

# *Treesponsibility Newsletter*



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Hello and welcome to the last issue of the treesponsibility newsletter in Volume Two - number 29 to be precise!. The Summer edition will be the first in Volume 3, marking the fact that we will be into our third decade. Expect a bumper retrospective of highlights from our first ten years.

All the above is a somewhat long-winded way of saying that March 9<sup>th</sup> marks treesponsibility's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, which seems like quite a milestone. As per normal we will be having a birthday planting weekend to which everyone is invited (see details on back page), but we would also like to have a bit more of a party element, and we are hoping that people will bring musical instruments to help us celebrate on Saturday night. Expect at least one round of the famous story game, and dancing too.

Some of the treesponsibility "old-timers" are beginning to show signs of our advancing years – Gavin's back is a bit dodgy, Christina is having trouble with her hip, Billy has deep vein thrombosis and I have had a brush with cancer (hopefully I am on the mend now). All this has concentrated our minds on the need to ensure that the work we have started continues into the future. This was a key theme of our recent "visioning meeting", held in Mid February. One of the things we discussed was the declaration that we made in 2002 that treesponsibility was a 25 year project. When we made that commitment, it seemed like quite a long time – but now the "end time" seems to be approaching fast!

In general we felt that sticking to the 25 year time limit could be a good thing, provided that there was a succession plan. It could be a positive to create a new organisation with its own ethos – this would be rejuvenating for the people involved and leave Treesponsibility's legacy intact. The possibility for the future would not be limited by what has gone before. One thing that has changed since the group was originally founded is that high rental costs and the switch to Universal Credit rather than Tax Credits means that it is much much harder to survive on a low income, particularly for people with children, so the way treesponsibility has been run in the past cannot necessarily continue into the future.

Fortunately there are new younger people who are interested in carrying things forward. What we need to be doing over the next five years is use the skills these new people can bring into the group, and share the skills and experience of the existing members. This can be achieved by getting new people to "shadow" old-timers at meetings, and during the practical running of the project (tree-orders, fund-raising, site visits etc.). It will be helpful to have written job descriptions, and also to make better use of technology – such as information sharing via a "cloud", so that everyone has up to date site plans.

The visioning meeting also conducted a SWOT analysis of the treesponsibility project. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Obviously there were weaknesses – the need to continually find more land to keep going, being one example, as well as the problems which we have been experiencing with our electronic mailing list (hopefully sorted now – thanks to Sophie). However we all felt that the organisation had a great number of strengths – in particular the dedication of our workers and our good reputation locally, with the agencies and with the activist community. There were significant opportunities looking ahead – not least the announcement of a "Northern Forest".

That's enough for now. Hope to see you during the birthday weekend. xx Dongria

## Planting Weekends

Although we must have done about 75 of them by now, the treesresponsibility crew never get jaded with the planting weekends. It is a real pleasure to host lovely people from across the country, and everyone seems to have a really good time. We really appreciate the effort organisers put in to get groups of people together to come.

We did two weekends over February. The first was the Ende Gelände weekend, organised by Alice. Ende Gelände is a large civil disobedience protest movement in Germany to limit global warming through fossil fuel phase-out, and from 24 to 29 August 2017 about 6,000 people blocked a mine near the Hambacher Forest. This included a group who cycled all the way from England, and the planting weekend was a chance for them to have a bit of a reunion. We did lose one day to snow unfortunately, so Sunday ended up being a “walk and pub day” instead!

We were luckier with the weather last weekend, when a group organised by Rowena Field came out. We were able to finish off our site at Popples Close, which was good – although we will miss Paul and Linda the extremely hospitable landowners! Rowena’s group were a mixture of buddhists, people from a Tibet support group and assorted friends. They were a lovely crowd, and very appreciative of the meals we provided. One of the highlights was a slide show of an expedition to Tibet in the 1920’s which provided the entertainment on Saturday night.



While I am on the subject of the tree-planting weekends, I have BAD NEWS! After more than 10 years the price is going to have to go up from next planting season. We aim to cover the costs of hostel rental and food purchases, but this is no longer possible at the existing price. So from Autumn 2018 the price will probably be on a sliding scale from £35-50 (although we will never turn anyone away if this is beyond their means).

## New Van



Hooray and Hurrah! Treesresponsibility is now the proud possessor of a new van – it is a Ford Transit 9 seater crew cab, with a storage area behind a bulkhead at the back. It is ex Ministry of Defence (so it should have been looked after) with just over 80,000 miles on the clock and a 12 month Warranty. The RAC have checked it out and found it to be in good mechanical condition. It has compartments to put things in! It doesn’t leak!!! (As you can see, I am very impressed with it).

So, some thank yous are in order. First off, we could not have bought the van without a £4,000 grant from the Community Foundation, so we are very grateful to them. We should also mention the work that Mischa put into searching for the vehicle, and ensuring that we ended up with a good one. Finally thanks to Duncan and Mischa for trekking over to collect it.



We are still going to keep the leaky, rusty, old LDV on the road, doing rough and dirty jobs such as transporting planting materials up bumpy tracks. The new van will be primarily used for transporting volunteers, and we will also share it with the slowing the flow group.

**Be prepared....** Last month Walshaw Moor Estates put in applications to Calderdale and Pendle councils for 5km of new tracks across the top of their land. WME stated that the primary object was to “protect this sensitive landscape for future generations” (they are claiming that it will reduce wildfire risk). However, as we all know, the primary motivation will be to improve access for the grouse moor. Both the applications were submitted under permitted “agricultural development” to bypass the usual planning system, but fortunately a speedy response nipped that in the bud and they will now have to be submitted through the normal planning system. This is likely to happen soon.

The proposed development runs across blanket bog in a special protected area, so whilst in general farm tracks are not matters of national importance and attention, this one most definitely is. The designation of Walshaw Moor as a Natura 2000 site means that it should be given the highest level of protection.

Blanket bogs are a rare ecosystem within Europe, and whilst a healthy blanket bog can act as a very effective carbon sink (drawing carbon down from the atmosphere and storing it as peat), many are in poor condition and act as carbon sources. In 2011 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) published the results of their Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands, concluding that:-

*“Damaged and degraded peatlands place a substantial financial burden on society because of increased greenhouse gas emissions, poorer water quality and loss of other ecosystem services. Damaged peatlands may also exacerbate costly flood events, when water is rapidly conveyed from peatlands through drainage ditches and erosion gullies into downstream areas.”*

In 2013 Natural England carried out a review of the scientific evidence on “The Impacts of Tracks on the Integrity and Hydrological Function of Blanket Peat” (NEER002). Key findings were that:-

*Tracks alter the structural integrity of blanket peat. Building upon peat compresses the peat and alters the drainage patterns on and around the peat, both within the peat body and over its surface. The level of compression and disruption depends upon the structure and wetness of the peat in question. Peat that is loaded (for example, by being built on) will consolidate, the permeability will reduce (affecting natural sub-surface drainage) and the level of surfaces and any structures will settle. Drier peat has a stronger surface layer than very wet or saturated peat, and therefore tracks on dry peat are less likely to cause damage. Drainage ditches can feed or focus water into areas of weak peat, thereby potentially creating instability. Similarly, the cutting of drainage ditches across slopes removes support for the slope above and damages the structural integrity of the peat deposit. This may also lead to instability.*

*Tracks alter the hydrological system of blanket peat at either surface or sub-surface level. The artificial drainage of peat results in the settlement of the peat, which disrupts the hydrology both within the sub-surface peat body and over its surface. Drainage channels are damaging as they result in drying of the peat and may lead to instability of the peat depending upon their position within the slope or by channelling water into areas of structural weakness. Constructed tracks result in the settlement of peat and the reduction of sub-surface flow through the peat because of the consolidation process. Compression of the peat through track construction may lead to accumulations of surface runoff water (ponding), which may lead to erosion and/or instability of the track and adjacent peat. Constructed tracks usually require ditches to be made to manage runoff, but these ditches are normally damaging because they result in drying and possibly instability of the peat. Drainage of peat results in deformation (in the form of settlement) of the peat.*

In a total dereliction of their duty as a regulator, Natural England supported Walshaw Moor Estate’s application for the track to be treated as a “permitted development.” They claimed that the science review would “help inform our future advice and practical management of the uplands”, but the evidence clearly indicates otherwise.

Natural England has also signed off a Catchment Management Plan for Walshaw Estate which does not become valid until the estate receives planning permission for the new tracks. The new Management Plan allows burning by the back door under several loopholes (restoration burning, heather beetle, fire-breaks) and allows even more burning than the Heather & Grass Burning Code for blanket bog.

# Proposed New Track





## Helping Treesponsibility

It seems like quite a miracle that we have reached the 20 year mark, but we still need another push to get us through the next 5 years. There are several ways you can help:-

We are always in need of new sites. If you have land which might be suitable, or know some-one who does, please get in contact.

We have had terrible cash flow problems this year, so we need to build up our funds a bit. If you would like to make a regular small donation please drop us an email and we will send you a standing order form. It is also helpful if people who get the paper newsletter can pay their subscription this way – saves us doing reminders.

Organise a group for a planting weekend. Christina has to book hostels quite far in advance, so if that sounds like something you might be able to do, please get in contact now for next season.

Turn up to plantings (but let us know first if you are planning to come, as sites often change at the last minute). If you are coming to plant soon, please turn up with a yellow plastic duck. (Don't ask – it is to do with publicity!!)

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## Trial begins for new urban sustainable drainage (SuDS) project



Rain garden planters are being installed in the courtyard of Hebden Bridge Town Hall to show how small interventions can be used to slow run-off and temporarily store water during storm events in our urban areas. The planters will intercept water from downpipes around the edges of the courtyard, providing water attenuation and biodiversity in an attractive way whilst maintaining the usability of the courtyard as a flexible open space.

The project is funded by The Postcode Lottery and the Calder and Colne Rivers Trust. Slow the Flow, The Green Business Network and 2B Landscape Consultancy are all involved. Following the installation of a prototype planter in December, the group intends to have several large planters in place by Spring 2018 with the help of volunteers. This demonstration project is part of the 'You Can Slow The Flow' initiative, please see <http://slowtheflow.net/you-can-slow-the-flow/>

## Good News on Fracking



The government is delaying a decision on Third Energy's fracking plans at Kirby Misperton in North Yorkshire until the company has filed its latest accounts.

Under the Infrastructure Act, the Business Secretary has to give the final consent before hydraulic fracturing can go ahead.

In a written statement this afternoon, Greg Clark said the company must submit its accounts for the year ending 2016 before he would announce his decision. The accounts are nearly four months overdue.

He has also added two further financial checks before giving the final go-ahead to Third Energy. In future, all companies that want to frack will be assessed for their financial resilience.

The minister said:-

"I also consider that an equivalent assessment should be undertaken of the financial resilience of companies proposing to carry out hydraulic fracturing operations so that stakeholders can have confidence in the company's ability to meet its commitments.

"I note that as of 24 January Third Energy UK Gas Limited and other related companies had yet to submit their accounts for the accounting period ending in December 2016, despite a statutory deadline of 30 September 2017 for them to do so. I have therefore asked the Oil and Gas Authority to seek further financial information from the company, including the required set of up-to-date accounts, to inform my decision.

Shortly after this announcement the drilling equipment was removed from site.

# For Your Noticeboard: Treesponsibility Diary Dates Spring 2018

**9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> March Treesponsibility's 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday Weekend. Accommodation will be at Height Gate. Please come and help us celebrate another milestone. We will be planting at Gorpley. Cost is £25.00 for food and accommodation. Please book early – [treesponsibility@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:treesponsibility@yahoo.co.uk) or ring Christina on 07709 690368**

## **Other Weekend Planting Days:-**

(Everyone welcome to come and join us on site – just contact us to let us know if you want to come and we will send details of where we will be planting)

31 <sup>st</sup> March -1 <sup>st</sup> April	Duncan's Birthday weekend
7 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> April	GAPS
14 <sup>th</sup> - 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Elvira's Birthday

## **Other Group Planting Days:-**

8 <sup>th</sup> March	SUMA, Cragg Vale Business Park
18 <sup>th</sup> March	Valley Garden Organics, site tbc.
13 <sup>th</sup> April	Environment Agency, site tbc

## **School Planting Days:-**

13 <sup>th</sup> March	Midgely School
14 <sup>th</sup> March	Old Town School
16 <sup>th</sup> March	Saville Park School
20 <sup>th</sup> March	Hill Top School
21 <sup>st</sup> March	Heptonstall School
23 <sup>rd</sup> March	Bolton Brow School
27 <sup>th</sup> /28 <sup>th</sup> March	Luddendenfoot Academy
28 <sup>th</sup> March (pm)	Colden School
18 <sup>th</sup> April	Hebden Royd School
27 <sup>th</sup> April	Castle Hill

The Slow the Flow Group have also asked us to publicise their AGM at Hebden Bridge Town Hall at 6pm on Thursday 12 April, with a screening of **High Water Common Ground**.