



**Women's  
Environmental  
Network**

# **S E Essex Women's Environmental Network NEWSLETTER**

September 2013

## Word from the Secretary

So we have a real summer at last! The weather has been gorgeous and nothing less than we deserve after a rubbish one last year let alone the very cold and long winter (the irony is it's raining as I type this!). The good weather has made me sad though. Suffering from RSI has more implications than I first thought. Watering cans are a big no no, so I've only managed to plant two tubs this year, located close to my outside tap. One of peas and one of beans. My strawberry pots which have been blooming since moving next to the railway line, have all died, whereas last year they were fruiting and growing spurs even though the watering I had to do was minimal! The beans have suffered from terrible aphid infestation. Luckily, as I can't rub the leaves and stalks constantly, they have finally attracted ladybirds! The first I have seen in my garden for two years. We seem to have more butterflies and moths than previous years as well. The magpies are obviously here, as are the pigeons and seagulls. But the jays we have spotted are new (even if they did eat all my cherries!) and the chickens got dive bombed by a sparrow hawk! The damselflies are out in force and we haven't been so troubled by slugs and snails this year. The badger and foxes are all to be seen early evening. Maybe as I haven't been so 'head down' gardening, I've noticed that there is allot more happening outside!

RSI is also proving bad for my diet. For those who are unaware, RSI doesn't necessarily just mean pains in the arms. Hands, shoulders and neck can also be affected. So, over a couple of days last week, I peeled a couple of Butternut squashes for dinner and some Sweet Potatoes the next day. On the third I could hardly move my shoulder! Peeling the vegetables had caused such pain! Only a good hour of physio made it any better. From now on, if it needs to be peeled, we won't be eating it!

### Text Alerts

If you wish to receive information on the next WEN event direct to your mobile, text 'Yes Please' with your name to 07941154166. You will not be charged for any texts you receive, and you can cancel at any time by texting 'no more' to the same number. It's a great way to receive a little reminder in the busy world we live in.



**What is SEEWEN all about?**

**WEN's strategic aims are:**

- 1. Empowering women to make positive environmental change.**
- 2. Increasing awareness of women's perspectives on environmental issues.**
- 3. Influencing decision-making to achieve environmental justice for women**

**As a group we try to keep in mind our strategic aims when planning activities/events and the structure of our meetings. It's so easy to get side tracked down different interesting avenues.**

**However, as a group we have agreed an additional overarching 'theme' - to be positive. It's very easy to get sucked into negative ways of thinking about today and the future. Within the group we take the view that each of us is trying our best to improve the world we live in and 'look' after it for future generations. How we do this is up to us on an individual basis.**

**Interestingly, creativity and innovation are two major strengths of the group. We are always open to new ideas and to trying different activities to help us meet our aims.**

***Free filter for your water butt***

***Plants prefer rainwater to tap water, and water butts are the perfect way to collect it. Help keep yours free from debris, such as leaves and moss, by fixing an old pair of tights over the bottom of the down pipe***

**What we've been up to recently...**

**Badger culling is a topic of controversy at the moment. We were able to explore some of the debates and issues around culling at our June meeting with Frank from the local Badger protection society.**

**The evening was exceptionally interesting, we gained an insight into the behavior and lives of these wonderful creatures and well as having the opportunity to see some stunning pictures of them going about their everyday (night) activities.**

**Inviting guest speakers who work to protect and support our local wildlife brings home what we could lose if we don't look after the environment and take climate change seriously.**

**In May we held another group day at a Beach Hut on Thorpe Bay Esplanade. We were really lucky and the weather was great. How does this 'jolly' fit in with our aims?**

**To me the day at the beach links in with our aim of empowering women to make positive environmental changes. Empowering is a difficult concept for most of us. According to the Thesaurus to empower is to enable/give someone the authority/power to do something.**

**A day together gave us lots of time to talk about many different issues and I'm pretty sure everyone came away having enjoyed the day, feeling positive and having gathered a few tips about some positive changes they can make (enabling in action).**

**The beach and sea were beautiful. Who could we walk away and not be concerned about marine pollution and the number of creatures being killed by the plastics that have found their way in to the seas and waterways. I for one certainly felt more empowered to take action to protect and maintain our oceans.**

### ***A clear winner***

***Help your mirrors and windows sparkle naturally and cheaply. Dilute white vinegar with water (recommended dilutions vary from 1:10 to 50:50 - experiment a bit). Apply with a pump-action plant sprayer then wipe with scrunched up newspaper for a great shine.***

## **Stop Climate Chaos Coalition letter to David Cameron**

In March WEN became a signatory to the Ocean 2012: Transforming European Fisheries Coalition letter that was sent to all 28 EU fisheries ministers. The letter requests that in the final stages of negotiation on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the EU Council support the EU Parliament's aim to end overfishing by 2015 and restore fish stocks by 2020. 217 civil society groups from across Europe are signatories of the letter, which demonstrates the Europe-wide awareness of the importance of a sustainable CFP.

WEN has also signed the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition letter to our top politicians which urges them to reconsider their decision to delay action on the decarbonisation of the electricity sector until 2016. The letter has been signed by more than 50 civil society organisations, and is an important step to keep up the pressure on government to act on climate change issues.

You can also take action by [sending an email to your MP](#) about the importance of a decarbonisation target.

### ***Natural body scrub***

***Mix olive oil with ground sea salt and a little brown sugar to make a natural exfoliating scrub for shower time.***

As most of you are aware, Carrol, a long standing and much missed member emigrated to France recently. You can catch up with the tales she and Bill are willing to share here -

[www.wellbehavedsystems.co.uk/pragelier](http://www.wellbehavedsystems.co.uk/pragelier)

### ***Enjoy the great outdoors***

***We've got some beautiful - and usually free - places to enjoy nature, especially now the weather's warming up. Discover what's on your doorstep, whether you live in***

## **The Forum**

You've probably noticed that Southend's new library/conference is almost completed where the car park used to be in Elmer Square, just off Southend High Street. A joint 27million pound (approx.) venture between Southend Council, University of Essex and South Essex College, it promises to bring 'the library' into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Not only will the library provide a wider variety of books. CD's, DVD's, it will also house a new 200 seat lecture theatre, teaching facilities and 'a vibrant new public square where outdoor events are enhanced by a public screen'. The venue is due to be opened next month. For those of you lucky enough to have booked, Professor Brian Cox is the opening public speaker on 30/09/13. Tickets sold out in the first day! Other speakers appearing in the opening sessions include Prof Jules Pretty from Essex University who argues: 'a greener world economy isn't just better for the planet, it could also make us happier.' (£5 per ticket) and George Alagiah focusses on the growing global food crisis after 15 years travelling the globe (£12.00 per ticket inc refreshments)  
Full list of events on - [www.theforumsouthend.co.uk](http://www.theforumsouthend.co.uk).

## ***Make woodwork gleam***

***Mix two parts vegetable oil with one part lemon juice to make a fresh and effective polish that will give a deep, natural lustre and a refreshing scent to wooden furniture.***

## **Pure White and Deadly by John Yudkin**

I purchased this book after watching a TV program on obesity. The book has been republished after 20 odd years as it came out of print in the mid-seventies (the reasons are stated in the book why).

The book reasons that sugar is bad for us - not just from a 'calorific' point of view but also the diseases that have been linked to excess sugar consumption. He also explains why we should not be eating sugar substitutes and how the big sugar corporations are only funding grants and subsidies to universities and colleges that do not encourage experiments and studies about excessive sugar consumption.

On the whole, the book didn't inspire me to give up sugar. Nor did it make any ground breaking observations about sugar consumption that I didn't already know. However, the science behind the topic, and the broader subjects covered (i.e. how much sugar we eat, the effects of diabetes and how information can be withheld if it is 'unsavoury' for the food industry) was an eye opener. I would imagine that 30 years ago when the book was first published it would have caused up roar. Now it seemed to be more of a 'here's the reasons why we say this stuff' journal.

A BOOK WORTH READING ... After reading Lucy Siegle's latest book 'To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World' you'll never feel quite the same about wandering round the fashion departments of high street stores or browsing through Internet fashion websites.

The book is an expose on the fashion industry examining the inhumane and environmentally devastating story behind the clothes we so casually buy and wear.

Taking particular issue with our current mania for both big-name labels and cheap fashion, To Die For sets an agenda for the urgent changes that can and need to be made by both the industry and the consumer. Far from outlining a future of drab, ethical clothing, Lucy Siegle believes that it is indeed possible to be an 'ethical fashionista', simply by being aware of how and where (and by whom) clothing is manufactured.

ROSS GARDNER, a local man made good as a professional naturalist, came to our March meeting to tell us about his work. It was so nice to hear about how he early came to love nature through playing on a piece of 'wild' land near where he lived in Hadleigh. Not so good to hear that the plants and creatures he loved and studied are there no more because the ground is now covered with Morrison's car park!

Ross has a passion for British wildlife about which he has written a number of books. In his latest 'Never a Dull Moment: A Naturalist's View of British Wildlife' he tells of ...

*'the germ of childhood interest and the growth of a passion. Of reconnecting with the natural world and the ways in which it might touch every aspect of our life. Of the simple pleasures, moments of awe and emotional ties; from the first childhood glimmer of a dawning interest to an all-consuming passion of later life'*

If, like me, you feel that we would perhaps all be happier by being closer to the natural world, then this book is a must read.

### ***Jts bananas***

***Storing fruit with a bit of care can make it last longer and reduce waste. For example, bananas emit ethylene, which encourages fruit to ripen. So store them separately if you don't want your other fruit to soften, but put them next to an unripe avocado if you plan to make guacamole soon.***

### **Three top tips on how we can make our wardrobes more sustainable?**

1. When you buy new clothes aim to get a minimum number of wears. So only buy a piece you can commit to wearing 30 times as a starter. You'll be amazed how this makes you think differently!
2. Use a percentage of your fashion budget to invest in sustainable pieces. If you shift even a small amount of your fashion budget to a piece from a brand such as People Tree or hat makers Pachacuti (by the way, I think hats are essential!) you are not just making a Fast Fashion Mogul even richer. You are investing in the producers and the makers. Plus their pieces are now really good.
3. Try making something, anything. Once you've knitted a piece (my thing) and painstakingly tried to match seams you'll never treat fashion as a throwaway consumable again.

- See more at: <http://www.westlondonmum.co.uk/at-home-with-lucy-siegle-journalist-author-and-environmentalist/#sthash.MdxG4U2A.dpuf>

### *Put old beer to good use*

*If you have a few half-empty bottles of beer left from your party or barbecue, don't tip the dregs down the sink. Pour a small amount on your compost - the yeast gives beneficial microbes a boost, and the beer is a good source of nitrogen.*

This link has been forwarded to us via Jill Poet - <http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-stuff>

Should be accompanied by a health warning though - if you are feeling depressed leave it until you are feeling better!

### *Green and living roofs*

*Green and living roofs, which are partially or completely covered with vegetation and soil, are becoming increasingly popular, especially for sheds, garages and even houses. As well as looking beautiful, they encourage wildlife, reduce the impact of run-off on water drainage systems and improve air quality*

Diary dates -

SEEWEN meeting. Third Thursday of every month.

At our new venue! Relate at 29 Harcourt Avenue. 7:00 for a 7:30 start. Our autumn sessions are still in the planning, but for September, we will be making Table clothes for our Harvest Supper. Why not join us for a relaxed, informal evening.

Southend Soup - 28th September, 6:30-9:30

Wesley Methodist Church, Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea. This is a great fundraising idea - the first of its kind in the area. You pay £3 for soup, a roll, a drink, and a vote. During the evening, a few people with "Good Ideas" talk about their projects. People then get to chat, and mull over the ideas, whilst they enjoy food together. Everyone votes for their favourite idea, and that idea wins the money in the pot.

Harvest Supper - 12th October,

St Marks Church, Princes Street. Join us for our annual supper night! All are welcome. More details to follow.

Bonfire night - 9th November

Manchester Drive allotments. We are withholding information on this one at the moment - so only pencil this in! Weather depending.

## **Safeguard our Soils, Mr Pickles**

Carole Shorney from South East Essex Gardners would like to bring your attention to her petition -

### **Why this is important**

Why is agricultural land, described in one planning application as 'a mixture of 80% Grade 2 (very good quality) and 20% Subgrade 3b (good quality)', being developed?

We need change before any more agricultural land is offered to/bought up by developers.

We must accept that Britain cannot rely on world food supplies because, as prices rise, Britain needs a stable, secure food supply, with short distance from field to plate.

Over the next 50 years, food and farming face the stark challenge of providing better nutrition for more people in spite of rapid environmental change, while cutting our diet's impact on natural resources, ecosystems and the climate. This calls for changes in our eating habits, reductions in food waste and improvements in food production. We want to make sure organic and other agro ecological approaches are at the heart of efforts to achieve this.

It used to be the case in England that the grade of agricultural land was a prime consideration for planners and local authorities in allocating sites for development.

But changes to planning policy in the late 1980's downgraded the importance of agricultural land classifications in planning, in response to the more globalized market for food that had developed and this level of attention to quality of land was no longer needed.

The DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) report [http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=9905\\_SP1501finalreport.pdf](http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=9905_SP1501finalreport.pdf) demonstrates that before the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Local Planning Authorities didn't have the tools they need to protect our best agricultural land from development – and the NPPF has done nothing to improve planning policy to address this.

Web site address for this petition is -

[http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Safeguard\\_our\\_Soils\\_Mr\\_Pickles/?!launch'](http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Safeguard_our_Soils_Mr_Pickles/?!launch)