

THE GREEN CENTRE
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**The Green Centre,
opposite Iceland,
Chester Street,
Douglas IM1 2PG**

Open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10am, pop in to see us and chat about any green, environmental matters.

Plastic Bag Charges

by Muriel Garland of ZWM

We are surrounded by countries that charge for plastic bags a year since England introduced their 5p charge.

During that time the number of single-use plastic bags by the 7 largest supermarkets has fallen by more than 7.6 billion per year to 600 million.

And during that period the supermarkets have raised £29 million for charities.

Locally TESCOs is offering generous amounts for environmental projects even though they don't charge for bags of money here on the island. The Manx Wildlife Trust is raising money towards an outside classroom as part of the Forest project.

Let's hope our new government sees the sense of putting a charge on plastic bags. It takes very little to change people's minds and stop them from creating litter and waste.

For further information see:- <http://www.tesco.com/>

Radioactive Mann

On Monday 5 September BBC Panorama delivered an insight into the failings at the Sellafield Nuclear facility, a mere 34 miles from the Isle of Man. Panorama's stark findings drew the newly formed Isle of Man Green Party to call for the Isle of Man Government and Tynwald to put pressure on the UK Government to expedite the decommissioning of this cold war relic. The Panorama programme identified a glaring lack of oversight and administration of the facility, with the structural integrity of the façade a concern, and effluent discharges and storage of nuclear waste going unchecked.

In a lamentable turn of events, just one week after the Panorama programme was broadcast the United Kingdom Prime Minister Theresa May announced that stalled plans for the Nuclear Power Plant at Hinckley were to be proceeded with. The Economist captured the news of the Prime Minister's decision with an opinion that the Hinkley Point power station would tie Britain into an energy system that is already out of date. In the last ten years the price of nuclear energy production has increased while the price of renewable energy has plummeted. The decision to progress the Hinkley Point plant proffers an ignorance of the future of decentralised energy production. With the increased availability of wind generation and solar cells, and the exponential improvements in the price and efficiency of battery storage, Hinkley Point will become a white elephant hanging around the neck of the UK tax payer, tied into fixed price subsidisation for the plant's builders.

Renewable energy production such as wind and solar will not only provide for a sustainable and increasingly cheap form of energy but do not carry the risks of nuclear waste and climate change to our future generations; if anything, their increased use can provide for the mitigation and amelioration of such issues.

The Next Green Party Meeting is to be held at 18:30 on Monday 10 October at 18 Albert Street, Douglas.

Beach Buddies help to save our seas from pollution



BEACH Buddies hold regular beach cleaning events which are fun and social events as well as helping our coastal environment and marine life.

Beach Buddies provides all the necessary equipment including hand wipes and hand gels afterwards, and has a First Aid kit (which has never been used, and we hope never will be!), full Public Liability Insurance, is a registered charity (no 1158) and we can provide Risk Assessments for company events, or events for groups like schools, Scouts, Guides, Cubs etc.

New volunteers have been a strong feature of pretty much every event held this year, and fast approaching 7,000 individual volunteers since 2014.

New volunteers, of all ages, are always warmly welcomed, especially families, and we also like to welcome well-behaved dogs. No need to register - just come along for as long or a little as you like.

BEACH BUDDIES

Registered Charity No. 1158

www.beachbuddies.org.uk

(website under construction)

e beachbuddiesisleofman@gmail.com

f Beach Buddies Isle of Man

River and Coastal Flooding

By Andrew Jessop

In the previous article on river and coastal management I touched upon some of the challenges facing the island in the coming decades as rainfall and storm events affecting the IOM become more intense and destructive. I suggested a few mitigation measures that could be relatively cheaply and quickly put into place but one of the major obstacles to these and other measures is our archaic planning system.

Unfortunately the island is plagued by legacy planning decisions that are now recognised by many, including current planners, as having been short-sighted or just plain wrong.

Examples are the development of land at Poyll Dooey, Ramsey; Broogh Wyllin, Kirk Michael; Mill Race, Sulby, and the NSC in Douglas to name just a few.

However, in the case of the land at Poyll Dooey commencement of part of the development means the remaining portion of the site can continue to be developed even if common sense dictates otherwise.

Effectively the government (or really the tax payer) potentially has the unenviable choice, if it wishes to stop further development of a site which has an extant planning permission, to either pay millions in compensation to the developer or (sometime in the future) pay millions to build flood protection defences. So which would you vote for if you were one of the new MHKs?

This clearly is not fanciful speculation, hard evidence of the government having to make this type of decision lies only a few miles south west along the Sulby River at the Mill Race.

So what is to be done about these ticking time bomb sites, forget about them and hope for the best or spend a load of money now in the hope it is not wasted and that it saves a lot more money in the future. A question to perhaps pose to the prospective Chief Minister candidates.

However, moving forward the obvious answer to these types of issue is to don't zone/build on land that falls within identifiable flood risk areas. But this requires a planning process that is fit for purpose, and a government that is prepared to stand up to landowners and developers, who wish to see their land developed, and refuse to accede to their pleadings no matter what mitigation measures they claim will be designed as part of the development. Because who do you expect will pick up the tab to maintain the defences or 'bail-out' (no pun intended) the residents if the defences fail?

Cynics will say as the island is really run by people with money rather than our elected representatives, the chances of any significant change in planning policy is remote and the mistakes of the past will continue to haunt us as will the ones yet to be made.

Let's hope our new House of Keys will prove the cynics wrong and a fresh approach to climate change and its consequences will be genuinely embraced and our children and grand children can look forward to a brighter future.

Encouraging bio-degradable food containers at events



We were recently at the Food and Drink Festival at Villa Marina, and noticed some food was being provided to people in cardboard packaging rather than non-biodegradable plastic. This is so much better for the environment and also looks far more classy and contemporary.

Plastic packaging seems out of fashion as well as harmful to the environment, 'it's so 1970s'. It may raise inference in some consumers as to the amount of care kitchens put into making their food if they present their food in cheap, non-biodegradable cartons. It can only have beneficial image/marketing implications to use bio-degradable containers.

But some fast food companies don't care about the environment and just want to make a fast buck, they will still use plastic containers even when alternatives are available. Their target market doesn't care either, they are not appealing to the more discerning market. This means it would be up to the organiser of events, whether large events like the TT or smaller events like car boot sales/fetes to stipulate that only bio-degradable food containers may be used.

If the bottom-up approach is not reaching all distributors of food at events, then it would be necessary to supplement it by a top-down approach where those who organise events stipulate that only bio-disposable containers may be used.

Another top-down approach would be for Government to impose an import tax on plastic containers to raise revenue as well, and to keep our island clean and healthy and for our residents and visitors at the same time as raising revenue.

Message to new MHKs by Sarah Calverley

The Green Centre welcomes people to come and chat about all environmental issues. Our visitors are interested in the Island's environmental issues, even people who call in to see us who live overseas. We do not have *any* political allegiance and welcome people with all kinds of political, economic and social views share an interest in the environment. The Green Centre welcomes and comprises of people of all ages, stages and all walks of life and encourages this diversity.

When I've been in the Green Centre we chat about green issues, anything from how to grow potatoes to global warming, and occasionally I have heard a discussion veer towards political and economic issues such as taxation, wastage of resources, which I pick up on as it is of interest to me personally. I don't like wastage of resources even if it is public ie community resources and not our own personal resources. I have heard praise and appreciation for some government offices and at the same time dismay and caused by inaction and lack of motivation by other government offices. I don't know what can be done when government offices are not motivated – to me it seems so wasteful of resources. I have come to the personal conclusion that it depends on the Minister heading any particular department, that a competent minister can and will take control of his Department and make it his/her business to personally ensure good running. A competent, proactive MHK can make a difference and we now have a whole new Parliament so let us be optimistic and also let us support and encourage our MHKs.

But it seems like a challenging role for somebody to come in and sort out a whole pre-existing department, to effect changes which may not be welcomed by staff. And it is also a very challenging role to live up to the promises and expectations raised by previous governments. But these decisions did have to be made and they are very important, the future of the planet and future generations depend upon these plans being implanted.

Decisions have already made about reducing our carbon footprint and it is important that MHKs do appreciate and work at reducing our carbon footprint. It has already been established by previous Parliament that it is an objective to be achieved. Here I will quote from last newsletter:-

“In May 2013 Tynwald agreed to reduce the island's . gas emissions. The target is an 80% reduction of 1990 levels by 2050. At the moment we produce 9.55 tonnes of CO₂ per person. To reach that dramatic reduction it needs to come down to 1.91 tonnes per person. How can we possibly do that?

At the moment we produce 5.3% of our electricity from renewables whereas in the UK that figure is 19.2%.

...2050 may seem far in the future for our politicians and many of us won't be here to see the results. But time passes quickly and we only have 34 years to achieve these ambitious goals for the Isle of Man...

....So we must put our faith in the politicians who are elected in September.

Please choose wisely! Choose politicians who see the urgency of dealing with climate change and our share of emissions.

Going from 9.55 tonnes per person to 1.91 tonnes requires more than vague suggestions”

Maybe any MHKs with a particular interest would share their views and aspirations, or concerns about meeting this target, you would be very welcome.