

Sustainability in the News – No 5

This is your latest extract of news stories around sustainability and regeneration all taken from the regional on-line newsletter – bdaily – in recent weeks.

They will help you and your pupils understand some of the current issues surrounding sustainability and to learn of some of the new initiatives, products and services being offered in this growing area.

We hope they provide inspiration and ideas.

B daily May 2

Charity backing for smarter working

The Work Wise North East campaign has recently gained the support of a regional charity aiming to combat climate change.

Business in the Community (BITC) is backing the campaign as it believes that smarter working practices such as home and remote working can cut traffic congestion and carbon emissions, helping the environment. Work Wise North East, which celebrated its first anniversary last month, encourages employers to consider ways to change the traditional nine to five working culture and to adopt alternative practices such as mobile working, remote working and working from home.

Karen Wilkinson-Bell, regional director of BITC said: "BITC is keen to be part of the Work Wise North East campaign and this is why we invited Simon Roberson, chairman of WWNE to be a keynote speaker at our regional May Day Summit at the Rivergreen Centre in Durham on Thursday to stress the benefits of smarter working and how it can impact on the environment.

"Businesses in the North East are taking the lead to tackle climate change. By adapting internal practices, influencing and supporting customers and supply chain, and working with sector peers, they are helping to safeguard the environment whilst ensuring their long term success."

Simon Roberson, chairman of WWNE said: "Even a limited change in working practices and culture will lead to a reduction in transport congestion and pollution and help to combat climate change. The introduction of new information and communication technologies enable organisations to introduce greater flexibility into their working practices, enabling both home and remote working.

B daily May 5

NE recycling helps raise £1,000

Thanks to the recycling efforts of North East residents, Durham-based Premier Waste Management has made a donation of £1,000 to local charity Traidcraft Exchange. The money was raised through the Kerb-it recycling scheme, which donates £1 to charity for every tonne of waste recycled.

Heather Thompson, from Traidcraft Exchange's International Development Department, said: "1,000 tonnes of waste into a £1,000 donation shows that you really can turn trash into cash. We are really grateful to Premier Waste Management for this donation, which will be used to help poor producers in the developing world to trade themselves out of poverty."

Traidcraft Exchange, based in Team Valley, Gateshead, specialise in making trade work for the poor in developing countries. Recycling and trade are particularly relevant at present, with World

Fair Trade Day on Saturday 10 May focusing on fair trade and ecology. Traidcraft Exchange is currently managing 14 major projects with a total value of about £5.5 million. These projects are directly benefiting 350,000 poor people overseas, with a further 1.4 million indirectly benefiting.

Tony Hitchens, head of marketing at Premier Waste Management, said: "We are happy to support the work of Traidcraft. By donating money based on the amount of recyclables collected, we can reward the hard work by householders and benefit local charities." For more information email media@traidcraft.co.uk.

.....

B daily - May 7

New rural business investment begins

New and existing rural businesses looking for support to grow and develop are in line for a share of more than £1m in funding from the recently-launched Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). The money is designed to help micro-enterprises in rural parts of the region with elements such as start-up revenue and capital investment costs, technical and marketing support, product development, branding and design.

Rural business owner and One NorthEast board member Ian Brown said: "Small businesses are a huge part of the rural economy, so this is a really important area of investment for the new RDPE programme.

"It will help land-based businesses to develop alternative sources of income, and wider rural enterprises to create new jobs and to make their operations more sustainable. It will also help promote entrepreneurship, which is absolutely key to increasing the range of businesses across different sectors in rural areas. We very much look forward to seeing the first investments being made."

Jonathan Shaw, Minister for Rural Affairs, said: "I am delighted that One NorthEast has launched its fund to invest in making the North East an even better place for rural people to live and work in, and where rural businesses can prosper and grow. This is part of a record investment of £3.9 billion by the Government in rural development in England between now and 2013. It will help our farming, food and forestry industries to thrive and become more competitive, and enhance opportunity for rural businesses and communities."

The RDPE micro-enterprise funding is available through the North East England Investment Centre. Businesses wanting further information should contact Business Link on 0845 600 9 006.

For more information on RDPE in North East England, visit www.rdpenortheast.co.uk.

.....

B daily May 12

Record number of students take up the challenge

A sustainable housing project in Nigeria, a tax-saving website and a company that manufactures bespoke canvas shoes are just three of the winners from a record number of entries which won a share of £11,000 prize money at Newcastle University's Enterprise Challenge Awards Dinner last week. Enterprise Challenge, which is now in its sixth successful year, is Newcastle University's Business Planning Competition, run in association with Accenture.

PhD Architecture student Eno Nyong won the Community Impact Award, having come up with a convincing business plan for a sustainable conceptual housing project in Nigeria, together with her husband John. Eno said: "I have benefited hugely from the encouragement and support provided through the Careers Service at the university, in particular the advice given by Doug Richard (ex-Dragons' Den), who held a one-day seminar on campus. This enabled me to 'cut out the excess' from my business plan and the financial forecasting software package they gave me has been indispensable."

Nick Keeley, director of Newcastle University's Careers Service, said: "We have had a record-breaking number of 94 entries, which suggests that students are really buying into the importance of enterprise skills for their future career. The interest from the business community in the Awards Dinner has been tremendous with all 300 tickets sold out one month in advance."

Lisa Hyman of Accenture added: "We are delighted to be sponsoring the Enterprise Challenge Awards again this year because as a company, we encourage innovation and this initiative offers a great springboard for creativity, offering the support these entrants need to grow their ideas and help them materialise."

The Enterprise Challenge competition is held annually and is organised and hosted by the Careers Service on behalf of Newcastle University. For more information on the competition, visit www.enterprise.ncl.ac.uk.

Sustainable energy top of agenda at regional event

Promoting sustainable energy and reducing carbon emissions will take centre stage at an annual event this week. The Cleveland Institution of Engineers is hosting its annual conference at the University of Teesside, which will bring together top executives, leading businesses, academics and regional organisations to share best practice on innovative technology and sustainable energy.

The event, on 14 May, will feature Corus, Science City, One NorthEast, the CPI, NaREC, Strathclyde University, SembCorp and the University of Teesside.

Alex Fowler, One NorthEast's Energy Analysis and Policy Specialist Advisor, said: "The Energy sector is already a major employer in North East England and major investment opportunities are likely in the future. These opportunities will bring enormous benefits to the regional economy and present the region with the chance to be a world leader within this ever expanding field."

One NorthEast have made recent investment in renewable energy and low carbon technologies like biomass, wave and tidal power, support for business resource efficiency and studies into cutting waste and finding new markets for release.

Mr Fowler added: "It's so important that businesses and organisations think more about the impact of reducing their carbon footprint. If they do, they could reduce their bills significantly which will free up funds for expansion. That's good news for them and the region's economy."

If you are interested in attending the event, which runs from 12.30pm until 6.30pm, email events@cieng.org.

.....

B daily May 13

Getting ready for Work Wise Week

North East employers are being encouraged to think more about different approaches to working in the run up to national Work Wise Week which takes place from Thursday 15 to Wednesday 21 May.

Campaigners will be spelling out the benefits of 'smarter' working to employers and employees across the region in a bid to encourage greater take up of alternative working practices.

The week commences with National Work from Home Day and organisations are being urged to take part in home working trials to see how their organisations can benefit from home working. During the week both employers and employees are being invited to consider methods such as home, flexible, mobile and remote.

Simon Roberson, chairman of Work Wise North East said: "The age of working 9 to 5, five days a week, from a central location, is for many, fast coming to an end. This rigid work structure, which is largely dictated by culture and nothing else, is wasteful in terms of time and resources, damaging to the environment, and harmful in that it impacts upon stress levels and the health of employees.

"Smarter working will revolutionise the way people work and will increase business productivity and competitiveness. It will also reduce transport congestion and pollution, improve health, and assist disadvantaged groups.

"Many employers are already ahead of the game and are working smarter but during Work Wise Week we will be urging all organisations across the North East to take up the Work Wise mantle.

Further information about Work Wise UK, and how organisations can participate in Work Wise Week, can be found at www.workwiseuk.org.

Automotive showcase for North East

An international symposium on alternative fuelled vehicles and transport systems is to be held in the North East in September.

The two-day 'Partners4Automotive 2008' event will bring together over 100 experts from local, national and international companies and academic institutions that are working in the area of alternative fuels for vehicles and transport systems. Hydrogen, bio fuel and electricity will be explored and discussed as possible alternatives to the current petrol/diesel based system.

The event is being organised by Washington-based marketing and event management company Allancia in cooperation with the University of Sunderland's Institute of Automotive and Manufacturing Advanced Practice (AMAP).

Adrian Morris, project manager at AMAP said: "We are delighted to be acting as the event patron for Partners4Automotive 2008 and can bring this prestigious event to Sunderland and the North East of England.

"AMAP has significant strengths in developing alternative fuelled vehicles and transport systems. The event will not only provide a powerful insight into the needs and future issues that are surrounding the development and growth of this key market but also spotlight AMAP and the North East region as leading players in the sector."

Phil Eadon, Managing Director of Allancia Ltd, said: "We have known and worked with the team at AMAP for several years and were delighted to agree that we will organise our first international automotive symposium here in the North East of England. "Those firms that get involved and understand the issues and challenges ahead will be able to develop the skills and experience to help them win orders in the future."

The two-day event is being held on the Sir Tom Cowie Campus at St Peter's at Sunderland University on 17-18 September. To find out more visit www.partners4automotive2008.co.uk.

Major demolition in riverside regeneration

The regeneration of a Tyneside town is moving on with the scheduled demolition of one of South Shields' 'major eyesores'. The former Circatex plant has stood empty since it closed over two years ago, but is now destined to be torn down at the end of this year as part of the South Shields Riverside project.

The Riverside project will see the creation of five new neighbourhoods running along the river from South Shields town centre. By opening up the waterfront the regeneration project aims to reconnect the town centre and communities with the riverside.

The Circatex building was originally built for Plessey and in its heyday was an important local employer under various different companies, with 2,000 people working there at its peak.

Neil Graham, Head of Regeneration North for One NorthEast, said: "The removal of the former Circatex plant is a major milestone in this project, but just as importantly it removes a derelict building from the South Shields riverside that has become a blot on the landscape since it closed down over two years ago and will turn it into an exciting development opportunity.

"Residents can be assured that while it is a lengthy process all efforts will be made to ensure demolition and decontamination work has the minimum amount of impact on them."

Electronic polling system tested by Newcastle University

An electronic vote counting system, designed to overcome the previous problems of automated counting of ballot papers in elections, was tested for the first time at Newcastle University this week.

The 'Pret a Voter' system has been designed by computer scientists at Newcastle and Surrey Universities, who believe there may be interest from many countries, including the UK and USA.

The trial run, supported by the Electoral Reform Society, took place in the King's Road Centre at Newcastle University, when students were invited to cast a vote for one of three charities.

Professor Peter Ryan, a computer scientist who led the project, said that a successful trial run will help prove that the system could be introduced in polling stations. Eventually, the system could allow people to vote from home via the internet, but that would require further development, he said.

To use the system, voters are given a ballot paper and draw a cross by a candidate (in this case, a charity) in the normal way. However, the positions of the candidates on the paper are selected at random. After the cross has been drawn, the voter tears off the list of candidates, so that it is impossible to tell who has been voted for. The strip of paper with the cross is then scanned in to a computer, along with a serial number which allows the computer to allocate the vote to the correct candidate. Afterwards, voters can check that their vote has been cast by logging on to a special website and entering their serial number.

Many countries have tried to introduce electronic voting in the past but results have generally been disappointing. Professor Ryan says the big advantage of Pret a Voter is that people and auditors can check that the system has worked properly and fairly and has not been tampered with illegally.

For more information about Pret a Voter, visit www.pretavoter.com.

B daily May 15

Support for Seaham film project

The creation of an international Centre for Creative Excellence at Seaham in County Durham has moved a step closer.

Easington District Council has granted planning permission for the project, the company behind the project said this week. Coolmore Estates said the centre would generate more than 2,400 jobs on site and more than 1,800 indirectly, resulting in a contribution of more than £52 million to the economy of Easington District. The proposed Centre will comprise a full-service media business park, an educational campus with student accommodation, two hotels and serviced apartments and an agricultural college.

However, owing to the regional significance of the project the plans now have to be approved by the Government Office for the North East, which could see the project receiving the final go ahead this summer.

Coolmore director Alistair Ross said: "I am very pleased with the outcome. Our proposal has been met with overwhelming support throughout the consultation process. "The council's decision will enable the detailed implementation work to begin to ensure that the Centre for Creative Excellence will be a facility that will generate training, education and job opportunities for local people and make a significant contribution to the North East economy."

Councillor Alan Napier, leader of District of Easington Council, said: "This is an exciting venture not only for the district but the region as a whole. It will not only put the spotlight on East Durham as a location for national and international film making, but most importantly, bring a significant level of investment to the area with the employment benefits to the area and beyond being considerable."

The Centre for Creative Excellence would incorporate a full service media business park and light industrial workshops offering digitally supported production and post-production facilities which would service the feature film, television, advertising and other media-related industries.

There will also be facilities for national and regional educational institutions to provide training opportunities in film and television production, advertising and other media and entertainment industries.

B daily May 25

On-campus recruitment campaign goes green

Students at Durham and Newcastle universities were invited to compete in a 'Carbon Gym' as part of a professional services firm's green approach to its on-campus recruitment campaign.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP's recruitment team set students a 'Roller Racing' challenge on stationary bikes to encourage them to think about their carbon output.

The team also calculated the carbon footprint created by the recruitment tour across the country, including travel to and from events and student interviews. In addition to using choosing more environmentally-friendly forms of travel, the firm also purchased carbon credits to offset the carbon outputs of the UK recruitment team's activities.

The green recruitment campaign is part of the firm's strategy to manage and reduce their carbon emissions by educating future recruits about their impact on society.

Cathy Little, student recruitment manager, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Newcastle said: "Corporate responsibility is becoming increasingly important to both businesses and individuals and our campaign has been a great way to promote its importance to the student community and our business leaders of tomorrow."

.....

B daily May 27

Skills gap identified in North East energy market

There are currently over 1,700 jobs available in the North East energy sector, it has been revealed.

According to NOF Energy, the business development organisation for the oil, gas and energy-related sectors, who carried out research ahead of its Jobs4Energy Recruitment Fair on June 12, the North East energy market has in the region of 1,730 vacancies.

The study of North East energy sector employers also highlighted the variety of roles available across the sector including; project engineers, marine risk management professionals, deepwater drilling specialists and skilled machine tool operators.

These jobs offer positive career prospects and salaries upwards of £30,000 a year for some roles.

As the figures indicate, the sectors are facing ever-increasing skills gaps, which have been attributed to the challenges of an ageing workforce coupled with the continual development of new energy-generating opportunities.

To address this issue, NOF Energy, in partnership with a range of industry employers, is hosting the Jobs4Energy Recruitment Fair at St James' Park, Newcastle in June.

The event, which is being sponsored by a number of organisations including Jobs@pertemps, AMEC and CTC Marine Projects, will play host to around 30 employers from the oil, gas and energy sectors.

It is also open to experienced energy professionals looking for a new challenge and skilled workers who want to move into the sector from other industries.

Also invited to attend will be schools, colleges and universities to help them find out more about employment opportunities on behalf of their students. The event will also help forge new links between education and employers to arrange work placements, apprenticeships and graduate programmes.

George Rafferty, Chief Executive of NOF Energy, said: "These figures are a strong indication of the challenge facing the North East energy sector and put the skills shortage into clear perspective. Employers are crying out for talented personnel and can offer North East people the opportunity to be part of an exciting, expanding and dynamic sector, which offers secure career opportunities.

