



November 2009 diary

Rubbish meeting?



My Environment Agency - previously OFWAT - work takes me to many of the places that we need as society but we rarely want to go ourselves. Sewage works and landfill sites are the top two locations. However the site I went to run by WRT near Wakefield in Yorkshire was well run, and had its own bird of prey handler to keep off the seagulls and other scavenger birds. The amount of material going into the ground has fallen vastly through taxation mechanisms and because it is easier for domestic homes to recycle... it is still tricky for business. Anyway, I hosted a very good meeting of my [REPAC](#) committee in the visitor centre at the landfill site and I trust nobody thought it was rubbish. We failed to find the £18,000 that some jobbing builder had kept hidden from the taxman... until his mum

saw the black bin bag containing the money and threw it out... justice of sorts... everything goes to the worms eventually!

Microrenewables

The future is bright: the future is green. November saw a very interesting meeting of [Community Energy Solutions](#), which showed me that we were at the very cutting edge of the green energy revolution ten years ago here at Lee Moor Business Park. We have a wood-fired district heating system, photovoltaics making electricity, and a ground source heat pump, and all a decade or more old! From next year these items start to make you money as well as save you money. That is a subtle difference – but an important difference all the same.

Weaving willow...

Our willow at Lee Moor is grown for fuel... It is of course a very flexible crop in every sense of the word, and as such we have a group of enthusiasts looking to harvest the smaller wands which are not suitable for burning but which are ideal for bending and weaving into baskets or hurdles. We are also in talks about coppicing the hazel for shepherds' crooks - and I am considering putting some mistletoe berries onto our apple trees... you never know!



A funny thing happened to me on the way...

Mervyn Stutter was excellent at the village... if you are a baby boomer it is even more aimed at you, singing and humour all wrapped up in an very entertaining evening. There were musical instruments too! Just what the village hall needs... laughter like that hasn't been heard since I went to school there 35 years ago!

Who's the best?

The [Northumberland Business Awards](#) were a fantastic night at nearby Linden Hall - I hope to see some Lee Moor Tenants entering next year. I was involved with judging the Training and Employer of the Year awards and have to say I was very impressed with the standards around the county. The recession is a mixed deal and the employment figures in Northumberland have not been as dire as in other areas. Many of the businesses we saw were expanding and doing well. As the country's financial engine splutters we need business even more than we did before. Support your local businesses! - and well done to North East Press for holding the awards... it was a pleasure working with you all.

Reflective season

In a wet season water is a curse, but the ponds in front of the Business Park do now have a maturity that is very pleasing – I have put in this photo from my phone... do send yours in and I will put them on the site.



Bong... Who is that with Ian Brown?

We are judged by who we are associated with, so imagine how tickled I was to be on the CBI conference attendees' list with the Prime Minister – in the thick of it, I tell you. Here is my report:

Last week I attended the annual CBI conference with an enthusiastic group of future leaders from here in the north east. As the leaders of the future we had more to gain and indeed more to lose from the actions of our speakers that day than most. No other region has invested in creating this opportunity and to be in the front row and have the MD of the International Monetary Fund followed by Brown, Clegg and Cameron in that order is not a bad run in to lunch!! The heavy security around the event perhaps reminded us the value of political freedom; as a group we had the ability to ask our leaders questions, which they answered best they could.

It was an insight into the world of the bosses; political and business bosses coming together for mutual admiration but also to spar and chew over the issues of the day. The afternoon saw the heads of Pfizer, M&S and The Royal Bank of Scotland run into the final 'head for home' speech by Lord Turner... with the FSA and Climate Change in his in tray who better to give a perspective on threats and opportunities?

All in all, thank you to the regional CBI team for the opportunity - and I came away thinking that the people who run the world are just that... people. There are many potential solutions and leadership is essential to make traction. I like to think that in the north east we want to be part of some new solutions, and that journey started for me with a train trip to London.

Ian