



# Llangattock Green Valleys newsletter

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<http://www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org/>

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## ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS

By Steve Sharp

### Hydro schemes update

Those who live in Wales will know that April was pretty much devoid of the traditional showers locally and, as a consequence, some of our hydro schemes didn't generate any electricity during the month. However, there has been much more rain than usual in May and so generation for the quarter will probably be around average.

Our volunteers visit all five of our hydro schemes each week to record the data on the meters, clean the intake screens and check that all is well. Unfortunately, at our Nant yr Hafod scheme this month there was plenty of water in the stream and the scheme was primed to start generating but the head reading showed 0mm on the screen, which was clearly incorrect given the volume of water at the intake. Our maintenance manager changed the head sensor fuse and reset the system but this had no effect, so he thought there may be a problem with the head sensor, the cable going to the turbine house or possibly the suppressor unit. Ironically, the water level was initially too high to be able to determine the cause of the problem but we've now managed to get the scheme restarted.

A reminder for all Members of the LGV MH-2 Co-operative that this year's AGM will take place via Zoom on the evening of Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June, starting at 7pm. An invitation and Zoom link will be sent to all Members prior to the meeting date.

*Our next article introduces our newest LGV CIC Director. Welcome aboard George!*

## LIVING WITH RENEWABLES

By George Smith

This is an interesting opportunity for me to reflect on what it is like to be a user of several types of renewable and sustainable resources. Before I continue, I must state that I am a firm believer that the best thing we can all do is consume less. I acknowledge that this is easy to say, and I certainly do not always do this. Living in the mainstream of society this is very difficult. We have all got so used to abundant availability of energy, food, transport, and countless other products. If we are to preserve an inhabitable planet, life needs to change dramatically.

When my wife and I bought our current house it was heated with oil, the water was heated with electricity and oil as back



up. At the time my cousin ran a company called LlaniSolar so I got her to install solar thermal hot water, which still works well

16 years later. It is pleasing to appreciate that generally between the months of April to September most but not all our hot water is generated by this system. It must be acknowledged that energy savings are minimal and it probably has not yet paid for itself!

When carrying out renovation work I've always replaced single glazed windows with double glazed units and improved loft insulation with suitable eco products. My house is constructed partly of traditional stone and partly of modern concrete block. The only way to effectively insulate it is with external cladding but for several reasons I decided this was impractical. I



decided the best thing was to switch over to a biomass heating boiler. I am fortunate in that I have a good supply of firewood from my own land and soon I will start using the 3.5 hectare of woodland I planted 14 years ago. I must admit that processing enough wood to keep it going is time consuming and if you added up my time probably very expensive. Think about the petrol I use in my chainsaws too! At either end of winter I switch back to oil because it's not really worth lighting up Ye Greate Fiery Furnesse.

For a long time, my wife and I were very conscious of her use of fuel in her work commute. We'd always wanted an electric car so we bought a second hand BMWi3. It is an amazing car to drive and charges overnight on a normal 13amp plug. Unless you want a rapid charge this is all you need. Fortunately, we can plug it in outside the house but this is not an option if you have to park on the street. For work I use a 26 year old Land Rover which is endlessly repairable. It burns diesel but my mileage is very low and diesel is mainly an issue in towns with a high density of traffic and people.

Before I leave the topic of electricity, two years ago I installed a 7.2 kW photovoltaic system. It has never produced what was forecast and it would never produce enough to charge my wife's car...

Earlier I mentioned the woodland I planted, well I didn't plant it, I got a Forestry Commission grant and they planted it. I really feel that it is one of the most worthwhile things I've ever done, it's been really easy too. In the first three years all I had to do was scythe down the bracken. It is 70% oak and ash the rest are traditional hedgerow species. It is a low tech solution to a global problem caused by technology.

All but the woodland have involved using manufactured products and we should bear in mind that manufacturing and consumerism are the cause of most of our problems. About 80% of the UK population lives in urban environments and these options simply are not open to them. Would I install them if I had the opportunity again? Yes, I probably would.

Big George

# LACAS

By Sue Cartlidge

LACAS has welcomed four new members to the allotment society this spring – we wish we had more plots to offer as we still have a waiting list of people keen to grow their own.

The watering system has had a spring clean and renovation courtesy of two of our wonderful members. We are very fortunate to have access to underground water that is pumped up via a



solar powered pumping system, so hopefully in times of drought, our water supply is constant – not a problem this last month, everything is very soggy underfoot!

The raised beds have had some temporary repairs to a couple of timbers as they were discovered to have started to rot. The committee is looking into the cost of replacing them, and we are also hoping to create another raised bed area for the future. Due to ongoing Covid restrictions we have been unable to hold an AGM, but just as soon as the restrictions ease we will be setting a date and venue.

To change the subject completely, the crucial difference between a Facebook page and a Facebook Group is that all group users can equally create and participate in ongoing discussion threads, which are bumped up to the top of the group every time a new

comment is posted, rather than only administrators being able to post comments. So to cut a long story short – we now have our very own **Facebook page**,..... **LACAS – Llangattock Allotments**....., where members can now post photos, comments, plant swaps, etc. Look forward to seeing you there.



## A BREAK IN BOB'S BEE NOTES

Some really good news this month from Bob who has taken a step back from doing his Bee Notes to get married. As I write he will be putting on his new suit and Caroline, his wife to be, will be getting dressed up to attend a very small ceremony in a beautiful chapel setting in Abergavenny.

We wish Bob and Caroline the very best for their future lives together. The pandemic meant several postponements but the day has now arrived. We don't have a picture of Bob and Caroline but I thought this honey cup brings to mind Bob and the bees.



On behalf of Bob the Bee  
Jackie Charlton



## THE OLD FASHIONED WAY

By Jackie Charlton

Working in our woodlands can be a dangerous activity with lots of powerful equipment which needs to be supervised by trained operatives managing the work. Health and Safety is a key part of our governance as Trustees and we take this very seriously. To get wood from the trees for our customers takes a lot of organising, managing and preparation from all of our volunteers.



The last bit in the process is splitting the logs to stack and dry for selling. To do this we use a hydraulic log splitter for large rounds similar to the one shown above. This has been such a valuable and reliable piece of equipment which everyone can use, that we had forgotten just why we bought it in the first place. Well, that was until this week when the log splitter developed a fault and had to be decommissioned as it was too dangerous to operate. As a result, we had to revert to the old fashioned way of splitting logs by hand as one of our volunteers is demonstrating here. This is when we were very much reminded of the reason behind our original investment! Using a hand splitter is extremely time consuming and hard work but it does keep you fit!



LCW Trustees are justly proud of the commitment and enthusiasm of all our volunteers. We meet regularly every Tuesday and you can find information on where and when we meet on our website [www.lcwg.btck.co.uk](http://www.lcwg.btck.co.uk). If you are interested in environmental management, green wood crafts or bee keeping then please do get in touch. Please email Eric Gower [eric.gower@gmail.com](mailto:eric.gower@gmail.com) for a membership form.

### LGV VOLUNTEERS NEEDED PLEASE! CAN YOU HELP?

We are looking for a number of people who would like to get involved at Director and non-Director level. Please get in touch with Simon Walter if you would like to explore the ways in which you can help: [admin@llangatockgreenvalleys.org](mailto:admin@llangatockgreenvalleys.org). You can meet our Board of Directors [here](#).

We'd also like to get a few more volunteers involved in monitoring the hydro schemes and taking readings. This would only take around an hour or so once every 6-9 weeks. If you are interested in helping, please contact Simon Walter using the email below: [admin@llangatockgreenvalleys.org](mailto:admin@llangatockgreenvalleys.org)

