

VALE ROYAL ENVIRONMENT NETWORK

Autumn
2006

NEWSLETTER

VREN's Future – in Your Hands!

Do you want, and how do we achieve:

- Community Renewable Energy?
- Local Organic Food?
- Waste Reduction and Recycling?
- Help for Campaigners?
- Sustainable Communities?
- Public Discussions?
- Resource Centre?
- More Education?
- Improved Cycling and Public Transport Provision?

To do these, does VREN need some independence from Groundwork as a charity or not?

For your chance to have a say in how VREN acts on these and other issues, come to the AGM - **Wednesday, 8th November, 5-10pm at the Blue Cap Hotel, Sandiway** – tea, coffee and buffet provided. If you need an invitation, let us know. (Mapping the future pic from www.merci.org.uk/pdfs/enterprising/enterprising-4.pdf)

This newsletter will be available on the internet, so tell your friends! Go to www.groundwork.org.uk, click on NW England, and enter 'vren' in the search box. Or - <http://cheshire.groundworknw.org.uk/publications.asp>



Furniture Finders of Winsford are Open

Furniture Finders of Winsford is a furniture re-use project covering Vale Royal and surrounding areas. They collect donated household furniture, linens and electrical appliances, in good condition, and clean and repair them ready to redistribute at low cost to Vale Royal people, including those in need. They thus reduce waste, provide a community service, and give opportunities for volunteers and those on supported employment schemes.

They need volunteers to drive their van for collections/drop offs, to clean and repair furniture etc, and office work – you can volunteer for as little as one half-day shift per week. They'd also like to build up their stock of furniture and electrical goods, household linen and clothes.

To volunteer yourself or your goods, ring 0845 026 4727 or email info@ffow.co.uk.

Address: Bridge Building, Road Two, Winsford Industrial Estate. Hours 9 to 5 Monday to Friday.

See www.ffow.co.uk, or if outside the borough, see the Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum's website, www.cfrf.org.uk. (pic: ffow)



Vale Royal Environment Network

thanks its many sponsors, supporters and volunteers.

Registered Charity Number 1101585. Offices at:

Yarwoods Arm, Navigation Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1BE

tel 01606 723160, email vren@groundwork.org.uk

More Local News

Vale Royal goes Fairtrade

Vale Royal achieved Fairtrade status in July – through encouraging shops and outlets to sell Fairtrade (FT) products, and resolving to ensure it only supplies FT tea and coffee in its buildings. In celebration, Vale Royal BC created a Fairtrade garden at the Tatton Park RHS Show, and received a merit award. Their looking to recruit new members to the FT steering group – contact Denise Snelson, 01606 867724 or email dsnelson@valeroyal.gov.uk

Waste & Recycling

Free Food

Shocked by the amount of waste food? So are the freegans. 17 million tonnes of food are skipped in the UK each year, by farmers, retailers and customers. Freegans, as reported on a recent Radio 4 programme, dive in – and rescue perfectly good food that's nominally past its sell-by. Inspection by eye, nose and feel determines whether to leave it there. Apart from feeding themselves cheap (they pay for grains), they also find good clothes and furniture discarded. See <http://freegan.info/> PDM Group also collects waste food – for processing into pet food, biodiesel and industrial raw materials. (pic: BBC)

Battery Regs

A new European Directive means we'll have to be recycling portable batteries – 25% by 2012, and 45% by 2016. Some other European countries have had collection schemes in place for some time, and achieve up to 59% battery recycling. More collection points may be needed, and it is likely that distributors will be required to take back dead batteries. Also, by 2009, batteries will be required to display their electrical content.

Waste Public Inquiry

Public Inquiry into re-deposit draft of Cheshire's Replacement Waste Local Plan: Chester Racecourse Sept 5th for 11 weeks. Recycling/bulking/scrapyard at Brook Lane Middlewich 10am, 31st Oct. Non-hazardous landfill at Kinderton Lodge, Middlewich: 21st Nov & 1st Dec. Potential thermal treatment and recycling, Winsford Industrial Estate, 2pm 25th Oct.

Cigarette ends are plastic, and in the environment leach toxic compounds (*Radio 4, Shared Earth*)

How to win the right to dispose

CoRWM, the Committee for Radiactive Waste Management, suggest:

Community involvement in any proposals for the siting of long term radioactive waste facilities should be based on the principle of volunteerism, that is, an expressed willingness to participate. Participation should be based on the expectation that the well-being of the community will be enhanced.

Willingness to participate should be based on the provision of community packages that are designed both to facilitate participation in the short term and to ensure that a radioactive waste facility is acceptable to the host community in the long term. From a report at <http://www.corwm.org.uk/pdf/None%20-%20CoRWMs%20Draft%20Recommendations%2027%20April.pdf>

Plastic Recycling

80% of Vale Royal now has doorstep plastic recycling; the council hope to extend it to the remaining households by the end of the year. The material goes to JFC Delleve in



St. Helens, where it is sorted automatically by type and colour using infra-red technology, and made into either corrugated drainage pipes for the construction industry, land drainage, road works, rail, forestry and leisure projects etc, or the Knotwood range of decking, fencing and street furniture. (*more at www.jfcplastics.com and http://www.jfcuk.com/index.asp?active_page_id=5*)

Rotting Food

Warrington-based Accelerated Compost Limited has developed an in-vessel composting machine for kitchen waste, "The Rocket®". It claims it's advantages are speed and compliance with animal by-products regulations – it reaches over 60C, enough to kill pathogens, although to date the Centre for Alternative Technology have been disappointed with the temperature in the one they've been trying (albeit with a meat-free diet), and are continuing to experiment. Rockets come in sizes to cope with 50 to 7000 litres of kitchen waste a week. For more details, tel 0870 240 7313 or see www.quickcompost.co.uk



Compost Bins Offer

Cheshire County Council has a limited arrangement with Blackwall, whereby Cheshire residents can order compost bins at discount rates. A 220 litre Convertabin costs £4; a 420 litre square KOMP £10; and a 700 litre KOMP £20 – all including delivery. They're made from recycled plastic. To order, call 0845 077 0757, quoting CHE03RDD1.

Where to Recycle?

An on-line resource exists to tell large-scale producers where they can recycle – anything from agricultural plastics to plate glass. Most of the locations are out of Vale Royal, so it's best going to the local recycling officer at Vale Royal first, 01606 862862. The website is www.wasterecycling.org.uk.

Make the Environment SMYLE

During the Summer Vale Royal BC launched SMYLE (Save MY Local Environment) – a clean-up initiative. Under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, they have powers to prosecute litterers, dog foulers fly-tippers etc, and they'd like the public to help, by:

- not dropping litter
- not fly-tipping, fly-posting, or abandoning vehicles
- follow the council's policy on waste disposal and recycling
- keep noise down
- join in any community litter picks/clean-ups
- report grot-spots and environmental crimes

With the object of 'Cleaner, Greener, Streets and Spaces'

More info from Vale Royal Borough Council, 0800 435 199 or email environment@valeroyal.gov.uk

Your Life

Crafting Willow

The Dane Coppice Crafts Group meets on alternately, the last Saturday and last Wednesday of every month at Brereton Country Park (between Holmes Chapel and Congleton). They hold workshops for willow basketry, willow sculpture and other related crafts. For more details, tel Chris Jordan 01606 47217 or see <http://homepages.tesco.net/~jpandca.jordan/DC/CG/links.html>



It's Not Easy Being Green

The BBC is to run a second series – in which Dick Strawbridge and his son/apprentice James offer advice and practical help to a wide range of green projects being undertaken by average people. They could be doing an eco-renovation, green dream home or environmental business. They're currently talking to lots of people – no commitments yet. For more information contact the Centre for Alternative Technology, 01654 705957.

Pic from www.itsnoteasybeinggreen.org

Vacancies

Norton Priory Museum Trust is seeking Casual Outreach Facilitators to deliver outreach sessions. Experience of working with groups of people and an interest in historical, gardening, arts or heritage desirable. Enhanced Disclosure required. Contact Norton Priory's Outreach Officer on 01928 567995 for more details. (www.nortonpriory.org)

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is seeking an enthusiastic, wildlife loving Membership Recruiter to visit pre-booked venues – shows, garden centres, supermarkets. Car and phone required, good commission, training given if necessary. Please write with CV to Glynn Taylor, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, Reaseheath, Nantwich, CW5 6DG. (www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/cheshire/job_advert.htm)

Picture Your Bag

Cheshire County Council are offering recycled prizes for the best pictures of their **Bags For Life**. If you've got shots of yours climbing mountains, sunbathing, skiing or whatever, send them to Bag for Life Competition, Waste Management Service, Cheshire County Council, Backford Hall, Backford, Chester, Cheshire CH1 6EA; or electronically to waste@cheshire.gov.uk

To Do

Kick to Give

Plastics manufacturers in Europe want to get you to kick along with the World Cup for a good cause. Play the game daily to help raise the target of 6 million 'kicks' and PlasticsEurope will donate €250,000 to the Johan Cruyff foundation and to 'Kits for Kids'. See www.kicktogive.org



DEFRA Consultations

A number of consultations are on the DEFRA website, www.defra.gov.uk, they include:

Consultation on proposals for managing the coexistence of GM and non-GM crops in England Deadline 20 October 2006 (see article under "Food")

The Energy Efficiency Commitment April 2008 to March 2011: Initial consultation Deadline 23 October 2006

Consultation: EU Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of Natural Resources Deadline 24 October 2006

Consultation: Making Space for Water: Environment Agency strategic overview – strengthening our strategic approach to sea flooding and coastal erosion risk management Deadline 31 October 2006

Consultation on the implementation of the UK National Control Programme for Breeders (Gallus gallus) that's breeding hens, in quantities over 250 birds. Deadline 3 November 2006

Consultation on new regulations on ecodesign requirements for energy-using products Deadline 29 November 2006

Second consultation on proposals for creating a streamlined environmental permitting and compliance system Deadline 6 December 2006

Water Efficiency – Examples Wanted

The Mersey Basin Campaign wishes to embrace water conservation – and is looking for water efficiency projects (or similar), where a raising awareness campaign has brought about behavioural changes in the general public. Suggestions and ideas are welcome – send them to Sarah Wallbank, Mersey Basin Campaign, Fourways House, 57 Hilton Street, Manchester M1 2EJ; Tel 0161 242 8217; email s.wallbank@merseybasin.org.uk



Resources

Resources for Events

Talk Action is a web based directory of social and environmental speakers, workshop leaders, and essentials for green events. So if you're looking for speakers on climate, food security, sustainable building, environmental law, invertebrates or orang-utans; workshops on building benders, bike renovation, scrap musical instruments, herbalism or puppet shows; package eco-events, catering, yurt hire or power supplies, look here! www.talkaction.org or tel 0207 254 7219. (pic: www.c-realevents.demon.co.uk/events05/events05.htm)

Funding guide

The Cheshire Community Funding Guide containing various potential sources of funds plus some tips on how to apply is available from Voluntary Action Vale Royal. Please call 01606 723180 if you'd like a copy. Or visit www.cheshire.gov.uk > environment > rural development > rural funding

Shell Springboard - for small businesses with big ideas on climate change

This is the second round: last year's applications were truly inspiring. Tackling climate change is not just about cost and compliance; if you've got a great idea (and a sound business plan), it could be a huge opportunity.

Awards of between £20,000 and £40,000 will be available in early 2007.

To be eligible:

Your product or service must reduce greenhouse gases, be innovative and commercially viable

You must have been in business for at least three months, as a sole trader or a company employing fewer than 250 people

The application deadline is 10 November 2006.

See www.shellspringboard.org

Meanwhile, controversy surrounds a Shell consortium development in Mayo, W Ireland: residents consider their interests have been sidelined by both government and developers.

(See www.corribsos.com > 'new leaflet - Shell to Sea' or tel Mark Garavan, 00353 87 9023687; for Shell's side follow the Corrib link from

www.shell.com/home/Framework?siteId=ie-en or tel 00353 97 83955.)

Big Lottery Grants

Awards for All: grants for small community groups. See www.awardsforall.org.uk or call 0845 600 20 40

Community Buildings: grants from £50,000 to £500,000 to build and improve multi-use community buildings. Environmental sustainability is important. Closing date for stage 1 – 30th April 2007. See www.biglotteryfund.org.uk or call the Big Advice Line, 0845 4 102030.

Breathing Places 2: to create or maintain “breathing places”. Grants of £300 to £10,000 to increase access, involvement and participation in natural places, and to make a lasting improvement to the local environment. Closes 13th December 2006. See www.biglotteryfund.org.uk or call 0845 4 102030.

Build It

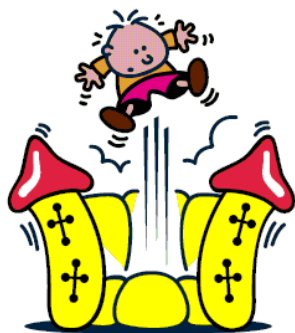
There are a number of courses to come at Womersleys, of Heckmondwike:

- § Decorative Paint Techniques using only Natural Paints, 24th Oct 06 - £65 + VAT
- ❖ How to Build a Wind Turbine, with Hugh Piggott, 18-24 Feb 2007, £480 + VAT, incl accommodation and food

See www.womersleys.co.uk/acatalog/Building_Products_training_courses_7.html or tel 01924 400651 for updates.

Ensuring Safety At Public Events

There's new guidance for organisers of carnivals, charity and small-scale sporting events. It's been designed to ensure that such events are as safe as possible for the public and participants. See <http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/safety-at-public-events>



Training for the Third Sector

The following are to be held at Voluntary Action Vale Royal's offices at Waterside House, Navigation Road, Northwich:

- Supporting and Supervising Volunteers – 21st Nov, 2006
- Word Shortcuts (it's quicker using your keyboard than you mouse) – 11th Dec '06, 12th Feb, 2nd April, 4th June '07
- Induction – how important is it? 30th Jan '07
- Volunteer Recruitment – 20th March '07
- Committee Skills – 14th May '07

- Grant Applications that Succeed – 24th July
- All are free to Cheshire organisations or groups, and times are 10am – 12 noon except Word Shortcuts – 10 – 11.30am. Contact Arthur Neil, 01606 723180.

School for Social Entrepreneurs is Launched in Liverpool

A new school for social entrepreneurs has been launched in Liverpool. The school teaches students how to regenerate the areas in which they live and encourages them to consider innovative ways in which they can create social businesses which will positively change their town, by creating employment and growth. See http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/News/newsdetail_1816.asp

Events

For Churches:

'Think of a World...' an environmental conference, in Church Stretton, Shropshire - 24th to 26th November. To focus on climate change with workshops, activities, exhibition Speakers include the Secretary of State for Climate Change & Environment Ian Pearson MP, President and Vice President of the Methodist Church Conference - Revd Graham Carter and Dudley Coates.

Everyone with an interest in the environment, climate change, and how we can take action is invited to attend and will be made welcome. The conference is free. Info and booking: Brenda, 01902 332508.

Open Discussion, animal ecologist and geneticist Prof RJ (Sam) Berry with Don Thompson of Merseyside Environmental Trust. Liverpool, Saturday 18th November 2006 at 10.30am. It's free but places should be booked: contact MET on 07074684135 or email theroost@tesco.net

Sustainable Cheshire Forum Meets

The next annual SCF meeting is Wednesday, 6th December at Chester City Hall. It will be a morning meeting followed by lunch. There will be a focus on Climate Change, and feedback from the Year of Action on Waste. Also, following the merger into the broader-scoped Communities for Cheshire Partnership, there'll be elections for the chair and vice-chair of the SCF. Contact Michele Burrow, Environmental Co-ordinator, Cheshire County Council: tel 01244 603125 or email michele.burrow@cheshire.gov.uk

Energy

Joule Centre for Energy Research

This is a £10 million centre, a partnership between the universities, local industry and energy users. It's funded by the NWDA to pioneer new wave, tidal and micro-hydro technologies, and to research 'smart' technologies to improve domestic and commercial energy efficiency. It's housed in the Pariser Centre of Manchester University. It will offer research grants: the first three are:

- A flume to research offshore renewable energy devices
- A computer model to assess the potential for barrages on the six major North-West river estuaries, and their effects both within the Irish Sea and upstream
- An assessment of the hydro potential in the North-West

A call for proposals to research demand reduction has been issued, with grants of up to £50,000 (more for 'seedcorn' funds). See www.joulecentre.org for more details, or tel Mrs Laura Mitchell, 0161 306 4656.

Talking Climate Change

COIN and Talk Action have arranged a day training event on the 24th October for those concerned about the issues surrounding climate change and keen to develop their public speaking skills to promote the issue. <http://www.talkaction.org/SpeakerTraining.pdf>

Form a Group, Share Experience

Carbon Rationing Action Groups (CRAGs) already exist in Leamington, Oxford and Hereford. Membership is voluntary, but signing up means a commitment to the carbon target set by the group. There are rewards for those who undershoot the target and penalties for overshooting – with an upper limit on penalty charges. The UK average output per person was 5.4 tonnes in 2003. A 10% cut in the target year on year would bring the UK average down to a sustainable 0.6 tonnes by 2030. Tina Fawcett and Mayer Hillman, the leading promoters, hope the scheme will de-mystify the idea of carbon rationing and show how it can be integrated into the lives of normal people. For details of the Oxford scheme telephone 01865 727911 or visit www.coinet.org.uk For a starter guide to CRAGs ring 01564 793141. (lifted from <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/p0608.htm>)



You can make your own wind turbine

- Hugh Piggott is the expert, with a book "Windpower Workshop: Building your own wind turbine" and website www.scoraigwind.com/ (whence picture). See also "Build It" article in Resources section.

For grants for renewable energy, see www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk

Carbon Sequestration

One of the options being considered for reducing our carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions is to compress and pipe it from power stations and other large generators into underground geological voids. A popular option is to use the gas for enhanced oil recovery – to help extract the remaining oil from the oil-bearing rock a near-depleted well; another, of greater potential capacity, is to use saline aquifers, deep porous reservoir rocks saturated with brine. In either case, the CO₂, under pressure, will take on a liquid-like nature, and will either be trapped under an impervious cap, as the oil was, or be held by adsorption or reaction to the rock. The CO₂ becomes less mobile over time as multiple trapping mechanisms take hold – however, it's considered monitoring will be prudent. CO₂ has been pumped into a saline aquifer in the Norwegian Sleipner field since 1996. Excess CO₂ from the natural gas is pumped into the aquifer which overlies the gas field. At Weyburn in Canada, CO₂ from a coal gasification plant is used for enhanced oil recovery.

The process is not free: apart from the infrastructure, there is the need to compress and pump the gas, estimated to take 10 to 20% of a power station's output.

For more details and further examples, see the International Panel on Climate Change document at http://arch.rivm.nl/env/int/ipcc/pages_media/SRCCS-final/SRCCS_Chapter5.pdf

Weather Predictions

Mark Atherton, Head of Sustainable Development and Climate Change at NWDA, has ambitions for the North West economy: we have to change the way it works. Our aging buildings have higher heating demands, more transport uses more fuel, and we have much heavy industry. Our climate has altered and will alter further: since 1880, summer rain is down 20% and winter rain up 40%; by 2080, summer rain will be down 60% and winter rain up 30%.

Potential for Hydro Power

Some time back, estimates for the hydro potential on the Rivers Weaver, Dane and others in the UK were made, mostly at river locks. The data is now on a US website, www.small-hydro.com/index.cfm?Fuseaction=countries.country&Country_ID=79.

Here are the results for our area – all prices come from 1987! British Waterways are aware of these prospects. (pic derived by VREN)



New Warning on Global Warming

A draft report, leaked from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in May, has predicted that mean global temperatures will rise by between 2-4.5 C over the next 44 years, although positive feedback mechanisms could push this as high as 6C, experts warn.

The UK's Chief Scientific Advisor has stated that a 3C rise would lead to drought, famine and mass extinctions.

A recent article in New Scientist has pointed to a target maximum of 1C rise due to man-made global warming, to avert methane release from frozen tundra producing a positive feed-back.

The Tyndall Centre is calling for a 70% emissions cut in 25 years, and points to the initial need for behavioural change using existing technologies within the next 3-4 years, followed by renewables, then the products of future research.

Friends of the Earth have their "The Big Ask" campaign – if you think the Government isn't doing enough on climate change, you can write to your MP via www.thebigask.com

PV Air Conditioning

Solarventi of Gadbrook road, Northwich, has



developed a PV powered dehumidifying and air conditioning unit, ideal in winter months for holiday homes, caravans and canal boats. Their range is sized to move from 20 to 120 m³/hour, and they have a new addition that also

produces solar hot water. Tel 01606 331565 or see www.solarventi.co.uk

Lights Off

Essex County Council is to switch off (with certain exceptions) street lights between midnight and 5am. This should make a big dent in their 44 million kWh lighting bill, with associated 19,000 tonnes CO₂ emissions. www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/dis/ ned.jsp?oid=77786

The G8 Draft on Energy Policy

Some excerpts from

<http://en.g8russia.ru/docs/11.html>

Expand the hydrocarbon proven reserves in a way that would outpace their depletion and increase the recovery of energy resources; Continue to consider the impact of the air transport sector on energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions noting international cooperation on these issues.

Those of us who have or are considering plans relating to the use and/or development of safe and secure nuclear energy believe that its development will contribute to global energy security, while simultaneously reducing harmful air pollution and addressing the climate change challenge

Despite the increased role of alternative sources in the energy mix, hydrocarbons are expected to continue to play a leading role in total energy consumption well into this century. Therefore we will work with the private sector to accelerate utilization of innovative technologies that advance more efficient hydrocarbon production and reduce the environmental impact of its production and use. These include technologies for deep-sea oil and gas production, oil production from bitumen sands, clean coal technologies, including carbon capture and storage, extraction of gas from gas-hydrates and production of synthetic fuel. Nothing on CO₂ emissions targets, cutting travel, contraction and convergence....

Wind Scheme Blown Out

Vale Royal planners voted the Aston Grange Wind Farm out, 7-7 with the fatal chairman's casting vote saying 'No'. Five labour councillors now want the decision brought before the full council, 6.30pm on Thursday, 30th November. Report at

<http://cmttpublic.valeroyal.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.Asp?CId=124&MID=1169#A12104&J=4>

Schools

Bikes 4 Africa

Altrincham Grammar School for Boys is collecting 320 bicycles (for 12 year olds +) to fill a container to send to Senegal. Contact Keith Knowles, 01565 873325 if you can help, or Sylvie Beuzit at the school, 0161 928 0858. It's assisting with a scheme run by the Jole Foundation. (See <http://www.jole1000.org/bikes4africa.html>)



Junior G8

On 16th July 2006, eight young people from the J8 Summit made history by presenting their recommendations on global issues to the leaders of the G8 countries. The one-hour meeting was the climax of the St Petersburg Summit, which took place from July 7 – 18. J8 is the junior G8, where youngsters from G8 member countries get their say. There's an annual competition (check the website from October for 2007 entry), and ideas for having your own local summit.

See www.j8summit.com/

School Grounds Handbook for Cheshire Schools

Why are school grounds important? How do you run a successful improvement project? This handbook presents solutions, with design ideas (ponds, trees, wildlife, food, quiet/active play), case studies, contacts, and fact sheets. It's just been launched - one free to every school, with updates and website backup. Further copies available at £15. For more details, contact Michele Burrow, Environmental Co-ordinator, Cheshire Council, tel 01244 603125, michele.burrow@cheshire.gov.uk, www.cheshire.gov.uk/ecoschools/schoolgrounds

The Friend Ship

Embarking on a voyage of discovery from September 5, the Friend Ship will explore friendship as a cultural stimulus with primary school pupils. With a cargo of exciting learning materials from seven cultural partners, the Friend Ship will promote tolerance, diversity and environmental issues.

For information ring 0151 233 2008, or use a broadband-connected computer (there's some hefty uncompression) to see the leaflet and resources at www.liverpool08.com/friendship

Win a Wind Turbine for your school/youth group

Friends of the Earth are offering a 1kW Windsave wind turbine to the winning school/youth group – to enter, Key Stage 3 pupils have to make a documentary, photo-story, tape-recorded interview or leaflet/newspaper article about an inspirational local who's done something to

tackle climate change. Closing date is Thursday 23rd November. More at www.foe.co.uk/learning/educators/shout_about/

What Has the EU Done for You?

A competition for secondary school children, aged 11-19 years, to help involvement. Registration for entry by school staff only. Max 800 word essays to be submitted by 17th November. See

www.britishcouncil.org/brussels-europe-eu-competition.htm



Cut Flying
AirportWatch are doing a petition calling on Government to rethink its backing for growth in aviation. They have

Transport

Low Cost Intercity Travel

Eg Manchester to Edinburgh, £7; return add £1, + 50p booking fee! See www.megatrain.com, or phone 09001 200 300. You are limited – from Manchester, you can only go to 4 stations in the north served by Virgin Cross Country. You are restricted to the boarding and alighting times and stops selected.

Other fares news: Railcard holders purchasing and Virgin Value Advance tickets will not be subject to the £10 minimum fare.

The Weekender fare has gone.

A new level of Advance Standard fare has come in, to encourage travellers off the very busy services. They can be purchased up to 6pm on the day before travel.

Sometimes it pays to investigate the price of a journey by breaking it up into legs: an operator of one leg may offer a value fare that doesn't figure if you ask the price of the full journey.

For rangers and rovers, see

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/promotions/rangers_and_rovers.html

Calculate your car's CO2 emissions from your mileage and car make and model – see <http://www.ecoinsurance.co.uk/calc.php>. The link to more information leads to a plug for car insurance from Cooperative Insurance Group, with an element of carbon offsetting.

Going Somewhere?

A website, www.liftshare.org, aims to match travellers planning the same or similar journeys. Whether you're using a car or not, if you enter your journey details and click the search button, especially if you broaden the search area, you can probably find someone doing the same trip, and thus share the costs. They reckon they get a 36% match rate, and have 130,000 registered users recording 28 million trips. There are special sections for company and event use. You may try phoning them on 08700 780225. Freewheelers is an alternative, web-only: www.freewheelers.co.uk



cross-party political support, as well as from environmental organisations. See www.rethink.airportwatch.org.uk or tel 020 7248 2227

Great Rail Journeys

Great Rail Journeys offers European escorted holidays by rail. See www.greatrail.com or tel 01904 521980

A Chance for Riversdale Bridge?

There are rumours the formerly well-used footbridge at Hunt's Locks will be reinstated with help from Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity. However, residents of the Crescent are currently enjoying a crime reduction since the bridge was closed. Sustrans' Connect2 community project has been shortlisted for funding from the Big Lottery Fund – there'll be a televised public vote for the winner on ITV. Sustrans is inviting the public to forward proposals that would make a real difference to their community and improve the chance of walking and cycling more. Visit www.sustrans.org.uk for a form and guidance, or write to John Grimshaw, Sustrans, 2 Cathedral Square, College Green, Bristol BS1 5DD.

Food

Little Leigh Potato Fest

A potato event to celebrate the harvest, with contributions from local growers, held 29/30 September and 1st October. It

included harvest festivals (one at the school), a harvest supper, history, sports, and more. See www.littleleigh.net (whence pic)

Arley Pumpkin Challenge

How's your pumpkin? Have you grown one larger than the Arley gardeners? Prizes for the best pair of pumpkins, best decorated, best lantern, and pumpkin most like it's grower. Arley Hall, 28 & 29 October, 2006.

Less CO₂ from Organic and Local Produce

The Soil Association is keen to highlight the connection between traditional foods and energy use/greenhouse gases. They want an accelerated programme of organic expansion. Their research says:

Organically grown crops use 50% less fossil fuel than those from industrial agriculture – mainly due to artificial fertilisers;
Intensive animal husbandry with imported feeds uses far more energy than organic methods;
31% of UK domestic freight is moving food, animal feed, animals or fertilisers;
Food processing uses energy while reducing nutritional value;
<http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/donationpeakoil?openform>

GM Consultation

DEFRA's consultation on the proposed co-existence of GM with non-GM and organic crops closes on 20th October. It proposes that contamination levels of 0.9% could be routine if GM cultivation goes ahead. Notification of GM crops would exclude to gardeners, allotment holders and farmers who save their own seeds. The consultation is at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/gmnongm-coexist/index.htm.

For more, and how to object, see www.stopgmcontamination.org or tel GM Freeze on 0207 837 0642

Hazel Grove Organic Box Scheme

Offer various size boxes of organic vegetables or fruit and veg, and boxes of dry produce; they can be delivered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, and there is a range of individual items that can be ordered. See www.organics-4u.co.uk, phone 08000 93 22 49 with your requirements.

Organics 4 U Limited, Unit 7, Simpsons Business Centre, Buxton Road, Hazel Grove, Cheshire, SK7 6LZ

Pear Festival

Acton Bridge held their first Pear Festival on 9th September, rejoicing in the history, the trees, the fruit and its cooking. Fruit expert Tony Gentil was on hand to help identify the 20-odd varieties inherited by present residents. They hope to run the next Pear Festival in spring, to celebrate the blossom. One visitor remarked about an Australian who was an annual visitor to see the blossom. One year he saw a row of trees de-headed; he vowed he would not be back. The following year, the trees had been grubbed up. Other items of history included the



length of the ladders required to reach the tree tops, and the bounce as they were climbed. Pear orchards seem to have been planted during the 1800s; and dug up in the 1900s. Pic from

www.pardoes.com/abo/pearfest.htm



Loquat Growers

The hot summer may well have brought your loquat into flower. They

appreciate cross-pollination, so if you get in touch with VREN, we'll set you up with a mating partner! (pic A. Powell)

Landscape and Wildlife

Wood Bought

Frodsham Hill Wood, off Middle Walk, has been purchased by the Woodland Trust on behalf of locals who have forwarded the necessary finance. The Woodland Trust now has a prospect of acquiring an adjacent 10ha of poorly managed woodland west of the Mersey View. Info: Sarah Lyons, 0151 734 3730, saralyons@woodland-trust.org.uk

Nantwich Riverside Park

Nantwich has a Riverside Project Officer, James Thompson, charged (for 3 years) with enhancing the River Weaver as it flows through the town. The park includes a cycleway; Mill Island – a popular spot for events; a seasonally flooded ox-bow lake; a man-made lake fed with salt springs that could be good for swimming if the waterfowl weren't fed; and the chance of using redundant mill structure for hydropower, possibly to fuel events on Mill Island. They're planning access improvements with improved paths and bridges, a wildflower meadow, and an autumn cultural/arts willow pollarding. For more information, contact James Thompson, 01270 537061, email james.thompson@crewe-nantwich.gov.uk

Winsford Flash

Winsford Sailing Club is concerned about silting in the 90-acre Flash. Until 1984 the flash was dredged, then work started channelising the river on the east side, using river dredgings to form a bund separating river from flash. This was not completed, so the silt still gets offloaded where the river meets flash, and the flash is becoming unnavigable. They need cash to ensure the job gets completed, which would stop the silting-up. Contact them at wpsc@fsmail.net

(<http://www.winsfordflash.co.uk/index.htm>)

Meanwhile, one of the hopes to the Weaver Valley Regional Park team is to link the Weaver Navigation to the Shropshire Union Canal, by making the Weaver south of Winsford navigable.

At the other end, the Weaver Sailing Club operate from a new clubhouse in Frodsham, but this being out-of-sight, they'd like to promote their existence!

Biological rECOrdIng in Halton

rECOrd, the biodiversity information system for the Cheshire area are undertaking biological recording work in Halton, as part of Halton Borough Council's program of Biodiversity Action Plans. Specifically, redshank (*Tringa totanus*), skylark (*Alda arvensis*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) and salt marsh habitat. Funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, the work will consist of some in-house recording as well as collecting data from other sources around the area, such as local nature enthusiasts. To help us gain a better understanding of Biodiversity in Halton we require any records of species together with the number of individuals spotted, location and spatial grid-references and a date when the record was taken. Any records you could provide will be gratefully received, and if you think you can help please contact Tom Hunt on tom@record-lrc.co.uk or rECOrd, Oakfield House, Chester Zoological Gardens, Upton, Chester, CH2 1LH. Visit www.record-lrc.co.uk for more info.

Barn Owl Breeding Slumps

Following a recent steady increase in breeding pairs (61 in 2003, 76 in 2004, 120 in 2005), this year sees a reduction in chick numbers. A poor/late spring has led to a reduction in small mammal numbers, so owls have responded with less breeding activity. Mid

Cheshire Barn Owl Conservation Group (which includes North, South and East Cheshire) hopes for a late pick-up, and continues to work with supportive farmers and landowners to support these birds as part of our countryside. Recording of barn owl sightings and nests is an important part of the Group's work, particularly this year. So if you know of the location of any barn owls, or have seen any recently, please contact John Mycock on 01606-75937 or 07970-235473.

Finch Deaths

There's been a spate of finch deaths this summer, due to an outbreak of Trichomoniasis, precipitated by the hot weather. This disease causes excessive salivation, difficulty breathing and swallowing, and general malaise. The parasite perishes quickly in the open, but spreads wherever birds congregate, through saliva, regurgitated food (as in the breeding season), and sometimes droppings. Greenfinches and chaffinches have been most affected, along with other finches and sparrows. Advice is to keep bird baths and feedings stations clean, disinfecting the latter; otherwise stop watering and feeding for a 2-week period, and gradually restart. (www.bto.org)

Riverside Aliens

Karen Hughes, a student with the Mersey Basin Campaign, assessed the Bollin Valley weeds. In order of pestilence – Himalayan Balsam first, Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed. Balsam shades native species out, but is subject to community bonding exercises as it's easily pulled out.

Giant Hogweed can lurk for 4 years before producing masses of seeds – if touched, don't expose the skin to sunlight – it can leave the skin light sensitive for as many as 6 years. If you make contact, with either the sap or its bristles, hide the area from light and wash

immediately in soap and water. It's an offence to plant or cause Giant Hogweed to grow in the wild. See www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/processes/367839/?lang=_e Knotweed leaves bare banks in winter, allowing

erosion. www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/conservation/840870/840894/840941/?referrer=/subjects/conservation/ (pic: <http://www.garypoyner.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/wildlife/wildlife.html>)



Build a Sparrow Terrace

Sparrows are declining in numbers. These instructions on how to build a sparrow box (they like to live communally, but with entrances at least 30cm apart) come from www.beautifulbritain.co.uk/html/wildlife_gardening/sparrow_terrace_plans.htm. Add a small batten part way up an internal side, for the young birds to look outside from. Assemble with waterproof wood glue and No 4 brass screws, fixing the front with screws to facilitate cleaning. The holes (which will also suit nuthatches) should be near the roof to deter predators, and small holes added drilled in the bottom for drainage. Other plans on the site include a blue tit box and a mealworm feeder.

Gardens or Houses?

Developers often buy up houses with large gardens in order to use the grounds to build a number of houses –gardens are currently classed as brownfield. Greg Clark, MP, has put down an Early Day Motion to tighten planning laws to change this, and to protect the utility and biodiversity of these gardens. Garden Organic (formerly HDRA) is asking for help to support him: see www.gardenorganic.org.uk/news



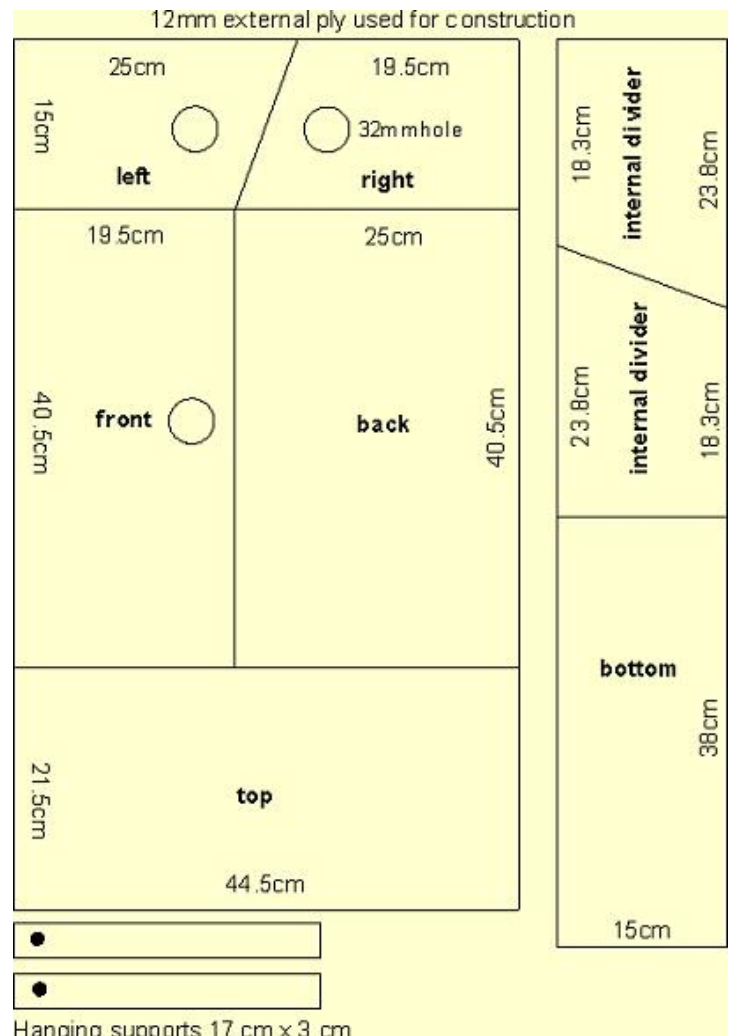
Spot the plop

British Waterways are asking us to 'spot the plop' in this year's National Waterway Wildlife Survey. The 'plop' in question is made

by a diving water vole. They want to know where they are in order to help conserve them. Water voles are often mistaken for the more common brown rat - to identify them, look for small hidden ears, silky mid-brown fur, a blunt nose and a short furry tail. Water voles are one of the country's most endangered species, but the survey is also interested in hearing about other species, including kingfishers, swans, mallards, frogs and dragonflies. www.waterscape.com/wildlife or tel 01923 201101

Butterfinch Bridge

Butterfinch Bridge opens up a new safer route through Northwich Community Woodlands – spanning Forge Brook, it links Anderton Nature Park and Marbury Country Park. From Marbury Lane,



access is by a steps (opposite the galvanised bridge beyond the Marbury car park), or steep bath 100m further on, leading to a streamside walk; from Anderton/Hopyards, a steep zig-zag path leads down direct. The bridge was designed by Tracy Cartledge, commissioned and engineered by Cheshire County Council, managed by the countryside rangers and Action Weaver Valley, and part funded by INEOS Chlor through landfill tax credits. (Pic: A.Powell)

Taming Nature

If you would like to benefit from some physical activity, in good company, for a good cause (and enjoy the local wildlife) you might like help on Cheshire Wildlife Trust's reserves. The tasks usually involve clearing of invasive scrub to support the long term management of the sites. For information contact Len's Lot on 01928 733559 or Dave's Diggers on 01606 832148



Free Trees

Cheshire Landscape Trust again has free trees on offer 19 native species + horse chestnut; and local varieties of apple trees. The trees should be for public open space, by public rights of way, in school or community grounds. They also welcome donations of surplus seedlings. Details from Katie Lowe, CLT, tel 01244 376333 or email cheshire@landscapetrust.fsnet.co.uk
In addition, VREN has an offer of a Mulberry tree, same conditions – contact us for details.

Diary Dates

With Hallowe'en Treat: animal skulls from 'Animal Tracks, Trails & Signs', Brown, Lawrence & Pope
Fri 20th Oct

Gardening Quiz – with sets of questions brought in by members. 7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

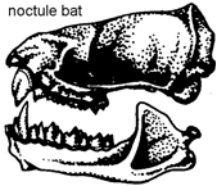
Sat 21st Oct

Small Mammal Morning at Wigg Island, Runcorn, 9am. Tel 01928 583905 to reserve place

Sat 21st Oct

Life Beneath Autumn Colours, a 3 mile walk from Summertrees Café on the Sandstone Trail, SJ 540673, 10.30am. Can use café car park. Mid-Cheshire Wildlife Trust. tel Joan, 01829 751954

noctule bat



Sun 22nd Oct
Winter Arrivals: Mersey migrant birds. Park in Hale

village (W of Widnes), meet at Hale Lighthouse, Within Way, 7-11am. Tel 0151 425 4706

Sun 22nd Oct

Weather Watch – learn about the weather. Spike Island, Widnes. Tel 0151 420 3707

Sun 22nd Oct

Landscape, Trees and Water: guided walk and fruit tasting from the CFWI orchard. 2pm, Ranger's Office, Marbury Country Park. Tel Cheshire

Landscape Trust, 01244 376333

leisler's bat



Wed 25th Oct

Hedgerow

Planting, Restoration & Management, Gore Farm, Ashton By Budworth, Northwich. Helen Broughton, FWAG, Tel:01270 627938 to book. £10 for non-members, £5 members.

Wed 25th Oct

Sporting Activities on the

R.Weaver: Sailing and other watersports. River Weaver Navigation Society, 7.30pm in new venue – The Wharf, 216 Manchester Road, Lostock. Free admission. Tel Ann Bates, 01606 79576

Thurs 2nd Nov

Weaver Valley Watersides: Ann Bates talks about the Weaver, particularly about water quality. £1.50 to non FOAM members. 7.40pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. tel Brian Jaques 01606 891242

Sat 4th Nov

Climate Change March, in London, organised by Stop Climate Chaos and the Campaign Against Climate Change, prior to the next round of the UN Climate Talks in Nairobi. For info and how to get to London, see www.campaigncc.org or tel 0207 833 9311

Sat 4th Nov

Birds and Baskets: making owl baskets (for Runcorn owls) and bird feeders (to take home). Wigg Island, Runcorn, 10am. Tel 01928 583905

Mon 6th Nov

Day of Action Against Short Haul Flights. For ideas to take up, see www.planestupid.com or tel 07979205373

Fri 10th Nov:

'National Heritage of the Pennines and Scotland', Gordon Yates. Hartford Village Hall Chester Road, Hartford. MCOS. Adults £2, children £1. Harold Fielding, 01606 882529

Sat 11th Nov

Hale Duck Decoy: a chance to see this Scheduled Ancient Monument, one of only 3 in the country. Meet at Pickering's Pasture, 10am. Limited places, booking essential – 0151 4525 4706

Sat 11th Nov, +Sun if sleeping over

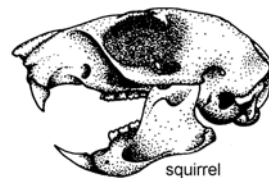
Wildlife Watch: **Autumn Sleepover** at Fox Howl, Ashton Road, Delamere Forest. Packed lunch required. 10am – 6pm Sat; or to 11am Sun. Contact Ken, 01606 883013

Sun 12th Nov

Wind in the Willows: make a willow garden masterpiece. Phoenix Park, Runcorn, 1 – 3.30pm. Tel 01928 564472

Sun 12th Nov

Bridging the Runcorn Gap: history of the 3 bridges that have spanned the Mersey. Spike Island, Widnes, 2.30 – 4pm. Tel 0151 420 3707



squirrel

Thurs 16th Nov

Ground Source Heat Pumps. Energy Institute, Haydock, 6pm. For lift contact VREN.

Fri 17th Nov

Pumpkins and Squash – things to do with, + AGM. 7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

Sun 19th Nov

Best Foot Forward: walk the Bridgewater Canal towpaths into Cheshire countryside. Phoenix Park, Runcorn, 1pm. Tel 01928 564472

22nd Nov – 3rd Dec

National Tree Week: tree planting, walks, talks, songs, story-telling and tree dressing. Register your event with Jo Sayers, 01925 816217

Sat 25th Nov

Lopping Around: planting trees, hacking shrubs. Arley Woods, Widnes, 10am. Tel 0151 257 9849

Sun 26th Nov

Bird Boxes and Feeders: make for your garden. Spike Island, Widnes, 1-3pm. Tel 0151 420 3707

Sun 3rd Dec
Branching Out:

woodland management. Tools, equipment, hot drinks supplied. Pickering's Pasture, Widnes, 10am – 1pm. Tel 0151 425 476

Fri 8th Dec:

'A Night on the Tiles', Jeff Clarke. Hartford Village Hall Chester Road, Hartford. MCOS. Adults £2, children £1. Harold Fielding, 01606 882529

Sat 9th Dec

Wildlife Watch: **Christmas Crafts**. Weaver Parkway (off road opposite side of roundabout to Morrisons, Winsford, 10am-noon. Contact Ken, 01606 883013

Tues 2nd Jan 2007

Wigg and Moore Duck

Tour: bird walk through the waterways of Moore Nature Reserve and Wigg Island, 9.30am – 2pm. Places limited, booking essential. Tel 01928 583905

Fri 12th Jan 2007

'India – Birds of Bharatpur', Sigrun & Dave Tollerton. Hartford Village Hall Chester Road, Hartford. MCOS. Adults £2, children £1. Harold Fielding, 01606 882529

Sun 14th Jan

Willow Weaving, Wigg Island, 1-3pm. Tel 07901 978366

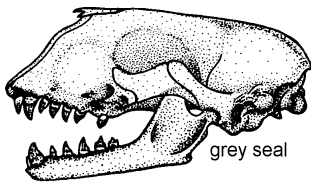
Sun 14th Jan

Turning of the Tide; illustrated talk about the natural, and historical, history of the Mersey Estuary. Pickering's Pasture, 2-4pm. Tel 0151 425 4706

Wed 17th Jan

The Ups and Downs of Cheshire Birds – population trends, following data collected by over 300 recorders over the last 3 years and comparing with previous information. David Norman. 7.30pm, Frodsham Community Centre, Fluin Lane. Mid Cheshire Wildlife Trust and Frodsham Naturalists.

Peter Young, 01606 852406



grey seal

Fri 19th Jan

Soups. 7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

Sun 21st Jan

Rock Park to Wigg Island

Walk. 10am. Tel 01928 568219

Wed 24th Jan

The Brunner Mond Fleet: River Weaver Navigation Society, 7.30pm in The Wharf, 216 Manchester Road, Lostock. Free admission. Tel Ann Bates, 01606 79576

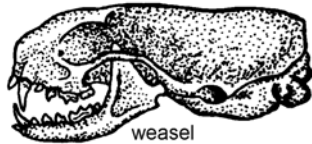
Sun 4th Feb

Conifer-Loving Wildlife: at Daresbury Firs, 10am. Booking essential. Tel 01928 583905

Fri 9th Feb

'Wildlife of the Czech Republic', Terry Pickford. Hartford Village

Hall Chester Road, Hartford. MCOS. Adults £2, children £1. Harold Fielding, 01606 882529



weasel

Sun 11th Feb

Birds and the Bridge: the Runcorn-Widnes Bridge attracts

thousands of starlings, and other birds.

Illustrated talk and 2km walk, with free return transport – places limited, so booking essential. Meet Pickering's Pasture, 3.30pm. Tel 0151 425 4706

Fri 16th Feb

Valentine's Special:

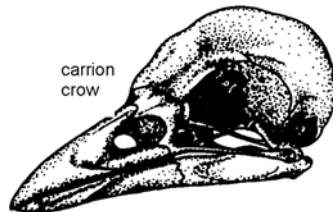
Aphrodisiacs. 7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

Sun 18th Feb

Bird box making, Phoenix Park, Runcorn, 1-3pm. Materials provided. Tel 01928 564472

Fri 9th Mar

'Birds of Mallorca', Stuart Meredith. Hartford Village Hall Chester Road, Hartford. MCOS. Adults £2, children £1. Harold Fielding, 01606 882529



carrion crow

Fri 16th Mar

Seeds and Seedlings swap.

7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

Sun 18th Mar

Mersey Meander: emerging wildlife, panoramic views on this walk. Park in Hale Village (Widnes), meet at the Childe of

Hale pub. 9.30am – 12noon. Tel 0151 425 4706

Sun 25th Mar

Big Baked Potato Trail:

family event, fun treasure trail, walk through spring woodlands and meadows, healthy food finale. Sandymoor Hall, Runcorn. Booking essential. Tel 0151 495 3293

Wed 28th Mar

Update on the Weaver Valley

Regional Park & AGM. River Weaver Navigation Society, 7.30pm in The Wharf, 216 Manchester Road, Lostock. Free admission. Tel Ann Bates, 01606 79576

Fri 20th Apr

Square Foot Gardening, veg from small plots. 7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

Fri 18th May

Slugs and Snails. 7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

Fri 15th June

A Social Evening Full of Taste – organic food and drink. 7.30pm, Comberbach Memorial Hall. £1.50. VROWG, tel Nickki, 01606 556424

Notes

FOAM: Friends of Anderton and Marbury

FWAG: Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

MCOS: Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society

VROWG: Vale Royal Organic and Wildlife Gardeners (all dates provisional)

Wildlife Watch: Cheshire Wildlife Trust's junior branch



mallard