

WFEG Supports Campaign Against High Speed Rail (HS2) Proposals

WFEG has looked at the case for the new HS2 rail line which the Government wants to see built from London to Leeds and Manchester. We have tried to look at the case for and against – particularly the impact on carbon emissions and energy use.

WFEG is not a 'nimby' organisation – in other words we try to take the wider view and not just look at the local impact of development – though that is obviously important too. HS2 would be one of the largest commitments of public funds and will cause huge disruption to local communities right along its route – very likely including our own. Building new High Speed Rail (HSR) lines has been promoted as a valuable means to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. Does it meet the claims that have been made?

Our considered view is that the case for the High Speed Rail line from London to Leeds and Manchester does not stand up to critical examination from either an environmental or economic perspective.

From the environmental perspective, consider the following:

HS2 will not reduce CO₂ emissions. 360km/h trains use more than twice the power of 200km/h trains. Journeys on HS2 will indisputably create more emissions than conventional rail. The carbon emissions in the course of construction will be massive too.

Only a new railway line can solve the rail capacity problem. Extra capacity could be achieved with just extra rolling stock on the West Coast Main Line and without the material disruption caused by the construction of HS2.

HS2 will not greatly reduce domestic air travel. Any reductions in domestic air services will be replaced by more polluting long haul services. Experts agree air wins against rail for trips over 3½ hrs.

It is unsurprising that HS2 is not 'green' because:

- **Speed is not 'green'.** Most of HS2's forecast passengers would otherwise be travelling on less energy consuming conventional rail.

- Encouraging more travel is not 'green'.
- **HS2's only means of reducing emissions is winning traffic from air.** Domestic air passengers have been reducing from Heathrow since 1997, domestic passengers from all London airports to the North West and Scotland (lowlands) has been declining since 2004 and total domestic passengers have been reducing since 2005.

There is no London/Birmingham air market and rail already has 80% of the Manchester-London flow. The forecast gain from air exceeds the entire of the current flow of air passengers between these places and Heathrow. It is nonsense.

Even the economic case for the new line is very doubtful.

Some leading experts such as Professor Mike Geddes from Warwick University have suggested that the main economic benefit will be to London with potentially negative impact on the West Midlands. Others have pointed out that much of the economic benefit rests on the clearly erroneous assumption that no productive work gets done on trains.

The Government are committed to reducing emissions by 80% by 2050. How can it be sensible to have the proposed HS2 transport investment make little or no contribution to this? It appears we are being asked to pay an unacceptably high price for a flagship project which will yield little discernible environmental benefit.

Annual Energy Survey Prize Draw winner!



The lucky winners of our Annual Energy Survey Prize Draw of £50 worth of Tamworth Co-op vouchers were Mike and Jean Tarbuck. Jean is pictured here receiving these from Mike Kinghan, WFEG Chair. Many thanks to the Coop for their support.

WFEG Dates for your Diary 2010/11 are:

Christmas Market - local food, gifts and crafts - The Bell Inn (Indoors) - Saturday 4th December, 09.30 until 12.30
Big Green Fair 2011 - Whittington Village Hall - Saturday 16th April, 10.00 until 16.00



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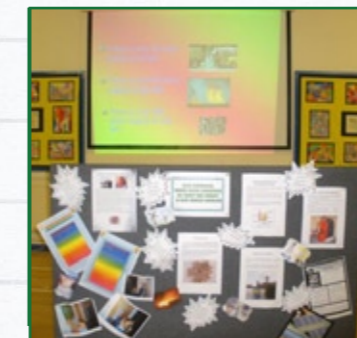
On a journey to a low carbon future

WINTER 2010

Renewable energy coming soon to Whittington School

Solar Photovoltaic panels are coming soon to Whittington School. WFEG has been working with our school for some time to try and help us reduce our energy costs. We had the great news recently that our bid to British Gas for 50% funding (c. £9,000) for solar Photovoltaic panels had been successful. Midlands Expressway Limited have also agreed to contribute £1000 and the remainder will come from a donation by the school PTA.

The result is that a 4kW PV system should be going up soon. As well as savings on electricity bills, estimated at around £120 p.a., the school can expect to earn around a tidy £1300 per year from the Feed-in Tariff (see solar article). This will come in very handy. There will also be a saving of 1.4 tonnes of CO₂ p.a. The other



renewable energy project the school and WFEG have been working jointly on, helped by the County Council, is the feasibility of installing a Wood Pellet boiler to replace the school's aging oil boilers - and also replacement of the remaining expensive electrical heating. (The school does not have a gas supply). The pros and cons of a pellet boiler have been the subject of painstaking investigation including a visit to see one in operation at Shenstone Lodge school nearby. A pellet boiler in Whittington school would be a first for Staffordshire if it comes off and the County Council is very keen to establish a model for other off-gas schools.

Biomass fuels like wood pellet and wood chip are considered to be very low carbon as the CO₂ released during combustion is re-absorbed provided new plants are grown in their place. WFEG and Whittington School jointly held a Woodfuel evening at the school on 21st October to inform parents about the proposals and garner support. The school's Eco Council put on a presentation about renewable energy and wood fuel. Over 80 signatures supporting the wood pellet boiler project were collected. There will also be a stall at the school's Christmas Fayre on 11th December to promote the project.

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Well done to us all!

Well done to our Parish....At the recent Southern Staffordshire Partnership Awards ceremony WFEG was awarded the prize for the best Environment project category (against some very tough opposition).

There were around 200 people there from across the area which stretches from Kinver to Burton, and some really inspiring social and economic as well as environmental projects including the Shareshill Community Shop and Star Recycling project.

While it's always lovely to be recognised, the whole point of entering these awards (which takes up a lot of volunteers' time) is that it raises the Parish's profile, spreads the message and gives us the opportunity to make new contacts.

It also means that when we put in funding bids our credentials are top notch and we are first in the queue for initiatives like EST's for the free energy monitors and Smart Driving. Also it's good to be part of a wider network in the context of the Big Society and what might emerge from that.

Our prize was presented by the Head of Regeneration at the Homes and Community Agency West Midlands region (an important body which funds social housing and regeneration), Anne-Marie Simpson who was also one of the judges, and who was really positive about WFEG's work and the efforts of the whole Parish as an example of community delivery of low carbon action.

Renewable Energy Coming to Whittington School

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Funding applications are now being made to try and secure funding for the boiler and replacement of inefficient and expensive electrical heating in some areas of the school.

Although the price of wood pellet fuel is not currently much different from oil heating, the school is likely to be able to benefit from the Renewable Heat Incentive that the Government will be introducing next year-this could mean that significant annual payments could be made to the school based on the amount of heat generated. The amounts are not yet known but may be quite substantial.

If funding is secured the work to install the wood pellet boiler is likely to take place during the next summer holidays.

Solar Panels for Electricity - Update

As we reported earlier this year you can now be paid for generating solar electricity from solar panels, since the feed-in tariff (FIT - also known as the Clean Energy Cashback Scheme) was introduced on 1st April.

Currently you can be paid 41.3p per kilowatt hour (= 1 unit) of electricity generated if your system is less than 4kW. This sum is guaranteed, inflation-proofed (RPI) and tax-free for 25 years. A typical system of 10 panels will cost in the region of £10,000 and should produce an annual return from FITs of in the region of £700 p.a. You will also make a saving on your electricity bill from power generated when the sun shines-which could be around £150 pa on that size of system, and also a small sum from the surplus that goes into the grid.

Some companies are advertising schemes whereby they provide 'free' solar panels, through which the householder receives the benefit of the free electricity but they receive the significantly larger benefit of the FIT, so these should be treated with caution.

WFEG is currently working hard to see if we can negotiate a deal that could achieve a significant discount for residents of the parish for the purchase of PV (and possibly also for community buildings). We are looking at various options for achieving this. The biggest discount would be accomplished if we could team up with a public sector partner with significant roof space to offer (eg local authority, housing association).

The current level of FIT will not be in place for ever. It is almost certain to be reduced after 31st March 2012 for new entrants (those who come in earlier will continue to receive the higher rate). This 'degression' as it is technically known has been built into the FIT process to reflect a predicted drop in solar panel prices. It is possible that it could be reviewed prior to that date.

We cannot say definitively to people to hold off if you are thinking of installing PV because we do not yet know what kind of discount might be feasible-but we will keep you informed via this newsletter, our website www.wfeg.org.uk or via our mailing list.



If you would like to join our mailing list please email info@wfeg.org.uk or to join WFEG please go to our website. Some other key points:

- A good independent source of further information is www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy/Sell-your-own-energy/Feed-in-Tariff-scheme#tarifflevels
- You do not need planning permission for Solar panels unless your home is in a Conservation Area, or listed.
- Roofs which are between ESE and WNW are generally regarded as suitable provided they are mostly unshaded.
- Three homes in Whittington have already installed solar PV-if you would like to talk to one or more of them please email info@wfeg.org.uk and we will arrange for a chat.

Save Money with FREE Home Energy Masterplans!

Would you seriously like to know how to reduce your energy bills?

If so WFEG can still offer a limited number of free in-depth reports on the options for reducing your energy bills? There are still opportunities for people to have these free assessments which are considerably more wide-ranging and detailed than the audits we were able to offer three years ago.

You will receive a detailed report which will look at all the aspects of your home heating and power systems and will look at the costs and benefits of a wide range of options-on a both DIY and contracted basis.

One happy resident comments as follows:

"I've gone through my Home Energy Masterplan and I'm very pleased with it. It is clear, easily understood and sets out realistic options and appropriate recommendations. It will influence my future choices and it is a document that I can continue to refer to. It identified areas that I had overlooked and puts into perspective what I should do, rather than could do, and by so doing has saved me a lot of money."

These audits are being carried out by Parity Projects who are very experienced and working on one of the national Pay As You Save pilots which are being run by the Energy Saving Trust.

For further information or to register your interest please contact mike@wfeg.org.uk or phone Mike on 01543 432238

Woodhouse Community Farm gets the green light:



The fight to save Woodhouse Farm from going under the hammer has passed a significant milestone-which could see armchair farmers having a stake in it within months. The 22 acre smallholding on the outskirts of Whittington is part of the Elford Estate which was left in trust to the city of Birmingham by local benefactor Frances Howard Paget in the 1930's.

Last year councillors there voted to sell it off, making homeless the occupants Andy and Annamarie Stone whose family have farmed it since the 1960's. That sparked a vigorous campaign-supported by WFEG-which led to the formation of Woodhouse Community Farm Ltd-a charity offering to take it over and develop it as a community asset.

After fifteen months of struggle, the Councils Trusts and Charities Committee has now agreed "in principle" to grant the group a long term-lease allowing it to restore the tumbledown Grade 11 listed buildings and to develop Woodhouse as a Care Farm. It's already hosted more than twenty activity days for care users from Birmingham, Tamworth and Burton under the groundbreaking "Wellies" mental health project, while Andy and Annamarie have restocked with pigs, chicken and cattle and launched a veg-box scheme from The Walled Garden.

The deal is expected to be rubber-stamped by the full council in Birmingham by Christmas paving the way for a Community Share and Loans issue early in the New Year. It means supporters will be able to buy a stake in the project-which includes the creation of a Rural Studies Centre for schools, health and leisure groups.

It's hoped the agreement will ultimately also embrace the 38 acres of neglected woodland surrounding the farm-currently concealing outstanding water features designed by Capability Brown.

"We still have a lot of detail to work through", said WCFL Chair Rob Golding.

"But we are now working positively in partnership with Birmingham to realise the dream of the original benefactor, for the farm to be a real asset for the entire community, connecting people with the countryside. It's a fantastic result, thanks to the support and encouragement of so many-significantly WFEG".

More details of the project and how to be involved in it can be found at www.woodhousecommunityfarm.co.uk

Rob Golding-Chair WCFL

Saving the Planet - Our Community Shows the Way!

This year's Community Energy Survey has shown an amazing reduction in the average carbon emission of those taking part down from 13.12 tonnes in 2008 to 12.58 in 2009 and this year to 10.79 tonnes. This is a tremendous result and shows what can be done by a group of people who are determined to make an effort to reduce waste and energy use for the benefit of future generations - and usually for their own pocket too. The lowest individual footprint is an astonishing 2.2 tonnes and the highest 25.5 tonnes.

96 households-8% of the parish population took part in the survey this year, very slightly down on last year, but still a very good turnout for this kind of survey. If replicated across the Parish this would equate to a total saving of 2127 tonnes in the last year and 2844 since 2008. Since it is likely that respondents to the survey are generally fairly enthusiastic 'greens' this probably overestimates the figure but the result is impressive nonetheless.

There have been some very substantial reductions by individuals some of whom have recorded their actions on the WFEG blog which you can catch up on at www.wfeg.org.uk One entry reads:

- Reduced use of car.
- Increased use of buses and bicycle.
- Reviewed number and use of low energy light bulbs.
- Checked fit and quality of draught insulation.
- Lowered ambient temperature within the house.

WFEG is extremely grateful to the 96 households who took the trouble to complete the survey, and also to several others who we know made an effort to take part but for various reasons were unable to calculate their energy use for the past year. More detailed results from the survey will be published on our website and in our next newsletter.

Also a big thanks to our student Liz Harris from Wolverhampton University who worked tirelessly to deliver leaflets and help people complete the survey. Liz is now helping us to look at the feasibility of producing a Green Guide for Whittington, Lichfield and surrounding areas.

As you know we had a prize draw for £50 of Co-op vouchers, part-sponsored by Tamworth Co-operative Society-and the lucky winner was Mike and Jean Tarbuck of Spring Lane.

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