

# News Update January 2011

## Special points of interest:

- Pete Postlethwaite
- Condensing boilers
- Loft insulation
- Cancun Conference
- Low hanging fruit
- News in brief
- What the Minister said

## Next event

Film evening, Friday 4th March  
showing 'Beyond the Brink'

## Farewell to a good friend



Pete Postlethwaite 1946 - 2011

To arts aficionados he was perhaps the best actor in the world. But to us he was also Pete, ordinary bloke, supporter of Stretton Climate Care, worried like the rest of us about climate change, doing his bit to reduce his carbon footprint and raise awareness generally. Others will pay tribute to his achievements in the world of film and theatre; we were just proud that the star of ['The Age of Stupid' was also one of our supporters](#), that he was just as chuffed as anyone else when he won a raffle prize, and that we could refer to him as "our very own Pete Postlethwaite", and know he wouldn't mind. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Jacqui and his children, Will and Lily.

(Follow the link for an interview with Pete.)

## Trials and tribulations of a condensing boiler

The introduction of condensing boilers a few years ago was seen as a great step forward in greater efficiency for the heart of heating systems in many of our homes. Since 2005 Government regulations insist on these being the only type permitted to be installed. These are significantly more energy-efficient than traditional boilers because rather than expelling hot waste gases from a flue they use some of this energy to heat water. However, this process condenses moisture in the gases. The waste liquid is usually expelled into the drains via a slim plastic pipe running down an external wall. Prolonged sub zero temperatures before Christmas revealed perhaps an Achilles heel in this latest generation of boilers, for the condensed waste liquid which dribbles slowly into the plastic pipe is prone to freeze in the pipe before it reached the drain. Once the condensate pipe has frozen up the boiler shuts down and unless spotted and thawed out will result in frozen pipes elsewhere in the house and all the associated grief as they thaw out and possibly burst.

Insulating the pipe may help but eventually the insulation will become frozen. Increasing the diameter of the pipe is another suggested solution but when, as is sometimes the case the route to the drain involves a run of near horizontal pipe work, the risk is still there.

If you are not able to check the pipe regularly and defrost with a kettle of hot, not boiling water (which of course if you are away for more than 24 hours you cannot do) the solution may be to wrap the pipe with an electrically heated tape, thermostatically controlled to warm up as temperatures approach freezing. The tape is very low wattage, a 7 ft length being 20 watts, and is supplied with a three pin plug for standard 230 volt operation. The best solution is for the condensate pipe to be routed internally to the U bend of a sink but that is not always possible.

## Was your loft insulation too good?



The U.K. is just not geared up to the kind of winters we have had recently. Airports closed, chaos on the roads, Amazon unable to get Christmas deliveries out on time etc etc. and water pipes in lofts freezing because 270mm of insulation does a very good job of keeping the heat in and making our lofts colder. Even if these pipes are well insulated there is still a risk they will freeze if loft temperatures dip below zero and when thawed out likely split. In such adverse conditions a thermometer up in the loft will warn you of potential problems and disaster may be averted if you open the loft hatch during the coldest of the weather.



The colder countries of continental Europe don't have the problems as in many cases boilers are installed below ground in basements, service pipes are buried much deeper in the ground and lofts are kept free of pipe work.

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## Energy saving technology

The UK electricity distribution network operates at a nominal 230V, although in practice average voltages are more likely to range between 240V and 245V. Our attention has been drawn to a new bit of kit which might interest some folk. Called the VPhase, this unit according to a company advert manages voltage to a stable level, normally 220V in the UK, regardless of the incoming supply voltage.

The amount of energy saved is device specific, for example: testing by VPhase on fridges and freezers shows 17%, 15% on normal light bulbs and 10% on energy saving light bulbs. One digital cordless phone showed an extraordinary saving of 44%. Savings will vary depending on incoming voltage and individual devices.

Further savings can be made on washing machines, tumble driers, dishwashers, televisions and numerous other electrical appliances across the whole house.

Their advert suggests whole house savings are in the region of 10% - which means, household electricity bills will be around 10% less each year.

Unlike Smart Meters, which require a change in lifestyle, or solar and wind power that are focused on renewable energy production as opposed to preventing energy waste, VPhase Voltage Optimisation is a fit and forget solution that once installed will operate silently and unobtrusively, lowering and stabilising household voltage, saving money, reducing CO2 emissions and preventing energy waste.

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## Outcomes of Cancun Climate Conference

The Cancun conference came and went with less drama than Copenhagen 2009 and though disappointing in some respects, there were some encouraging outcomes.



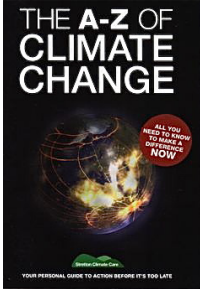
- For the first time, there is an international commitment to 'deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions' to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 degrees Celsius. This includes processes for adopting targets for peaking emissions as soon as possible, and substantially reducing them by 2050.
  - The conference also adopted decisions to develop systems for measuring, reporting and verifying emission reductions and actions in line with countries' commitments.
  - The conference agreed the framework for 'REDD plus': reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, through which developing countries will be paid for keeping trees standing rather than logging them.
  - Launch of a Climate Fund. Although the Copenhagen Accord identified the need for a fund, governments of developed countries must deliver to help rebuild trust. Eventually it was agreed that developing countries will have more members on the fund board than developed countries.
  - **2<sup>ND</sup> commitment period of Kyoto.** This battle continues into next year with Japan and Russia not committing to new targets. This will be a key battle ground to push for a legally binding commitment at COP 17 in Durban next year.
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## Has the Low Hanging Fruit been picked?

Since over 40% of U.K. greenhouse emissions come from the domestic sector it is up to all of us to continue to get our personal emissions down and we continue to urge you all to play your part. As someone said the other day, we have picked all the low hanging fruit and the number of people coming forward asking for an energy survey is dropping off. Our members and the 300 odd households we have already worked with have led the way in our community and nationally we are recognised as a good example of what can be achieved. Now we have to persuade others to take up the challenge. Please help us by encouraging your friends and neighbours to ask for a free home energy survey. On average we have helped folk get their carbon footprint down by 14% and that also means considerable savings on their energy bills.

Unlike some communities who have hit the headlines with exciting community renewable projects to help reduce their carbon emissions, we have no suitable water for a hydro electricity scheme and large wind turbines would not get planning support. Other than continuing our free household energy checks, **what other ideas do our members have that we should perhaps consider.**

## News in brief

- Alison Bradley has taken over from Rachel Finch-Lees as our membership secretary. Many thanks to Rachel for all her hard work over the past three years.
  - Our **Fund Raising** Cheese & Wine evening on a snowy night in December was a great success, (many thanks to the National Trust for letting us use the Pavilion Tea Rooms free of charge) and saw the launch of our **new book "Cookery in a Changing Climate"** Sales are going well and if you haven't yet bought a copy they are available at just £5.00 We also launched our **super designer shopping bags**, available for minimum donation of £2.50 or £3.00 according to design. Copies of our popular **"A—Z of Climate Change"** are also available. All profits of these items go towards keeping our finances afloat. They are available from various outlets in the town or direct from us—just ring 0752 849 3181
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- John Hofmeister's talk** back in November was a fantastic success. To have attracted such a high profile speaker to South Shropshire was humbling and we were all extremely grateful that John was so willing to give us some of his precious time. His website <http://www.citizensforaffordableenergy.org> currently contains an interesting video clip. In year one we attracted Mark Lynas, then Sir John Houghton, last year it was John Hofmeister so who have we got up our sleeve for 2011?.....
  - Climate Change seems to be taking a bit of a back seat, energy security and rising costs more hitting the headlines. Electricity and gas prices continue to rise and the prediction by our A.G.M. speaker Dr. Chris Endicott that petrol could reach £1.70 a litre has **more than a ring of truth in it** as petrol and diesel prices continue to soar.
  - In September 2010 the Rural Services Network produced a report on **Fuel Poverty in Rural England** which suggested that 8.8% of people in South Shropshire could be suffering from Fuel Poverty (that is having to spend at least 10% of available income to heat their homes.) In conjunction with Shropshire Community Council, NEA, (the national energy action charity, who campaign for increased investment in energy efficiency to tackle fuel poverty in poor and vulnerable households) have begun a project to see how best this problem can be alleviated. Helping to reduce fuel poverty is one of Stretton Climate Care's aims and so we are much involved in this new initiative. Our Home Energy Visitors are already being asked to offer advice to those in fuel poverty and we recently received training to increase our knowledge of what help is available.
  - Diary Date.** Our next event will be a showing of the short film **"Beyond the Brink"** at the **Parish Centre** on Friday 4th March at 7.30pm *Beyond the Brink* is a young filmmaker's take on the climate change debate. 18-year-old Ross Harrison spent a year chasing up experts, studying the news and filming to create a short documentary that answers the ever-pressing questions, are we really causing climate change, and who cares? The result is a 40 minute film about the knowns and the unknowns of the science, about the risks, and about being hopeful for the future too. Interviews with Sir David Attenborough, Mark Lynas, David Shukman, Prof Dieter Helm, the UK Youth Climate Coalition, and Ross' grandparents among others, offer fresh perspectives on a subject that saturates the media, divides the public, and yet is still meaningless to many. At a time when the hype is blowing over and people feel put off by scandals, *Beyond the Brink* seeks to lay out how things really stand now. Following the showing we hope to have a discussion **and encourage younger members of our community to attend.**
  - Our next campaign:** Your Publicity and Campaigns Committee are working on a new campaign and challenge to encourage households to become more energy efficient. Watch out for further details.
  - Watch out for details of our next **fund raising** evening and our next **Low Carbon Homes** open day.
  - And we think we've had a hard winter!** These pictures were recently sent to us from Eastonia.



- Grant funding for our **Project Worker**, Julie Mellors, runs out at the end of February and she has decided to return to family and friends in Canada where employment opportunities are more buoyant. Julie has done fantastic work for us, both paid and voluntary over the past three years and will be sadly missed.

## News in brief continued

- Politicians are renowned for sound bites which say all the right things but words need to be backed up by action. Over a weekend in January two of our team will be attending the National Communities and Climate Action Conference in London, organised by the Low Carbon Communities Network, of which Stretton Climate Care is a member. The purpose of the conference is to demonstrate to government and other partners communities' unique and critical role in helping to deliver climate change targets. A report on the conference will be printed in our next newsletter.
- Shropshire County are looking to create an Environmental Delivery Group action plan to help them deliver on environmental / sustainability and climate change issues. Your representatives will be attending a briefing meeting on this later this month.
- We have been successful in obtaining a grant from Shropshire AONB Sustainable Development Fund to help further our work in our more isolated communities. We have already taken our mobile "drop in service" to Car-dington, Rushbury and Hope Bowdler and will be visiting Aston Munslow, Wistanstow, Ratlinghope and Mynd-town in the near future.

## A few quotes from Chris Huhne, Minister of State for the Environment

speaking at a CBI Conference back in November.

- Climate change poses a unique threat to our security, and our prosperity. From mudslides in China to forest fires in Russia, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent. Food security, water shortages, climate-driven migration, energy conflicts; the potential knock-on effects are on a global scale."
- **The UK may be responsible for just 2% of the world's carbon emissions**, but the consequences of climate change will not respect our borders."
- We also face a shifting landscape of public opinion; where **doubt and disbelief in science** itself threatens to undermine collective will for action.
- 7 in 10 people think 'it is **too late to do anything** about climate change'. 1 in 4 believe 'it is **not worth Britain trying** to combat climate change because other countries will just cancel out what we do".. Faced with a problem of such seriousness, and a system of such complexity, fatalism can easily take hold.
- From carbon markets to emissions reductions targets, it can be difficult to pick a path when faced with uncertainty and risk.
- Exactly how fast carbon emissions are changing our climate – and exactly what that change will mean – may be unknown but **uncertainty is no excuse for inaction**.
- And that is what climate change policy is – **home insurance for the planet** . The challenge is to make sure we take the right policy measures. To protect not just our society, but our prosperity.
- We need to stop thinking about carbon implications as a bolt-on, and more as an integral part of a company's profile.
- The challenges are huge. We must replace a quarter of our old power stations by 2020. Largely decarbonise the electricity sector in the 2030s. And prepare for a **possible doubling in demand for electricity by 2050**.
- Left untouched, the electricity market would allow a new dash for gas, increasing our dependence on a single fuel, and exposing us to volatile prices. It would lock carbon emissions into the system for decades to come.
- We have a **once-in-a-generation chance to rebuild our fragmented market**, rebuild investor confidence, and rebuild our power stations. Like privatisation before it, this will be a seismic shift; securing investment in cleaner, greener power.
- **Green Deal** Cleaning up the supply of energy is a huge part of my Department's work. But we are also determined to do something about energy demand. Energy saving is the cheapest way of closing the gap between demand and supply.
- Energy efficiency can also offer real opportunities for businesses to save money, increase competitiveness, cut carbon, and access new market opportunities.
- The Green Deal is our answer to the challenge of our ageing housing stock; a nationwide refit to bring our homes up to 21st century efficiency standards.. We're designing the Green Deal to work for business, too.

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