

source^{NW}

WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY

DREAMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS

Earth-friendly luxury for the festive season.

URBAN FIELDS

The changing nature of urban green space.

GREEN-SPARATION

The Northwest's environmental entrepreneurs.

RIVER OF LIFE

Meet the fascinating people of the Mersey.

United Utilities believes that business has a duty to have a positive impact on society. We have been awarded the title of 'official community partner' in recognition of our community work in Merseyside.

Our partnership will enable us to develop projects with the community aimed at encouraging the whole of the North West to get behind Liverpool in 2008 and beyond.

Proud to be official community partner



The festive season is almost upon us and it begs the question: can Christmas ever

be environmentally friendly? For one thing, Santa travels the entire globe in a single night – imagine his carbon footprint. Or do reindeer count as bio-fuel?

It's the yuletide orgy of over-consumption that's to blame, of course. The vast quantities of cheap plastic toys shipped in from China, as well as the food imported from halfway round the globe. All raise uncomfortable questions about pollution, wage levels and carbon emissions (transporting the typical Christmas dinner to your plate releases 37kg of CO₂).

But as we hit the shops, ready to max out our credit cards, Christmas also reveals the huge power of consumer spending as a force for good.

Last year sales of organic food and drink in the UK nudged £2 billion, while spending on Fair Trade products is expected to reach a record £400 million in 2007. Of course, environmentalists have been urging us to spend wisely for years, pointing out, for example, that we can wrap our presents in newspaper instead of all that nasty gift wrap.

Poppycock. The difference these days is the vast range, quantity and quality of environmentally friendly and ethical goods in the shops, from Green and Black's chocolate to M&S undies. So go on, unleash the power of your purse. Everyone else is.

Matthew Sutcliffe, editor
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Source^{NW} is the magazine of the Mersey Basin Campaign. The campaign works towards better water quality and sustainable waterside regeneration for the rivers and waterways of England's Northwest.

Cover Louise Clarke of Sefton Sea Anglers, by Colin McPherson, page 12.

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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



ADDLESHAW GODDARD



Mersey Basin Campaign corporate sponsors include

The BBC's flagship offices at mediacity:uk in Salford are to lead the development's drive to meet tough environmental standards.

As construction work gathers momentum at mediacity:uk, the site's sustainability credentials have been revealed for the first time.

The BBC's buildings at mediacity:uk will be built to meet BREEAM's 'excellent' rating for sustainability. Throughout the construction stage, a site-specific environmental management plan will be implemented to minimise the use of resources and prevent pollution – all of which are independently audited by the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

BREEAM is the most widely used assessment method for buildings, and certification under the scheme is a well-respected and coveted accolade for all developments. It assesses a building's performance on a set of nine criteria, including energy use, pollution, materials and water consumption.

Around 1,500 London-based BBC staff will relocate to mediacity:uk in 2011, with an estimated 800 staff currently based at the BBC in Manchester joining them on the new site.

But while the BBC's high profile move to mediacity:uk will anchor the development, the entire site will eventually cover 80 hectares and is expected to attract over a thousand businesses in the media and creative industries. Jobs for over 15,000 are expected to follow.

The developers, Peel Holdings, say that not only has environmental planning started early, it will also encompass the entire site. Beyond the architecture and building design, green spaces, tree lined streets and 'pocket parks' will be woven into the urban fabric. Waterfront walkways beside the Manchester Ship Canal will provide areas for recreation, and landscaping will be designed to encourage biodiversity.

Public transport, walking and cycling will all be encouraged. A grid of pedestrian and cycle friendly streets will be a feature of the site, making it easier for people to get to and around the media hub. The Metrolink service will also be extended to the heart of

BBC goes green

Developers unveil environmental ambitions.

mediacity:uk and the frequency of services improved to provide a tram every six minutes. Planners are even considering introducing water taxis to reduce car usage.

Waste will be minimised through supply chain management, green procurement, recycling and efficient usage. Water consumption has also been considered with designs to maximise water efficiency and conservation. Mediacity:uk will also explore the potential of low and zero carbon technologies, along with opportunities to integrate renewable energy sources.

Ed Burrows, Peel Media's property director,

said: "mediacity:uk is a city for the future, an innovative and exciting development locally, nationally and internationally.

"Environmental issues are important today but, when the site is up and running in 2011, these issues will be all the more critical. We are working hard to make sure mediacity:uk is future-proof by incorporating the very best environmental and sustainable credentials into every aspect of the development."



SOUND BITES

S Preston protected. Work has begun on a major £3.5 million scheme to protect the city of Preston from pollution and flooding. An ageing sewer was in danger of collapsing into the River Ribble, having fallen into poor condition. The sewer runs above ground alongside the river in the city, and heavy autumn rain had further undermined its foundations. About 450m of new pipe is being installed and the land around it will be built up to provide added protection. The work will take up to a year and is

being carried out by United Utilities, which is spending £2.9 billion on improvement work between 2005-2010.

S Not a waste. A new funding scheme is offering support to Northwest based companies that are developing new technologies to deal with waste. The scheme aims to help by providing funding towards the cost of equipment and will fund 50% of the equipment cost to a maximum value of £10,000. The projects may be based on totally novel technologies, or on new applications of a known technology. For more details visit www.envirolinknorthwest.co.uk or contact Lee Allman at Envirolink Northwest and ask about the New Technology Commercialisation Capital grant scheme.

S Pearlie queens. At a secret location in South Cumbria a project to save one of Europe's rarest species is proving successful. For the first time in England, the Environment Agency has successfully bred freshwater pearl mussels in captivity. Over 2,500 juveniles have been produced. They are destined for the River Lune in Lancashire to help

revitalise the county's only – but ageing – freshwater mussel colony. The mussels can live for over 100 years and, as their name suggests, they do produce pearls. However, over 90% of the European population has been lost in the last century. Only 80 adults are left in the Lune.

S Keep on the grass. Urban parks should be returned to their former glory to help tackle obesity and poor health, says a report from Manchester Metropolitan University and the Centre for Public Health. If current obesity trends continue, nearly one third of children under eleven are predicted to be obese or overweight by 2010. The report recommends maximising the health benefits of parks by improving facilities and encouraging schools to use them. It also calls for parks to be promoted by health practitioners and park staff, and on a new website.

S Guided getaways. Guides to making the most of Merseyside's varied and beautiful rural and coastal locations have been launched



Every little helps

Tesco to fund research into 'sustainable consumption'.

Supermarket Tesco has teamed up with the University of Manchester in a £25 million investment to promote fresh thinking on key environmental issues.

The newly created Sustainable Consumption Institute will bring together leading experts from around the world to ask how customers can be persuaded to buy green products and services, how business can adapt to customer needs, and how to train the next generation of environmental leaders and experts. Its research and conclusions will be shared freely.

One professor, five academics, some 20 PhD researchers and up to 30 PhD students will be based at the institute. Projects already under way include research into low carbon lifestyles and the role of new

technologies in delivering them. Outcomes could range from making paper out of chicken feathers to fuelling delivery vans with plastic milk bottles.

Professor Alan Gilbert, president and vice-chancellor of the University of Manchester, said: "We're delighted that Tesco has chosen Manchester for this vitally important new institute.

"The partnership will be built on a shared understanding that we need to bring together the best thinking from all sectors to address these critical global concerns."

The institute will draw on expertise from all four of the university's faculties and co-ordinate a wide range of research programmes.

While new research findings are expected within the first year, the institute is seen as a long-term commitment. It includes funds to endow a continuing professorship in sustainable consumption,

alongside an extensive postgraduate training programme that aims to make it a focal point for the next generation of researchers, policymakers and advisers in the area of sustainable consumption.

Tesco's chief executive, Sir Terry Leahy – a former student at Manchester University – said his business wanted to show greater commitment to the environment following demand from customers. Announcing the launch of the centre, he said: "We know our customers are concerned about climate change and expect us to be taking the lead in helping create a greener future.

"We have already taken a number of significant steps in this direction, for example by announcing our plans to introduce carbon labelling on all our products." He added that the institute is one of the key elements of the company's climate change strategy, announced in January.

But at four million tonnes every year, Tesco's carbon footprint is substantial, and critics claim that the world's fifth largest retailer is simply trying to buy green credentials and could make a greater difference by selling fewer damaging products in its 1,800 stores. However, in the past year Tesco has announced a £100 million investment in alternative energy, as well as commitments to reduce transport by sourcing more products locally.

Sir Terry said: "Making a real difference to global problems will take time, but our support for this partnership with one of the country's top universities marks another major milestone on the road to a low carbon future."

Wine from water. In October Tesco became the first major UK retailer to start transporting freight by canal – right here in the Northwest. Fifty lorry loads of wine every week have been taken off the road and are now carried along the Manchester Ship Canal from Liverpool docks to Manchester instead, cutting carbon emissions by a massive 80 per cent. Three shipments a week transport almost two million litres of wine by barge to a bottling plant just yards from the canal. Previously Tesco's wine shipments arrived in the UK at various southern ports before being driven to the Manchester bottling depot.

by Mersey Waterfront. As well as a large guide to the entire 135km waterfront area, there are also walking and cycling guides covering specific locations on the Wirral, Liverpool city waterfront and Sefton coast. Each features details of 2-3 walks and cycle routes and includes detailed descriptions, fascinating facts and easy-to-use maps. The guides are available from Merseyrail stations and travel centres or by emailing cathy.elwin@merseyside.org.uk

S Needed: bigger mantelpiece. Staff at a Northwest environmental organisation are shopping for a new trophy cabinet after winning their sixth prestigious award in six years. ENWORKS, which helps companies become more profitable by adopting

environmental improvements, won its most recent accolade from Regeneration and Renewal, the country's leading regeneration magazine. It was crowned Economic Development Project of the Year. The judges commended ENWORKS as an excellent example of best practice that produces tangible economic results. Over a thousand firms are now using ENWORKS' Online Resource Efficiency Toolkit, a unique piece of software that tracks the savings companies are making. www.enworks.com

S Panel discussion. Pollution, flooding, wildlife habitats – the Environment Agency wants to know what you think the biggest problems facing the water environment in the Northwest are? The region may get lots of rainfall, but it still faces plenty of environmental challenges, says the agency's Northwest liaison panel, a gathering of leading environmental groups in the region. According to the panel's recent report, the region is home

to 6.8 million people and contains 18% of England's derelict land, not to mention a third of the poorest quality rivers in England and Wales. The panel's own list of key challenges includes diffuse pollution, sewage and man-made changes to rivers and coastlines. Do you agree? Let them know by visiting www.environment-agency.gov.uk

S Mersey power boost. Proposals to harness the massive tidal flow of the River Mersey to generate renewable energy have received backing from two separate sources. A major report into tidal energy, *Turning the Tide – Tidal Power in the UK*, concludes that there is "real enthusiasm for harnessing the tidal resource in the Mersey, and a consortium of interests that might be willing to take this forward." Published by the government's independent adviser, the Sustainable Development Commission, it examines how the country's tidal resource and emerging tidal technologies can help provide secure, low carbon electricity. Meanwhile, Wirral South MP Ben Chapman has also backed the proposals, calling for more members of the public to become involved in the debate. www.merseytidalpower.co.uk

Field of light

An otherwise unremarkable field in Stockport temporarily sprouted a stunning art installation this autumn, when hundreds of fluorescent light tubes flickered into life.

Powered only by the electric fields generated by overhead power lines serving the nearby Chadkirk estate, the tubes had been carefully planted on the banks of the River Goyt.

The collaboration between Bristol based artist Richard Box and Stockport Council was commissioned to draw attention to proposals for a new river crossing. The bridge is part of a nationwide project called Connect2, which will face-off against competing schemes in a Restoration-style TV vote later this year.

Councillor David White, executive member for transportation, explained: "Stockport is part of the Connect2 scheme, run by Sustrans, which is made up of 79 projects across the UK. It's vying against five other national schemes for a pot of £50 million from the Big Lottery Fund.

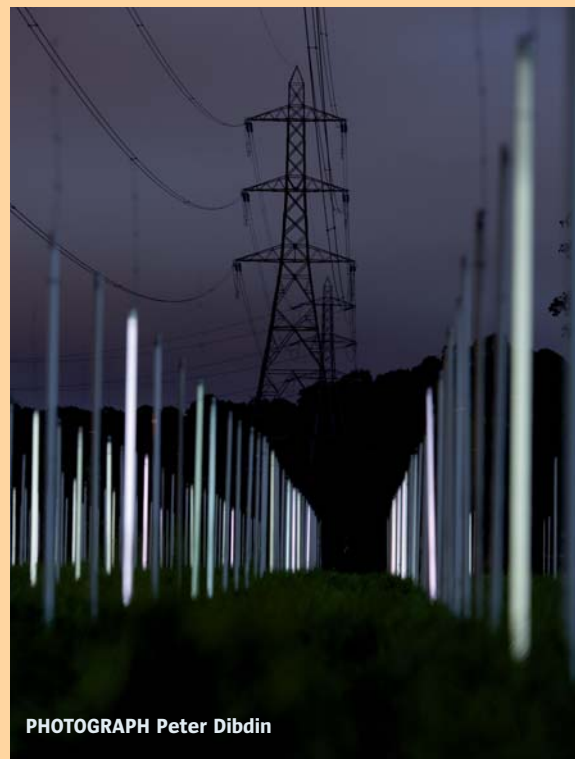
"Connect2 is about building better links that allow people to walk and cycle in their local area.

"A bridge over the River Goyt would create a traffic-free link between schools, stations and local centres, as well as links with existing routes such as the Trans Pennine Trail."

Sustrans and its supporters are banking on the publicity generated by ideas such as the 'field of lights' to translate into votes come the big day.



That was the Week that was



PHOTOGRAPH Peter Dibdin

Climate of opinion

Over 90 per cent of people living in the Northwest are already taking some action to tackle climate change, according to a new report.

The Climate Change Perceptions Study surveyed 550 individuals and businesses about their opinions on climate change, revealing that most people – around 90 per cent – are convinced that the region's climate is already changing. Most, 88 per cent, also agree that climate change is caused either solely by human behaviour, or by a combination of natural and human factors.

On a positive note, over 77 per cent of people feel they can make a difference in tackling climate change, a finding the report describes as 'encouraging'.

On the issue of energy use, around a quarter – 24 per cent – said they are already doing everything they can to reduce usage. A further 69 per cent are doing something but could do more. Only the remaining 7 per

cent are not doing anything at all to reduce their energy consumption.

Source NW is the magazine of the Mersey Basin Campaign, but as well as writing about the region's environment, we at the Campaign also like to get our hands dirty every once in a while. Hence the 16th annual MWH Mersey Basin Week, which took place in October, with over 320 events and activities around the region organised by everyone from community groups to councils. A huge amount of environmental improvement work was completed, much to the credit of the over 4,000 volunteers who took part.

cent are not doing anything at all to reduce their energy consumption.

The study was carried out on behalf of the Northwest Climate Change Partnership, which includes the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA). The NWDA's head of sustainable development and climate change, Mark Atherton, said: "This study is a key milestone for the Northwest Climate Change Partnership in helping to measure awareness of the causes of climate change in the Northwest.

"Whilst the findings demonstrate a good level of awareness, the challenge now is to build on this and ensure that the Northwest is equipped to tackle the environmental challenges ahead and take advantage of the opportunities a changing climate presents."

MORE INFORMATION

www.climatechangenorthwest.com

November 7 IEMA Environmental Knowledge Exchange

This conference aims to bring together environmental managers and academics to discuss cutting-edge research dealing with specific issues in managing environmental problems. Researchers from a wide array of backgrounds will contribute, fostering closer links between research and practice.

Venue: Freemason's Hall, Manchester

More information: 01522 540069 iema.net/events

November 9 Responding to the Challenges of Climate Change

Real business case studies showcasing projects and innovations from Northwest companies responding to the challenges of climate change, to encourage and inspire delegates to think about their own businesses. The aim is to provide a practical business response to the Northwest Climate Change Action Plan, on the first anniversary of its launch.

Venue: Astra Zeneca, Macclesfield

More information: Katie Bray k-t-b.co.uk

November 12–14 European Biosolids and Organic Resources Conference

The 12th annual conference will facilitate the transfer of knowledge and information from academia to an international audience of engineers, scientists, environmentalists, legislators, consultants and managers. The programme promises to bring delegates right up to date with current issues.

Venue: Lancashire County Cricket Club

More information: european-biosolids.com

November 23 Managing Flood Risk and Spatial Planning

A half-day seminar on water and what it means for planners, with a focus on managing flood risk. A river basin management workshop will explore the water and planning issues in a typical river catchment. This is a jointly run ENMAR and Environment Agency seminar.

Venue: Mechanics Institute, Manchester

More information: Caroline Riley 0161 242 8206

c.riley@mersybasin.org.uk enmar.org.uk

December 5 Envirowise Conference

A free event arranged by Envirowise to spread best practice and information including top tips on resource efficiency, including simple ways to make changes, save money and increase efficiency, reduce material use and waste, and avoid the use of non-renewable resources.

Venue: Midland Hotel, Manchester

More information: wilmingtonconferences.com/envirowise2007

December 13 Mersey Basin Campaign Conference

Find out how we in the Northwest are facing up to the challenges of climate change, after this summer's floods focused unprecedented government, media and public attention on water as a critical issue for all of us. Find out also how the region is setting the pace in environmental regeneration.

Venue: The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

More information: Fouzia Bhatti 0161 242 8200

f.bhatti@merseybasin.org.uk merseybasin.org.uk

January 30–31 2008 British Urban Regeneration Association Annual Conference

An opportunity for all the main stakeholders involved in regeneration to come together to learn each other's objectives and constraints. The conference will provide a mix of new ideas, case studies, debate on policy and practice, study visits and workshops,



Virginia is top volunteer

A part time schoolteacher from Cheshire has been crowned the Northwest's top environmental volunteer.

Virginia Hunt was praised for her infectious enthusiasm and boundless energy as she scooped this year's Individual category of the Unilever Dragonfly Awards.

Virginia was recognised for her work at the Marshall's Arm local nature reserve near Northwich. The reserve celebrates its tenth birthday next year and Virginia was a founder member of its management committee. She has also been a

Wildlife Watch leader for 15 years.

She was nominated for the award by Mac Carding of the Mersey Forest, who works with community and volunteer groups in the area. Mac said: "Virginia is a volunteer par excellence. She has a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the natural world that she cannot help but share with others. She can make a commonplace object fascinating."

Virginia wins £1,000 to help with further improvements at the nature reserve.

Mac added: "Virginia never stops working – her energy and dedication are very inspiring for other people. The world needs more people like Virginia."

PHOTOGRAPH Karen Wright

New power generation

The clue is in the name – New Mills in Derbyshire was once a thriving mill town, much of its industry powered via waterwheels along the fast flowing River Goyt.

A century later, a £200,000 hydro-electricity scheme is putting a modern twist on old technology in a bid to reduce carbon emissions. The scheme will have a 70kW capacity, producing around 260,000 units of electricity per year – enough to power 70 houses.

The scheme, run by Water Power Enterprises, will be funded through private investment and grants. The company's spokesman, Steve Welsh,

said: "Our aim is to reduce carbon emissions. This should save 4,500 tonnes of carbon per year.

"We are going to use a modern version of the old water wheels, the Archimedean Screw. We are trying to find 30 such rivers to set up similar schemes in Yorkshire and Derbyshire."

The scheme will be built in the Torrs Historic Park and will be sensitive to the site's archaeological significance. Local people will be able to invest in the project and benefit from future profits – shares cost £1 each with a minimum purchase of 250. The money raised will help pay for the generator.

MORE INFORMATION:

steve.welsh@h2ope.co.uk or 01422 355 544

Löve

Why I love... my Eco-Pod

By Aidan Quinn, architect and entrepreneur



“It’s like an egg, and it’s that roundness that I think has caught everyone’s imagination. It’s reminiscent of ancient towers, or yurts. I designed the first Eco-Pod to be four metres in diameter, and it’s got everything you’d need built-in; a kitchen that’s been made specially to fit the contours, solar panels to heat the

water, a wood-burning stove, a recycling system and piping for harvested rainwater. One person fits in nicely, two people feels snug. We’ve got a second, larger Eco-Pod in prototype form now that’s six metres in diameter, and though that doesn’t sound much bigger, the area of walking space is considerably more at 14 m² on each floor, as opposed to 6 m².

I built the Eco-Pod as an environmentally friendly accommodation unit because a) it’s possible, and b) because increasingly, it’s necessary. It’s a concrete structure with polyurethane on the outside. We clad our first one with cedar and the next with recycled car tyres that look like slate. Concrete mixed with fly ash has less embodied energy than imported soft woods, so it’s more eco-friendly than you might think. It’s super-insulated and extremely cheap to heat, so you save carbon on the running of it. It’s compact, convenient – everything is certainly close to hand! and very cosy.

I’ve been living in the four metre model on and off for the last six months. A local farmer let me install it in his field in Stretford, and it does provoke a lot of curiosity locally. I think that’s a good thing. When I took it to the National Homebuilding Show earlier this year, people were piling in. They seemed to love it just as much as I do. We’re close to commercial production now, which is exciting. We’ve got our first orders, and we’re just waiting for building control to inspect our plans for adherence to building regulations. The one person pod costs £35,000 and we’re working out the cost of the bigger one now. Ultimately, I’d like to produce them commercially on a production line to show that you can reduce the carbon footprint of a structure that’s designed for living in.” www.wsync.org.uk

Hate

Why I hate... ^{Some} biofuels

By Nick Dodd, a director of the Green Gold Biodiesel co-operative



“As an energy source, biofuels have some good points. They burn cleaner than fossil fuels, and approached in the right way, I do believe they could be an important element of the transition from fossil fuels to renewable fuels.

But they have their downsides, which lie in how the fuel is sourced and just how much we need.

Most biofuels are based on crops. Increasing demand is leading to deforestation in the developing world to provide land for growing the crops from which biofuels are derived: palm and soya in particular. Competition with agricultural land is also squeezing food prices.

Fuels are a commodity market, and investors will meet demand by the cheapest, most intensive means they can find, even if that means clearing rainforests for land and then shipping the fuel from one side of the world to the other. Taken all together, the CO₂ thus released may mean that biofuels have an even higher carbon footprint than fossil fuels.

The simple fact is that there will not be enough space on the planet to grow enough bio-alternatives to sustainably meet our current levels of energy demand. Right now, biofuels are being seen as a quick-fix solution, but the danger is that they put off the day when we have to reduce our fuel consumption.

However, sourcing biofuel made from recycled UK cooking oil, as the Green Gold Biodiesel co-operative attempted to do, makes use of something that would otherwise create waste and pollution. Sadly there was never enough to meet demand, which created an ongoing problem for our business. Sustainable supply chains are vital if biofuels are to offer a viable alternative.

But in the final analysis, reducing our demand for fuel has to be part of the solution.”

WORDS + NUMBERS

500,000

The number of Christmas trees dumped each year in the UK, instead of planted or recycled, according to estimates by Friends of the Earth.

378

Food miles travelled by the Christmas dinner served at the City of Manchester stadium. A typical Christmas meal travels around 49,000 miles. Much of the food is made within 30 miles of the stadium.

41%

The percentage of Merseysiders who have already reduced their car usage due to concern over climate change, according to a study for the Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership.

3,411 litres

The amount of water used by the average Brit per day – interestingly, that’s almost exactly the global average. Amazingly (but not surprisingly) the average American uses nearly twice the global average.

One fifth

The proportion of the UK’s Sites of Special Scientific Interest that are located in the Northwest.

£3.5 million

Total pollution fines levied against companies in England and Wales in 2006, according to the Environment Agency’s annual Spotlight report. Serious pollution incidents fell by 17%, says the report, the lowest ever level.

Postcard from...Cumbria Christmas Flower Festival

Flowers in winter? Not just flowers, but a showcase of talent and floral artistry by 18 clubs from the National Association of Flower Arranging Societies. It being Cumbria, don't be surprised to see daffodils.

Very Wordsworth... Indeed – it's the first major flower festival to be staged in Cumbria for over ten years. If that's not enough, it takes place in Mirehouse Historic House and Gardens near Keswick. According to the organisers it's a magnificent house that makes the perfect setting for the start of Christmas 2007.
www.mirehouse.com

Sounds like an excuse for a romantic weekend... Doesn't it? Imagine sweeping views of snow-capped peaks followed by hot toddies and the crackle of a log fire. On top of that, it's all in a good cause – the flower show is in aid of charity (a donation will be made from the proceeds to the Great North air ambulance).

Even so, it's a long way to go for a flower show. Don't be silly, the Lake District is within easy reach of the whole Northwest. Anyway, it's not just a flower show – there's loads going on in Cumbria at this time of year, from an Audience with Victoria Wood to learning how to make traditional Danish Christmas decorations. Check out www.golakes.co.uk for a truly extensive events guide and places to stay.



I'm already booking a cosy room. What were those details again? The Christmas Flower Festival takes place from Thursday 29th November to Sunday 2nd December at Mirehouse Historic House and Gardens in Underskiddaw near Keswick. Entry costs £8.

How to...spot a porpoise in Blackpool

Whale watching might still seem like a fairly exotic, once-in-a-lifetime type of adventure, but you don't have to be David Attenborough to have a good chance of seeing cetaceans (that's whales, dolphins and porpoises) here in the Northwest. Just head to Blackpool.

Every year since 2004, Dave McGrath, Blackpool council's sustainability manager, has helped organise a whale and dolphin watch as part of National Whale and Dolphin Week, set up by the Sea Watch Foundation.

In fact, says Dave, it's porpoises that you're most likely to spot in the Irish Sea off Blackpool. There have been over 30 confirmed

sightings in the waters around the resort in the last two years, including 'dozens' of sightings this year. Porpoise are most often seen along the coast to the north of Blackpool, but have also been reported off Crosby Beach in Liverpool.

Sightings of Minke whales and bottle-nosed dolphins are becoming more common too – both were spotted from Blackpool prom in 2006. There's also plenty of grey seals, sea birds and the odd basking shark to see.

There's no particular time of year that is best for spotting the creatures. It's just that people are happier to stand outside looking for them in summer. Which is why Dave is hoping for help in keeping an eye on the Blackpool coast this winter.

Even so, you'll need patience, says Dave. You'll also need a good pair of binoculars and

some warm clothes.

The best place to get a sighting is at Starr Gate at the southern end of Blackpool promenade, near the giant glitter ball and across the road from the Solaris Centre, where Dave works.

Try to arrive on a rising tide on a calm, cloudy day – deep shadows on a bright, choppy sea make porpoise spotting difficult. Scan the sea between about 200–500m out, looking for the tell-tale curved black back and small dorsal fin of a porpoise as it breaks the surface. Unlike dolphins, porpoise don't leap from the water or ride the bow-waves of boats.

And if you are lucky enough to spot anything, contact Dave (01253 478 020) so that he can add it to Sea Watch's national survey.

As he says: "I only really get ten minutes to watch after I've eaten my sandwiches at lunchtime, but it's like Christmas when you spot one."



Coming...and Going

Sue Kidd, a senior lecturer at the University of Liverpool, is the new chair of the Northwest Coastal Forum. Sue carries out research on environmental, coastal, marine, river and estuary planning and has supervised major postgraduate work for the Mersey Waterfront and Weaver Valley regional parks.

Liz Newton has taken over as regional director of Natural England in the Northwest. Amongst her earlier roles she was Northwest regional director for the Countryside Commission. She is from Stockton Heath near Warrington and grew up in Knutsford.

It's all-change at Envirolink Northwest, where **Nick Storer** takes over at the helm from another stalwart of the Northwest's environment sector, **Jackie Seddon**.

Nick moves up to the chief executive's position after three years with Envirolink, while Jackie is now on secondment to Lancaster Environment Centre.

Lastly, a fond farewell to **Peter Jones**, **Roger Lamming** and **Bob Lee**, as all depart the Environment Agency after a combined service of over 80 years. Roger and Bob worked as area environment managers. Peter retires as the scientist who knows more about the River Mersey than probably any man alive. Each played a significant role in the Northwest's environmental recovery.



The other Iron Bridge

Ciara Leeming reports on the six-year campaign to save a Marple landmark.

Peter Clarke was walking his dog when he noticed the state of Marple's iron bridge.

The Grade II listed, Georgian structure – which spans the River Goyt in the Cheshire town's Brabyns Park was declared unsafe in 1991 and had fallen into serious disrepair.

As half the team behind the campaigning community website *Marple UK*, Clarke – also landlord of the Ring o'Bells – was ideally placed to lead calls for action.

Six years and more than half a million pounds later, campaigners are finally seeing their efforts pay off. The 194-year-old carriage bridge is being renovated and will reopen before Christmas.

Clarke, who fought alongside friend and website partner Mark Whittaker and pensioner Ann Hearle, chair of Marple Local History Society, says: "We were looking for a campaign to direct our energies into and agreed on the bridge.

"We had no idea how long it would take or how much it would cost. We thought the work would perhaps cost £50,000 – but it ended up costing more than ten times that figure."

"Pub quizzes helped raise £16,000."

Built using iron from the Salford Iron Works, the bridge provided access to what was then the Brabyns Estate from the nearby village of Compstall. Few of its kind remain in Britain.

It survived with a minimum of maintenance until the structural assessment in 1991. Then, a temporary Bailey bridge was built across to take weight off the structure. It remained for 16 years.

Clarke and Whittaker used the local press and their website to raise their concerns. As the issue picked up momentum, they formed the Iron Bridge Restoration group, with Hearle – a font of local knowledge – and Stockport council.

First, they needed to find out what was wrong with the structure. A project planning grant application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which put £30,000 towards the survey and design solutions. Meanwhile, campaigners set about raising funds.

Clarke wrote to local businesses and groups to ask for support, and held regular quiz nights at his pub. He

and Whittaker did a six-day sponsored walk from Brabyns Park to Ironbridge in Shropshire – home of the world's first iron-made bridge. These and other events took the total to £16,000 in five years.

The project was delayed when a gas main – supplying the whole of Compstall – was found to run buried across the bridge. Eventually, however, the renovation contract was put out to tender and won by Tameside firm Dew Construction, subject to a successful grant application.

The group applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund in January 2007 and learned in June that they had been awarded £424,700. An additional £59,000 came from Stockport council's transportation team and Marple area committee.

Tim Boylan, a council official who managed the bid, says: "The local campaigners were naturally interested in restoration of the bridge, but Heritage Lottery has got different priorities. As well as restoration, it requires improved access and learning, and the grant was towards all these things."

To fulfil these requirements, information boards and listening posts will be placed near the bridge, and site access improved. An exhibition will be displayed at Stockport Story Museum.

This summer, the area around the iron bridge was cleared of vegetation and readied for the work. The Bailey bridge was finally lifted off with a crane in September prompting cheers from watching campaigners. Next, scaffolding and protective sheeting was put up around the structure, and the restoration began.

The site will be unveiled in December, with an official opening next summer. A production company will make a corporate documentary and short film about the project.

Hearle, who moved to Marple 37 years ago, says: "It was a magic moment when the Bailey bridge came off. There were times

L-R Peter Clarke (The Marple Website)
Cllr. David Goddard (Leader of Stockport Council) **Ann Hearle** (Chair of Marple Local History Society)
Nicola Marshall (Heritage Lottery Fund project officer) **Mark Whittaker** (The Marple Website)

along the way when we all felt a bit depressed and wondered if we would ever succeed.

"But we've lost so much in Marple – all kinds of buildings have been demolished – that we just weren't prepared to let the bridge disappear as well."

BEST & WORST

BEST

"Heritage Lottery told us afterwards that one of our biggest strengths was that this was a real community project," says Clarke. "They liked the way we had involved so many aspects of the community, and kept them informed on how it was progressing."

WORST

Clarke says: "We could have thought bigger. A cottage next to the bridge was on the market for a long time because it had no access rights. For perhaps £200,000 it could have been bought and turned into a perfect visitor centre. We recently discovered that Heritage Lottery funds can pay for buildings and that we could have applied for the money."

Dreaming of a green Christmas

Softly falling snow, twinkling fairy lights, children singing carols and goodwill to all men. Christmas is a special time of year. But it's also the time to go all Nigella and abandon yourself to a season of yuletide luxury and self-indulgence. Locally raised organic meat, organic beer and wine, handmade Fair Trade chocolates, farmhouse Christmas puds and a session in the country's first eco-spa are all on the bill. So who needs a white Christmas when you can indulge in a green one?

Mansergh Hall Farm

Christmas organic meat hamper

Fabulous organic turkey, bacon, roast pork and lamb – at Mansergh Hall Farm in the beautiful Lune Valley, livestock is born and raised in an environment free from herbicides, pesticides, chemical fertilisers, antibiotics, growth promoters or genetically modified organisms.

www.manserghhall.co.uk



Forestry Commission Christmas Trees

Beautiful Christmas trees from Delamere Forest in Cheshire are on sale from 26th November to 19th December and prices start from £10. For every tree sold, the Forestry Commission plants two more, and you can bring your tree back to be recycled.

Call 01606 889792, email delamere@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or head to Delamere Forest Park, Linmere, Delamere, Northwich, CW8 2JD

For Her Titanic Spa

With stunning Pennine views and blissful natural and holistic treatments, a pampering session at the country's first eco-spa is the perfect green gift for her.

Gift vouchers range from £25 to £99.
www.titanicspa.com



For Him Eco Eco

This year, why not think beyond socks and buy your man a gorgeous eco-knit from Derbyshire based Eco Eco.

Image: Organic cotton/hemp v-neck jumper. £55.

www.eco-eco.co.uk, phone 01298 816235 or visit Eco Eco, 2 Bagshaw Lane, Sparrowpit, Derbyshire S33 6RD

Vintage Roots

Winter warmer organic wine and beverages

Treat yourself to an organic drinks hamper from Vintage Roots, with organic wine, beer, cider, spirits, liqueurs, soft drinks and chocolate. Many of the drinks are sourced right here in the Northwest.

www.vintageroots.co.uk, phone 01189 761999 or email ewan@vintageroots.co.uk



Chocolala

In the small town of Hebden Bridge, Chocolala is making some of the most beautiful, innovative and delicious chocolate that's ever likely to melt in your mouth – and it's all Fair Trade.

www.chocolala.co.uk, phone 01422 844779 or email melt@chocolala.co.uk



For Children The Little Woodshop

Unplug the xBox – from doll's houses to chess sets, rocking horses to trains, The Little Woodshop in Heswall has a huge range of handcrafted, traditional wooden toys.

www.thelittlewoodshop.co.uk, phone 0151 3421974 or visit The Little Woodshop, 40 Downham Road North, Heswall, Wirral, CH60 6UN

Green Card Company Xmas card designs

We love the modern and quirky designs from The Green Card Company, whose Christmas cards are printed on recycled paper. Prices start at just £3.40 for a pack of ten.

www.greencardcompany.co.uk, phone 01865 321302 or email leilagreencardcompany.co.uk



Farm House Fare

One of the best Christmas puddings we have ever tasted is made right here in the Northwest – Clitheroe in fact. Some are organic and all are absolutely delicious. Brandy butter with that?

www.farmhousefare.co.uk, phone 01200 453110 or email puds@farmhousefare.co.uk



With Liverpool about to take on the mantle of Capital of Culture 2008, a new book and exhibition celebrating one of Europe's great environmental success stories – the clean up of the River Mersey – is about to be launched. Mersey: the river that changed the world tells the river's story as it crosses the Northwest from Stockport and Manchester to Merseyside. We meet some of the people who have contributed their stories to the book.

RIVER

Photographs Colin McPherson

Interviews Kate Fox

SIMON SNODIN POLICE DIVER

I've been a police diver for seven years. Our main role is search and recovery – we're not a search and rescue unit. We look for bodies, submerged vehicles and missing people.

The Mersey has a great tidal range, which makes diving very difficult. Slack water, between the tide coming in and going out, can be almost non-existent, and the currents make it hard to hold to the smooth hull of a ship, for example, when we search the outside of vessels on behalf of HM Customs and Excise.

The visit of the Royal Yacht Britannia in 1984 was my most memorable moment on the Mersey. I was in the Royal Naval Reserve at the time, as radio operator on HMS Striker. We were deployed as the guard ship, trying to keep pleasure craft away, when we received a message: "Striker, this is Britannia, can you go away, the noise of your engines is disturbing the royal party". So we had to limp away, letting the pleasure boats circle Britannia.

Like many people on Merseyside, my roots go back to Ireland. Ultimately we wouldn't be here if my grandparents hadn't sailed up the Mersey to Liverpool and stayed.



OF LIFE

“One of the best moments was when the Mersey won the World River Prize for best clean up, beating the Thames, the Rhine and the Mississippi.”

TOM & KATH WORKMAN
LIVERPOOL SAILING CLUB

Kath's the hardest working crew I've ever had. I never had to tell her what to do – she's always been able to read my mind. We like going upriver where it's quiet, untouched by human hand. The river's got an ever-changing face, with sandy beaches at the top end, and the docks at the bottom. Ten miles down and ten miles up, a vast expanse of water.

The beauty of it is when you're thirteen miles out at the Bar, and you can see the cathedral and the Three Graces. South of the Bar can be a very hostile environment, and it's a wonderful feeling when you see that and know you're home.

SHANTHI RASARATNAM, MBE
UNITED UTILITIES

My involvement with the Mersey began in 1996 when I managed a £200 million United Utilities improvement programme for five wastewater treatment works on the Mersey Estuary.

What was so amazing was that we witnessed signs of new life returning to the estuary before our very eyes; wading birds like curlew, redshank and godwits, fish such as whiting, cod and plaice, sea trout, even octopuses. From time to time we saw seals, and on one occasion a whale decided to swim up the Mersey, and got stranded!

One of the best moments was when the Mersey won the World River Prize for best clean up, beating the Thames, the Rhine and the Mississippi. But the ultimate highlight of my career was being awarded the MBE for services to the water industry. I went to Buckingham Palace and met the Queen, and I was able to explain to her all about the Mersey clean up, and how it's transformed the whole environment here.

DAVE HALL
PUBLICAN, JACKSON'S BOAT, SALE

The name Jackson's Boat comes from Farmer Jackson, who used to ferry people across the river for a penny a time.

The pub used to fall within Manchester's boundaries, and under the old licensing laws it had a half-hour later license than those in Cheshire, so the last half-hour was always very busy. We still have Grandfather Rights to sell alcohol out of the bedroom window during floods.

A lot of our customers who stumble across us think we're on a canal. When you tell them it's the Mersey they say, "it can't be, that's in Liverpool". You have to try and explain that it does go from one place to another.

It's amazing to come down here in the morning with a cup of coffee and watch the wildlife. You wouldn't think you were five minutes from Manchester city centre. This is the real Mersey paradise.

DIANE WALKER

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY, WARRINGTON

I work as a regulator across the whole of the Mersey river basin, concentrating on incidents and emergencies. For many, the river is out of sight, out of mind, so they don't think too carefully about what goes into their drains, and where those drains eventually lead.

As a regulator, you do tend to take ownership of your patch. If an incident like a fish kill happens, you take it very personally. It used to be a condition of working for the National Rivers Authority that you actually lived on your patch, so it's even affected where my children have been brought up.

As a family we enjoy walking along the river, from the source right down to Liverpool. When I took my eldest son on the Mersey ferry for the first time, he thought he was in France!

**BARNEY EASDOWN**

DECKHAND, MERSEY FERRIES

In the early nineties we used to have football races on the river with three ferries representing Tranmere, Everton and Liverpool. One year my mate and I were preparing the boats the day before, and being fanatical Evertonians, we filled every fresh water tank on the Liverpool boat so that it would be heavier than the others. Lining up at Seacombe, the captain of the Liverpool boat twigged that something was drastically wrong – instead of lying with its bow up, it was lying bow down. I came on duty to sail the Everton boat, and the bosses were chasing me all over saying "it had to be you!" Eventually they pumped the tanks out, and the Everton boat came in last, which I was sick about.

**LOUISE CLARKE**

ANGLER, SEFTON SEA ANGLERS

I've been going fishing with my dad since I was about three or four. I'm the only girl in our club – I'm the only girl I know that likes fishing. All my mates think it's weird that I like fishing at my age, and they all think it's dirty because you're touching fish. Even my boyfriend doesn't like it.

I just like standing there, watching and waiting for the bite, and then when it comes, reeling it in, and the fight it puts up. When you bring it in and see what you've caught, you feel so proud of yourself. I get a cob on if I don't catch anything. I caught a thornback ray when I was younger, and I tell everyone about that.





JOHN CURRY
MERSEY RIVER PILOT

I came straight from school to serve a seven-year apprenticeship. My father and elder brother were pilots, and my mother's family had their own pilot vessel in the nineteenth century.

You began as the junior lad, serving meals and washing up, and you wondered what this had to do with piloting. You worked your way up to senior lad, learning your trade by living on the river.

The river becomes part of us as pilots. We know it so well in all conditions, different states of tide, different heights of tide, different weather conditions.

The comparison I've always made is to the medical profession. The Master of a vessel is like a GP, while the pilot is the specialist with local knowledge who takes over when the ship arrives at a port.

There are many difficult pilotages in the world, but Liverpool is one of the most difficult, and for me it is *the* pilotage.



MARY KENDRICK
ACTING CONSERVATOR OF THE MERSEY,
1988-98

The Mersey Conservancy really began way back in 1626, when Charles the First granted a charter to Liverpool allowing them to levy tolls and look after the navigation of the river. The upper river authorities became rather fed up with paying these dues, so in 1842 the Mersey Conservancy Act vested the interests of the conservancy in three commissioners, who were to appoint the Acting Conservator. I know of no other harbour authority in the country that has a similar post. I suppose it was a good old English compromise at the time.

For me, the Mersey's special because of its geological and geomorphological significance. It's one of the few estuaries I've studied that's shaped as it is, with its very narrow entrance and the fantastic upper estuary that's five times as wide. It's unique and fascinating. The river is never the same for more than a few days together, it's a very dynamic system, always shifting its banks and channels.



MICHAEL HESELTINE
POLITICIAN

I'd been involved with Liverpool for some eighteen months when the riots of 1981 took place, and I felt personally responsible because no-one saw them coming... so I asked Mrs Thatcher if I could take time off from the responsibilities of cabinet to literally walk the streets and talk, listen and investigate.

The Mersey got to me, it was enormously significant to the history of our country, and I felt a debt to that river. For three weeks my hotel room overlooked the Mersey. I saw this huge majestic river flowing through this great British city, and I just felt ashamed. This was the river that had given life to that part of England. Without it there would be no Liverpool, and yet we had treated it with total and utter contempt and disinterest. It was an open sewer, and I felt deeply sad that we hadn't realised what an enormous, valuable resource it was. That's where the idea came from, that we must make good the degradation of centuries.

If you have a stinking sewer running through large urban areas, no-one will take the opportunity to develop alongside it, or create jobs or live close to it, but if you can clean it and give it back its life, it becomes a huge beneficial force for good.

Now, the Mersey is on the mend. It is a generator of wealth, of happiness, of opportunity. It has got a long way to go, but I will always take pride that perhaps I took the initial decision to reverse the downward trend.

DAVE SANDMAN
MERSEY SWIMMER

United Utilities were asking if people fancied the challenge of swimming across the river, and being an idiot, I thought I'd have a go. I went down to Albert Dock, and they basically put a cap on me and said 'jump in'. Boy, was it cold!

People have this perception of the Mersey being dirty and horrible, but it isn't. It's as clean as a river in an industrial town could be. It tends to look dirty because it's turbulent, but that's mainly silt. I see the kind of stuff [the Sandon Dock wastewater treatment plant, where I work] takes out of the effluent, and it's incredible.

I wouldn't have swum in the Mersey 20 years ago, but I'm quite happy swimming in it now. I've swallowed enough of it without any ill effects.

“People have this perception of the Mersey being dirty and horrible, but it isn't.”

Mersey: the river that changed the world is published by Bluecoat Press in November, available at bookshops and online at www.bluecoatpress.co.uk, priced £17.99. To pre-order a copy contact info@bluecoatpress.co.uk or call 0151 707 2390. The project has been made possible thanks to support from United Utilities.

URBAN

The hotly debated future of Manchester's Castlefield area raises fundamental issues over the nature of urban green space.

“More green space” is the cry that goes up whenever people are asked what they want in future cities.

Which is weird, because we seem almost entirely to have lost the skills to use it. Relative to almost any other decade in their century and a half's history, most of our Victorian parks are now deserted. They lack colour, investment, animation, maintenance and security. Today, most parks don't work.

Joggers and dog walkers use parks and green space. The more we are inclined to exercise our dogs and ourselves, the more of us head back to parks. The curious fact remains that for the time being, green space is under-utilised in cities, and therefore ill planned and under funded. Green space is not good for a city's net-to-gross. Needless to say, developers don't like green space, especially if they are the ones charged with providing it. One developer tells me that his way to deliver high quality public realm is to get somebody else to pay for it. That has been the case in New Islington, Manchester's Millennium community. The extensive water park that spans the space between the Rochdale and Ashton Canals, complete with orchard, island, reed beds and nesting boxes, is largely funded by English Partnerships. Don't expect to be picnicking here quite yet. Maintenance will be funded out of the eventual residents' service charges, and there aren't enough residents yet.

Before a community struggles to find money to establish and maintain high quality public space it is probably wise to question its appeal. Do kids climb trees? Do retired people play bowls? Do you enjoy a turn around the boating lake? Things come and go, and just occasionally come back again. Who is to say that the very real effects of global warming won't see the return of outdoor lidos? Or that we won't see publicly

funded olive groves and vines? There are very real question marks that hang over the unsupervised use of public space. There are health and safety issues in playgrounds and by water. And there is vandalism. Nevertheless, we say we want green space, so we'd better consider how we use it.

Ardwick Green was probably the first semi-public green space in Manchester. From as early as the 1820's it worked along the lines of London squares, and subscribers had their own keys. There was a fishing pond.

**We say we want green space,
so we'd better consider how we use it.**

Twenty years later, three public parks – created by public subscription, but with free access for all – opened on the same gala day: August 22nd, 1846. Peel Park in Salford opened in the morning, followed, in a promenade of dignitaries, by Queens and Philips parks later the same day. Peel Park is arguably the

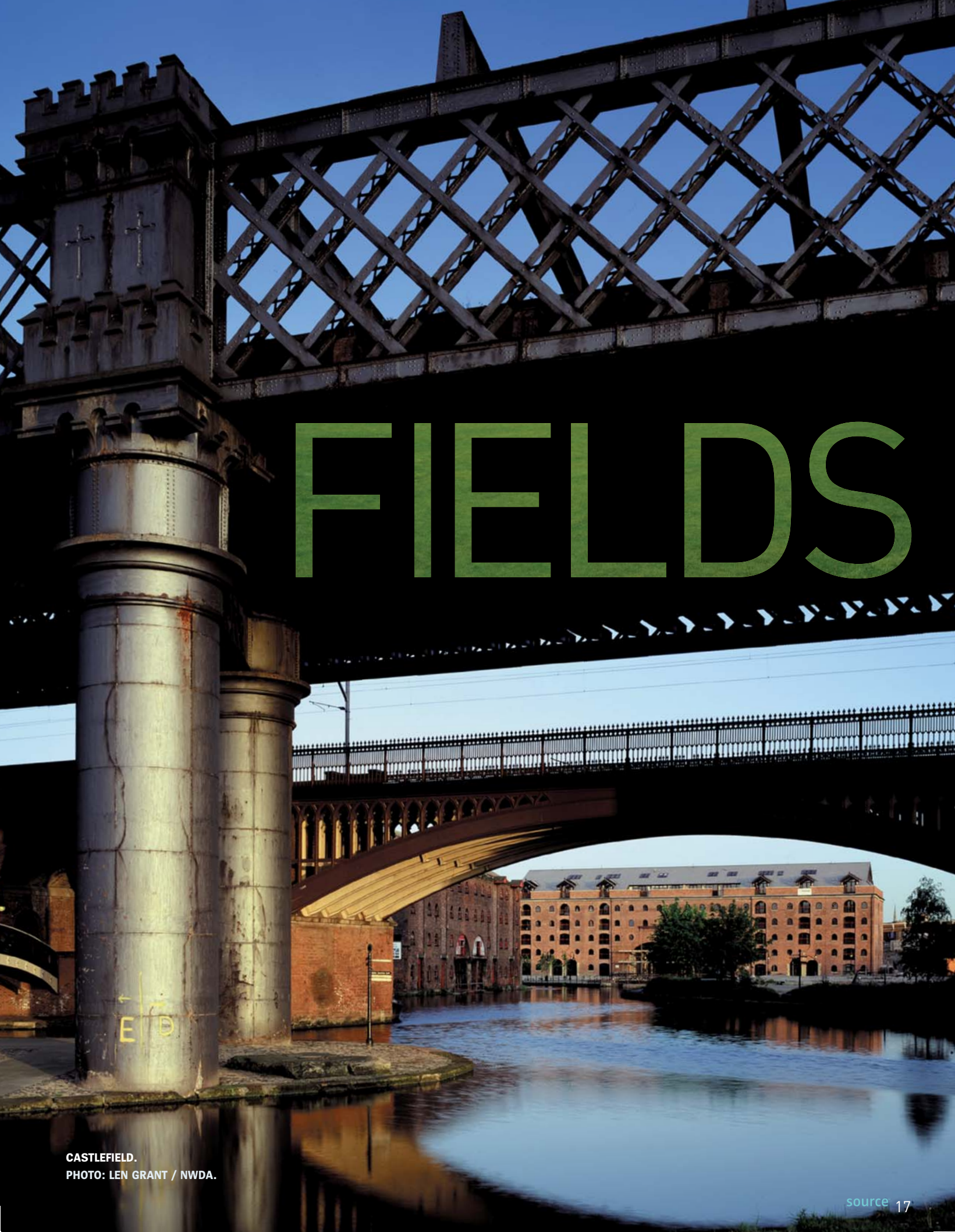
first public park anywhere in the world. Manchester has added more new green space recently, notably Cathedral Gardens and Hulme Park. Salford has created acres of public realm around the Quays. These spaces work well, but questions remain; are we making the best use of spaces available to us, and are they contributing to what we have come to call “place making”?

[Continued over](#)

(LEFT) **PEEL PARK, SALFORD.**

PHOTO: SALFORD CITY COUNCIL / NICK HARRISON.





FIELDS

CASTLEFIELD.
PHOTO: LEN GRANT / NWDA.



**CASTLEFIELD
BAR CULTURE.**
PHOTO:
**JONTY WILDE/
NWDA.**

Victorian parks did most of their business on high days and holidays, when thousands of people flocked to Alexandra Park or Platt Fields. They were resorts, with cultivated flowerbeds, arboretum, statuary and promenades. Most weekdays, they were deserted. Parks were show time, with bandstands, boating lakes and playgrounds. They were planted and programmed. Parks were spectacle, largely for audiences and promenaders. “Keep off the grass”. Improvised football pitches, bikes and joggers came much, much later. Right now there are good arguments to suggest that parks are becoming outdoor gyms, that organised sport and leisure has a real future and that public and private sector liaisons are the way forward.

“Green space” is part of a new language, and a new way of using city centres.

Public space in city centres is more problematic. Spinningfields, the new commercial zone between Deansgate and the River Irwell, appears to have plenty of ground-level food and drink provision, with a roster of tenants running from Café Rouge to Yo Sushi. Customers are thin on the ground. Chain outlets such as these, good and popular as they no doubt are, don’t tend to make memorable places. This is a different, more complex activity. A good place, somewhere people identify with, develop a relationship with, respect, defend and recommend, is a different matrix. A good place has history, geography, individuality, continuity and anecdote. People identify it, distinguish it from other places, feel comfortable with it and want to tell you about it.

In the 1950s city kids identified with bomb sites. These, more than parks and local countryside, were occupied, customised and improvised. Particular

corner lampposts were teenage hangouts, and bus shelters were for those of snogging age. Bits of the city centre – coffee bars with jukeboxes – were for pre-pubbers. Green space? There weren’t even sandwich shops, and it wasn’t until the 1990s that Manchester got its first pavement tables and chairs. “Green space”, like “public realm”, “regeneration” and “place making” is part of a new language, and a new way of using city centres.

By “green space” we often mean an area of the city where pedestrians have priority or sole use, and where some sort of landscape exists, perhaps along with grass, trees and plants. Parsonage Gardens, between Kendals on Deansgate and the River Irwell, is a high quality such space that has existed for 80 or so years. Cathedral Gardens is another such, created in 2002, with Urbis as its backdrop. You know this is a totally successful new

urban space because it is overwhelmed by Moshers and Goths. It’s a latter day street corner, close to public transport, and invisibly supervised.

Sadly, a well conceived public space in Manchester has recently been surrendered. The Manchester Plan of 1945 (the year of the birth of planning in Britain) envisaged a “Ceremonial Way” from the Town Hall steps (though admittedly a new “modern” Town Hall, closely resembling the one in Swinton Precinct), across Deansgate by John Rylands Library to the steps of the new Crown Court. This route provided an important piece of way-making in the city. It has finally been cut off by large chunks of Spinningfields, the new commercial district that is in mortal danger of itself being isolated from the city. Green space in cities need not be green. Properly constituted shared space is a city’s software. If you mangle the platform, the routes by which city life flows, you corrupt the programme.

Frederick Law Olmstead told the city of New York in 1872 that the park he was creating in midtown Manhattan would

be the “lungs of the city”. Central Park has turned out to be a sort of refuge from various pollutants as well as a carbon dioxide bank. A good thing then. London’s parks serve a similar purpose. Manchester’s needs in this area are probably quite well catered for by Heaton Park, and the fact that you can get to the countryside from the city centre, in any direction, within 20 minutes. In amongst the maddening buses on Oxford Road, air may be as sour as Mexico City, but it’s as sweet as the prairies once you hit Irlam O’th Heights.

Space in cities can be green, pink or technicolour, so long as it has identity, purpose and quality. They can be hard spaces, such as Grand’ Place in Brussels, Campo in Siena, and Trafalgar Square; programmed spaces such as Tivoli Gardens and Central Park; soft spaces like Rathaus Park in Vienna and Sefton Park in Liverpool. The crucial thing is that “space” as part of the public character of a city, should be properly conceived and well maintained. Space, it can be argued, lends more to a city’s heritage than the transient buildings it is defined by. Space, if it is properly protected, is perpetual.

Castlefield Basin is a great space just off Deansgate in the centre of Manchester. It is fed by the (culverted) River Medlock, and the Bridgewater and Rochdale Canals. The geography is attractive enough, with the outcrop of Collyhurst sand stone below Castle Street, and the gentle bend in the Bridgewater Canal. Not

Space in cities can be green, pink or technicolour, so long as it has identity, purpose and quality.

many places in the UK can outgun its history; Roman fort, first industrial canal, first passenger railway on the planet. Within 500 metres is the Museum of Science and Industry and Granada’s Coronation Street set. Walk west on the towpath and in less than fifteen minutes you are at the biggest football club in the world. This is a place maker’s dream. So why, for most of the day, most days of the year, is it more-or-less deserted? Why is it that two big new pubs, Quay Bar and Jackson’s Wharf, both built within the last eight years, are boarded up and abandoned? Another bar, Box Bar, in the undercroft of the lovely Italianate Baptist chapel on the viaduct, didn’t last two years. Only Dukes ’92, Albert’s Shed and Choice are well established and doing good business. This situation has been debated, and is being addressed by the city council and local interest groups. However, at least two additional

residential schemes are in for planning in the immediate area, and that is further cause for concern. Castlefield is too good and too rare an opportunity for the city to miss.

If you create nice places – as the Central Manchester Development Corporation and others did in Castlefield in the late 1980s – then pretty soon people are going to want to live in them. That’s only natural, and to the good. However, in this case, and critically, Castlefield has been handed to the city, and effectively taken away again. Kids are as rare as kingfishers down here, and old people might as well not exist. On a clear autumn day such as the one on which I write, Castlefield is beautiful. The lock keeper’s cottage is a post-card. Water cascades over the gates of lock 92, and I’m sharing the place with three other people. There are high days down here, and frankly, the quiet days are really rather a privilege. All public open space needs attention. It needs nurturing and promoting or it will go to waste.

We can walk from Castlefield past the Museum of Science and Industry and lovely St John’s Gardens. We can move across Quay Street to the newly created Hardman Square, down Hardman Boulevard, past the glorious new Civil Justice Centre to peek at the River Irwell. From Quay Street to the river is disappointing.

Spinningfields creates millions of square feet of high spec commercial space, and very little sense of space. This can and should be put right.

Other cities are learning how to connect their dislocated places back together in interesting ways (I’m thinking of Sheffield, for instance, from the Railway Station to the Town Hall). All towns and cities must do this as a matter of urgency, because if they don’t they will wither. Space doesn’t have to be green, though green space should be part of the mix. It is not “lungs” that we need (exclusively), it is variety of space, calm and cacophony, open and enclosed, hard and soft.

Most of all we need to be able to use space to navigate our cities, under our own power, and in our own time. Not just lungs but minds. Good cities are sensual places. We need high quality spaces to be able to appreciate that.

SEFTON PARK
IN LIVERPOOL.
PHOTO:
JONTY WILDE/
NWDA.





Interview Mark Hillsdon Photograph Jim Varney/VisualMedia

Air and water

Chris Matthews,
carbon manager, United Utilities

The country's first dedicated carbon manager at a major utility company explains his job and how the sector needs to change.

United Utilities uses a lot of energy. To be precise, last year it used one-third of one per cent of all the electricity generated in the UK. All that energy goes to power its water and wastewater treatment operations, which in turn leads to the equivalent of 488,000 tonnes of CO₂ floating up into the atmosphere.

It's a carbon footprint the utility company intends to cut with a £37 million action plan – developed after six months intensive work with the Carbon Trust – that by 2012 will reduce emissions by eight per cent on 2005-06 figures.

And overseeing the delivery of this strategy is Chris Matthews, the industry's first dedicated carbon manager.

"When the opportunity came up to apply for the role there was no hesitation," says Matthews, who's been at the company since graduating in 1994.

He's passionate about his job and talks of the importance of integrating carbon reduction into business plans and decision making processes, as well as involving employees and seeing carbon as a tradable commodity.

Other key elements of the strategy involve United Utilities (UU) buying a fifth of its energy from renewable sources over the next three years and further developing the use of combined heat and power systems at its sewage treatment plants, exploiting the potential of the methane gas that's a by-product of the treatment process.

Matthews has also been working closely with the Low Carbon Culture Company, an off-shoot of the Carbon Trust, which puts employees at the centre of the drive to reduce emissions, while the company has earmarked £1 million to help low carbon ideas get off the ground within the group.

But there's also something of a paradox at the heart of UU's carbon question. The company estimates that simply keeping pace with European legislation governing water and sewage treatment has seen its demand for electricity nearly double since privatisation. So while these targets for water improvements are being met, airborne carbon pollution has grown.

"The Victorians were quite elegant with their solutions," explains Matthews. "They built a reservoir

up in the Lake District and the water gravitated all the way into Manchester for treatment and there's drinking water for you. With the need to improve the quality of drinking water we're now having to stop that gravity flow, pump that water to a treatment source, and then let it continue on its way.

"But by putting this inter-stage treatment process in... we're consuming carbon. So what's happened perversely over the last 15 years is that the drivers to improve drinking water quality and discharge to the environment have been met, but at a cost.

"We've got to ask ourselves the question – is it right that we continue on the same scale of aquatic improvements, regardless of the extra emissions it is causing?"

Perhaps, suggests Matthews, instead of reacting to problems such as the levels of phosphate and nitrates in our water, isn't it time we looked at the root of the problem and made changes there, which in this case means pushing detergent manufacturers to cut the levels of these chemicals in their products?

Consumer demand can be a powerful tool and Matthews believes UU's own customers have a role to play in the company's carbon management, too.

"It's not just about using less water but understanding why doing this has climate change implications," he says. Less use, he reasons, puts less strain on resources such as reservoirs, which themselves are under pressures from changing rainfall patterns.

"The other element is from a mitigation perspective... if customers use less water we have to use less energy to treat it, while around fifty per cent of household water use involves energy too, from boiling kettles to taking a bath, so ultimately it will mean smaller utility bills too."

Matthews also feels that the way in which the industry is currently regulated needs to

change in order to take into account the effects of climate change.

"There are constraints in the ways in which we spend our money," he explains, as new activities have to pay for themselves and both customers and shareholders need to benefit from what the company does.

"The way forward is to possibly change the five-year cycle of reviews [by the industry regulator Ofwat] and allow utility companies to make more considered long-term investments.

"Working with Ofwat and the Environment Agency, we need to find the right way forward which is affordable ... but which also delivers environmental improvement.

"The model for the industry will change and I don't think in 50 years time the water industry will look like it does today. But we need to start thinking about that vision now."

TURNING POINTS

1994 Graduates in History and Politics from the University of Warwick and joins a graduate training programme at United Utilities

1998-2001 Runs the water distribution network in east Cheshire

2006 United Utilities' Carbon Forum, made up of senior managers, is formed and work begins with the Carbon Trust

2007 Co-authors the company's carbon strategy and is appointed carbon manager

Weight watchers

Councils could soon start charging householders for the amount of rubbish they throw away. But if consumers are going to have to pay for their waste, shouldn't manufacturers be doing more to help?

The Local Government Association (LGA), which represents more than 400 councils in England and Wales, wants councils to have the power to charge householders directly for collecting and disposing of their rubbish, with reduced rates for less waste.

"Then the polluter pays and behaviour changes," it says, warning that if councils fail to meet the EU's targets for reducing landfill over the next four years, they could face fines totalling up to £3 billion – and taxpayers could bear the brunt.

Dubbed 'pay as you throw', options being considered include making people buy prepaid waste sacks, charging people according to the size of their wheelie bin, or using bins fitted with special microchips. All make it possible to charge people according to the amount of waste they throw out. Government legislation would be needed before councils could implement the schemes, but that could be in place by 2009.

Some argue that as long as the taxpayer foots the bill for the collection of packaging waste, producers are not really responsible, and there is less pressure on companies to reduce the amount of packaging. But if people find they are being charged for every wrapper tossed in the bin, then supermarkets and retail outlets are likely to face mounting pressure to reduce packaging – pressure that will be passed on down the supply chain.

Richard Wild-Jones, a practitioner at the Manufacturing Institute, thinks that the environment is already a key

concern for customers and says: "Companies can gain significant competitive advantage by pursuing a green packaging strategy."

Linpac Plastics' St Helens plant, which has an annual turnover of £20 million and 135 staff, reduced the amount of material used in its expanded polystyrene food packaging products after Mike Salkeld was brought in as site manager in January 2007.

Salkeld says he implemented the project to satisfy customers' needs, in recognition of the increasing demand for less packaging. "The pressure comes from our direct customer, the food processor, because they are under pressure from the supermarkets to reduce packaging waste," he says.

"So there is some end-use customer

Companies can gain significant competitive advantage by pursuing a green packaging strategy.

pressure, but there are also internal business pressures to reduce product weight in a competitive marketplace," he adds. Linpac had been hit by increasing material and power costs to make the extruded sheets of polystyrene used in its end products. These are then moulded into finished packaging in industrial ovens – another energy intensive, and therefore expensive, process.

Indeed, Wild-Jones says reducing packaging is a key part of any company's lean strategy, where waste is squeezed out of manufacturing processes and the product itself, including its packaging. "Costs of raw materials, such as plastic, are going up and when you combine this with the increasing costs of waste disposal, there are powerful cost advantages to reducing, eliminating or re-using packaging," he says.

Salkeld brought the changes in quickly: the same month he joined the St Helens plant, Linpac successfully converted its disposable

tableware; in February 2007 it reduced the amount of material in its hot food boxes, typically used by takeaway food restaurants. Material reduction was rolled out to other product lines in the following months and in June the company reduced the amount of material in its expanded polystyrene discs used by supermarkets for pizzas.

The plant had been using 6,000 tonnes of material polystyrene a year and the changes mean Linpac has been able to save 400 tonnes of that. The conversion process also now produces less waste and is 30 per cent more efficient than a year ago.

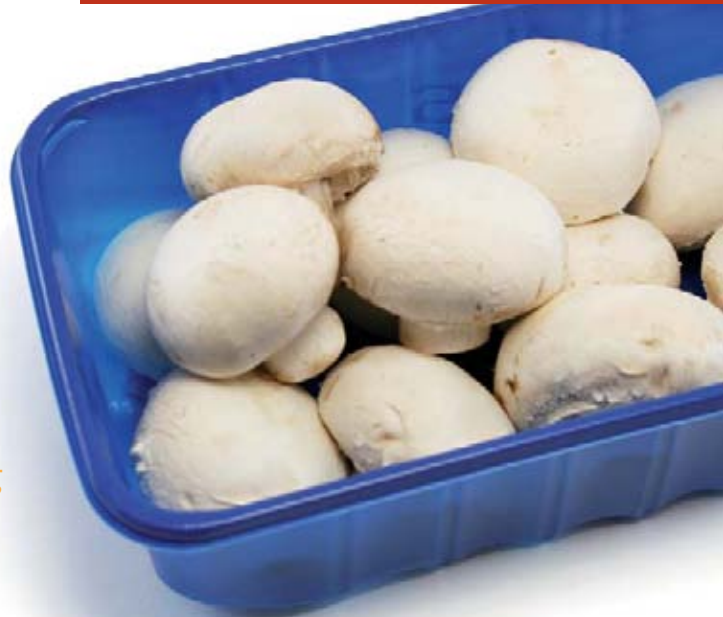
But before embarking on this programme, the company consulted its customers and carried out a series of stringent product performance analyses at reduced material rates to ensure each product was still performing to the standard expected by its

customers – those being the food processing companies, which in turn supply the supermarkets. "The product we make is the same in appearance and function but it has less weight," says Salkeld.

The Manufacturing Institute's Wild-Jones agrees with the approach Linpac has taken. "Stand back and consider what value the packaging is adding to the product from the customer's perspective, and consult customers on what they think. Any element that is non-value adding should then be removed. A useful next step is to consider whether materials used are over-specified. So, should you use a lighter grade of material?" he asks.

Linpac is now looking at the way it delivers its product within the supply chain. "When we deliver polystyrene discs, for example, we use cardboard simply for transit so looking at eliminating that cardboard could result in a saving both for us as the supplier and for the customer," says Salkeld.

Joanne Birtwistle is a journalist for North West Business Insider magazine.



Meet three of the region's budding environmental entrepreneurs.

Interviews by Michael Short

GREEN-SPIRATION

Innovation and opportunity: two of the key words for any successful business. Here in the Northwest – the cradle of the industrial revolution, birthplace of 'baby', the world's first computer, and home to retail giants including M&S and the Co-op – we know all about innovation. So it's not surprising that the region's businesses have been quick to capitalise on a rapidly emerging new opportunity – the environment.

A report published last year estimates that the region's environment supports over 100,000 jobs and is worth around £2.6 billion. Manufacturers have spotted that working more efficiently reduces their impact on the environment, but also significantly cuts costs.

Meanwhile, retailers are differentiating themselves from the competition and finding favour with concerned consumers by investing in their green credentials.

Smaller businesses too are seizing the green opportunity, with individual entrepreneurs spotting new niche markets. Here, we meet three members of this inspiring new breed.



Natural Retreats

Matthew Spence set up his company Natural Retreats with the aim of putting luxury holiday homes on the doorsteps of national parks. But he quickly realised sustainability was the way forward for his grand scheme.

“Seven years ago I went to Yellowstone National Park for my honeymoon and struggled to find accommodation. We wanted to stay in a nice place but there really wasn’t anything. When we came back I thought ‘wouldn’t it be nice if you could stay in high-end accommodation in our own national parks?’ and that’s where the concept came from.

I’m from a farming background and we had 55 acres of rough scrubland near Richmond in the Yorkshire Dales, just 500 metres away from a national park. It was crying out to be the site for five star luxury accommodation, which is different to the usual boring B&Bs and campsites you get.

“Each cabin operates entirely off renewable energy and we even take our water from a local spring.”

Unfortunately we were being told that land could only be used for hill farming but in this day and age, that’s no existence at all. You have to work longer hours than you can imagine and can’t make any money from it.

It took three years to persuade the local community in Richmond that we should get what we wanted. There was huge opposition from groups like the CPRE and English Nature who didn’t want to see any development on green belt land but our point was that we couldn’t make anything from farming that land. That meant we had to find a way of moulding our development around everyone’s concerns.

The way to do that was to make it green, to make it sustainable and help the local community. Rural communities are dying and we were very keen to make sure our development would benefit the local community. And what we have found is that if

you start with sustainable principles, the environmental elements will follow.

We have no facilities on site, forcing people to use local shops and pubs. That’s sustainability, and on the back of that we have been able to build on green principles.

Once we got the support of the local community we had to build our cabins in a way that would satisfy the planners. That meant using sustainable, local resources such as timber, building them on site with little impact on the local environment.

The point is we aim to give more back to the environment than we take out, which is partly why we have been awarded Zero Carbon Footprint status. As well as sustainable buildings, each cabin operates entirely off renewable energy and we even take our water

from a local spring rather than having mains installed. We’re not experts in the environment but we are learning and doing what we can. Our business model is all about doing the right thing, whether for the environment or for local communities who need help.

We have wonderful wildlife in Britain and we think people should be holidaying here more. There’s no need to jump on a plane to the Costas. I think people are starting to see that too, because our occupancy levels are well above the national average.

We can’t save the world but we can save our National Parks by encouraging more people to visit them and in turn help the communities in those areas. We are now looking at further sites but the plan is to expand the company globally.”

www.naturalretreats.com



Crowberry Consulting

If proof were needed that a heightened environmental agenda is creating new opportunities, then Becky Toal is it. Her environmental consultancy company, Crowberry, was set up to answer the increasing demand from firms who need help to improve their ethical and environmental performance.

"This is my vocation. I've always had a passion for the environment and sustainability and decided that was what I wanted to pursue in my life. I have three environmental degrees – a Bsc, Msc and MBA – and after achieving those went to work for Natural England as an environmental manager. I then had five years

"The environment has created opportunities for people like myself."

with the Co-operative Group, but left last year to set up Crowberry Consulting because right now it's boom time for the environment. I'm quite driven and ambitious anyway but felt I could make a success of it given my business background and experience.

I think more companies are aware of their

environmental responsibilities for a variety of reasons, and legislation plays a large part in that.

Health and Safety was at the top of the agenda in the 1980s, about ten years after it was introduced. Environmental elements were introduced in the 1990s and they're now taking effect – I believe it takes about ten years for things to become embedded and filter down.

The other influence is access to information and with the explosion of the internet, people are a lot more aware of environmental issues and can easily find out if a company has a good track record when it comes to corporate social responsibility.

That combination of developing legislation and of everyone being connected to information is what is driving the environment as an issue for companies, and it is being reinforced by all the media coverage and events such as Live Earth.

However, there's a huge divide between the corporates and the SMEs. Small businesses are very time-pressured and sustainability is not high on their agenda, yet more and more small companies are being asked to demonstrate their environmental credibility.

I think the growth of interest in the environment has created opportunities for people like myself who have the academic background and industry experience to provide the support that clients need to deal with these new pressures."

www.crowberryconsulting.com

Environappies

Avril McGarvey first started the Preston-based social enterprise Environappies, a laundry service for real nappies, more than a decade ago. Today the business serves much of Lancashire and is allowing Avril to expand into other environmentally-friendly social enterprises.

"I used to run my own cleaning company and thought that when I retired I would settle for a little part time job to keep me busy.

But not long after I retired I realised I would have to do something else because I was getting bored. That's when I decided to start Environappies. I had seen a laundry service for nappies when I was on holiday in

"I think running as a social enterprise is the way forward."

America and thought it was a really good idea.

Real nappies are much better for the environment than disposables but the problem is no-one wants to wash them.

Disposables make up about four per cent of domestic waste and end up in landfill. Trees are felled to make the paper pulp used in disposables and they also contain plastic produced from non-renewable crude oil resources.

Our customers have a bin where they put their used cotton nappies and we collect them, wash them and

return them, all for £6 a week. Our driver even washes and sterilises the bin.

We borrow space at Blackpool Hospital where the nappies are washed – it's where all the scrubs are washed so they are cleaned to a high clinical standard. It's also better for the environment to have them washed on that scale and the cleaning agents they use have to be non-harmful too, without all the chemicals in.

It's not just the cleaning products though, we're also getting a new van that will run on biofuel and be less harmful to the environment.

People are a lot more clued up about environmental things these days, which means we are getting more business.

Because we are a social enterprise we qualify for lots of different grants and we get lots of support in other ways from people who want to be our partners or sponsors. For example we are allowed into hospitals to talk to antenatal classes about using real nappies.

The profits we are making mean we are looking at starting more social enterprises. We are looking at a gardening business for example.

I think running as a social enterprise is the way forward."

www.environappies.co.uk





Calling all green heroes

We know you're out there, going about your lives, working amongst us, often unnoticed. Now it's time for you to stand tall; to wear your green credentials with pride. Our region needs you. And the Northwest Business Environment Awards need you too.

The Awards celebrate companies that are taking positive steps to put the environment at the heart of their success. Awards categories include innovation, environmental best practice,

communications, sustainable procurement and the built environment. Whether it's cutting energy use, creating products for the conscientious consumer or designing a sustainable building, Northwest companies are leading the way. Have you got what it takes?

Find out more at:
www.merseybasin.org.uk or call
 Environment Connect 0800 032 0222.

Deadline for entries: March 3rd.
 The Awards will be held in June 2008.





Little eco-warriors

Kate Fox talks to Fiona Stanley, the classroom assistant who helped turn Summerville Primary into Salford's first Eco-school, and finds out what it means for the school, the children and for her.

Q What does it mean to be an Eco-school?

Eco-schools is run by ENCAMS, which is based in Wigan, and it's basically a management system that runs the school in an environmentally-friendly way. We reduce, reuse and recycle – which everyone should be doing anyway – but the heart of the programme is the Eco Committee. That's a group of pupils who are elected by their peers to represent the class, and they make decisions about what's going to happen in the school. For example, last winter there were some trees that came down in the storms, so the committee asked if they could be replaced by fruit trees so that pupils could eat the fruit from them.

Q How did Summerville get involved with the programme?

I'm afraid I kicked it all off! When my little girl came to the nursery here, almost seven years ago, I was looking around thinking 'they're not using the grounds much, I wonder what they could do?' I started searching on the internet, and I saw a Greenfingers Challenge on the RHS site. The runners-up that year were Canon Burrows School in Ashton-under-Lyne, who are a Green Flag school. I went to visit them and they talked about eco-schools – I was so excited that I couldn't sleep for two days. I suddenly saw how our grounds could be used. It was a real eye-opener. We didn't actually go for the [entry level] bronze award – I looked at the criteria and thought, yes, we're doing all that, let's go straight for the silver. We were the first school in the city to get silver, then the following year we achieved our Green Flag.

Q What do you think the children gain from the experience?

I think it's mainly a sense of being involved. A lot of kids don't really get listened to, and this really gives them a voice. They know they can make a difference. Last year's Year 6 wrote to Gill Baker, the strategic head of children's services at Salford council, and asked if she could tell schools to use recycled paper, and she wrote back saying 'No, they won't listen to me, but they will listen to you.' So the children went along to a primary heads meeting and did a presentation about the importance of using recycled paper – and we know that people are changing over now. One little girl came back and said 'Oh, I changed the world today!' – and she's right, if everyone did a little bit, you'd have the world saved.

Q What do the teachers and parents think about being an Eco-school? The kids are easy to get on your side, whereas the teachers have got so many other things to do. But this programme ticks lots of other boxes at the same time. They can use the wild garden for all kinds of curriculum subjects. When it was being built, a maths class went out and measured the pond hole so I'd know what size liner to get. I think the parents think I'm a bit of a lunatic, but we do get a lot of feedback saying how good the school feels. I think the eco ethos is a fundamental part of the school now.

Q What's your next challenge?

I've become an Eco-schools assessor now, and I really want to get more and more schools to take on board the environmental message and get involved. We want a whole little army of Salford eco-warriors! Teachers from the high school that our children go on to say they're getting nagged by ex-Summerville children about Eco-schools, so I've been over and spoken to them, but secondary schools are a harder nut to crack.

Q What do you feel you've got out of the Eco-school experience yourself?

I was a nervous wreck when I started here – when I introduced the Eco-schools idea to the school governors, I'd never spoken publicly before. But now I've talked off-the-cuff to meetings of 250 people. So many doors have opened for me. It's pushed me into doing things I hadn't before, and made me realise that I'm passionate about this. My generation, and those before me, have really mucked this world up, and we have got to teach our children to do something about it.

Ken Knott is chief executive of Ask Developments. The multi-award winning Manchester based company is one of the region's fastest growing developers.



Opinion: by focusing on the element of a congestion charge, the opponents of the Future of Transport in Greater Manchester plan risk missing out on billions in investment and condemning the city to an uncompetitive future, says Ken Knott.

THE TRUE COST OF CONGESTION

I would like to applaud our political leaders in Greater Manchester for having had the courage to promote a public debate on the crucial issues facing all of us on transport recently.

There has been real progress in Manchester these last few years, in both the economic and physical profile of the area. The city is now seen internationally as a place of opportunity rather than decline. Job creation and investment levels have increased significantly. We have the drive and appetite, the policies and the delivery partnerships to ensure this growth can continue in the future in the interests of everyone who lives and works here.

But it's not going to be easy to continue the growth we have enjoyed as a region in recent years. We'll have to meet many huge challenges around skills, education and also around transport, where we need to capture very significant levels of investment to ensure we have in place an infrastructure of the necessary quality, reliability and capacity to meet the needs of our residents as well as business.

No one can expect the principle of congestion charging by itself to be greeted with joy anywhere: in businesses, town halls, bars or shops, or by the public. That is not the issue. The issue is how we are to deliver the step-change in investment we need,

No realistic alternative exists that will secure immediate access to over £2.5 billion of investment.

how we exercise more control and influence over our bus and rail network, and how we tackle congestion by influencing changes in behavior through greater use of an expanded and renewed public transport system. We have to decide

whether the gains around investment levels, and control over the transport network in particular, are sufficient to offset a congestion charging plan.

I think that the overall balance of the package Manchester has submitted to the government in its bid for funding from

the Transport Innovation Fund is about right. It justly includes environmental responsibility: something our younger people rightly demand of us all.

All the main political parties – whatever they say publicly – to a greater or lesser extent accept the inevitability of congestion charging. Indeed, on the balance of probabilities, a majority of us believe congestion charging will become a permanent fixture of national planning and transport policy within the next ten years.

It is of course very easy for anyone to oppose the Future of Transport in Greater Manchester plan – because it is controversial and radical, and because some people may be affected negatively in the short term.

But what realistic alternative exists that will secure immediate access to over £2.5 billion of investment? Investment that will mean we can exercise more control over buses and rail to rid the system of the wasteful inefficiencies which we witness on a daily basis and which threaten the growth path we are promoting.

The reality is that there is no sensible alternative to the present plan. If we fail to deliver, it will mean no more major investment in transport, more and more congestion, smaller and smaller job markets and a serious economic slowdown leading to ultimate decline.

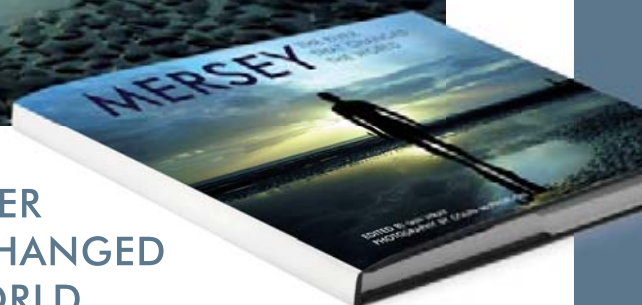
That is not the vision that most businesses have for a successful and dynamic Greater Manchester, which must compete in a global market place.

Manchester has shown that it has the ambition to be successful, and the capacity to deliver. Occasionally very difficult decisions have to be made. That is what our leaders are elected to do and why serious business people who have the wider and true interests of the area close to their hearts should stand and support them.



MERSEY

THE RIVER
THAT CHANGED
THE WORLD



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