



Environment Matters – 3 March 2006

Welcome to the latest edition of Aardvark's fortnightly news briefing

- **World's most precious commodity is getting even scarcer** Across the globe, a third of all people suffer from "water stress". There are 1.1 billion people lacking access to clean water, 2.4 billion lacking access to improved sanitation, and half the world's hospital beds at any one time are thought to be occupied by people suffering from water-borne diseases. In 2003 a UN report predicted that by the middle of the century 7 billion people in 60 countries could be faced with water scarcity, although if the right policies were followed this might be brought down to (merely) 2 billion, in 48 nations. It doesn't take much to realise that with such a commodity in desperate demand, fights are going to break out. ([The Independent 28/02/06](#))
- **Giant wind farm plan thrown out** Plans to create England's largest wind farm in Cumbria have been rejected by the government. The £55m development would have seen 27 turbines, each 377ft tall, erected at Whinash, near Kendal. A six-week public inquiry last year heard from campaigners who said the project would destroy the landscape of the Lake District. Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks said he agreed with the inquiry inspector that the plan should be thrown out. Environmental groups such as Greenpeace backed the clean energy plans, but campaigners were worried about the visual impact on the countryside. ([BBC News 2/03/06](#))
- **Introduction of new building regulations speeded up** The Government has tightened the time for the building industry to comply with new climate change regulations. Transitional arrangements have been cut from the usual three years to just 12 months to speed up take up of the regulations to maximise their impact on climate change. All new buildings without full building plans approved by 6 April must comply with new building regulations from 6 April 2006, which increase the energy efficiency of new buildings by 20 per cent from April, and by 40 per cent since 2002. ([Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 22/02/06](#))
- **Britons could stomach green taxes says poll** According to a recent poll week the British public are ready to accept taxes that encourage environmentally friendly behaviour. A tax on flights might not be as hard to swallow as politicians fear. The ICM poll, published in the Guardian newspaper on Wednesday, February 22, asked if people were prepared to make sacrifices in their own lives to combat climate change and whether they would accept a tax that would make the polluter pay on a personal level. Almost two thirds of respondents said they would welcome such a tax, while 34% said they were not in favour. ([Edie 22/02/06](#))

Latest News from the Aardvark Team

- Record low temperatures across central Europe and varying winter fuel prices have prompted a renewed interest in alternative forms of energy. Aardvark has been commissioned to provide calculations of fuel prices, under a range of scenarios and to see how renewable energy sources can be incorporated into fuel delivery mixes. Initial results from the study show that as at the time of writing, biomass fuel (wood) for the first time in over 10 years is now cheaper as a fuel than oil and gas.
- For all the latest Aardvark news www.aardvarkem.co.uk.

And Finally

- **Love is in the water for dwindling pearl mussels** The Environment Agency has had success as a dating agency and revived the ailing sex life of the pearl mussel, a fast disappearing native species. The Agency's mussel expert, Anne Lewis said: "Pearl mussels have become so dispersed in the wild that they don't get the opportunity to meet that often. Even when they do breeding is complicated and success can be hit and miss with only one in ten thousand of the young surviving to adulthood. We have tried to create the perfect conditions for breeding by bringing them together and providing the right climate". ([The Environment Times 21/02/06](#))