



CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE OVER 50s

Directory and Factsheets

General

The individual topic areas below provide pointers to providers of more detailed information and advice. However there are also some more general sources of information that provide a wider context.

- *Climate change* is inextricably linked to the concept of sustainable development. The UK government established its independent watchdog, the Sustainable Development Commission, in October 2000. Information about its work can be accessed via <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/>
- *Over-50s and greener living*: There is a useful central government website that provides an over-50s perspective on greener living and thus provides an overview of the issues dealt with here. It also has a pointer to volunteering opportunities and can be viewed at http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Over50s/HomeAndCommunity/Yourcommunityandenvironment/DG_069311

Where to go for independent advice/information on the science:

- For some simple guides to *climate change* go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/climate/>
- To obtain a more detailed background on the science <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/hadleycentre/index.html> which also has links to the reports of the United Nations-led Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UK government's Stern review on the economics of climate change.
- The Royal Society has produced a simple guide to climate change controversies <http://royalsociety.org/page.asp?id=6229> This helpfully addresses a number of misleading arguments often put forward to deny that climate change is happening

The sources of information and advice in the topic area factsheets generally provide a national perspective, but in each case local authorities can provide additional advice and information. The starting points for the local authorities in the RSVP West Region are:

- Bristol City Council <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/> Tel: 0117 922 2000

- Bath and North East Somerset <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/bathnes> Tel: 01225 477000
- Cotswold District Council <http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/> Tel: 01285 623000
- Kennet District Council <http://www.kennet.gov.uk/> Tel: 01380 724911
- North Wiltshire District Council <http://www.northwilts.gov.uk/> Tel: 01249 706111
- South Gloucestershire Council <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/> Tel: 01454 868009
- Swindon Borough Council <http://www.swindon.gov.uk/> Tel: 01793 463000
- West Wiltshire District Council <http://www.westwiltshire.gov.uk/> Tel: 01225 776655
- Wiltshire County Council <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/> Tel: 01225 713000

TOPIC AREAS

Energy

Issue/Problem: Human beings rely on the use of energy for maintaining warmth, cooking, transport etc. The breakdown of our use of energy can be summarised as follows:

Total:

<i>Services (incl street lighting; farming etc)</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>Transport</i>	<i>36%</i>
<i>Industry</i>	<i>21%</i>
<i>Domestic</i>	<i>30%</i>

Of the domestic use:

<i>Lights and appliances</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>(4% of total)</i>
<i>Cooking</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>(1.5% of total)</i>
<i>Water heating</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>(7.5% of total)</i>
<i>Space heating</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>(17% of total)</i>

Current concerns focus on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere caused either directly by energy and power generation processes (such as the burning of fossil fuels), or indirectly through its supply and distribution. The environmental “cost” associated with meeting lifestyle needs depends very much on the source of the energy and the method of its production. However, no source of energy is without some environmental “cost”. It is simply that some are viewed as less problematic, or more sustainable, than others.

At the individual and household level, the primary focus should be on energy efficiency and energy conservation. Government grants are available for insulation etc and are administered via local authorities.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

- It is now possible to choose a household energy provider who generates your supply of electricity from renewable sources. The Energy Savings Trust is a publicly funded body established to advise on the sustainable use of energy and to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. With a focus on the household and transport sectors, it provides advice and information for

the public and local communities on energy consumption, efficiency and renewable energies. Contact details: Energy Savings Trust 21, Dartmouth Street, London SW1P 9BP. Tel: 020 7222 0101. Website: <http://www.est.org.uk/>

- If you are contemplating changing any of your household appliances (fridges; washing machines etc.) the Time to Change website is helpful, <http://www.t2c.org.uk/>
- The UK government has published an Energy White Paper setting out options. This can be read on the website of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform , available at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/energy/index.html>
- Carbon Trust is a publicly funded body focused on provision of advice to industry and the public sector on reducing carbon emissions and promotion of low carbon technologies. Contact details: Carbon Trust, 8th Floor, 3 Clements Inn, London WC2A 2AZ. Tel: 0800 085 2005. Website <http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/> (contains details of contact points in Cardiff, East Kilbride and Belfast)
- If you live in South Gloucestershire and are interested in finding out more about installing renewable energy in your home ring the SG Futureenergy Renewable Energy Advice Service on 01594 544119. Alternatively email renewables@swea.co.uk or visit the website at www.southglos.gov.uk/climatechange.

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- The Energy Saving Trust has an initiative entitled Community Action for Energy (CAfE) that is a network of people who share interests in energy projects and ideas. It can be contacted via the Energy Savings Trust website (*see above*) or Tel: 08701 261 444
- Alongside Exxon Mobil, National Energy Action and Energy Action Scotland, CSV-RSVP is a partner in the Energy Challenge and seeks to provide advice on energy saving and home warmth. For further information contact coluby@csv.org.uk or swilkie@csv.org.uk for Scotland.

Ethical investment

Issue/Problem: National statistics show that the age 50+ sector possess 40% of the UK disposable income, 60% of savings and 80% of the UK's private wealth. Most of us trust our money (in the form of pensions, savings and investments, mortgages etc.) to institutions we hope will at least safeguard, and hopefully increase, its worth. However unless the institutions have statements to the contrary, your money could be supporting environmentally damaging practices.

In response to increasing public awareness, many institutions now offer more ethical (that is, socially responsible) investment. In the area of the environment two other terms are used by the finance sector. 'Dark green' investment policies adopt a much stricter approach than 'light green' ones, which are more flexible. Both approaches are valid and often institutions use a mix of both.

'*Dark green*' investments traditionally use negative screening that involves drawing up a list of unacceptable practices that in reality can rule out specific industries and sectors, such as nuclear power. They can also incorporate cause based approaches that identify specific industries or causes deemed to have environmental worth. '*Light green*' investments may rule out a few industries but generally use positive screening that defines expectations that must be fulfilled. An integral part of this approach is to include engagement strategies in the hope that they can influence or push for better environmental standards.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

- Many industries use the Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRIS) but they also offer advice and information on many other areas as well. <http://www.eiris.org/>
- A more comprehensive guide to examining corporate behavior can be found at <http://www.corporatewatch.org/>
- ***Volunteering Opportunities for Age-50+***
- People with a financial sector background could offer free financial advice services to the age 50+ sector

Food and drink

Issue/Problem: This a politically charged and emotive area of environmental debate and encompasses many issues including, animal welfare, public health, and international trade. This factsheet deals only with the issues relating directly to climate change.

Austerity associated with the World War Two years resulted in large post-war investments and state subsidies to bring about intensification of agriculture in order to produce as much food as quickly as possible. This resulted in a fall in the price of food in UK shops, a welcome development that has hidden costs such as reductions in biodiversity, increased soil erosion and pollution. However very recently food prices have started to rise worldwide and there is considerable concern that this will have adverse impacts on developing countries or those in vulnerable areas that are already experiencing the adverse impacts of climate .

A growing awareness of the environmental impacts associated with intensification of agriculture has led to the growth of the organic farming movement. Emergence of organic farming and other initiatives such as Fairtrade (usually, but not always, organic) has prompted questions about which is best for the environment. There is no definitive answer to this question but it is generally accepted that organic farming tends to encourage biodiversity, use less energy (reducing climate impacts) and generate less waste. However it is important to differentiate between organic farms and organic food. Organic farms tend to produce less per acre, be more labour intensive and hence more expensive. To produce the same amount of food organically in the UK as we do at present would require encroachment on areas of forest that have a greater capacity to mop up greenhouse gases.

There is also another dimension to the debate of local food production versus organic or versus Fairtrade. Most organic food available in the UK is shipped or flown in from Asia, Australia or Latin America, with consequent impact on greenhouse gas emissions. The concept of food miles, the distance traveled “from farm to fork”, has therefore been born. Even then close examination of the options is required as a tomato grown in a heated greenhouse in the UK could mean greater greenhouse gas emissions than one grown under natural conditions overseas.

Finally the upward trend to “grow your own” fruit and vegetables continues and can have the added benefit of being combined with outdoor exercise. All local libraries will have information on how to get started.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

- A quick guide to the issues surrounding this topic can be found at http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenerlivingaquickguide/DG_064420
- For information on organic farming and produce the following are good sources of additional information:
 - Soil Association: <http://www.soilassociation.org/> Tel 0117 314 5000
 - Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic>
 - Links Organic provides details of “organic” businesses <http://www.linksorganic.com/>
 - Plan Organic is a useful starting point on background to organic farming <http://www.planorganic.com/>
 - The BBC website provides a good background to the issue of “food miles” http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/food_matters/foodmiles.shtml
 - In relation to the debate over Fairtrade versus where to obtain local food suppliers versus grow your own, the following may be helpful
 - <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>
 - <http://www.bigbarn.co.uk/> (*portal to find local suppliers*)
 - <http://www.farmersmarkets.net/> (*portal to find your nearest farmers market*)
 - <http://www.rhs.org.uk/> (*grow your own and gardening in a changing climate*)
 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/grow_your_own/ (*grow your own fruit and vegetables*)

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- Green Gyms are easy ways of getting involved in community conservation or gardening projects, some of which involve growing fruit and vegetables <http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/greengym>

Travel/Transport

Issue/Problem: UK citizens travel further and more often than ever before and mostly by car. The ever reducing costs of air travel means that we also leave the country with growing frequency, with foreign holidays taken 2.5 times more often than 20 years ago. More travel requires use of energy which in turn (directly or indirectly) requires fuel resulting in more greenhouse gas emissions. The bottom line is that transport accounts for 25% of all UK greenhouse gas emissions.

In the hierarchy of environmentally friendly forms of transport, walking or cycling are best with the added benefits of the exercise they provide. Use of local transport such as buses, coaches and trains are the next best options with car, air and shipping being the most detrimental.

Comparing the impact of different forms of transport on climate change is not simple and requires calculations that factor in occupancy levels, speed, distance, and the type of vehicle. There is also the fact that planes, whilst not much worse than cars in terms of emissions per passenger mile, allow us to travel further. They have an added problem in that their emissions tend to inject greenhouse gases directly into the high atmosphere where they do most damage.

Road transport requires an infrastructure that eats further into the countryside and consumes huge amounts of resources, even before the issue of fuel source is addressed. However there are many steps that can be taken to reduce the harm done by cars, from making changes to the way we drive to choosing more efficient, lower emissions vehicles. Choices over the form of transport or the need to travel or both are not uniform throughout the UK. People who live and work in remote areas generally have more limited choice, but the debate becomes more controversial in the sphere of leisure and particularly overseas holidays and the desire to visit relatives who may live at great distances or even overseas.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

- the government website <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable> highlights the issues surrounding sustainable travel and transport.
- The Energy Savings Trust is a useful source of information about greener vehicles <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/fleet> and the Environmental Transport Association <http://www.eta.co.uk/> seeks to raise awareness of the implications of excessive car use. Car Plus also summarises the issues and options surrounding more responsible car use <http://www.carplus.org.uk/>
- Sustrans <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/> has a focus on promoting cycling but is now is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity whose vision is a world in which people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.
- Airportwatch <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/> provides some very useful briefing sheets on the issues surrounding air travel.

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Establishment of car-sharing schemes will not only reduce GHGs but will also save money and can be particularly effective and useful in areas where public transport is limited.

Waste

Issue/Problem: Production of UK domestic waste is increasing at a rate of 2% per year with less than a quarter of that currently being recycled. The waste not being recycled is either buried or burnt. In the UK, landfill still accounts for 65% of waste disposal, although this is gradually reducing. Incineration remains at around 10% in the UK, but around 50% in Sweden and Denmark.

Burying waste has limitations in terms of land available and the inherent problem of generating methane, a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Incineration is viewed by environmental groups as a disincentive for recycling, and undesirable because of its generation of poisonous emissions and CO₂, although strict laws and technology do exist to significantly reduce them. Incineration can certainly be a useful local source of energy to reduce heating costs and is being used by some healthcare trusts.

EU and UK legislation has been instrumental in forcing local authorities, business, industry and individuals to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill or incinerated. However many local authorities have only recently faced up to their legal obligations and the approaches being taken are not the same throughout the UK. It is therefore important that individuals and households are aware of what is expected of them at a local level.

Individuals can do a lot to reduce the amount of waste we generate and which eventually requires collection. By taking action we can help to reduce both the amount of rubbish going to landfill and greenhouse gas emissions. The background to all of the issues relating to waste and its disposal are set out by Waste Online <http://www.wasteonline.org/> At the heart of the hierarchy, that ranges from prevention to the other extreme of disposal, are the so called 3 R's of **reduce, reuse or recycle**.

Where to go for independent advice/information:

(i) **Reduce:** While reusing and recycling are good, they are no replacement for not generating the waste in the first place. There are many ways to do this but some basic suggestions are set below:

- **Food and food packaging:** It is estimated that around 20% of bought food ends up in the bin either in the form of leftovers or because it is no longer fresh. Recent evidence suggests that, in energy usage terms, this waste, and its associated packaging, is equivalent to the entire greenhouse gases produced by all UK road transport. It also amounts to around £400 per household per year. More planning and care when shopping and cooking together with better use of freezers and other methods of storage, will help to reduce food waste.
- Some 17 billion carrier bags are used in the UK each year. Most of these end up in landfill sites and take around 500 years to decompose. Some types of bags use hydrocarbons as raw materials and use fossil fuels in their production and, after use, produce CO₂ and methane as they break down. Supermarkets now offer biodegradable alternatives, provide collection points or have “bags for life”. The latter, reusable bags, are the best solution.
- **Paper:** Each individual in the UK uses about 200 kilograms of paper per year (100 bags of sugar) and this quantity takes about 3-4 trees and thousands of litres of water to produce. As well as cutting down on food packaging, reduction of paper use can be achieved by going digital, and thus accessing and reading material online. If you need to print it off set up your printer so that double sided printing is the default option and use recycled paper.
- Junk mail is often simply picked up from the doorstep and put straight into the recycle box. To reduce junk mail register with the Mail preference service to have your name removed from the lists of direct mail companies <http://www.mpsonline.org/mpsr/> or ring 0845 703 4599
- **Other household items:** Whilst originally introduced for convenience, there are many household items that, for many reasons, can now be viewed as environmentally damaging and for which environmentally friendly alternatives exist. The classic example is use of disposable nappies which can account for as much as 50% of the content of household bins. Washable cloth nappies are a better alternative.

(ii) **Reuse:** The thrust here is on “don’t throw it, donate it”. The UK is actually very good at donating clothes and books to a variety of charity shops, most of which are represented in any town high street. However there are many other usable items which are often thrown away but could be donated to good causes. Some of these are mentioned below but there is also a website used by millions of people worldwide who wish to give things away locally. It is called Freecycle <http://www.freecycle.org/>

- **Computers:** ComputerAid <http://www.computeraid.org/>
 - Computers for Charities <http://www.computersforcharities.co.uk/>

- Donate a PC <http://www.donateapc.org/>
- *Spectacles*: Help the Aged World in Sight Appeal. Drop-in service at Dolland and Aitchison and Specsaver opticians, FREEPOST LON 13109, London N1 9BR or <http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/>
- *Tools*: Tools with a mission <http://www.twam.co.uk/> or telephone 01473 210220
- *Toys*: Toys to You <http://www.toys-to-you.co.uk/acatalog/ToyRecycling.html>

(iii) **Recycle**: There is a national organization “Recycle Now” who have an excellent Website <http://www.recyclenow.com>. Local authorities, prompted by the prospect of being penalized for non-compliance with UK or EC legislation, have recently put great effort into improving recycling facilities and services. There has been expansion in doorstep collection services in addition to the bottle banks and local amenity sites. Most items of waste generated from households can now be recycled and there are useful local directories on most local authority websites. These give advice and guidance on particular items and where recycling points are. There is also a very useful index of whether household material can be recycled, and if so how, on the following Web site: <http://www.recyclenow.com/what.more.can.i.do/can.it.be.recycled/index.html>

- *Mobile Phones* After removing the SIM card, recycle your old mobile phone and Age Concern will receive £3. Request envelopes by calling 08458 884444 or e-mail recycling@heyday.org.uk

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- *Litter picks* are encouraged by many environmental groups including the old Keep Britain Tidy Group now part of ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns). They have produced a short publication entitled “Litter — organising a clean-up” which can be viewed at <http://www.emcams.org.uk/publications>

Water resources

Issue/Problem: Since water is essential for the maintenance of life, access to clean water is understandably viewed as a basic human need. The floods during the UK summer of 2007 were a good illustration of this. However, in general, there are much greater inequalities between richer nations such as the UK, and poorer countries who often face problems of getting enough clean drinking water.

While the UK only rarely experiences problems with water quality, there are well documented recent incidences of lack, or reduced supply, of the amounts required to support modern lifestyles. Hosepipe bans etc. have been introduced in drought conditions but at the other extreme some areas have witnessed unprecedented flooding events.

Changing weather patterns, brought about by climate change, are likely to manifest themselves through increased frequency of these extreme weather events. The UK, as well as elsewhere, will need to be prepared for, and be able to react to, these extremes each of which can be exacerbated by increasing population particularly in areas that are already under pressure eg. South East England.

In instances where demand for water outstrips supply (driven by ever more hungry appliances etc.), ways of reducing consumption have been promoted by water companies and others.

However even in times of plentiful supply it makes sense to follow these ideas as all water treatment requires energy and if you are metered they also offer ways of saving money!

Where to go for independent advice/information:

- The Meteorological Office now provides reliable 5 day forecasts which are aided by early warning of severe weather such as heavy rain <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/> while the Environment Agency is responsible for providing information of flooding via <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/lang=e> or telephone the Floodline 0845 988 1188. There is also a flood guide for older people and tips on conserving and using water.

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- RSVP has not, as yet, identified any specific opportunities.