

DorsetCAN Newsletter 14 ~ March 2023

We want a paradigm shift to stop the planet overheating; reverse the appalling loss of wildlife; regenerate our soils, rivers and seas from devastating pollution; and to build a sustainable way of life for all people, species and living systems. For that to happen, we need to understand the processes damaging our world, how we can reverse that damage, and what positive actions we can take and urge others to take.

Rewilding

Wiltshire Climate Action have a [talk on rewilding](#) by Neil Hulme at St Margaret's Hall, Bradford on Avon, on Saturday 18th March at 3.30pm.

Tree Planting

Bridport Tree Planting group has been busy – [here's its latest newsletter](#).

Place, protest and belonging

Planet Shaftesbury have a [talk by Nicola Chester](#) on this. Her book *On Gallows Down* has won prizes. Grosvenor Assembly Room, Shaftesbury – Saturday 11th March.

Hedgehogs in Wareham

[Hedgehog Extravaganza](#) on Saturday 25th Mar at Wareham Town Hall.

A Rural Bus Network...

Following-up its report, [Every Village, Every Hour](#), CPRE has a petition to Transport Secretary, Mark Harper, asking for investment in a reliable bus service for every community, town and village in England. You can sign this petition [here](#).

Beaver-Human Activity Spotted on Rivers

Rivers are all the rage. *The Times* has [launched its 'Clean It Up' rivers campaign](#) with proposals to introduce “Jail and other criminal penalties for water chiefs” and to “Incentivise farmers to curb their pollution of rivers”. [How do we make these choices? We could equally incentivise water companies and imprison farmers. Or jail people who flush wet-wipes. Or jail anyone who supports the water industry by paying their water bill... or anyone who *doesn't* pay their water bill.]

i newspaper has a [Save Britain's Rivers](#) campaign. It says “We can't rely on [ministers] to take this seriously... journalists, readers and community groups must step in...”

Avaaz says “Our great rivers are dying, and that means we are too... The River Thames has some of the highest levels of microplastics of all rivers on the planet.” [Sign the Avaaz petition](#).



“A beaver hiding from hunters and biting off its testicles to leave them as their catch.” Etching by WS Howitt. Wellcome Collection.

Nearer to home, DorsetCAN held a ‘**Cleaning up our Rivers**’ meeting on 30th Jan with talks by Simon Browning (formerly Westcountry Rivers Trust), Dominic Acland (Connecting the River Culm project) and Ian Rees (Dorset AONB). [See a recording of the talks, watch the Q&A and read key points](#) (which prioritise gathering data and river monitoring and don't mention imprisonment). Notable is the “list of 11 rivers attending”. Like rivers being given legal status (e.g. the Magpie in Quebec, the Whanganui in New Zealand, the Yarra in Australia, all rivers in Bangladesh, and the Ganges in India), even the idea of a river attending a meeting muddies and softens the angry heart.

Update on Dorset Rivers: The [Lower Char Community Project](#) has a River Dragon Festival on 27th May to highlight the work being done locally to clean up the river. An [Upper Char Project](#) meeting recently highlighted the damage done to rivers and ponds by neonicotinoids (banned elsewhere) which are used in dogs' flea collars/treatments. They wash off or are excreted when dogs swim. **Lessons:** 1) treat your cat first (cats rarely swim and dogs mainly get their fleas from cats) 2) wash and vacuum your dog's bedding more often 3) use tablets not collars and skin treatments 4) don't let your dog in water for a week after giving flea treatment; 5) use treatments less often. If you want to join your local river group, there's [a list here](#).

Divesting from fossil fuels

A national Day of Action on 24th March will demand that local institutions (including Dorset Council) stop funding the climate crisis by investing pension funds in companies that profit from fossil fuel extraction and use. [Find out more.](#)

Dorset Council

DorsetCAN is busy responding to Dorset Council's new draft NECES [Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy](#) (which updates its previous Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy). The Strategy will be voted on by the Council on 28th March.

We also expect Dorset Council to reveal 1) a decision information tool that allows climate, ecology and adaptation issues to be addressed at all levels and 2) a paper explaining how Planning will be influenced by the NECES. There will be a sustainability checklist and it will cover renewable energy, energy efficiency and historic environment.

To learn more or get involved with work at this level, contact [Giles Watts](#).

Active Travel

Dorchester is hosting a Walking Festival from 13-21 May, with 40+ guided and self-guided walks to choose from.

They range from 2-mile trails around town, to the 26-mile Cerne Valley walk or the 212-mile Hardy Way. Details of the Walking Festival can be found [here](#).

Pop-Up Larders

North Dorset Poverty Action Group and [#HelpAndKindness](#) are working to establish a series of pop-up food Larders. They are running in Sherborne and Stalbridge with plans for 18 more across Dorset. The Larders open for 1-2 hours/week and provide more affordable food for up to 250 people. They operate as food clubs using a membership model.

Bridport Solar Array Proposal

Dorset Community Energy hope to build a small ground-mounted solar array by the reservoir at Dottery.

The planning application has been submitted. If permission is granted, funds will be raised via a community share offer, open to anyone living in Dorset.

They plan to make the electricity generated by the Dottery solar array available to local residents via an Energy Local Club, which will allow members to buy cheaper electricity direct from local renewable energy installations, whilst also enabling renewable generators to earn slightly more for their power. Read more about the [Dottery solar array and Energy Local Clubs here](#).

On Getting Angry About Stuff

If you're angry about the state of our rivers, angry about dividends paid to privatised water company shareholders and bonuses paid to their directors, angry with the Government about cuts it's imposed on the Environment Agency or its apparent reluctance to tighten up regulations affecting the Water and Sewage Companies... consider the subject-subject worldview (here's the science):



The face of an angry man. Drawing, 18th century, after C Le Brun.

“Many of the triumphs of Enlightenment rationalist thinking came from suppressing the subject-subject worldview and taking the objective one, separating the observer from the thing observed. That is a partial view. It needs to be complemented by a shift in our worldview that allows us to see ourselves as subjects and participants – a relational universe. What does that mean in practice?

Think of it as the difference between phoning home to say you are stuck in traffic and phoning to say that you are traffic.” [\[Read more\]](#)

If you're angry about rivers, think of it like this.

- Who elected the Government? We did.
- Who elected the Government that privatised the water companies? We did.
- Who buys the products that make the Big Pharmaceuticals industry rich? We do.
- Who, every day – in the choices we make about work, accommodation, banking, food, politics and health – in all our actions, condones the system of private capital that *requires* organisations like Wessex Water to prioritise profits over environmental good? We do.
- Who doesn't empty their septic tanks regularly? We don't.
- Who uses glyphosate weedkillers in their garden? We do.
- Who buys the food that intensive farming produces? We do.
- And if you're guilty of none of those things... were you once?
- And if your record is unsullied, where has your pension been invested for most of your life?

On the other hand, if people don't get angry when societal obscenities occur, how is anything going to change?

Regenerative Fashion Event

There's a festival to promote local fibre growers and makers on Fri 26th & Sat 27th May at Hawkers Farm, Stour Provost SP8 5LZ. If you would like to take part or offer a workshop or help in any way please contact: Jenny Morisetti, 07801 240103, info@creatinghealthyhomes.com.

International Car Free Day

Dorchester and Purbeck Transport Action Groups are joining International Car Free Day on Friday 22nd Sept. We hope other groups, including in BCP, will arrange events to mark the day. Dorchester and Purbeck TAGs are in the early stages of planning for their events (called **Streets Alive!** in Dorchester), and hope schools will take part, to encourage active travel to school. Other possible activities: cycle training information, free bike maintenance, reduced entry prices to tourist venues and possibly discounted public transport fares. To find out more [contact Helen Sumbler](#), the DCAN Transport Team Co-ordinator.

Transport News and Events!

Over half a million pupils are already taking part in the Sustrans [Big Walk and Wheel](#) from 20-31 March this year. Is your local school joining in? If not, why not encourage them to register for the UK's biggest inter-school walking, wheeling, scooting and cycling to school competition!



Girl feeding lettuce to two rabbits. c.1870-1900. Boston Public Library

Salad Days

Ecological Land Cooperative needs seasonal salad and flower volunteers on their 6½ acre smallholding in mid-Devon. Couples, friends or families welcome. [Details here](#).

Cl*mate Just*ce

DorsetCAN and others have steered away from the term 'climate justice' [just as Thérèse Coffey says s**t not shit] for fear of alienating small and big C conservatives. Recently, activist and writer Naomi Klein explained why climate justice has to be an integral part of what we're doing: *"I always think about climate justice as multitasking. We live in a time of multiple overlapping crises: we have a health emergency; we have a housing emergency; we have an inequality emergency; we have a racial injustice emergency; and we have a climate emergency, so we're not going to get anywhere if we try to address them one at a time. We need responses that are truly intersectional. So how about as we decarbonise and create a less polluted world, we also build a much fairer society on multiple fronts?"* [Read the rest](#)

Dorset Hedge – “we’ve started something enormous”

With the Government saying: "...farmers will be supported to create or restore 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037", our Great Big Dorset Hedge project is certainly timely!

The project is helping restore and extend hedgerows the length and breadth of Dorset. Volunteers assess the condition of hedgerows and survey results are added to a GIS mapping layer created by ecologist John Blanchard. This records progress as hedgerows are restored or planted. Lead survey coordinator **John Calder** writes:

"Many thanks to the 49 volunteers who have been able to undertake their first GBDH surveys, many going on to do much more than one. Between us, we have documented over 80km of hedgerows and another 20km of field boundary fences. In theory, those 'fedges' (fences that want to be hedges) could be our best opportunity for planting new hedgerows, but life is never that simple! Many fedges exist in landscapes where the hedges are not being well-managed. It makes sense to prioritise the planting of new hedges in landscapes where we know they will be looked after well.

It's too soon to say where new planting opportunities will arise but the more hedgerows we survey, the better our chances of finding them.

Many apologies to those 50+ volunteers who have not yet been invited to a survey. We'll reach you all as soon as possible. Be patient if you can (and [email me](#) if you can't, as there are opportunities if you can travel).

We have started something enormous. Many are finding the surveying to be fulfilling in itself. I, for one, have seen more of Dorset in the past several weeks than in the previous several years, and it's glorious."

Julie Leah has been leading the project with John and writes about local developments: *"Recently in Morcombelake volunteers, including two little boys and their mother from Ukraine, helped plant a new hedgerow and copse. The hedge is a mixture of hawthorn, blackthorn and buckthorn interspersed with hazel, field maple, wych elm and guelder rose. It was funded by Dorset AONB, but this doesn't cover labour costs so volunteers are vital. 8 volunteers make the work go 8 times faster! Lyme Regis Town Council is funding a trial to extend the GBDH to schools and youth groups. Trips out to survey hedges (like hedges themselves) will link rural to urban areas and offer physical and mental health benefits. To help with surveying, if you have hedges to be surveyed, or want a talk for your group or school, [contact Julie Leah](#).*

Glyphosate is on the brink of being reappraised in Europe

It could mean another DECADE of this pesticide being sprayed across our fields and parks. Bayer-Monsanto has lobbyists working to get the approvals. Ekō (formerly SumOfUs) has a campaign – [you can donate here](#).



Mimosa pudica, H. Zell

Plant consciousness: they may be able to learn and make decisions.

Mimosa pudica, the touch-me-not plant, folds its leaves when touched. Put one into a sealed chamber with a dose of anaesthetic and it will stop doing this, as though it has been knocked out. Lidocaine, the local anaesthetic used by dentists, will do. What's more, all plants are probably susceptible to anaesthesia.

If plants can be “put to sleep”, does this mean they exist in a state of awareness that is shut off by anaesthetics? Might we consider this state to be a kind of sentience, a subjective internal experience? If so, do plants have a form of consciousness? [More at New Scientist](#) (paywall)

More Rewilding

West Dorset Wilding was launched last month. It hopes to “help bring back wildlife to West Dorset through allowing nature to do what it does best, and to help people get involved with the nature on their doorstep.” WDW is a community and landowner led collaboration. As they said at the launch: “It's not so much for us, but for our children and their children – we just hope its not too late!” Join at: www.westdorsetwilding.org

Food and the Food System

Recently we've had a taste of the multiple, interlinked problems associated with what Prof. Jem Bendell (founder of the Deep Adaptation movement) calls food system breakdown. These are the 6 trends implicated:

1. We are hitting the biophysical limits of food production and could hit 'peak food' within a generation
2. Food production systems are destroying the resource base upon which they rely, so the Earth's capacity to produce food is falling
3. Most food production and all its storage and distribution depends on fossil fuels, making our food supply highly unstable
4. Climate change is already negatively impacting our food supply and will do so with increasing intensity as the Earth warms
5. We are locked into increasing food demand
6. The prioritisation of economic efficiency and profit has undermined food sovereignty and the resilience of food production

Some people look to technological innovation as a source of hope – Bendell has an interesting analysis of the sustainability of approaches like using microbes to grow proteins. But he concludes that “nearterm societal collapse is now inevitable” – governments will not act swiftly enough to make the necessary changes. But he hopes people will take action in their own lives and communities. “I believe there are new victories to be won in transforming food systems locally, while resisting the ongoing destruction from global capitalist enterprises”. ([Read Jem Bendell's article in full](#).) And look out for DorsetCAN's next Open Event on Food.



**DORSET
COMMUNITY
ENERGY**

Job – no tears

Dorset Community Energy (DCE) is an established successful Community Energy Company covering the whole geographical area of Dorset. It is approached by numerous organisations with large rooftops on which to install PV arrays, financed like DCE's previous arrays by crowdfunding.

DCE needs someone to take on this project. Phase 1 involves assessing the shortlisted roofs, checking grid access, and evaluating project costs for inclusion in a share offer.

If fundraising is successful, phase 2 will be to agree roof leases, seek tenders and supervise delivery.

If you know anyone with the right experience or qualifications to perform this work, please invite them to get in touch with: Henry Lovegrove 07970 376640 or henrylovegrove@btinternet.com



We're doing work that matters – doing our bit to clean up rivers, insulate houses, get better public transport, reinstate hedges, stop houses being built in the wrong place, get renewable electricity generated and distributed locally, get more food grown locally... the list goes on.

Behind it all is a desire to put things right. And behind that is the knowledge that endings cannot be put off indefinitely. Lives simply close, as this wonderful piece of writing reminds us. A prompt, perhaps, that we should incorporate as much art as science in our future efforts.

With that in mind, here's something Dana wrote after an encounter in the wood recently.

Thank you for reading and for everything you do.



Vladimer Shioshvili / Flickr / CC by-SA 2.0

Buteo buteo

Yesterday's wood.walk.

Latched on buzzard gliding down the slip.

Bird's span is not quite right. But not all wrong.

Not holding him for long enough to care, I flit to sit and write.

A wren chirrs up. Dog pricks and sniffs. Bounds off and bounces back without his ball.

A question in his ears, his gaze, his paws. The wood is on alert.

Dog.drawn. We find soft buzzard mounded on the fox.trod path.

A tucked and folded life,

As wild yeast dough knocked back to oven ready. Neat.

Alive, but down. His steel concealed in dying dove form,

metal fisting padded glove.

Hawk blinks but does not flinch.

I don't know what to do. So sit. Dog sits with me. Resist the tug to touch and stroke bird, give him water. Hold him like a son. So close.

I chat instead

I say you'll be ok: a lie. You're beautiful: A truth. Hang on: a plea.

Is bird afraid?

He doesn't look afraid. Resigned? Not quite, it's something else, a branching word just out of reach.

I drop to level with a piercing tawny eye I recognise. I smile.

He flatly blinks and drops his beak an inch,

(a winter thorn, its blue-grey bloom exactly like the colour of his sloe.blink lizard inner lid) to meet the bracken's rust and dust.

Bird parts thin yellow lips and eye to eye, he slips his tongue, like every other tongue, in me. Like lizard tongue. Like mine. We're all one tongue. But his is pale and deathly dry.

Bird's other eye is blue grey: blind

I kneel and stroke bird with my eyes and try to be an animal. Be present with the duff and dun, the yellow wax, the umber song, as velvet feathered perfect being dwindles, droops and spreads to merge with brash.

It takes so long. I am a human.

Tense with hanging at the edge of being. Willing bird to wing it. Be the plump soft uplift even as he falls.

[Before the end I fail and call Hawk Rescue. People come who give their lives to ending suffering. They tell me bird is thin and dehydrated, shutting down because he's semi blind. He can't survive without two eyes. They pick him up without a fuss or fight and slip him in a carry case. They promise they will kill him kindly. Sheila says it's better than the ravens pecking out his living eyes.

We all try not to cry.

I didn't take photos. I couldn't take my eyes off bird. Wanting to be present in his (please, not) last wood hour. Remembering later the waxy yellow nasal ridge, the plate glass gaze and soft so soft I long to hold you-ness. More than enough. And yet, of course, back home I Google "what's a bird's nose called?" And up pops this - why this, not sparrow's noses? Buteo was exactly this. The waxy cere, the blood.thorn beak. That pin of light in a pair of eyes that takes in every living thing.

Dana Assinder