



# the green valleys

## Newsletter

## Spring 2012

### The call to action:

Global problems often appear complicated, too large for an individual to affect or take action to redress. We are understandably daunted by the complexity of its systems, yet these complex systems function on the same fundamental premise as ourselves: if we live beyond our means and fail to take any action, our problems get worse.

Locally we are seeing our fuel and supermarket bills rise, our land and air quality deteriorating, we fear for the future that our children in a future climate and wonder about the security of our jobs, the potential to lose our homes to flooding and whether the next generation will curse us for our excesses. We all know these issues, we see them on the news, see our politicians discuss them, see our scientists work to better understand them, yet as we see the situation become worse we feel helpless.

If our decision makers fail to act, how can we as individuals and communities take action?

The fact is we can! We are the only experts when it comes to the little patch of Earth we call home. We know its key aspects, its problems and its opportunities. We inherently understand our local community, environment and economy. We are the ones who can make a difference. That is why the core philosophy of The Green Valleys is based on the belief that if we are to confront our communities' problems, we have to do it ourselves. We have to learn how to both live within our means and try to put back more than we take.

The Green Valleys grew out of a desire to make the communities of the Brecon Beacons carbon negative. The people and volunteers at The Green Valleys are not impractical dreamers. We are simply calling you to start to transform your most basic of all relationships, that is, the relationship with the place you call home.

Welcome to The Green Valleys. Get involved.

Just give us a ring on 07969 137719 or email us at [info@thegreenvalleys.org](mailto:info@thegreenvalleys.org).



## The first 2 years:

Two years ago this month The Green Valleys was named as joint winners of NESTA's Big Green Challenge and handed a cheque for £300,000 to help cut carbon emissions and make our region a better place to live in.

Our promise to the NESTA judges was that we would develop a sustainable business committed to developing low cost micro-hydro schemes with landowners and communities. To fulfill this promise 18 months ago we set up TGV Hydro to make micro-hydro power accessible to all.

So far TGV Hydro has installed one new turbine, is in the process of designing and building another 12 schemes in and around the National Park, has 6 community schemes 'on the drawing board', produced numerous viability and feasibility studies for potential clients, employs 7 staff and is on target to break even in 2012.

Aside from hydro energy generation we have also been supporting a number of communities in taking over the management of local woodland to promote biodiversity, provide sustainable wood fuel for heating, learn new skills and have some fun on winter weekends! There are 5 Green Valleys' affiliated woodland groups in the region and more to come.

"What did you do with the money?" is a common question. Half has gone to fund the start-up of the micro-hydro business – as we had budgeted. When TGV Hydro becomes profitable it will return future profits to The Green Valleys to promote a range of carbon reducing initiatives thereby investing our prize so it earns a future income for years to come drawing long term income from Feed-in Tariffs.

With support from The Brecon Beacons National Park, The Brecon Beacons Trust and Environment Wales we have also made a small part of the prize money go a long way and developed the woodland support service.

Most important what is next for The Green Valleys?

As TGV Hydro business is becoming established we are now focusing our attention on providing more support for communities that want to take action – whether it is installing renewable energy generation, undertaking energy saving ideas, managing a local woodland, starting an allotment, or a food initiative.

The Green Valleys can help with technical advice, grant funding, how to adopt a constitution, or finance a project and share the learning of local pioneers. Read what communities have been achieving over the last 2 years and get in touch.

## TGVHydro:

One of the key achievements of The Green Valleys CIC has been the creation of TGVHydro.

TGVHydro, wholly owned by the CIC, has been created to design and build micro-hydro systems for farmers, landowners and communities in the Brecon Beacons area.

From its creation as an independent company in November 2010 TGVHydro has created paid jobs for 7 people in the local area. It has also part financed a new engineering company, Hydrolite, manufacturing Hydro turbines.

The first system by TGVHydro using a Hydrolite turbine was turned on in October this year.

TGVHydro is currently under contract to design and build schemes worth £916,000 which when completed will generate a total of 569,903 KWh per annum, saving 286 Tonnes of carbon, which is the equivalent to the typical electricity usage of 127 average homes, while earning its customers £167,395 per annum at today's prices.



All profits from TGVHydro will be granted back to The Green Valleys CIC for reinvestment to support its mission.

## News from TGV Woodland:

TGV Woodland is a service to enable the development of community woodland groups through practical support, training and advice. Appropriate management of woodlands helps combat climate change by storing carbon, providing a renewable fuel and helping water management to prevent flood and drought while supporting a variety of wild species. Community led management allows everybody to get involved and benefit from woodlands, meeting new people, whilst learning skills and being part of enjoyable and rewarding activity.

Over the summer TGV Woodland has been working with the Lluest Horse and Pony Trust in Llangaddog. The Trust cares for abandoned and mistreated horses on its small farm holding, which includes areas of woodland. Here volunteers and

community groups are working to manage the woodland to improve biodiversity, generate a small supply of sustainable wood fuel and improve access around the wood as a nature trail for visitors. TGV Woodland will train the Trust staff and volunteers in preparation for developing the woodland nature trail project as part of a future grant bid. The Trust is always looking for suitable homes for their rehabilitated horses. <http://www.llesthorseandponytrust.co.uk/>

#### Other news in brief:

TGV Woodland has:

Written a management plan for Gilwern Outdoor Education Centre to be delivered by the Abergavenny Community Woodland group.

Attended the Big Skill event at Penpont estate in September, promoting local woodland groups and running a charcoal burning demonstration.

Provided technical advice and support to a Cardiff based film company, Indus. The story and process of woodland management will be documented during the next 9-12 months, as the film crew follows Crucorney group member, Rob Penn, as he gets to grips with woodland management. "Wildwood" with Rob Penn will be broadcast on BBC4 sometime in late 2012

### Llagattock Woodland Group:



Llangattock Woodland Group has completed another full and exciting year, our 2011 annual report can be found on [www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org](http://www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org) Below are some of the highlights and pictures taken from it:

We produced 1 in-depth case study for Llais y Goedwig, for which the group received £500. Out of this, Jackie & Di, two of the management committee were paid £100 each for their input on the project, although they matched this payment threefold in volunteer time. Thanks also to Simon, another member, for editing the video. The case study will have a wide readership, including the Welsh Government. Please do visit Llais y Goewig to look at the study and find out more about this great Community Woodland networking organisation.

We now have 35 members (up from 12 this time last year) including 6 children and teenagers. We are also working with Crickhowell Volunteer Bureau to help them out placing Millennium volunteers in our group.



We demonstrated woodland skills at 2 events, the Llangattock Community Allotment Society Summer Show, and the Big Skill at Penpont, near Brecon. Both events were very useful in terms of making contacts and marketing our firewood processor. Better still, we also recruited a few new members, including Helen Alexander, the happy winner of our raffle prize! (see picture). We hired out the firewood processor for a total of 16 days – 14 days to members or other community groups at £50/day and 2 days to private individuals at £100/day. After costs, this meant an income of £900. If you are interested in hiring out our wood processor (see photo of processor in action) then please do contact us.

### Talgarth Community Woodland Group:

The Talgarth Community Woodland Group has been working in a private woodland at Cwm Farm.

Our main task during the past year has been to start work coppicing along the line of an old hazel hedge. The hazel appears to have been untouched for a long time and as a consequence has required a lot of work to clear away dead and rotten growth and then to cut back the good wood. The small area that we have successfully cleared now has much more light getting in and new growth has started well.

The line of hazel continues for a considerable distance so this is a task, which will keep us occupied during the coming year too. Our ability to conduct this and other tasks effectively has been greatly enhanced following one of our members training for and receiving his chainsaw operator's certificate. Well-done Doug!



### Cae'r Hendre Hydro:

Despite the driest year we can recall we bravely commissioned TGV Hydro to install our new super scheme. We can now generate nearly 8kWh and, thanks to Western Power having a surplus of heavier weight transformers one of which will replace the restrictive transformer that only allowed 3.5kWh export, we are now positive exporters of energy from water.

The weather was so dry when the system was installed that it took a few weeks before it could be tested. However with the final advent of some rain we were amazed at the efficiency of the new system and the fact that, thanks to our spear valve which responds to the amount of available water, we no longer need to guess at which nozzles we should have open. Since its installation in October the new system has already generated over 11,500kWh so here's hoping for a normal wet spring

## Cwmdu Sustainable Energy Group:

Fedw Wood is approximately 11 acres and was bequeathed to the community approximately 150 years ago. The Cwmdu and District Community Council are the Trustees. The Cwmdu Sustainable Energy Group has been responsible for the management of Fedw Wood since Autumn 2009. The Group consists of some eighteen members, many of which attend the three weekly work parties on a regular basis.

Since we took on the management of the wood we have been very fortunate to receive training in woodland management from The Green Valleys, train two of the group in chainsaw operations, as well as obtain funding to purchase a chainsaw and personal safety equipment and various tools and fencing materials to help with the management.

The objectives of the management plan are to return the woodland to a coppice routine to encourage the biodiversity of the wood and to promote the woodland as a place for all the community to enjoy. The timber extracted also supplies a valuable source of firewood, beanpoles and pea-sticks for the volunteers and the community.

The full management plan and details of future activities can be seen on our website at [www.cseg.org.uk](http://www.cseg.org.uk) or contact Michael Houlton on 01874 730872 for further information.

## Crucorney Energy Group:



### PV Panels

Crucorney Energy Group installed 42 panels generating up to 9.8 kwh on the roof of the Pandy village hall in March. The timing was perfect as the great weather in April and early May got us off to a great start. Registration took longer than anticipated and by the time SWALEC had written to confirm, we had missed the first date to send in the meter readings.

The first reading on the 30th September showed we had generated 7755 kwh. The total predicted for 12 months was 8000kwh so we have clearly successfully generated far more than expected. The amount we will generate over the next five months will be much less but should add a further 20%. This, together with the sharp drop in installation costs of the panels, explains the big cut in FIT rates payable announced by the government at the end of October.



Anyone installing a community PV system needs to take into account the delay in getting payments when arranging finance and setting payment dates. We have been lucky. Due to delays in getting finance arranged, we installed our PV several months later than hoped, but as a result we will not be making interest payments until April - long after we have received our FITS payments. If we had completed the installation 5 months earlier we would have had to delay interest payments by perhaps as much as 9 months.

Anyone wanting more information please feel free to contact us. [www.crucorneyenergygroup.com](http://www.crucorneyenergygroup.com)



## Abergavenny Community Woodland Group:

The Abergavenny Community Woodland Group has now been going for about 18 months and it has been an eventful period for the new group. During last Autumn and Winter, group members attended a number of training days run by The Green Valleys, learning woodland skills such as coppicing, storing and seasoning wood for fuel, and tree identification, as well as essential things like health and safety and first aid.

The group now has agreements with the owners of three areas of woodland in and around Abergavenny. Mill Street, in the centre of Abergavenny, is a small woodland bordering an area of grassland which, following a local campaign, is earmarked for a community orchard. The work carried out here this year was primarily concerned with lifting the canopy and a small amount of thinning. A member of the group owns Arcadia, in Pantygelli. It was originally planned as a Victorian woodland garden, complete with its own lake and a boathouse rebuilt from timber taken from the woodland. Here the group is mainly involved in hazel coppicing, as well as learning skills such as hedge-laying and charcoal burning. The latest addition is woodland at the Gilwern Outdoor Education Centre. Work has started last autumn and continued this winter.

The group had a stall in Bailey Park (in the rain!) for the Steam, Veteran and Vintage Rally and on the previous drier weekend ran a stall at the Ty'r Mowydd/Mulberry House Environmental Study Centre's Eco Activity Day making bird and bat boxes with both children and adults.

If interested in the work of the Abergavenny group, contact Ed Cape on 07910 212772 or e-mail him at [ed.cape@vigin.net](mailto:ed.cape@vigin.net).

Newsletter of **The Green Valleys Community Interest Company** – company number 6889229

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