

Peaslake School pioneers wood fuel in Guildford

by John Bannister

IN OUR MARCH newsletter Mark Lebus told us about the excellent progress the Surrey Hills Wood Fuel Group is making to utilise our local woodlands to generate sustainable supplies of wood fuel for commercial and domestic space heating. Mark's company LC Energy Ltd is leading the charge with others, such as Longlyf Timber Ltd, and with the Forum playing a supporting role. With wood fuel supplies in place efforts are now being focussed on promoting the benefits of wood fuel, which include the fuel cost advantage, security of supply, improved biodiversity from better woodland management and local jobs. As with other renewables, the UK's use of biomass for heating is lagging far behind other European countries; we hope that is all about to change.

One inspirational project that was commissioned in Guildford in April this year is at Peaslake School, which sits at the very heart of the Surrey Hills surrounded by the most beautiful woodlands. It is not a state school, but is run by the village community for their community. When the original state school was closed in 1994 Peaslake School Trust, a registered charity, was established by the village residents to keep the school open for 3 to 7 year-olds. They receive no state support, apart from funding for early years (nursery). Peaslake villagers fund, operate and manage the school, which is absolutely brilliant.

When the school oil-fired boiler needed replacing



last year the Trustees decided that they would like to use wood fuel, provided they could stay within a capital cost premium over a new oil boiler of no more than £2,000. With Mark's help this objective has been achieved. A 50 kW Gerkos pellet boiler supplied by Longlyf Timber in Tilford is installed and up and running. Wood pellets are made from sawdust (a waste product) sourced from sawmills and are delivered in bulk. A small pellet plant is being installed at Longlyf Timber and so very shortly the 7 to 9 tonnes a year of fuel that the school needs will be supplied from the Surrey Hills Wood Fuel Group by Harvest Wood Fuel, set up there to make wood pellets – a truly local, renewable and sustainable energy source.

The children can now make important connections between our sensitive climate, the trees around them, diminishing oil and gas supplies and being comfortable and warm at school.

John Bannister

Protests against new Tesco in Ash Vale

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY in Ash Vale has been demonstrating to stop a Tesco Express store coming into the area. A leader in the fight is the Blackwater Valley branch of Friends of the Earth, which has launched a campaign called **Shop Local First**. Its spokesman, Rick Kimber, says:

"The **Shop Local First** campaign is asking people to support their local shops selling local produce, and fight the supermarkets that sell mass-produced food trucked in from their distribution centres, often over very long distances.

"It is becoming obvious in talking to the Ash Vale residents how much they appreciate the local independent stores and do not want a Tesco Express in the area. Among the many advantages that people mention are that local shops offer a much more personal service than supermarkets and a diverse range of local shops provides more choice

than one supermarket. In addition, local shops keep money circulating in the local area as they support other local businesses.

"We expect the Tesco Express proposal to be submitted to Guildford Borough Council very soon and will be publicising how to object to it."

