

Boiler Scrappage Scheme

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The Government is offering up to 125,000 households £400 towards the cost of upgrading their boiler (if G-rated or equivalent or worse) to a high efficiency A-rated one or a renewable heating technology. This will help to save in the region of 140,000t CO₂ per year - equivalent to taking 45,000 cars off the road.

What are the benefits in upgrading?

New boilers have rated efficiencies of 90 per cent or more meaning that they use less fuel, resulting in lower CO₂ emissions and running costs. Renewable heat technologies do not use fossil fuels, reducing CO₂ emissions still further. For example, this means by upgrading your G-rated boiler to an A-rated one, your household heating bill should drop by about a quarter - a saving, on average, of around £235 a year.



Who is eligible?

The scheme is open to 125,000 householders in England living in an owned or privately rented home.

Please note: - If you are a householder (including tenants) under 60 you can only apply for the scheme if the boiler you are scrapping is in working order and is the main boiler used to heat the home. If you are a householder (including tenants) and 60 or over you can apply for the scheme regardless of whether the boiler you are scrapping is in working order. However, it still needs to be the main boiler used to heat the home.

Only householders and landlords who privately own and rent dwellings are eligible to apply for a voucher. Boiler installers and manufacturers, local authority registered social landlords, and housing associations are not eligible to apply.

If you own your own home or rent it from a private landlord and are in receipt of certain benefits, you may be eligible for a grant of up to £3,500 (or £6,000 where oil, low carbon or renewable technologies are recommended) under the Warm Front Scheme.

For more info please visit:

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk
www.warmfront.co.uk

Please note you cannot receive funding under both Warm Front and the Boiler Scrappage Scheme

WFEG and EST team up for FREE energy checks and monitors

Thanks to all our efforts to save energy and reduce our carbon emissions our community has been selected as one of four in the West Midlands region to receive a special offer from the Energy Saving Trust. You should all by now have received letters and forms from the EST and WFEG offering you the chance for a free home energy check and the opportunity to obtain a free energy (or real time display) monitor - if you are one of the first 300 to return the energy check form. These monitors retail for around £25 and have been shown to really help people to figure out how to save electricity in the home. If you don't manage to get one of these free ones, you can borrow one through WFEG's Home Energy Monitor Loan Scheme (which is proving really popular).



EST are also going to send team of 'Energy Doctors' to our Parish to help us install the monitors and give households advice on saving energy. In addition to the Energy Check form you will have received a survey form about renewables. It will really help us and EST if you can complete this. WFEG are going to explore options for providing a good deal on solar panels for our residents and whether there is a possibility of establishing a loan fund. As another article in this newsletter says, from the 1st April owners of renewable electricity installations like solar panels or wind turbines will be paid for each kilowatt hour that they generate, so there are some really interesting opportunities here.

Also WFEG have been offered 30 days free help by EST - we are hoping to use this time resource to help us explore ways of promoting the use of renewable energy sources in our villages. More on this in future editions.

If you don't get a free monitor from the EST offer you can still borrow one for a month from WFEG by emailing Dave Murcott on ospregreen@hotmail.com

Volunteers and Committee Members Wanted!

WFEG is on the lookout for new Management Committee members as we have some vacancies. You don't need specialist skills, you just need an interest in improving your local environment and low carbon initiatives.

We are always looking to widen our activities which are currently based mainly around energy-saving and food. We welcome people interested in these, but also those with an interest in wildlife, recycling, transport and similar issues.

If you don't fancy being on the Management Committee then we'd be delighted to have you as a volunteer for helping to plan and run events. Meet friendly like-minded people, take part in lively discussions, help your local community and have loads of fun.

For more information contact
Thia 01543 432188 or Mike on 01543 432238
or email info@wfeg.org.uk

Tutbury goes green!

A Community Project Team in Tutbury is investigating the potential for a micro hydro-electric plant to be installed in the Mill Fleam in Tutbury. A feasibility study has been funded by donations from Trent & Dove Housing Association, Tutbury Parish Council and Tutbury Civic Society.

THEP (Tutbury Hydro-Electric Project Group) formed in December 2008, is a team of local residents who aim to reinstate Mill Fleam, a disused and derelict water course, so that a Hydroelectric Generator can be installed to generate electricity to be sold off to a customer or the National Grid. The proceeds of which will be returned to the benefit of the local community and the upkeep of Mill Fleam.

The benefits of which will be:

- Improving the green credentials of East Staffordshire/South Derbyshire and Tutbury/Hatton by acting responsibly towards the planet and reducing our collective carbon footprint
- The Hydro Plant will in turn pay for itself, in time generate income and return funds to the community and a dividend to shareholders who invest in the Industrial Provident Society.
- The design process will consider Educational and Visitor interest both during construction and through life.
- Improved environment for the Fleam, the surrounding area and for wildlife. The water will flow again.

The project team have conducted a number of site visits to completed or emerging schemes - Torrs Hydro, Alport Mill on the Duke of Rutland's estate, Cromford and Burton Flour Mills in Burton upon Trent. This has provided valuable information in terms of lessons learnt and good contacts for future advice.

Valuable links have been made with Midlands Co-op and Eon.UK as well as other environmental groups across the country. Enquiries about the potential Hydro scheme and the other 'green' aims of the group have even come from as far afield as Northern Ireland and Jersey.

Most recently the group have successfully been granted funding support under the Community Shares Scheme to assist in developing an Industrial Provident Society. They have also entered into an agreement with Water Power Enterprises to develop the Hydro Scheme and are exploring options for reinstating the Fleam, and will be setting up an IPS to raise funds and provide to people the opportunity to "Invest in the Environment". Most recently the project group hosted a visit from David Kidney MP, a Government Minister from DECC.

To find out more about the project email: Tutbury-Hydro@live.co.uk

WFEG Dates for your Diary 2010 are:

The Village Market - The Bell Inn car park - Saturday 20th March 9am to 1pm

WFEG Celebration & Planning Meeting - Maurice Fisher Room,

Whittington Village Hall - Saturday 27th March - 2pm to 5pm

The Village Market - The Bell Inn car park - Saturday 17th April 9am to 1pm

WFEG
Whittington & Fisherwick Environment Group
www.wfeg.org.uk

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WFEG Seasonal recipe

A tasty, vegetarian supper using (mostly) seasonal and regional ingredients, adapted from a Sainsbury's recipe which has been repeatedly trialled and tested by WFEG members Siân & Phil.

Apple, Leek and Potato Gratin (serves 4)

- 55g (2oz) English butter
- 450g (1lb) English leeks - washed and sliced
- 1 large English Bramley apple - cored, peeled & sliced
- 3 - 4 large cloves of garlic - crushed
- Salt & ground black pepper
- 80g (3oz) grated strong Cheddar cheese
- 675g (1 1/2 lb) English potatoes - peeled & thinly sliced
- 150ml (1/4 pint) English double cream
- 120ml (4 fluid oz) English semi-skimmed milk
- 2 dessert spoons of wholegrain mustard

Pre-heat oven to gas mark 6/400 °F/200 °C.
Heat butter in large frying pan and fry leeks for 3 - 4 minutes, stirring until soft.
Add the apple and the garlic and fry for another few minutes.
Season with salt & pepper.
Transfer into an ovenproof dish and sprinkle with the cheese.
Arrange potato slices over the top, so that they are overlapping.
In a bowl, mix the cream, milk and mustard, adding more ground black pepper to taste, before pouring over the top of the potatoes.
Bake for 1 hour or until potatoes are golden brown and tender.
Serve with a crisp salad and hot crusty bread for a delicious supper.
Please let us know if you enjoy this recipe and send us any seasonal recipes that you have, which use local/regional ingredients.

WFEG

Whittington & Fisherwick Environment Group

NEWSLETTER

On a journey to a
low carbon future

MARCH 2010

Boiler Scrappage Scheme

According to a recent DECC press release vouchers are still available under Government's Boiler Scrappage Scheme.

Apparently 54,758 vouchers have been snapped up under the scheme leaving around 70,000 vouchers worth a total of £28 million still up for grabs.

The scheme was launched in January to upgrade up to 125,000 household heating systems in England to cut carbon, save money on fuel bills and sustain work for the heating industry.

All the major energy companies which sell and install boilers (British Gas, E.On, npower and Scottish & Southern) have now matched the offer, giving householders potentially £800 off the cost of a new efficient boiler. Some manufacturing companies are also offering deals



The Energy Saving Trust (EST), which is running the scheme on behalf of the Government, is receiving on average 5,000 enquiries per day to its 14 call centres across England.

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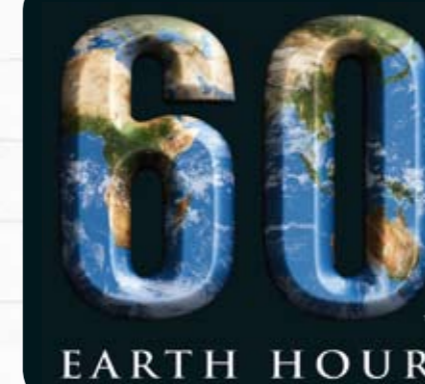
WFEG Scoops NATIONAL Award

Having already won two regional awards for its work in the last year, WFEG has added a national prize to its tally. We emerged as winner of the rural section of the **Energy Saving Trust/Guardian Newspaper Green Community Heroes Competition** - an amazing achievement given that we've been going less than 3 years.



Unfortunately our bid to become one of 20 'test bed' communities to receive £500,000 from the Department of Energy and Climate Change was not successful, but we were told that we 'scored highly'. Nevertheless there is still a possibility that we may receive some benefit as a 'runner-up'.

Among the projects which we hoped to fund with the money from the Challenge was a loan fund to enable residents to borrow funds to invest in microgeneration/renewables or in other energy saving activities at home. We are still looking at ways we could do this. Similarly we hoped to be able to fund microgeneration for community buildings in the Parish - again we are looking at other funding for these projects. We are also investigating ideas for how our community could generate its own power. More on this in the future we hope.



WWF Earth Hour 2010 takes place on Saturday March 27th 2010. WWF are hoping for a billion people around the world to switch their lights off for one hour to show political leaders and decision makers that they care about climate change.

To switch off and support Earth Hour go to:
www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour or call 01483 426 333
for more information.



The Newsletter from the Whittington and Fisherwick Environment Group

Want to get in touch? E-mail us: nichola@wfeg.org.uk

MINERAL MADNESS!



Fisherwick residents have been campaigning hard with the support of local County Councillor Matthew Ellis to protest against the high rates of sand and gravel extraction that have been proposed for the area, including a new quarry at Fisherwick.

Recently the soon to be defunct West Midlands Regional Assembly agreed to cut the proposed levels of extraction from 65% to 55%.

The reduction means that Staffordshire would still need to provide just over half of the West Midlands' total figure despite the relatively good news that one million tonnes a year less will be dug up from within the county up until 2020.

In a recent Staffordshire County Council press release Robert Marshall, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Infrastructure, claims Staffordshire will not succumb to pressure on this issue. He adds: "It's unfair, it's unsustainable and it's got to change... excessive quarrying also blights the countryside and local communities. It is an outrage that Staffordshire should provide two thirds of the West Midlands' sand and gravel."

Fisherwick residents agree – they think it's pretty outrageous that the idea of a brand new quarry is being mooted when there is plenty of capacity in existing facilities elsewhere in the West Midlands.

The impact on the local area (not just Fisherwick!) will be **enormous and irrevocable** – including heavy traffic throughout the Parish, the ruination of high quality farming and food production land, disruption to wildlife habitat and little or no economic benefit for the residents of the Parish - who will have to endure all of the misery.

Eco Case Study - Megan and Steve



Megan and Steve renovated a Victorian farmhouse that had been empty for several years.

They thoroughly renovated and extended it and introduced many energy saving features:

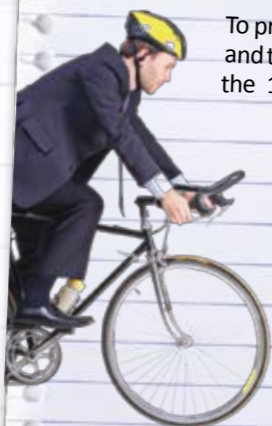
- Ground source heat pump, providing energy for central heating and hot water
- Wood burning stove – wood sourced mainly from the garden
- Triple glazed conservatory, double glazing throughout remainder of house
- Loft insulation
- Original walls have had insulation added internally using insulation backed plasterboard
- New walls have cavity wall insulation
- Rainwater tank, and grey water for toilets

The spacious 4 bedroomed house has a monthly energy cost of around £55. This is less than half the cost of powering the average 4 bedroomed property.

Also a large vegetable plot in the garden provides many vegetables during the summer months. Garden and kitchen waste is used to make their own compost. They walk, cycle and catch the bus frequently.

On Yer Bike!

With the Department for Transport
Cycle to Work Scheme



To promote healthier journeys to work and to reduce environmental pollution, the 1999 Finance Act introduced an annual tax exemption, which allows employers to loan cycles and cyclists' safety equipment to employees as a tax free benefit.

The exemption was one of a series of measures introduced under the Government's Green Transport Plan.

What about asking your employer to introduce the scheme?

More info at <http://bit.ly/adv87x>

Cut your energy bills at www.wfeg.org.uk/insulationoffer

Does Solar Electricity Make Sense At Last?



The government has recently announced the details of a new scheme, first proposed last July, which will give guaranteed payments to households and community organisations generating electricity from renewable sources (e.g. solar photovoltaic systems) from 1st April 2010.

For someone fitting a typical 2.5kW photovoltaic solar power system to an existing home a payment of 41.3p per kWh generated will be paid whether that electricity is exported or used by the home owner. This is called a Feed-in Tariff (or FIT). A further payment of 3p per kWh will be made for each unit not used and therefore exported to the grid. New-build properties fitted with solar panels will receive a lower tariff of 36.1p per kWh generated. These tariff payments are guaranteed for 25 years and they are also index linked - i.e. they will rise in line with inflation. For householders they are also tax-free.

The Government announcement also includes an example of the income available from a 2.5kW Solar PV system. These figures suggest that you could expect to receive up to £900 per year from the FIT plus a saving of around £140 on your electric bill giving a total net benefit of up to £1,040 per year.

As for the cost of a 2.5kW system – prices are variable but £12,500 fully installed seems to be achievable. That's not cheap but £1,040 a year from a £12,500 outlay is equivalent to a return of 8.5% - tax free, for 25 years and as good as guaranteed. Smaller - and larger - systems are of course available (but the tariff drops for systems >4kW) Bear in mind though it's not the same as a saving rate. You won't have access to your capital once you've spent the money on a PV system. It works out that your outlay will be recouped in approximately 12 years and the next 13 years are pure profit.

It is more comparable to an inflation-protected annuity – where you invest a lump sum in return for a guaranteed income – but it's guaranteed for 25 years and is transferable to anyone who lives at the house where the PV is installed. Comparisons are complex because of the different types of annuity available and pension tax arrangements, but an initial examination seems to suggest that it might be difficult to get the same guaranteed and inflation-protected rate of return from a pension annuity. In addition you could expect to see the value of your home improve once the FIT becomes common knowledge.

Given that energy prices are expected to go up long term, it seems anyone with a lump sum available might at least consider investing in renewable energy. It is also likely that various types of loan scheme will come into being to help those without access to large capital sums. It may be possible to add the costs to a mortgage. WFEG are investigating loan schemes and will keep you posted. We are also starting to explore whether we might be able to partner one or more Solar PV installers to provide PV to residents at discounted rates. More news on this if we are successful.

Full details of the scheme and a breakdown of the rates by technology type and how long the FiT will be paid for can be found here: <http://bit.ly/b6xVuq>. Planning permission is not needed for solar panels unless you are in a Conservation Area or the building is listed.

Two households in Whittington have very recently installed solar PV in readiness for the introduction of the FiTs. We look forward to many more joining them in the future. We hope to have an event later in the year to provide information on renewable energy – and another Open Ecohomes day in the autumn.



FiTs replace the Low Carbon Buildings Programme (LCBP) grant scheme for electricity-generating renewable technologies and the upfront grant is no longer available for these. Feed-in tariffs will also be paid to generators of other kinds of renewable electricity including wind power. Meanwhile grants from the LCBP are still available for renewable heat technologies such as solar thermal until March 2011.

This article should not constitute investment advice and readers are strongly encouraged to do their own research and shop around before making any purchasing decisions.

Wetland Wonders!

Like me, you may well have missed National Wetlands Day on 2nd Feb, but did you know that wetlands are vital for life on earth and are disappearing faster than our rainforests? They not only provide a crucial livelihood to worldwide communities, but also store vast quantities of carbon from the atmosphere, as well as storing and cleaning water, which helps protect us from floods and storms. But as our wetlands are lost, so too are the wildlife species that depend on them - 35% of all amphibians, 15% of wetland birds, 40% of reptiles, 30% of mammals and 6% of fish are globally threatened by extinction.

So, a worldwide network of healthy, productive wetlands, where a rich variety of wildlife can live and breed safely are essential - but what can I do to help and support wetlands, I hear you say?



Build your own mini wetland (see below) - if you have a garden, you can have your own backyard wetland by building a garden pond, which can teem with life during the spring and summer and provide hours of entertaining activity for wildlife watchers and pond dippers. Even small ponds are important sanctuaries for amphibians like Common Frogs and Common Newts and will help attract a wider range of birds to your garden too.

Alternatively, go along to a free local 'wildlife gardening' event.

Get involved with and support your local wetlands - Fisherwick lakes are just on your doorstep and just a few miles further away are Middleton Lakes, near Tamworth. This 160 hectare site, adjacent to Middleton Hall is a former Hanson Aggregates gravel quarry situated between the River Tame and the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal. This new RSPB reserve is due to open to visitors this year, but you can get involved now by offering a few hours of volunteering - irrespective of your skills or abilities. Some WFEG members have already been offering their services there.

To find out more, call RSPB Middleton Lakes on 01827 259454 or visit: www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/m/middletonlakes

Make your own Wild Pond

Today's children have little opportunity to see frogs, toads, newts, dragonflies or hedgehogs as we pave over the countryside and create increasingly neat and tidy gardens. So how about mowing a bit less and bringing wildlife into your garden? A wildlife pond is easy to make, costs nothing to run, and can bring hours of enjoyment. Why not do it next weekend?

You have got room! While the ideal size for a pond is about 2 - 2.5 metres by 1 - 1.5, ours is barely 1.5 long by 0.75 wide but is still successful. The most important thing to consider is location: not too sunny, not too shady, and not under trees or it'll be full of leaves. Too much sun and your pond will be covered in green algae. Got a space? Now you can begin.

First, mark out your site; most people use a garden hose to create the edges: you can entertain the neighbours by calling out instructions from the bedroom window. Then measure, double it for depth and order some black or brown pond liner, from a garden centre or the internet. It can be heavy - the thicker it is, the more it costs and the longer it lasts.

Now dig your pond, ideally about 60 to 100cm deep, with shallow shelved edges so that frogs can get in and out, and you can put plants there. If it can't all be 100cm, make sure you have one area that is, so that it won't all freeze in winter. Remove all sharp stones so that they won't puncture the liner, and put either loose soil or sand at the bottom to cushion it. Then you can direct operations from the bedroom window again...as you try to match the huge but rectangular liner to your shaped pond. Don't cut it yet! You tuck the liner under the adjoining turf or soil, so you need to leave at least 30cm around the pond: you'll only know how much is spare when you've started putting in water, which will drag it down.

It's ideal to take some water (a bucket should do) from a local pond to get all your microorganisms started, but you'll fill your pond with tapwater or rainwater. Even rainwater may contain chemicals, so you'll need to treat the water (only once!) to neutralise them: buy something like "Aquasafe" from a garden centre.

And that's your pond! Neaten up the liner edges, make a wild area (long grass, wildflowers) next to it to hide the frogs, and away you go. If you create it in Feb/March/April when the frogs are frogging, you'll soon be amazed at what finds its way to you. You can put water plants around the edges, to attract butterflies and dragonflies. It'll soon clear; if you want to encourage that, buy a piece of oxygenating plant. I say a piece (about £1) because it grows like mad. The only thing you mustn't do is put fish in your pond – they just pollute. If there's sunshine, and your pond goes green, just remove the gunge with a stick and if it's really bad, throw in a small bale of barley straw.

Finally, it's always a good idea to mark out where the pond is, either with solar lights or a boundary of stones or rocks, so that no-one falls in. And make a space to sit near it; you may want to watch the many visitors to the pond, at all times of the season and day. Good luck.