

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

No.1

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A new quarterly bulletin for the church

The principle of Sustainable Development is founded in the Christian belief in a binding covenant, renewed in Christ, between God and humanity. It's a covenant that establishes moral responsibilities of human beings to each other and to creation.

The church has a great opportunity to work as a partner – or as a 'stakeholder' – in promoting Sustainable Development. As it promotes Sustainable Development, the church will be witnessing to the Kingdom of God and to Christian stewardship of the Earth's resources.

The aim is to help the church make connections so that the church may make a prophetic contribution to the promotion of Sustainable Development.

Each edition of CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT will include:

- News of current issues in waste, energy, water and the carbon agenda.
- Informed analysis and insight.
- Opportunities for the church to contribute to promotion of Sustainable Development.
- Links to useful websites.

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CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT is edited and produced by the Revd Dr Andrew Craig and the Revd Jon Hale.

1. Archbishop of Canterbury's New Year Message 2008

In his New Year message for 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, tackled the issue of waste and a sustainable society. He challenged listeners to resolve to remember their obligations to future generations:

"One of the buzzwords of recent years has been 'sustainability', and, like all buzzwords, it tends to be used annoyingly all over the place, often for things it doesn't really fit. But what the word points to is the sense of obligation to hand on to our children and grandchildren a legacy that helps them live and flourish. Building to last is something we all understand.

"And if we live in a context where we construct everything from computers to buildings to relationships on the assumption that they'll need to be replaced before long – what have we lost?

"A lot the time we just don't let ourselves think about the future with realism. A culture of vast material waste and emotional short-termism is a culture that is a lot more fragile than it knows. How much investment are we going to put in towards a safer and more balanced future? A big question. But too big to avoid.

"And, if we feel a bit paralysed by just how big it is, well, we can at least start by a visit this week to the nearest recycling bins".

2. Stewardship and your council's refuse collection service

Wastes management is a whole new world of acronyms.

Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme

LATS means the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme, the trading system for local authorities the Government introduced in 2004 to enable England to achieve reductions in land-filling of Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) that have been set by Europe – a 65% reduction by 2020 compared with 1995 by 2020, starting with a 25% reduction by 2010.

Alternate Weekly Collections

AWCs are Alternate Weekly Collections – the regime now used by nearly 40% of all local authorities in England and Wales that now collect residual rubbish from households only once every 2 weeks.

In the weeks leading up to last year's council elections some of the popular press ran a campaign to have weekly collections restored. Although the environment is (thankfully) not generally a party political issue, several local parties in opposition made pledges to restore weekly collections. In just a few cases they were elected and AWCs were put into reverse. In a populist move, the Conservative front bench spokesman on local government, Eric Pickles MP, joined his voice to those calling for weekly collections to be restored – and also inveighed against "pay-per-throw", a measure being considered by the Government to allow local authorities to charge householders according to what they throw away instead of a service that seems to be free at the point of delivery.

Charging people proportionately

Eric Pickles probably isn't an anti-environmentalist. Rather he seems to regard this as a sneaky way in which the Government is getting people to pay more taxes or put up with reduced services as a means of taking the pressure off public expenditure.

However the UK is the only European country that doesn't permit its local authorities to charge people proportionately for waste management services.

A cultural change

The truth is that we are in the middle of a cultural change. Only a few years ago local authorities collected all the rubbish we chose to leave out for collection each week and took it away. Few of us gave much thought to where it went. Recycling rates of mainly less than 5% (compared with an average of about 30% now) were consistent with recycling being viewed as an optional extra – for people with "green" inclinations.

Under the new order, people are expected to separate their rubbish into recyclable and compostable fractions for separate collection. As part of the deal, the Council will also collect that part of the rubbish that is not realistically recyclable (only about 30% according to most estimates).

A huge effort in public education and awareness raising

In practice, engaging people more with recycling and reducing waste necessitates a huge effort in public education and awareness raising.

It also necessitates limiting the amount of residual waste that may be thrown away, or else providing a strong financial incentive to reduce it. This doesn't have to mean AWCs, but the alternatives are issuing smaller bins, which is expensive and wasteful if people already have bins, and introducing some form of variable charging ("pay-per-throw").

Financial "incentives"

In the 2007 Climate Change Bill the Government introduced a rather weak measure that will enable a small number of trial local authorities (5) to introduce financial "incentives" for householders to reduce their residual waste. Sensitive to the charge that this is back-door taxation, the Government has insisted that the "incentives" must be "revenue neutral" – what is taken from people who choose not to recycle much has to be returned as a reward to people who do, probably through a rebate.

Not surprisingly – because this will involve a lot of extra administration and organization – there isn't much appetite among local authorities for "revenue neutral" incentives, even when the Government is offering some financial help to the successful bidders.

The new order of household wastes management

AWCs work. Recycling is increased by around 20% or more.

If councils also make the effort to control side waste (additional waste left for collection next to a bin) through education and enforcement, this is also an effective measure for waste minimisation – the top of the "waste hierarchy".

However, people object. In a recent poll of householders in one of the boroughs I work for, the top three causes of anxiety about AWCs were to do with smells, flies and vermin from food waste left out for up to 2 weeks. Next to this is the feeling that the bin isn't large enough for all the waste. These two main objections can be overcome by arranging separate collections of food waste, and the light bulky fractions (such as plastics and cardboard) that take up a lot of space. This is the new order of household wastes management.

Environmental stewardship

For Christians recycling is an important part, although not the only part, of environmental stewardship. We are called to be salt and light to society as a whole (Matt. 5:13-16), which means not only being good recyclers ourselves, but also engaging with local authorities and helping to reduce their perceived political risks in establishing collection systems for more sustainable household waste management – and countering the arguments of those who argue for Business As Usual (BAU). Join the debate.

Andrew Craig

3. Shrinking the Footprint

Visit www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org

Has your church carried out an Energy Audit yet? If not:

- visit the site
- download and fill in the Energy Audit Questionnaire
- find out who your local *Measuring our Footprint* (diocesan) contact is and send in the form.

Of course the questionnaire is only the first step. Also downloadable from the website is a "mini audit" form – another questionnaire that hints at a number of practical things you could do to reduce your church's energy consumption and carbon footprint.

Here's a practical suggestion: one church had evening worship in a "café church" style, with a hymn, a psalm, prayer and then a showing of Al Gore's film: *An Inconvenient Truth*. Afterwards we discussed the film and what practical actions we could do as a church both to encourage each other in better stewardship and also to reduce the carbon footprint of the church.

A list of actions we brainstormed went in a report to the PCC and there was the kernel of an action programme. In our case energy efficient lighting and looking at the boilers in the church and the church hall came near the top of our list.

Could reducing the carbon footprint be made the basis for an *Eco-congregation* programme?

Carbon offsetting is one of the possibilities raised in www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org. It is good to promote better stewardship by putting resources into projects that will help reduce carbon emissions in developing or third world countries.

However could this also be a bit of a kop-out? We can afford to buy out our commitment without ourselves taking the time and trouble to implement the most effective possible measures to reduce carbon emissions.

Andrew Craig

4. 'Drinking bottled water is almost morally indefensible'

Phil Woolas, the Environment Minister, upset the bottled water industry, but delighted many people, when he announced on 16th February that 'Drinking bottled water is almost morally indefensible.' He said it was daft that six million litres of bottled water were drunk every day in Britain when safe tap water was universally and cheaply available. Environmentalists have highlighted the unnecessarily high carbon-dioxide emissions from the packaging, transportation and disposal of bottled water products. Later in February, Thames Water, supported by Friends of the Earth and Mr Woolas, started a campaign to persuade restaurants, pubs and hotels to make tap water more easily available to customers.

Bottled water has been calculated to have a carbon footprint more than several hundred times bigger than tap water for some brands.

Mr Woolas was particularly concerned about water being imported to Britain because of the potential damage to supplies in other countries. "It borders on morally being unacceptable to spend hundreds of millions of pounds on bottled water when we have pure drinking water, when at the same time one of the crises that is facing the world is the supply of water," he told the BBC Panorama programme. "There are many countries in the world who unfortunately haven't got pure tap water. We should be concentrating our efforts on putting that right in my opinion."

He received unexpected backing from Peter Ainsworth, the Shadow Environment Secretary, who agreed that the industry and consumers had big moral questions to answer. Steve Webb, the Liberal Democrat environment spokesman, said that the environmental impacts caused by the bottled-water industry were sufficiently worrying that the Government should introduce taxes to pay for damage to be put right. Taxes, either directly on the sales of each bottle or through mechanisms such as landfill tax, would put pressure on consumers to change their behaviour.

For more on this go to:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article3378791.ece>

5. The Carbon Agenda

The Stern Report

During 2006, Sir Nicholas Stern, Head of the Government Economic Service, produced an influential report about climate change for the Government – the Stern Report.

This was notable for being the first to recount not the environmental cost, not the social cost, but the economic cost of climate change.

Sir Nicholas calculated that action starting now seriously to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide could be done at a cost of about 1% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), but that if this weren't done, the economic cost would be far higher because dangerous climate change would be inevitable – and the cost would fall disproportionately on the poor countries. This is the outcome of Business As Usual (BAU).

Climate Change Bill

On the basis of his work, in last year's Climate Change Bill, targets have been set to reduce the UK's emissions by 60% by 2050. However Sir Nicholas has advised that an 80% reduction would be needed to stabilise the atmosphere.

The Climate Change Bill relies for implementation mainly on carbon trading – a measure that gives corporations that use a lot of energy to generate electricity, extract materials and manufacture things, a strong incentive to reduce their emissions (by becoming more efficient or reducing their operations).

At the other end of the scale is a timid measure that will enable a small number of local authorities to introduce "incentive" schemes ("pay per throw") to encourage householders to reduce their residual waste. (See Feature no.2 in this edition of **CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**).

For the first time, local authorities are being required to report carbon emissions and encouraged to sign the "Nottingham Declaration" committing them to take effective action to reduce emissions.

A challenge to the church

Climate change is also a challenge to the church. One commentator has estimated that BAU would make the planet uninhabitable (through sea level rise or drought) for 200 million people by 2050. Where will they go?

By Jesus we are called to proclaim the Kingdom of God - through our stewardship of the environment and pursuit of international justice and other means.

Community and individual level

It's difficult not to draw an analogy between BAU for the environment and BAU for the Church. Both lead to ultimate failure.

Something radically different is needed for the future compared with the past, and some will find this very difficult to accept. We are called to action at every level of society, from Global through European, national, regional, and local to community and individual. Archbishop Rowan's Christmas sermon raised the environmental issue at the national and international dimension, but it is on the community and individual level that the Church is likely to make the greatest impact.

The issue has many facets, from recycling and home energy conservation, through transport, holidays, food, and consumption of all sorts. It has to do with personal life-style, community (and corporate – those of us who are in paid employment) priorities and also with what we will vote for. It is also about prayer and hope and self awareness before God.

(First published in *Durham Newslink*, March-April 2008). Andrew Craig

6. News from EcoCongregation

Eco-congregation Award winners Leytonstone United Free Church in London are busy recycling in their church – they have a recycling point where all the boxes provided by the council are kept, and notices up around the building urging people to use the recycling facilities provided.



Likewise, St Andrew's Eastern Green, Coventry also have encouraged their members and local people to bring in items not accepted by the council for recycling, such as old printer cartridges and spectacles no longer required.

Dorking Quaker Meeting have ambitious recycling ideas: they began by collecting plastic, until the council began to do that themselves. Now they collect tetrapacks, as, after lobbying, the council has recently agreed to offer recycling of these. So members have been hoarding them in readiness. Labelled bins in the kitchen encourage recycling of paper, tins, cans and plastic bottles, all of which is recycled by the council.

Many churches can begin to offer recycling points as a service to people in the community – making recycling easier for people. All that is required is some research as to what to collect, where to send it, collection points in the church and willing volunteers to send things off. Once people get into the habit at home, they can get on with doing it at home!

Jo Rathbone

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7. 'Iconic' carrier bags

On 16th February 2008 the BBC News website reported that Glastonbury was set to follow Modbury as a 'plastic bag free town'. The London Local Authorities (Shopping Bags) Bill was deposited by London Councils in Parliament last November: the Bill introduces into London a prohibition on the supply of certain bags by retailers.

But at a seminar organised by the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM) on 25th January 2008, attended by Jon Hale, Jane Bickerstaffe (Director of the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment (INCPEN)) said that the environmental impact of one-use plastic carrier bags is over-emphasised, because these bags form only 0.3% of the total waste stream. Go to: <http://www.ciwm.co.uk/> and <http://www.incpen.org/>.

Nevertheless, the seminar accepted that these bags are 'iconic': their rejection symbolises a widespread desire to achieve a more sustainable future.

The town of Modbury describes itself on its website as Great Britain's first plastic bag free town. Its website urges other towns and communities to follow suit, and gives four reasons to do so:

1. A person uses a plastic carrier bag on average for only 12 minutes.
2. A plastic bag can take between 500 to 1000 years to break down in the environment.
3. In the UK at least 200 million plastic bags end up as litter on our beaches, streets and parks every year.
4. When a plastic bag enters the ocean it becomes a harmful piece of litter. Many marine animals mistake plastic bags for food and swallow them, with painful and often fatal consequences.

Modbury lies close to the south coast of Devon. The initiator of the plastic bag ban in Modbury is Rebecca Hosking, whose motivation comes from seeing at first hand the effects of waste plastics on wildlife in the Pacific Ocean, whilst working there as a wildlife filmmaker.

The motivations for banning plastic bags in the town of Modbury are therefore seen to be:

- Preventing harm to wildlife. This is the primary motivation of the originator of the Modbury scheme.
- Avoiding wastefulness: why use something for only 12 minutes and then discard it, when it will take up to 1000 years to break down?
- Preventing litter. Leaving litter is an offence under Section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Sections 88 – 94 and Section 99 also concern littering offences.

London Councils is co-ordinating the London Local Authorities (Shopping Bags) Bill. On its website it does not spell out specific motivations for its Bill, but refers to:

- 'The vast majority of these bags either end up in landfill or littering the streets'
- 'Environmental blight caused by throwaway shopping bags'.

Thus, we see in London motivations centred mainly on prevention of litter and a general desire to do away with articles that are effectively synonymous with landfill and 'environmental blight'.

The Government has already called on retailers to take voluntary action to encourage the shift away from single-use carrier bags. The Budget 2008 announced that the Climate Change Bill will legislate so that, if there is not sufficient progress on a voluntary basis by the end of the year, the Government can exercise powers early next year to impose a charge on these bags.

London Councils: <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/doc.asp?doc=22150&cat=937>

The Modbury website includes a list of all other plastic bag-free communities in the UK: <http://www.plasticbagfree.com/>

The BBC News website gives a list of countries that impose a plastic bag ban at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/7268960.stm>

8. Opportunities for churches to contribute to sustainable development

Opportunity	Which article in this edition of CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?	Page number
Visit the nearest recycling bins.	The Archbishop of Canterbury's New Year message.	1
Play your part in encouraging people to separate their household waste, so that as much as possible is put out for recycling, and as little as possible put out for landfill with no 'side waste' (additional non-recyclable waste left for collection next to a landfill waste bin).	Stewardship and your council's refuse collection service.	2
Separate collection of food wastes can help allay people's fears about alternate weeks' collection of household waste and can put food waste to good use. In Marks Gate (in the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham) the Vicar took the initiative to set up a food waste recycling scheme. The food waste is turned into compost. To find out more go to http://www.earthresources.org.uk/pdf/App%20F.pdf	Stewardship and your council's refuse collection service.	3
Join the sustainable waste debate by being good recyclers ourselves, engaging with local authorities and helping to reduce their perceived political risks in establishing collection systems for more sustainable household waste management – and countering the arguments of those who argue for Business As Usual.	Stewardship and your council's refuse collection service	3
Carry out a www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org energy audit.	Shrinking the Footprint.	3
Carry out a www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org mini-audit.	Shrinking the Footprint.	3
Hold a "café church" style, with a hymn, a psalm, prayer and then a showing of Al Gore's film: <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> . Then discuss the film and what practical actions you could do as a church both to encourage each other in better stewardship and also to reduce the carbon footprint of the church.	Shrinking the Footprint.	3
Stop buying bottled water.	'Drinking bottled water is almost morally indefensible'.	4
Ask for tap water in restaurants.	'Drinking bottled water is almost morally indefensible'.	4
Put notices up around your church building urging people to use the recycling facilities	News from EcoCongregation	5

provided, like at Leytonstone United Free Church.		
Encourage church members and local people to bring in items not accepted by the council for recycling, such as old printer cartridges and spectacles no longer required, like at St Andrew's Eastern Green, Coventry.	News from EcoCongregation	5
Label bins in your church kitchen to encourage recycling of paper, tins, cans and plastic bottles, like at Dorking Quaker Meeting.	News from EcoCongregation	5
Remember to take your re-usable bags with you when you go to the shop or supermarket, so you don't have to use single-use bags. Graciously don't accept unnecessary bags if they are offered to you.	'Iconic' carrier bags.	6

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Andrew Craig

After 12 years as an industrial materials scientist, Andrew Craig started working as a local authority recycling officer in the early 1990s, and as waste management development officer for the Tees Valley local authorities from 2000. His portfolio of responsibilities in the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit now includes climate change and energy policy. He is policy officer of the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) and a waste adviser to the Local Government Association.

Ordained in 2003 and 2004, he is licensed to All Saint's Church, Stranton, Hartlepool where he operates as a Minister in Secular Employment.

Jon Hale

Jon Hale is a Church of England clergyman in full time post as Vicar of All Saints', Crawley Down in West Sussex. He has a professional background in waste planning, and he's picked up a bit of waste management along the way.

In the Autumn of 2007 he did research into Opportunities for the Church to Promote Sustainable Waste Management in England, and you can read the outcome at www.earthresources.org.uk.

Jon has a particular interest in encouraging the church to work with local government and waste companies in promoting sustainable waste management.

Jo Rathbone

Jo Rathbone runs the Eco-congregation programme in England & Wales, part-time. She lives with her husband and two girls in Coventry, cycling out to the office on the Royal Showground.

Jo is also involved with Christian Ecology Link and the Anabaptist Network, and has a passion for caring for the environment as this is better for the planet, and enables a lifestyle which has justice for people at its heart, too.

Please email Andrew or Jon (co-editors) if you would like to contribute an article to **CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**. The editors reserve the right to decide the content of **CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**. The next edition of **CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** will be published on 1st July 2008. Please send any material for consideration for inclusion in the July edition to either of the co-editors by 15th May.

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