



MESS news

Marple, Mellor & Marple Bridge Energy Saving Strategy No.2 Autumn 2011

Vanishing of the Bees



In November MESS arranged a showing of the film, 'The Vanishing of the Bees'. This film notes that bees were on earth 20 million years before humans. But now human activity is endangering the future existence of bees.

The essential purpose of bees in nature, is pollination. 80% of our foodstuffs are pollinated by bees, and if bees disappear, then most of our fruit, vegetables, nuts and grains won't come to harvest.

Since 2007, beekeepers have found that whole colonies have been mysteriously dying. This 'colony collapse disorder' (CCD) has been seen in the USA, Taiwan, France and here in the UK.

One cause of CCD may be modern agricultural production, where massive areas are given over to one crop. When the crop has finished flowering the food source for bees disappears.

Another problem for bees is the pesticides used to keep down bugs on the crops. It may be that 'neo-nicotinoids' sprayed widely on crops all over the world, impairs the nervous system of the bees. They don't die at once, but around six months after collecting sprayed pollen, and then when they leave the hive they are unable to find their way back.

The film raises concern about our treatment of bees, our relationship with nature and our methods of food production. We need tighter legislation to protect the health of bees and ourselves.

As the film says, 'vote with your fork' and grow and eat organic.

MP

"An opportunity to face and plan, together as a community, the challenges that Climate Change will bring."

MESS - Marple, Mellor and Marple Bridge Energy Saving Strategy continues to work to raise awareness and ideas on how to save carbon emissions in the local area. The group has been running for two years and members meet each month to share their experiences of trying to live more sustainable lives and find ways whereby we can promote, in the Marple/Mellor area, our methods and discoveries.

Although our successful discounted insulation scheme is no longer functioning we recommend that you take up the free Toasty Stockport scheme which is still running at the moment. As the economic climate continues to be difficult many of these incentive based schemes, like the feed in tariff for solar panels, may be cut back. (see *overleaf*) So take up these schemes while they are available.

MESS has been showing a series of Environmental films. They have been popular with our members, as a good way of learning about many of the issues involved in climate change and environmental degradation, and anyone is welcome to join in these evenings. See them advertised on the 'MESS events' section of Marple website.

We are pleased, in this edition of MESS News, to introduce the MESS Garden Share Scheme (see *overleaf*). Do get in touch if this will help you as either garden owner or frustrated vegetable grower or if you wish to find out more about it. As you will see (*below*) we are still pursuing our campaign for more allotments in Marple. We will keep you informed.

In February 2012 MESS will again be organising an Energy Efficient SHOWCASE. This will give suppliers an opportunity to show off their products and you the chance to question and enquire about the technologies on offer. Put the 25th February in your diary!

MESS members are enthusiastic local people who are trying to offer ideas, knowledge and solutions to the challenges that we all face in these changing times. **Call on us if you think we can help or you have ideas to share.**

MM

Allotments

When our petition for increased provision for allotments in the Marple area had received over a hundred signatures, we decided to put the matter to Stockport Council at the Marple Area Committee. Our local councillors were supportive and suggested two sites in particular (the playing field at the old Peacefield school site and the garden centre area at Brabyns Park) to be investigated. However, this initiative seems to have hit an obstructive wall of Council inaction.

The current situation is dismal. There are 8 sites within the Borough's remit with a total of 93 plots. Some new plots have been created recently, none of them anywhere near Marple.



At the beginning of this year some 56 people were on waiting lists; all such lists are now closed to further applications. Legally, the Council is obliged to provide land for allotments if a request is made by more than six people, but this commitment is generally more honoured in the

breach than the observance. One reason for this is that, once created, to divert an allotment site to other uses requires Ministerial approval, and Councils cannot make money out of allotments, whereas other uses such as housing could be profitable.

It is possible that when the Coalition Government's Localism Bill reaches statutory power our task seeking allotment provision could be made easier, but opinions are divided on this matter. There are alternative community uses not using the word 'allotments' with its legal ramifications, which MESS will explore now our current petition seems to have fallen on stony ground. Sadly, the supportive words of our local councillors have not translated into action.

DM

Introducing the MESS Garden Share Scheme

Today more people are growing their own vegetables. Why? Firstly food is getting more expensive. Secondly, importing food from around the world increases CO2 emissions, and adds to climate chaos. Thirdly home grown vegetables taste better, and you can be sure they are organic.



Not all people have gardens though, and there are long waiting lists for allotments, so there are many frustrated vegetable gardeners around. On the other hand, there are people who simply don't have the time or energy to keep on top of their gardening.

Now, the MESS 'Garden Share' scheme can help both.

Garden share schemes put people who need a

vegetable patch in touch with people who have a garden which is underused. The person who owns the garden will benefit, because the vegetable patch is kept tidy, and they receive a proportion of the vegetables and fruit grown. The person using the land benefits too.

Someone from MESS talks firstly to the garden owners, and gardeners, separately, and then 'matches' them, in terms of area, size of plot, and so on. We then set up a

meeting where the arrangement is talked through, to make sure both sides understand exactly what they are agreeing to, and are happy about it. For example the agreement is usually that the gardener just tends to the vegetable plot, and isn't expected to do other garden work such as lawn cutting and hedge trimming.

MESS are currently contacting garden owners who would like to take part in the scheme, so if you have a plot large enough to grow some vegetables please contact :

MESS Garden Share Co-ordinator, Sally

Email: marplemess@gmail.com
or via
116, Longhurst Lane, Mellor, SK6 5PG.

MP

Hilary & Geoff's Eco House

Our new house needed lots doing to it so we took the opportunity to make it as low carbon as possible. We needed a new boiler and discovered that you could get a domestic sized 'combined heat and power unit' (CHP) which generates electricity while it heats the house. We also installed solar panels, both PV and hot water. The two electricity generators complement each other as the boiler does most of its work in winter when there is not so much solar power.

We use Ecotricity for gas and electricity, also claiming the feed-in tariff through them, and we have now completed our first full year. Averaged out over the year we find that Ecotricity will be paying us £52.75 and we have also had about £200's worth of 'free' electricity.

Since the feed-in tariff is index linked, it looks as if we will be getting 'free' energy for life!

GT

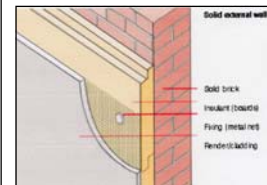
Feed in Tariff

The government seems to have made a real mess of the feed-in tariff, and is in danger of killing off the solar power industry. The FIT was originally due to be reduced in April (only for new installations), but now is going down in December to less than half the present rate. Also next year you may have to show you have other energy saving systems in place to qualify. The fall is due to take place even before the promised consultation will be completed. There may be legal challenges so watch this space!

GT

Insulating that cold wall

Solid wall insulation is complicated to apply to a whole house, but if you have one or two cold walls, it's cheap and can



remove that cold spot, paying for itself quickly.

In a 1970's house we had some non-cavity walls—one backing on to the garage and one in the lower floor backing onto solid earth. Luckily, both had few windows, doors or sockets. In one case we used sheets of insulated plasterboard—available in different thicknesses. We used the thinnest, 33mm, £15/sheet and we fixed with hammer fixings. Then we papered and painted over it to cover joints—or we could have had it skimmed. We sealed all round to avoid moisture getting in, vital to prevent condensation behind. In the second room we used vertical wooden battens, 50mm foam sheets between, sealed the edges again, and then built-in bookshelves with a plywood rear over the whole wall. The books add extra insulation!

The room is only slightly smaller, a lot cosier and the insulation value of the wall is at least tripled.

SM & MS

The Power of Community

MESS showed this inspiring and informative film produced by The Community Solution organisation in September.

Imagine...power cuts lasting twelve hours or more affecting homes, businesses and factories, no food in the shops, no fuel for cars, buses, lorries or tractors, no money for essential imports ...

Cuba faced this crisis. Until the early 1990's Cuba's economy had been dependent on cheap oil imports from the USSR, and these were suddenly terminated following the demise of the Soviet Union. This resulted in a major economic crash with devastating impacts on all the population. Such an 'energy famine' could have led to major social catastrophe, but this did not happen. The film explores how Cuba responded and explains why there was no competition over scarce resources. The government took a number of steps to make sure that no one suffered too much, helping to support a situation where people and communities were able to work together to overcome the problems. Free access to health care and education was maintained (and people's health improved). A rationing

system was set up to ensure fair food distribution and prevent hoarding. Large numbers of bicycles were imported to help ease the transportation crisis. Keeping people fed was a huge problem; the huge state farms were broken up allowing people direct access to the land for food growing as independent small farmers or as cooperatives. Cultivation of urban land began in an ad-hoc way, and this was developed so that all available urban spaces provided city dwellers with more than 80% of their fresh food. Three principles demonstrated by the Cuban people stand out: ~ being prepared to take action and plan for the long term; ~ think global and act local; ~ how to be happy with less.

At some point in the not too distant future we all face the prospect of declining supplies of fossil fuels. What will we do? Will we allow the world to be plunged into resource wars or will we learn from the Cuban experience and harness the power of community to work together to develop a fairer and more sustainable society?

SM



MESS meets monthly to discuss the scheme and matters arising and to plan the way ahead. If you would like to be part of the group and / or kept in touch with the group & other issues of Carbon Reduction in the area please complete the form below and send to: Maureen Matthews 116 Longhurst Lane, Mellor SK6 5PG

Email: maureen.matthews@which.net

YOUR DETAILS

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POST CODE: TEL.NO:

Email: