

# Upper Severn News

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

## NEWTOWN GREEN DRINKS



### Local veg all year round - the no dig way

Richard Edwards will talk about his experience growing vegetables for the Cwm Harry veggie bags on his plot in Llanmerewig.

Followed by discussion, questions and answers about local food growing.

**Black Boy**  
**Tuesday 8th June, 7.30pm**

**All welcome**

This is primarily an online newsletter. A full copy can be downloaded from the website [www.uppersevernnews.org.uk](http://www.uppersevernnews.org.uk)



## A plea for help from the Welshpool Contact the Elderly group

The Welshpool Contact the Elderly group helps elderly people who are in need of company but find it difficult to get out on their own.

This has now been running for nearly two years, and is going very well. The elderly people are picked up by volunteer drivers and taken along to a hosts home where they enjoy a simple afternoon tea. It really does help to alleviate the loneliness felt by people as they grow older. and they all enjoy the chance to chat and to feel that someone cares.

Unfortunately the group is in danger of closing if we don't find some more hosts.

The tea parties take place on a Sunday afternoon, from about 2.00 till 4.00. Most of our hosts provide a simple tea of sandwiches, cakes and lots of tea. You need to like older people, have a downstairs loo, and easy access. We only ask our hosts to do this once a year.

We find it suits busy people, as the commitment is so small, just a few hours, once a year. It fits in well around work and family, as you can choose when you would like to host. Plus, the family can all be involved. Some people get together with friends and host a tea party between them.

If you would consider hosting a tea party yourself, or if you'd like to know a bit more, please do get in touch.

Thanks a lot for reading this,

Kind Regards

Elizabeth Morgan

Mid Wales Development Officer / Swyddog Datblygu Canolbarth Cymru  
Contact the Elderly / Cyswllt â'r Henoed

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Contact the Elderly is a registered charity in England and Wales (244681) and in Scotland (SC039377)

## Newtown Carnival

**Saturday June 12th**

Newtown Carnival will be taking place on 12th July. The procession will start in Lower Canal Road at 11.30, and then will travel via Longbridge into the town centre.

There will more attractions in the park all through the afternoon, including sideshows, music by Newtown Silver Band, magic shows, marching bands, dancing competitions and much more.

### Sustainable Transport Carnival preparations

Having won a category prize in last years carnival procession, Newtown Action on Climate Change have been busy preparing an even better entry for this years carnival.

The float will be based on an extended bike trailer, and construction has been going on at the Cwm Harry factory on the Vastre Estate.

The carnival this year will be on 12th June, assembling for judging at 11.30 in Lower Canal Road.



*Road testing the float platform for stability and roadholding*



*Construction of part of the float display.*

We are intending our float to be accompanied by a flotilla of bikes, so if you would like to join us, please turn up on a bike at 11.30 (preferably wearing something green).

## Llani Car Club's 3rd birthday

The Llani car club is now three years old. Membership has grown to 24 and the club now has 4 vehicles. A van was recently purchased (see photo) by popular request of the members. During the last year the total mileage driven was 32,549, which is remarkable given that 10 members do not own a car and rely on the club for their use of a car. The remaining 14 members use the car club cars instead of owning a second car.

From 1st of June this year, Andrew Capel who founded the club has been appointed as the part-time coordinator. He will take over the day to day running of the club from the committee, who have done a fantastic job of running the club since the beginning.

The new van is a diesel Peugeot Partner, which has loads of carrying capacity and a tow bar. As we move into our fourth year we are looking to recruit more members and improve the service to existing members. For more information see our website [www.llanicarclub.co.uk](http://www.llanicarclub.co.uk) or ring Andrew on 01686 412961.

Andrew is also available to give talks about the car club to local and not so local groups.



## Newtown Ponthafren Centre

**Do you find the evenings hard to cope with, knowing there are no support services available in the evenings?**

Would you like to learn new ways of dealing with the things life throws at you?

If the answer is yes, Ponthafren Centre in Longbridge Street Newtown, a community resource centre, for health and wellbeing, will be opening in the evenings on Wednesdays & Thursdays, 6pm till 9pm for Crisis Intervention & Support.

This service will start on Wednesday 2nd June & run until Thursday the 15th July

Come along on Thursday 3rd June at 6.30pm to listen to our presentation & informal chat on solution focused therapy by Andre Hutchinson.

Every Thursday evening there will be informal 'drop in' sessions on solution focused therapies and our counsellor, Tracey Fletcher, will also be available on a 'drop in' basis for free counselling sessions.

Ring 01686 621586 for further details, all we ask is that you pay a £1 membership which lasts the year and entitles you to access our courses/workshops free of charge.

Visit our website [www.ponthafren.org.uk](http://www.ponthafren.org.uk) or phone on 01686 621586

*Nicky Morris, Co ordinator*

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## Change of Government, Grants and the Renewable Heat Incentive

You may have heard that as part of the fiscal tightening measures, the new government has closed the grants for renewable energy installations that were available through the Low Carbon Building Programme (LCBP).

Although this is a blow, it is not unexpected, and there is no reason to think that the Feed in Tariffs or the Renewable Heat Incentives will be the next targets. Both these schemes had cross party support before the election, and the funding for both comes from a levy put on utility companies, and not directly from taxes, and so the schemes do not directly affect government expenditure.

The Low Carbon Building Programme was expected to run out in December anyway, and it was known that there was no new money to be put in it. The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) will be sufficient incentive on its own, and it was recognised that, whilst the overlap between the RHI and LCBP was good for those people that could manage to get both, it was likely that an incoming government looking for cuts would make the logical but frugal decision to cut LCBP given that RHI will be taking over.

*Jeremy Thorp, Newtown Action on Climate Change*

# Climate Change on Mt. Elgon

These last weeks whilst travelling to some of Gumutindo's producer co-ops on Mt Elgon and working with their management committees, I have used the opportunity to discuss with farmers (nearly all of the management committees are composed of farmers) their experience of weather changes on the mountain.

In the west there is an understanding of climate change as a global phenomenon but this is not easily grasped by subsistence farmers and explaining it is a great challenge. Nonetheless, there is a ready admission that something big is happening in regard to weather and that it is outside of their experience.

We should bear in mind that we are talking about people for whom the weather is not an interesting topic of conversation as it is for many in the West but a matter effecting their livelihoods in a very acute way. Although some food is stored, most of the food needed to feed the family has to be grown in the two rainy seasons. The mountain is extraordinarily productive, blessed with fertile easily worked volcanic soil, a hot equatorial sun and yet with plentiful rainfall falling in the two seasons. This fertility is not limited to lower areas but can extend well above 8000ft! Two acres can provide plentiful food for an often large family and if all goes well, a cash crop of coffee and perhaps bananas, onions or garlic. This is often used to pay for school fees, medicines and some improvements to their home. When I tell farmers that in Wales, a farmer needs a couple of hundred acres to make a living and not a particularly good one at that and that what is grown on such farms is mainly grass for feeding sheep and that no trees grow on this land above about 1500ft, they are truly astounded.

However, for all its munificence, farmers are anxious, disturbed and in some cases gloomy about their futures on the mountain.

Here are some of the things they have told me about their experiences of late:

It is becoming harder and harder to know when the main rainy season has arrived and thus when to plant.

The rain is heavier than before and is damaging the fertility of their land- often on sloping land – and so defeating all the traditional methods they have used to maintain that fertility. Very simply, it washes away their soil and the techniques they have developed such as ditches and holding areas for the water as well as the use of certain grasses to hold the soil are no longer adequate.

Mudslides are becoming more frequent. (They already have experience of mudslides on the steeper slopes but believe they are now more frequent. The recent mudslide that buried a community with the loss of nearly four hundred lives has clearly affected them deeply.)

Temperatures are increasing under the hot sun and so evaporation also

increases.

When I ask what they think is causing this, there are a variety of responses. Many point to deforestation. Wood is the only fuel they have for heating water and cooking. It is also used extensively for building. Some have said that if they plant more trees, then things will return to normal. In another area, farmers told me that they have not cut the forest and yet still they suffer and admit they do not know what is causing the change. This reply, interestingly was given by farmers nearest to the recent terrible mudslide.

One group raised the issue of the population increase as a factor in deforestation (Uganda has nearly doubled its population in the last thirty years).

To, the question "what did they think should be done about the changes they were experiencing?" none offered the idea of political or a co-ordinated response. Rather they talked about planting more trees or in one or two cases of finding new varieties of crops or even of finding other sources of fuel such as bio-gas.

I asked if they were hopeful for the future of their land and future prospects for their children and was surprised by how gloomy many were about future prospects.

How to summarise these conversations? Of course there is a need for good research and more systematic work to be done on this. However some impressions and personal observations emerge that I believe are worth sharing.

There is real disorientation on the mountain as practices which have been used for generations are seen not to be adequate in the situation they now face.

There seems to be little evidence that in their lives as farmers they have witnessed co-ordinated or politically led solutions for problems certainly on this scale. (This would be true in the west too). Climate Change creates political challenges but there are opportunities here for a better understanding of the role of politics and the role of strategic policy.

Ways need to be found of explaining "Climate Change" so farmers can begin to understand the kind of problem they are facing and therefore the possible solutions. This inevitably means it must be given a global context with all the political, social and moral implications that entails. They no longer should see it as something they have caused.

Ways should be found to improve their confidence that there are things that can be done locally that could help (sometimes called adaptation).

John Harrington

May 11th 2010

[You can follow John's work through his blog on the Wales for Africa website at [www.walesforafrica.org/blog/author/johnharrington/](http://www.walesforafrica.org/blog/author/johnharrington/)]

Weekend courses at Old Chapel Farm (mid-Wales)

**FLINT KNAPPING**

**Tutors: John and Val Lord**

**3rd - 4th July 2010**



*Using the methods of ancient British people, including flint knapping, glue and cordage manufactured from natural sources, working with bone and antler, you will produce your own hafted tool to take home.*

*John Lord is a leading expert in his field.*

*All tools, materials and safety equipment will be provided.*

*Teaching: 10am Saturday - 4.00pm  
Sunday*

*Course fee: £120 per person  
Accommodation and food: £70*

*(accommodation on Friday and Saturday nights in shared yurts)*

**Bookings by post or email:**

**Kevin or Fran Blockley, Old Chapel Farm,  
Llanidloes, Powys, SY18 6JR.**

**Tel: 01686 412744.**

**Email: kevin@CambArch.co.uk    www.CambArch.co.uk**

**LETTER CUTTING IN STONE**

**Tutor: John Neilson**

**24th - 25th July 2010**



*A hands-on introduction to carving lettering in stone led by one of the best professional letter carvers in the UK.*

*This workshop will be principally about carving but will also touch on aspects of designing lettering for stone.*

*Participants will carve a word of their own design. We will also look at the background to the craft, and examples of work by present-day practitioners.*

*All tools, materials and safety equipment will be provided.*

*Teaching: 10am Saturday - 4.00pm  
Sunday*

*Course fee: £170 per person  
Accommodation and food: £70*

**The Cwm Harry truck (2010)**

This is the compost

Derived from food waste

Plates of food no one wanted

Pots half empty unremembered

BOGOFs going off & turning green

From the backs of fridges mostly unseen

Food from the rich, food from the poor

Food from the corner shop and the girl next door

Food from the supermarket, food from the farmers' market

Portions too large measured only by eyes

Meals uncompleted and finished with sighs

Breakfasts and lunches, dinners and suppers

Teas and breaks, snacks and others

Love waste, hate food is life's motto

Love food, hate waste is what we ought'o

Richard Northridge



# Energy saving tips - LED light bulbs

## What are the latest developments on LED bulbs?.

The most common application for LED bulbs is as replacements for the very common halogen spotlight bulbs, that are very fashionable in kitchens and bathrooms up and down the land.

These come in two flavors, 240V bulbs that use mains electricity direct, and 12V bulbs that need a transformer to convert the voltage to 12V. (Note, low voltage is NOT low energy, they use just as much energy as the 240V bulbs).

LED bulbs are available to replace both 240V and 12V bulbs. The 240V ones can just be plugged in as a direct replacement. The situation with 12V ones is slightly more complicated. The transformers commonly used with these bulbs do not regulate the voltage well if very only small currents are being drawn. This means that if they are only connected to LED bulbs, the voltage across the bulb will rise above 12V and this may shorten the life of the bulb. You therefore need either to replace the transformer for one designed for low power use (they are only £5 - £10 each) or, if one transformer is feeding several bulbs, leave just one halogen bulb in and replace the rest with LEDs.

You can now get LED bulbs of 3W, 5W and even 7W.

Compared to a 50W halogen bulb, the 7W LED is a pretty good replacement, and the 5W and 3W ones are bright enough to be used in many situations. Prices vary a lot from supplier to supplier (try looking on ebay), but expect to pay about £7 for a 3W bulb up to £20 for a 7W bulb.

Bear in mind that each 50W halogen bulb, being used 8 hours a day, will be using about £15 of electricity per year (and there are often a dozen or more in one room) and you can see that the savings (even at the top end price of £20 per bulb) are very good. There are very few investments that will pay you back as quickly as getting rid of your halogen bulbs.



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](mailto:info@newtown2020.org.uk)

If you would like to include anything in the next issue about your environmental or community activities, please email Jeremy on [editor@uppersevernnews.org.uk](mailto:editor@uppersevernnews.org.uk)