



# Ecodyfi newsletter Winter 2005-6



## Welcome Bev, but not goodbye Tom!

In January 2006 Tom O’Kane left his job as Sustainability Officer to follow some of his other interests – including new baby Sati and new building projects – but we could say that we’d gained one rather than lost. Because as well as taking on Bev Dimmock to start as Sustainable Living Project Officer in February, we’ve already welcomed Tom back to organise the “Get Growing” gardening course that he established with Ian Mitchell in 2005.

Bev’s main focus will be on an innovative Eco Foot-printing project for the Dyfi Valley. We have short-term support from PAVO’s European-funded SPIRIT II scheme as well as WWF and Environment Wales funding, and we hope to run a long-term project in partnership with CAT and WWF. It will involve young people helping to work out the environmental impact of households in the valley as well as of the area as a whole, and then – of course – working to reduce these impacts.

## AGMs & Half Year Forum for Members

50 people attended our AGM in June 2005 and heard about work being undertaken with local partners to stimulate the local economy and bring people together.

Former Ceredigion MP Simon Thomas praised **ecodyfi** for getting local people involved in global issues such as climate change. He urged members not to fall into the trap of doing nothing just because the problem seems so big. “If we all do our bit it will make a difference,” he said. In the face of what he called “our biggest challenge,” Simon suggested using our consumer power to pressure big business, our vote to pressure Government and our voice to educate each other.

Don’t miss our Half Year Members’ Forum on March 2 at Machynlleth Bowling Club with guest speaker Professor Peter Midmore – all are welcome! We’d like you to help us set priorities and complete our forward plan.

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[www.ecodyfi.org.uk](http://www.ecodyfi.org.uk)

- An information resource for all local people
- Membership form on-line— join us for £1; we need your support.

## What is ecodyfi?

- The community regeneration group for the Dyfi Valley
- With projects in waste, renewable energy, tourism, community planning, transport and more
- Committed to strengthening the local economy through careful stewardship of natural and cultural resources
- Managed by a Board of 17 local farmers, business people and other volunteers
- Supported by the Welsh Development Agency

## ecodyfi Board

**Aled Griffiths, Glantwymyn, Co-Chair**

Alun Jones, Cadfarch  
Andy Rowland, Machynlleth  
Bev Dimmock, Machynlleth  
Ellen ap Gwynn, Ceulanamaes-mawr

Gill Jones, Glantwymyn  
Guy Pargeter, Llangynfelin  
Jonathan Hill, Machynlleth  
Marit Olsson, Corris

**Martin Ashby, Glantwymyn, Co-Chair**

Nick Smyth  
Paul Allen, Corris  
Peter Jones, Cadfarch  
Teresa Walters, Borth  
Ursula Byrne, Ysgubor y Coed



## Don’t forget the bag!

One of the easiest and simplest ways we can reduce our own foot prints is to shop locally – not only for locally produced goods, but also through supporting local independent shops. If you’re buying fresh locally grown vegetables, they’re going to be much healthier for you

too – as vitamin contents plummet within the first day or two. And why not pick up your fresh and local foods in an **ecodyfi** biodegradable jute bag? The caption will remind others to shop local too. Only £3 for members – pick one up from Tŷ Bro Ddyfi.

## Waste minimisation & biodiesel

During 2005, Tom carried out an audit of the waste produced by Dyfi Valley businesses. Bev has inherited his report and will be considering opportunities to improve matters. Meanwhile, ecodyfi has been collaborating with Mid Wales Energy Agency and Dilwyn Jenkins to explore

the potential for producing biodiesel locally from used vegetable oils. The report is expected soon. Both projects were funded by Glasu, the European-funded initiative to stimulate the use of more natural products in Powys.



# Ecodyfi: new involvements



## Mentor Allan

**Ecodyfi** is the lead organisation for a local partnership that is planning a new well-being project in the Dyfi Valley. "Mentor Allan", which translates as "Venturing Out", is a Wales-wide project aimed at increasing activity levels amongst the 'hard to reach' sedentary population by increasing the recreational use of the natural environment. Project funding will be for four years if the bid to the Big Lottery Fund is successful. Our main target groups are parents of young children, particularly young parents, 11 – 18 year olds, especially those at risk of exclusion, plus people with mental health issues.

We hope to offer orienteering and treasure trails, golf, cycling and various fun activities in

woodland. We are working with CAMAD, Sure Start, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and others. Give us a call if you could offer activities or help organize this!

## Carnegie community cohesion project

**Ecodyfi**, together with Voluntary Arts Wales and local partners, have submitted a proposal to the Carnegie Trust to support a long term Dyfi Valley community cohesion project. The working group's vision is for the Valley to become "a place where all sections of the community can afford to live, have satisfying livelihoods and enjoy a good quality of life, so that young people want to stay and/or return. The great energy of the valley community will have been harnessed and united

and continue to celebrate its diversity." The project aims to create a community space (in the Plas?) through a process which brings together the main cultural streams in the valley for common purposes and reflects their different traditions.

## Ysbryd y Mwynwyr (Spirit of the Miners)

Coordinated by **ecodyfi** and County Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, the Community Councils of Ceulanamaesmawr, Llangynfelyn and YsguboryCoed are bidding for funds to prepare interpretive boards and pamphlets outlining local mining history and drawing attention to the public footpaths in the area, many of them originally used by the old miners. We are also working with Llandre Heri-

tage Society on similar proposals that include improving access to part of the Hafan Tramway above Talybont.

Ysbryd y Mwynwyr is a local fund administered by Ceredigion County Council aimed at promoting tourism and economic development on the basis of the rich heritage of the old mines that were for centuries so important to the economy in north Ceredigion. It is made up of European Objective 1 money together with money from the Countryside Council for Wales and Tourism Partnership Mid Wales.

Large and participative audiences attended meetings in Talybont and Taliesin in November 2005, for presentations on the history of the area and to share their memories. There will be more of these.



## Samhain – Good for the local economy

200 lantern-bearing children, together with 200 adult participants and performers, directed by 50 voluntary safety marshals, set off in a street-filling spectacle based on the theme of Time for the Samhain lantern procession in October 2005.

Of the large crowd who lined the streets, ecodyfi volunteer Martine interviewed 100 people (representing 329 in total) to find out where they and their family/group members had come from. She found that 39% were staying overnight away from home, 13.6% had come to the

## New Tourism Projects

event/area just for the day/evening and that 47.4% were from the immediate area. This is good news for Machynlleth – the average overnight visitor spends £38 per day – and has started committee volunteers, organisers and tourism providers thinking about making more of the half term week for visitors.

The event was funded by the Welsh Development Agency and Powys County Council as well as by many local businesses and individuals. It included 10 lantern-making sessions held at Celtica during the week running up to the event.

## Mountain Biking Trail Training

The Mountain Bike Trail Build Training Project has now trained 8 local people in valuable skills.

The project, which started in November last year and runs for 13 weeks, has been based in various remote parts of the Dyfi Forest – wherever there were improvements to be made and new surfacing to be done. So, at the same time as

training people, Dyfi Mountain Biking has seen major improvements to the trail.

Trainees have learned all aspects of trail building, surfacing and maintenance as well as developing a range of key skills. And they are now being offered opportunities for specialist training, such as chainsaw work.

The training programme is funded by the Social Risk Fund, which is aimed at economic regeneration, through raising skills levels and increasing access to training and employment. Supervisors on the project included Tristan Merry-Howe from Ecotrails, the company who built the Climachx. Only 4 years ago Tristan was himself a trainee on a similar mountain bike trails building training project at Nant yr Arian near Aberystwyth. Tristan says, "It was a great start for me, teaching me valuable skills in what is becoming a big industry".

## Eco tourism marketing

With partners Arriva, RSPB,

CAT, Tourism Partnership Mid Wales, The Wynnstay, Eco Retreats and Canolfan Corris Hostel, ecodyfi are planning an eco tourism marketing project aimed at bringing high spend "responsible" visitors to the areas to enjoy self-packaging "eco" breaks.

## Events Management training

Over recent years **ecodyfi** has been working to bring events organisers together to network, share resources and join forces wherever possible. This year we're rolling out a programme of training sessions for events organisers, delivered by events management professionals Sam Morton and Annie Grundy and funded by Medrwn, who facilitate tourism industry training across Mid Wales. A taster session on January 12th has identified local needs and further sessions will run in the Spring – contact Medrwn, Ty Glyndwr, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8WW for details of these sessions or to let them know about your training needs. Tel: 01654 704201 or email [enquiries@medrwn.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@medrwn.org.uk)



# Ecodyfi in action



## Dyfi Valley organic garden training!

- FREE “GET GROWING” COURSE starts March 2006 – apply immediately!
- Receive a certificate in organic gardening
- A practical course held in a working organic walled garden (Ynyslas)
- Any age & ability welcome

No time? Then join our postal or web based course!! For details contact Tom O’Kane, 01654 703 965 / 01970 832993 [tom.okane@ecodyfi.org.uk](mailto:tom.okane@ecodyfi.org.uk)

## “Get Growing” Wins Award

The Get Growing website developed by designer Dave Thorpe of Cyberium, with Tom’s direction and Teresa’s weekly photo diary, won an AOL award including a prize of £2000! This gives us some of the cash required to develop the website and extend involvement to selected primary schools. Once again the NPHS Inequalities in Health Programme will be providing financial support. See [www.ecodyfi.org.uk/growing](http://www.ecodyfi.org.uk/growing)

*Some of last year’s Get Growing Students with the herb spiral they created at Ynyslas Gardens, Borth. Trainer Ian Mitchell is on the right.*



## Community Buildings

### Future of the Plas, Machynlleth

Machynlleth & District Local Community Forum (with ecodyfi being its Secretariat) is coordinating communication between the community and Powys County Council about the use of this important building once Celtica closes. A Steering Group has been established to formulate proposals for a multi-purpose community-managed centre. Working Groups are focussing on:

- Office and studio spaces for rent
- Encouraging a cluster of creative enterprises that use video and other new media
- Community activities, and a performance space to complement the Tabernacl’s facilities
- Education & heritage, community education & the needs of young people

There is no guarantee that these ideas can be worked up into a viable plan but many individuals are putting in a lot of effort and imagination. If you would like to join in, contact Andy Rowland on 01654 703965 or Meic Llewellyn at [meic@vaw.org.uk](mailto:meic@vaw.org.uk). Long-term plans will take time to develop and attract funding, so a linked



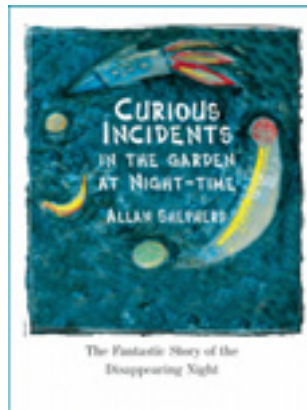
*Sion Aeron speaks at the Plas*

group is liaising with the Council about what happens in the interim. We hope the doors will be kept open for various activities.

### Update on Old School, Bontgoch

Using WDA funding, ecodyfi supported the community group in Bontgoch in carrying out feasibility work towards re-opening the only community building in the village. As a result, Ceredigion County Council’s planning committee refused permission for a change of use to residential. The owners have now put the old school on the market and Cymdeithas Elerch is exploring how to raise the funds.

## Local interest books



### Curious Incidents in the Garden at Night-time

Don’t miss this wonderful book by CAT’s own Allan Shepherd.

It was voted Christmas Number One book by *Garden Answers Magazine!* They describe it as a “practical gardening book ... also a novel as well as an environmental fable ... (and) an intriguing and unique insight into nocturnal plants and animals.”

Allan’s curious creation explores evolution, ecology and extinction through the eyes of a gardener. You can buy it at the Quarry Shop or CAT shop.

Price £8.99

ISBN: 1-90217-525-5

### A Tale of Two Rivers

Brings together evocative colour images by Jean Napier and tales, both ancient and modern, by Alun Richards, that take the reader on a journey from mountain to sea along the Dyfi and Mawddach rivers.

Price £12 plus £1.50 p+p from [info@jean-napier.com](mailto:info@jean-napier.com)  
ISBN: 0-86381-989-3





# Solutions



## Feature article: "Powerdown" + Renewables: solving peak oil & climate change. Paul Allen & Alex Randall, CAT

Most leading climate scientists now conclude that if our global greenhouse gas emissions exceed the planet's critical 'tipping point', it will set us on course for abrupt, accelerated or run-away climate change. And even if we meet our climate change targets, humanity can only avoid the 'tipping point' if the other countries follow suit. A 'global solution' must be developed which embraces all our needs. The major contender, 'Contraction and Convergence' suggests that we in the overdeveloped west must contract our level of emissions to converge at some 'fair share' with those of the majority world.

At the same time, our unstoppable oil economies are now being halted by the immovable facts of geology. Rather than talking about when oil could "run out", the peak oil experts predict (as M. King Hubbert did way back in 1956) that despite accelerating demand, the global rate of production may be reaching its peak. Set against escalating demand, prices will rise dramatically and become increasingly volatile.

Despite continuous warning from oil geologists and oil economists across the world, little action has been taken to

deal with Peak Oil because the prevailing belief is that the free market will take care of it. However, while in most cases more is produced when the price of a commodity rises, in the case of oil price can not determine availability. Furthermore, we cannot assume that as soon as oil becomes scarce expensive alternative forms of generation will be ready to fill the gap.

Britain is already more than half way through its North Sea reserves. We are increasingly dependent on imports to run our energy network. This makes us vulnerable. And the more advanced our extraction technology gets, the faster we will use it up!

Although Peak Oil and climate change issues relate in a great many ways, the most important link is that they are both mitigated by the same solution – 'Powerdown plus Renewables'. "Powerdown" means much more than energy efficiency: instead of merely looking at the "12% more fuel efficient" eco-labels when we purchase a new fridge, we would question the need for a fridge – as well as what we put in it. Globalised industrial agriculture now means we expend 10 calories

of petrochemicals to provide one calorie of food. Switching to a locally sourced, mostly organic, un-processed, low-meat diet will not only increase our general health and well-being, it will massively reduce the fossil fuel dependence of our eating habits (and also the need for the fridge!)

It would involve a big change of diet – but don't we need to do that in any case? Cut out the food rejected by supermarkets, domestic waste and food processing waste too, and we would be on our way to self-reliance while vastly reducing the oil needed to provide it and increasing our health and well-being in the process.

Industrialised cash cropping is not a long-term solution to poverty elsewhere either. It is peddling an addiction to increasingly scarce oil in order to satisfy our selfish desires for cheap exotic products.

Not only in the food industry, but also in buildings, energy, water, work, clothing, heating, holidays and healthcare, there are many areas in which facing up to this oil addiction could actually increase our well-being, whilst also allowing the majority world the energy and re-

sources they urgently need to improve theirs.

Once we have contracted our energy consumption to converge with our fair share, delivering it with renewable sources not only becomes achievable, it becomes rapidly cost effective as oil prices hit the roof, and significantly more dependable if oil supplies become intermittent.

So a 'powerdown plus renewables' strategy will not only reduce or forestall the problems of climate change and the end of our fossil fuels and nuclear reserves; it will also make Britain much better placed to cope with them. The great thing about using renewable flows rather than reserves, such as oil, is that as extraction technology improves, the amount of energy available to us gets bigger, forever!

Full article on-line at <http://www.ecodyfi.org.uk/energy/powerdown.htm>

See also: Centre for Alternative Technology [www.cat.org.uk](http://www.cat.org.uk); Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas at <http://www.peakoil.net/>;

Richard Heinberg, *Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post-Carbon World* (Clairview Books, 2004)

## Seedsavers

Seed saving is an old skill that would be lost without people like Imogen Pettitt, the Dyfi Valley Seedsavers Co-ordinator. She has organised some highly successful community events including two Seedy Sundays, a Seedling Swap and a Tree Day, as well as various visits and training sessions for people wanting to know more about the practice (and the politics) of organic growing from seed. Last year she was awarded funding from Glasu to produce literature on the fascinating subject of seed saving and she's fund-raising again now to keep the project steaming ahead!

## Dinas Plan and more low energy light bulbs

Christmas came early to Dinas Mawddwy when volunteers and staff of Mid Wales Energy Agency, ecodyfi and Adfywio Mawddwy handed out free low-energy light bulbs around the village.

The team, who went door to door in November 2005, were asking householders to answer some simple questions about the structure of the house, the energy they use to heat it and their attitude to community

heating in an initiative aimed at reducing people's heating bills by telling them how they can waste less energy. The light bulbs will help immediately and other possibilities include putting insulating material round hot water tanks and in loft spaces.

Alexis Williams of Mid Wales Energy Agency will be following up by providing advice on grants that will make the measures affordable - or even free to some people.

A community wood chip heating scheme has been proposed for Dinas Mawddwy by the community group Adfywio Mawddwy, which is working to revitalise the villages of Aberangell, Mallwyd, Dinas Mawddwy and Llanymawddwy. Secretary Arfon Hughes explained that the group wants to meet local needs by using local resources and to support forestry, farming and maintenance jobs: "Buying locally-produced energy keeps the money longer in the local economy", he said. The short survey also asked people whether they would be interested in buying heat from it once it is built.