 11am - 3pm | Sustainable Transport event | Bishops Castle | A chance to try out a variety of electric bikes and learn more about sustainable transport. | Further details from Dave Thomlinson on 01588 640550 |
| Saturday 21st November 9am | Greyhound rescue coffee morning | Montgomery Town Hall | Coffee morning, with Cakes, books, bric-a-brac etc. | helenporter@phonecoop.coop |
| Saturday 21st November 2.30 - 4.30pm | Mid Wales Geology Club Field meeting | Plas Dolerw, Newtown | The Baldwin Lecture "Fossils and the Prehistory of Powys" by Dr. Joe Botting. Sponsored by The Palaeontological Association. Dr Botting is the foremost authority on our local fossils and the environments they lived in. Guests are welcome | Bill Bagley, tel. 01686 413967 or Tony Thorp tel: 01686 624820 |

Regular events

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| Mondays at 7.30pm | Ffonic band practice | Monty Club, Newtown | Ffonic, Newtown's community folk orchestra, meets every Monday for sociable music-making, 7.30 - 9.30 PM during school term, in the Monty Club. | kgrnwd@yahoo.com |
| Monday and Thursday at 7.30pm | Newtown Amateur Dramatic Society rehearsals | Powys Theatre, Commercial St, Newtown | New members always welcome | helenfporter@onetel.com |
| Sundays at 10.30am | Quaker Meeting for Worship | Montgomery community centre and Llanidloes | Visitors and enquirers are welcome at all meetings. | helenfporter@onetel.com (Newtown) or david.utting@cooptel.net (Llanidloes) |

Please email editor@uppersevernnews if you would like your events to be advertised on this page.

Renewable Energy Study for Newtown

Newtown Action on Climate Change is currently carrying out a feasibility study on two different renewable energy schemes for Newtown.

The group was successful in applying for a grant from Glasu to enable it to commission a renewable energy feasibility study. This study is in two parts.

The first part is to investigate whether it would be viable to install a hydro-electric plant in the river by the weir just downstream from the town. The weir, alongside the nature reserve by the sewage works, was constructed to enable the river to provide a feed for the canal. Recent advances in the development of low head hydro plant means that existing constructions such as this are becoming easier to exploit.

The technology most likely to be used would be an Archimedes Screw, a device invented more than 2000 years ago for pumping water, but only recently has the potential been realised for these devices for generating power. The initial measurements that have been taken have looked promising, and more detailed investigations are now being carried out. The financial viability of small scale renewable electricity generation has just improved through the imminent introduction of the Feed in Tariff (see right)

The second part of the study is to investigate whether more use could be made of wood fuel for heating through a district heating network. The area of town the the study is concentrating on is the Mochdre Industrial Estate, as there is a significant heat load, and there is also good access for laying the insulated pipes that would be necessary and for installing the heating plant and fuel storage that would be necessary. The first part of this study, which is being carried out at the moment, is to find out from the owners of the businesses on the estate what their requirement for heat is, so that the scale of heating plant and fuel supplies can be worked out. Enquiries are also being made into what suitable clean waste wood is locally available that could feed the plant.

One possibility for supplementing the fuel supplies would be to burn unwanted pallets. This is not as straight-forward as burning clean wood, it is necessary to comply with emissions regulations that the pallets are de-nailed before burning, which is an additional cost in the process. However, all options are being kept open at the moment.

If you are interested to find out more about these studies, please contact Jeremy Thorp on jeremy.thorp@googlemail.com



Penarth Weir, Newtown

Feed in Tariffs

Small scale generation has just become more viable

The government has just announced that it will be introducing a new system for paying owners of small renewable energy generators such as wind turbines and solar panels.

Under the new scheme, known as the Feed in Tariff, owners of small renewable generators will be paid a fixed amount for each kWh of electricity they generate, even if they use the electricity for their own use. The fee will also be in addition to any sum they may receive for the export of the power through an export meter.

The rate they get will depend on the



size of their plant, and the type of technology, with the highest prices being paid for small solar PV installations, and lesser amounts being paid for other technologies and for larger installations.

The exact rates have not yet been decided, but some suggested figures have been put out for consultation. On these, a small wind turbine (under 1.5kW) would be paid 30.5p per kWh generated, and a small solar PV panel (under 4kW retrofit) would be paid 36.5p.

All generation plant installed from now on will be eligible, although the scheme will not start until next year.

At present, it is therefore an exceptionally good time to invest in renewable energy. At present, you could be eligible for this, and also get a grant for the installation from the low carbon building programme. It is likely that grant schemes such as this will be phased out as the feed in tariff will be seen to be providing all the necessary incentive to encourage people to invest.

If you install a scheme this year, you would be guaranteed this same rate for a 20 year period from installation. As the market matures, it is expected that this rate will be reduced for installations made in future years.

Energy Saving Tips - Radiators

Most central heating systems rely on radiators to transfer heat from the boiler to your living room. Here are a few useful facts about radiators.

Old radiators are just as good as new ones

The radiator itself is always 100% efficient, it cannot lose heat except to the room it is in, so an old one is just as good as a new one.

Reflective panels

Before double glazing was common, radiators were usually put on external walls under windows to prevent cold draughts. The wall behind the radiator gets very hot and some of this heat is lost through the brickwork. This can be reduced by putting a reflective foil panel behind the radiator, these are very cheap and available from most good hardware stores. More recently, radiators are put on internal walls, and the reflective panel is not necessary.

Thermostator radiator valves

Radiators used to fitted just with a manual tap, so that the radiator stayed hot whenever the central heating was on, even if the room was already hot enough. Thermostatic Radiator Valves (or TRVs) prevent this, by automatically closing off the

radiator when the room gets to temperature. They are simple to fit and are very cost effective.

Bleeding radiators

If air accumulates in the radiator, the part of the radiator filled with air will not heat up. You can tell when this happens because the top of the radiator will stay cold when the bottom gets hot. This is cured by opening the small valve at the top of the radiator to let the air out. The air will not make the radiator waste any heat, but it may mean that the radiator cannot keep the room it is in warm enough.

Curtains and shelves

If you have a radiator below a window, it is best to put a shelf along the top of the radiator, and to keep the curtains flush with the top of the shelf. Allowing the curtain to hang in front of the radiator funnels all the heat up between the curtain and the window and much of the heat is lost through the glass.



Llani Car Club Autumn Update

We are now in our third year and we feel well established in Llanidloes.

This summer we decided to scrap the oldest vehicle, a Peugeot estate and replace it with a smaller one, a VW Lupo which is 9 years old and in excellent condition. Up until now all the vehicles had been on loan to the club, this is the first car purchased out of club funds. It is a worthy achievement given that the club started with no money. It has grown from an initial group of 4 with one car, to 19 members with three cars. Today 6 members rely totally on the club for a car. The other members are able to do without a second car.

My initial reason for setting up the car club in 2007 was to avoid having to buy another car for the family. I was fed up of owning a car but realised we could not do without one. Car sharing seemed a very good alternative. Finding 3 other like minded people was essential in making the club happen. Since then we have received phone calls from around the UK as well as email from South Africa asking how we did it. There seems to be a growing interest in community car clubs. Clearly I am not the only one fed up of owning a car.

At the end of our second year the total mileage done by the members was 23,659, which is equivalent to twice the average annual mileage of one person in one car. Clearly the Car Club is part of the low carbon solution. It is also part of the solution to the credit crunch, why? Because it is pay as you go motoring, you have no overheads, if you don't use a car you pay nothing. Personally we now do one third of the mileage we used to do and are saving £2000 a year by not having a car, also there are no more unexpected bills and I am no longer a full time taxi driver for the children.

If you would like to give the car club a try ring me on 01686 412961

Andrew Capel



Letters

There will be a regular letters slot. Please send your letters to editor@uppersevernnews.org.uk or to Upper Severn News, c/o The Quarry, Ucheldre, Brooks, Welshpool, Powys, Sy21 8QW

Try out an Electric Bike

The Wasteless Society, in association with Bishop's Castle and District Cycle Group, invites you to a Sustainable Transport event
11.00 TO 3.00 ON SUNDAY 8TH NOVEMBER
AT CHURCH BARN, CHURCH LANE,
BISHOP'S CASTLE.

Try out electric bikes provided by Onbike of Presteigne
<http://www.onbike.co.uk/>

Bring your own electric or folding bike to show others
Public transport information will be available (to be confirmed)

At 11.30 Andrew Capel of Llanidloes Car Club
www.llanicarclub.co.uk/ will explain how a successful car share scheme has been developed in a small rural town

Refreshments will be available

No charge for admission

Further details from
Dave Thomlinson
on 01588 640550



Solar Panels on Ponthafren

Despite its green award, Ponthafren is not resting on its laurels.

Ponthafren, the local resource centre for mental well-being, walked away with the WCVA Network Wales Green Award at the end of last year. Against fierce competition with much larger organisations, the judges were impressed with the measures taken by the organisation to reduce its carbon foot print.

Simple steps such as using energy saving light bulbs, 'Hippos' in toilet cisterns, and recycling waste materials were in place. Grants had been obtained to double glaze windows, loft insulation was installed, and members set about draft proofing doors. Car sharing enables staff and members to get to meetings and events.

Ponthafren members, realising the importance of energy saving, enthusiastically produced posters and web pages, giving to the general public simple tips and information. Members also work in Ponthafren's organic garden, and enjoy the produce. Surplus food is sold thereby contributing to the reduction in food miles.

Year 2009 has seen further efforts, not an easy task for a building built before the middle of the 19th century. If you have you passed Ponthafren lately have you noticed the photovoltaic panels? Installed in July thanks to the grants from Scottish Power, the Low Carbon Building Programme, and fundraising of members, they generate energy for lathes, the pottery kiln, and the all important kettle. The surplus energy is sold to the electricity company to reduce Ponthafren's energy bills.

To supplement what is grown in the garden the organisation has introduced its own fruit and vegetable co-op. The produce, wherever possible, is locally grown and seasonal, not only good for members but also lessens food miles.

Members continue to show their commitment to energy saving projects raising funds as the need arises.

What will be next? All I can say is watch this space!

For more information contact 01686 621586 or visit www.ponthafren.org.uk



Recycled chip fat bio diesel

I had my first delivery of 100 litres a couple of weeks ago. It is very straight forward if you just do it yourself or with a couple of friends.

Last year a few of us looked at doing a community scheme but although there was no shortage of demand, it ran into the sand because of a whole load of complications such as costs of properly bonded tanks, finding a good central location, dispensing equipment, supervision, payment and the fact that everyone seemed to want to make money out of it.

If however you ring up and order a delivery for yourself and maybe a couple of friends, or for your organisation (Car club / Dial a ride etc) it couldn't be easier. It cost me 95.5p a litre (10p less than diesel) plus £3 refundable deposit on each of the 25 litre containers it came in. There is a £10/year membership fee for individuals (varies for low waged and organisations). Delivery was free/included in membership fee and they will deliver about once a month to Llanidloes. The only other things I need are a funnel and someone to hold the funnel while I pour it in. You can use up to 2,500 litres per household per year before having to register and pay additional duty. You can also use it for heating fuel - although it is more expensive than conventional heating oil.

Their literature says it can be used in diesel engines without any modifications although you may need to change your fuel filter more often. Obviously you need to check for yourself that your car can take it - I take no responsibility for that! If you want to order some for yourself - or try again with a community scheme (they are keen to help with that) then contact info@sundancerenewables.org.uk or call 01269 842401 or see www.sundancerenewables.org.uk

Hannah Scrase



Hannah with Young Climate Change Champion for Wales Cerith Jones with the new biodiesel.

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE SERVES LOCAL COMMUNITY

Newtown University of the Third Age or "U3A" as it is more commonly known has been meeting monthly for over twelve years and now has a membership of around 60. It is made up of retired folk who feel that they want to learn a little of something else and also – just as important – may feel they can impart and share knowledge from their own experiences.



The monthly meetings (on the first Wednesday in each month, held at Plas Dolerw in the mornings) are mainly taken up with illustrated talks covering an eclectic range of subjects. The majority are by local people, expert in their particular field, who present anything from History and Art to Travel and Wildlife.

Although our meetings are enjoyable, educational, as well as social events, we feel the most important part of U3A is the various interest groups. They involve smaller numbers of members, meeting mostly in their homes and in which all manner of topics are pursued – ranging from gardening and French conversation to painting and film making. It would be misleading to assume, that the topics are all of an academic nature. Games such as Rummikub and Canasta have a regular following, there is a very strong walkers' group that tackle all terrains about twice a month, and a heavily attended Luncheon Group.

Being part of Newtown's community activity we recently had our stall at the community event at the Crescent Church. You may have seen us there, if not and you want to know more of what is going on within Newtown U3A we can be found on the Web. The address is www.newtownu3a.pontrhafren.org.uk

75th Anniversary for Newtown Amateur Dramatic Society

Our first play of the 2009/2010 season will be

Night Watch by Lucelle Fletcher

Monday 16th Nov. - Saturday 21st Nov.

(Booking in Oriel Gallery, Newtown. Booking for Theatre Book Holders week commencing 2nd Nov., General Public week commencing 9th Nov.)

As this is our 75th year as an Amateur Company we will be holding several, extra, special days. These will be announced at a later date.

If you would like to join our friendly group in any capacity, acting, back stage, sound/lighting, front of house etc. you will be very welcome

Minimum age for membership is 16 years old

Please contact Gillian Thorp on gillianthorp@uku.co.uk

Launch of "Newtown Traffic Solutions" group

The recent public consultation in Newtown about the possibility of a new bypass has prompted a new group to form, "Newtown Traffic Solutions". This group has been formed to investigate whether there are cheaper, more sustainable solutions to the traffic problem in Newtown than the bypass, which will cost £10,000 for every household in the town.

Data collected by the consultants for the bypass suggests that the bypass may not achieve the result it promises, the data shows that 5/6 of the traffic on Newtown's roads is travelling within and not through the town, and hence would not benefit from a bypass. If you are interested in these issues, please contact Garry on

If you wish to express your views on the bypass, from any viewpoint, UpperSevernNews is happy to receive letters on this or any other topic, please email to editor@uppersevernnews.org.uk

Electric Bikes Roadshow in the Park.

Newtown held its first ever Electric Bike Roadshow in September. This took place in the glorious sunshine in the Park in front of the Council building. Newtown Action on Climate Change organised the event and Onbike of Presteigne brought along a wide variety of electric bikes for people to take for a test ride. There were also local enthusiasts who are already regularly using electric bikes who brought their bikes along and were talking to people about their experiences. Phil Breeze and Jeremy Thorp brought along their own bikes for people to try, and to add variety, Garry Saady and Kitty Greenwood brought along their tandem and trailer for people to try out. They have recently used this bike for a three month tour of Europe. To demonstrate the flexibility and practicality of bikes, St John's Ambulance were present with their new fully equipped bike complete with defibrillator and oxygen.

There was an excellent turnout and a constant queue of people to try out the bikes on display. Electric bikes now offer a very practical form of transport with all the convenience of a normal bike with much less of the effort.

Organiser, Jeremy Thorp, said that he was delighted with the turnout for the roadshow and the positive responses from the people that tried out the bikes, and he is keen to organise more events such as this to give more people the chance to try out these very practical machines.



Councillors George, Harris and White on electric bikes

“International Day of Climate Action” marked in Llanidloes



24th October was designated as the “International Day of Climate Action”. On this day, groups from all around the planet organised events to raise awareness of climate change, and focus on the number 350. This is the concentration (in parts per million) that leading climate change scientists, headed by James Hanson of NASA, believe to be the highest safe long term concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

The current concentration of CO₂ is around 399 parts per million (go to www.co2clock.org for a constantly updating value). We therefore need not only to halt the rise in CO₂ concentrations, but reduce our emissions sufficiently to allow concentrations to start to fall. (for more information, go to www.350.org)

In Llanidloes, the day was marked by the open day held at Llani Solar, the leading Welsh solar heating installer. Llani Solar are specialists in renewable energy heating systems. The new buildings were developed by WAG and featured in the BREEAM Awards for Wales 2008.

A wide variety of local environmental groups attended with stalls, demonstrating the broad range of voluntary activity that is carried out in this region. These groups focussed on a wide variety of issues, energy efficiency, local food, local drink, sustainable transport, local money advice, locally grown plant nurseries and the new Llanidloes bicycle repair service.

Mick Bates opened the event, and encouraged all present to do their bit to help reduce CO₂ emissions. He encouraged people to sign up for the new 10:10 campaign, which is encouraging people and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions by 10% in 2010. Mick said that he was aiming to achieve this by taking cold instead of warm showers from now on.



Other 350 events around the world on 24th October



Steve Barratt (Llanidloes bicycle repair man) helps fix an ailing bike