

Climate Change Comes Home

Mark Lynas, environmental author, campaigner and Good Energy customer, writes that the real solutions to climate change begin in the community.

Climate change has become something everyone wants to know more about. Broadsheet editors want to hear how villages are going green, and even my neighbours are taking a real interest in cutting their carbon footprints. Politicians have finally got the message and are beginning to propose serious policies to tackle the crisis. So is it job done and time to relax, now that the rest of the world seems to have woken up to global warming at last? No – to paraphrase Winston Churchill, this is only the end of the beginning.

Whilst politicians certainly sound like they are keen to reduce carbon emissions, actually getting this done in the real world – challenging people's ingrained high energy-consuming habits – is a different matter altogether. A document recently leaked to the press showed that government officials have briefed MPs that there is no chance that the UK will meet the EU renewable targets of 20% by 2020. To me it seems strange that the UK can claim to be a world leader on climate and yet give up on a very moderate renewables target a full 13 years before it is even supposed to be met. Clearly then, if we want to see real change it is up to you and me – the citizens of this country – to make it happen.

In Wolvercote, the village where I live on the edge of Oxford, there are thankfully many people who are really embracing the challenge of climate change and are making it easy for the whole village to take practical action. A great initiative that Low-Carbon Wolvercote - as we've dubbed ourselves - has come up with is 'street reps', each responsible for their own road. The reps are helping to organise insulation for each home, car-sharing schemes for the street and a bulk purchase of solar panels for the village. Ten years from now the village aims to be getting all its energy from renewables – that's when we'll truly become Low-Carbon Wolvercote.

Another smart idea is our lightbulb library, where villagers can come and find the right low-energy bulbs to fit their homes. We are also encouraging the village to sign up with Good Energy, which will help cut our carbon and raise money to install solar panels on the village's community buildings – for every new customer, the company is giving £20 towards our solar panel fund.

There's a sense of pride in the village for what it's achieving – and an added benefit is that the sense of community is growing even stronger. People talk more

and look out for each other more, and our village fete in the summer was the best-attended ever. At the annual open-air night one couple even premiered the Low-Carbon Wolvercote song, and had the whole crowd singing along!

Wolvercote is special to those of us who live there, but it's not unique in going green. Ashton Hayes in Cheshire is two years ahead of us and there are Transition Towns in Cornwall, Devon and Gloucestershire - all moving towards a future less dependent on fossil fuel.

Of course we wouldn't have to do any of this if the government had got its act together on climate change. But with emissions still rising every year – particularly from coal-fired power stations, road traffic and aviation – it's down to every community in the country to make the low-carbon transition happen from the bottom up.

I hope more and more green towns and villages appear across the UK and that these dots join together to cover whole counties. One day, even Westminster might become a green dot on the map of the British Isles.



Good Energy – Supporting Communities

Good Energy is keen to support towns and villages aiming to go green. Like Low Carbon Wolvercote – we can donate £20 for each sign up and help communities raise money for their green projects. For more information email affiliate@good-energy.co.uk. To find out more information about Low Carbon Wolvercote, and Mark Lynas' work go to www.marklynas.org

Ecolerne sustainability group in Colerne, Wiltshire.



100% renewable electricity



Westmill Wind Farm board members



Adam Twine of Westmill and the Energy4all team



Film Premiere Film Premiere

Good Energy Generator – Westmill Wind Farm

This August construction on the Westmill wind farm in Oxfordshire began. Westmill will be the first 100% community owned wind farm in the South of England and the five turbines are expected to be installed and start generating in Spring 2008. They will produce enough electricity to supply over 2,500 homes and avoid the release of 10,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

About half of the money needed to build the wind farm was raised by offering shares to the community around Westmill. The remainder has come from the Cooperative bank, confident the project was a sound investment as Westmill has secured a purchase agreement for their electricity - Good Energy is buying the power from three of the Westmill turbines for the next five years. This will provide enough electricity to supply over 1500 Good Energy customers. We hope to report on the project going live in the New Year.

Latest News

This Autumn Good Energy is launching a new service that offers individuals lots more ways to cut their carbon footprint. More info will be available at www.good-energy.co.uk very soon.

Wind Fair 2007

On Saturday 18th August over 3,000 people came along to the third Delabole Wind Fair, hosted by Good Energy. More than 30 organisations – many leaders in eco-design and home energy – exhibited at this year's event including installers, local producers and environmental groups. There were even some sustainable hot-tubs for people to dip in and try out.

Juliet Davenport, Good Energy's Chief Executive gave her view after the event, "People have been telling me what a great day they have had. There's been so much to see and do - great exhibitors, our Home Generation films, brilliant circus performers and storytelling - plenty for the adults and the kids. Everyone's leaving with a real buzz about Good Energy and renewables. It's been a real success!"



One of the day's small generator forums



Wind Fair visitors enjoy the dutchtub eco-hot tubs



The spectacular turbine illumination

Good Energy Films

Good Energy is launching four short films about home generation – we hope they will inspire people to take the leap and generate their own electricity.

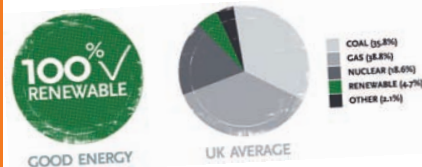
Through the stories of urban and rural homes and community case studies, we address the typical questions that are raised by the people who want to make energy at home – such as planning and grant issues.

Our films will be launched on our website this September - visit www.good-energy.co.uk/films

100% renewable

In 2005 Ofgem and the Department of Trade and Industry set up 'Fuel Mix Disclosure'. This system allows the customers of electricity companies to see how the electricity their supplier sells them is made, helping them to choose an electricity supply that will help them minimise their environmental impact.

As we go into the third year of disclosure, Good Energy's electricity supply remains 100% renewable and we believe we are still the only company to source all of our electricity entirely from renewables.



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