

ATC CONTACTS

HB Alternative Technology Centre,
Hebble End Mill, Hebden Bridge, HX7 6HJ.
Tel: Daytime: 01422-842121
Fax: 01422 84 31 41
info@alternativetechnology.org.uk
www.alternativetechnology.org.uk

The views expressed by individuals on the Green Page do not necessarily represent the views of the ATC.

Switch On to Renewables

Many local businesses will have by now received their first electricity bills to include the Climate Change Levy. This levy was introduced last April as an energy tax placed on business energy users, including industry, commerce and public sector bodies such as local authorities.

The level of this tax is set at 0.43p per kWh. Revenue from the levy will be recycled to business via a 0.3% cut in the main rate of National Insurance Contributions. In addition, £50 million of levy revenue will be used to support the provision of energy efficiency advice, promoting the take-up of low carbon technologies and the promotion of renewable energy projects.

By switching their supply to 'green electricity', however, businesses can claim exemption from the Levy and make savings on their electricity bills. Green electricity is

generated from renewable sources such as wind turbines, hydroelectric power through hydro power devices and from tidal and wave power machines and the burning of waste and energy crops (plants, such as fast growing trees like willow and poplar, grown specifically for use as a fuel).

Domestic as well as business customers can switch onto green electricity. On average, depending on your electricity consumption, you could cut emissions from your household by up to 1 tonne of carbon dioxide per year.

There are currently 15 renewable energy offerings managed by 13 different energy suppliers. Yorkshire Electricity, for instance, offers Green Electricity from wind and biomass. It is only available to customers living in Yorkshire.

As reported in the July Green Page, the civic offices at Northgate House in Halifax

have negotiated a contract with Yorkshire Electricity for electricity produced from renewable sources. Even though there is an 8% premium charged for the green electricity, there will still be a financial saving due to the exemption from the new climate change levy. This saving will be approximately £2,500 per annum.

The newest green electricity offering was launched on August 1st and is called "Juice". Power supplier npower has teamed up with Greenpeace to promote this new green electricity, which they hope will contribute to a much larger uptake of green pricing schemes by UK customers. In three years time, the electricity will come from the North Hoyle off-shore wind farm. In the meanwhile, the electricity will be generated by on-shore wind sources, as well as a hydro plant based in the Snowdonia mountains.

Juice will cost you no more than conventional "grey" power – it may even cost you less. You can check out savings to be made with the calculator on the npower website at: www.npower.com/html/juice-andwindpower_4467.htm

The partnership aims to get at least 50,000 UK customers onto green electricity and to help take the country from 2.8% of electricity supplied from renewable sources to 10% by 2010.

More information also available at: www.greenpeace.org.uk

Another new offering comes from Green Energy. The price for their 'Green Energy 10' tariff is set at the same level as your regional electricity company but only 10% of your electricity will be from renewable sources (10% is the government's target for electricity produced from renewables by 2010). The 'Green Energy 100' tariff however is 100% pure green electricity but you will pay a small premium over your regional electricity supplier.

Green Energy is offering its first 100,000 customers the option to receive fully paid-up shares in Green Energy UK PLC. More information from Green Energy at 9 Church Street Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 9EG or on the internet at: www.greenenergy.uk.com/

Another deal worth checking out is RSPB Energy. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has developed its own renewable energy scheme with Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE). This is 100% renewably generated electricity and available at the same price as you would pay for "conventional" electricity from your regional supplier.

For each customer that signs up to RSPB Energy, SSE will contribute £10 towards the RSPB and a further £5 per year will be paid into a fund that will be used to acquire more renewable electricity. More information at: www.rspb.org.uk/

For more information, call in at the ATC. Links to all the websites mentioned and other relevant sites can be found on the ATC website links page: www.alternativetechnology.org.uk



Solar powered street lighting outside the ATC. The three street lights now installed outside the ATC at Hebble End run off electricity generated by sunlight. During the day, two 64 watt photovoltaic panels generate electricity which is stored in batteries inside the Green

Shop. A charge controller regulates the amount of energy going into the storage batteries and also senses when it is night time and switches on the lights when they are needed.



A Sideways Look

John Morrison

Endangered species are an emotive subject, though it all depends on which species we're talking about. People are prepared to put their hands in their pockets to save giant pandas, baby seals and other appealing animals. But when the time comes to bolster the numbers of some rare leech or lamprey, people don't usually feel quite so generous.

What bothers me most isn't the extinction of a super-rare creature. I confess I find it hard to get worked up about the demise of an animal I wasn't aware of in the first place. No, what concerns me is finding so many familiar species in decline. Birds in particular. Twenty years ago song thrushes were an ever-present feature of the garden. Now their numbers are way down. Lapwings tumbled and dived - like demented black and white butterflies - over every field. They were so common that they never even got a mention in my nature diary (or 'nature dairy', as mine was called, confus-

ingly, until I learned how to spell). Why bother mentioning a bird you saw every day?

Skylarks, too, were everywhere. That lovely liquid song was the soundtrack to my childhood adventures. Now, whenever I hear one, I stop and listen - wondering when and where I will hear the next one. Redpolls, linnets, yellowhammers the colour of butter toffee, whitethroats and their scratchy summer song: these are just some of the birds that are disappearing from our heaths and hedgerows.

Even the once ubiquitous house sparrow is strangely absent from many of its former haunts. And if the sparrow (the Arthur Daly of the bird world) is unable to thrive, what hope is there for more retiring birds such as the dunnock and garden warbler?

These observations are not the ramblings of some old buffer who harks back to a golden age - when winters were warmer, young people respected their elders and beer was thruppence a quart. Well, not just that, any-

It's A Wind-up!

Most people have heard of wind-up radios and torches, which we stock at the ATC's Green Shop, but, according to a recent article in the New Scientist, these are just the start. Clockwork is making a comeback in a big way.

The wind-up revolution began 10 years ago, when British inventor Trevor Baylis produced a clockwork radio that played for 14 minutes after 30 seconds winding. Aimed originally for use in Africa, it became a surprise hit in the developed world. Since 1996 Freeplay, who market the Baylis designed radios, has sold more than a million of them to Western consumers. Sony, Philips and Aiwa all now sell wind-up radios.

Now there is news that, by the end of this year, you should be able to buy the first of the "next generation" of wind-up products - a hand-cranked charger for mobile phones. Developed by Freeplay and marketed by

Motorola, the unit will apparently work with any mobile phone currently on the market. Winding the palm sized generator for 30 seconds will give you 6 minutes of talk time or 2 hours on standby. Not a lot perhaps, but enough for emergency back-up. It is expected to retail for £45.

Another British inventor called Howard Atkin from North Yorkshire is busy working on further wind-up technology. He has prototype wind-up units designed to power anything from electric razors to laptops. His systems also use a hand-cranked generator, but, instead of a rechargeable battery, they have an energy storage device called a supercapacitor.

It may not be long until any gadget you have that currently uses a battery can be wound up instead.

way. The statistics back me up; our common birds are just not so common any more. It's depressing to think that the summers to come will be filled with the noise of traffic, radios and the banshee howl of unattended car alarms... but not much birdsong.

This, thankfully, is just one possible future. By looking at the evidence of the recent past, we can be cautiously optimistic. For example, the hard winter of 1962-3 decimated the bird population. Millions of birds died of cold or starvation. Wrens, I recall, were hit especially hard. But within five years the bird populations were back almost to what they were before the big freeze. Today, bucking the trend, wrens are thriving once again.

The year 1962 was, coincidentally, when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published. The book brought the wanton misuse of agricultural chemicals to a wider audience, and offered dire warnings about what would happen to the planet's wildlife if we continued to pollute the land with pesticides. At the time it sounded like scaremongering; in retrospect the book seems measured and understated.

We learned some of the lessons: at least farmers don't spray DDT on their crops any longer. But the biggest lesson is that the loss of our garden birds is neither inevitable nor irreversible. When we stop poisoning the birds, or grubbing up the hedgerows where their nest, their numbers will recover.

GREEN FINGERS

The Gardening Group at the ATC is starting up again... Due to increasing requests for a gardening group since the end of the summer holidays, we are starting up again on Friday mornings at 10am (beginning on Friday 28th September).

There is an ever-growing list of things to do: wild flowers need planting out along the canal, willow weaving is to be continued in Primrose Garden and the harvesting season is upon us....

Contact Susy at the ATC for details.

BIG GREEN WEEKEND

The ATC is beginning to plan its third Big Green Weekend for February 2002. As in previous years we hope to organise events all over Hebden Bridge which showcase sustainable living. If any local group or individual would like to be involved or would like to organise an event as part of the weekend, please contact Polly at the ATC.