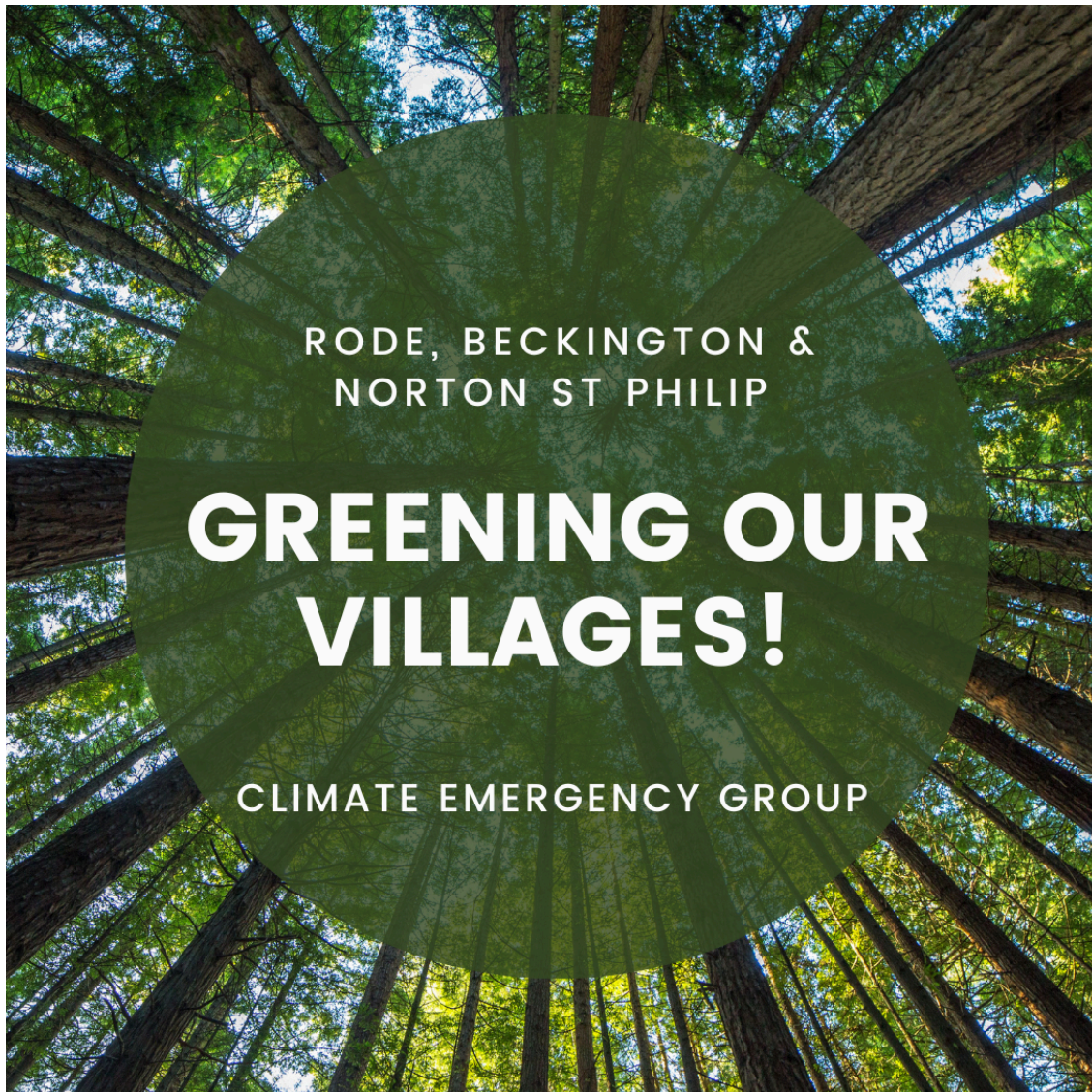


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Welcome to the August Climate Emergency Group Newsletter

You may be surprised to receive this newsletter after a short break in service! Many apologies for the lack of newsletters in June and July.....simply down to a lack of time on my part (a poor excuse, I realise).

Anyway, since the last edition we have a new government. Whilst this newsletter tries to be apolitical I think we can all now look forward to a more focussed agenda in relation to tackling climate change, and the Labour government has already demonstrated its commitment to net zero by approving three huge solar farms in eastern England and ending the de-facto onshore wind ban. In addition, the proposed new National Planning Policy Framework is particularly supportive of renewable energy projects, amongst a plethora of measures to underpin the government's net zero commitments.

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- more details below, together with more information about other local climate change issues and initiatives.

As always - if you know someone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter, feel free to forward this issue. New subscribers can sign-up by following the link below:

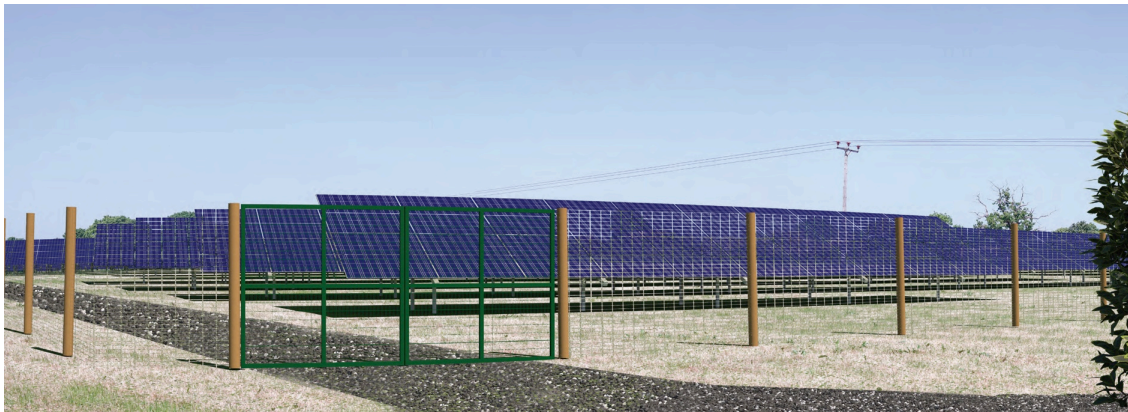
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And all past editions of this newsletter, plus various resources, advice and information, are available on the Rode Village Website:

<https://www.rodevillage.com/climate-emergency/>

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Solar Farm in Rode - approval granted

The planning application to build a large scale Solar Farm in Rode was approved at the July meeting of the Somerset Council Planning Committee (East). Although one of the key concerns previously raised by Councillors (ie, the scale of the development) had not been addressed, the Council Officer advised that there was no further basis on which the application could be refused. In addition, the applicant was unwilling to enter into discussions regarding potential further amendments to the scheme.

Rode Parish Council had opposed the application, reflecting the vast majority of responses from local residents in relation to the proposed solar farm. However, the PC fundamentally believed that a balance could be reached, and a better scheme produced with some relatively minor amendments, reducing the impact on the historic setting of the village (amongst other issues). Unfortunately it has not been possible to achieve those amendments.

elapse (during this period a challenge could be made in relation to the planning process). Assuming no challenge emerges, Rode Parish Council will seek to engage positively with the developer (Low Carbon). The PC understands that the solar farm is unlikely to start operating until 2026 at the earliest, but given the scale of the development it will be important to ensure a positive relationship over the coming years, in particular during the construction phase.

Although the scheme is larger than Rode Parish Council wished, and impacts more significantly on the village, it will be an important contributor to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which is so vital to address the climate emergency.

All the documentation in connection with the development is available on the Somerset Council website: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/view-and-comment-on-a-planning-application/>

[Choose "Mendip", then go to "Find an application". The application reference is **2023/2183/FUL**].



Thinking about installing solar panels?

If you're not sure whether your roof is sufficiently large or facing the right way, there's a free on-line tool to measure your solar panel potential.

Designed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), this free-to-use Solar Wizard gives you a quick, straightforward and unbiased way to evaluate whether solar panels would be suitable for your home or building. It provides you with a summary of how much energy the panels could generate, the installation cost, and how quickly you can earn this back through energy bill savings. Click here for more details: <https://solarwizard.org.uk/>



No Mow May in Rode - result!

The small area of grass in front of Rode Memorial Hall is now in its second year of life as part of the "No Mow May" experiment. Great to see plenty of wild flowers have survived, and hopefully this will be the first of a number of areas around the village (and maybe further afield) that benefit from a less curated approach to council land. Many thanks to Rode PC (and in particular Andy Pickett) for this.



Lights off in Rode!!

Rode Parish Council has been working with Somerset Council to decrease the impact of artificial lighting (ecological light pollution) on wildlife, as well as reducing energy use (and saving Somerset Council some money). A proposal to turn off many of the street lights in Rode was supported by two-thirds of respondents to a village-wide survey. The Parish Council has funded the cost (just over £2k) of the necessary changes to the controls on the chosen street lights, and the work completed last month.

So, all street lights in the village (with the exception of those on the key routes: Church Lane, High Street, Bradford Road and Rode Hill) now switch off at midnight. They will turn back on again at 5.30 am if it is dark at that time, and remain on until day-break.



Insect loss - what can we do?

Repeated surveys and analyses highlight a catastrophic loss of insect life in the UK (and elsewhere). Fortunately there ARE things we can do to try to arrest this decline, and recently one of our sister local Climate Emergency groups (in Wellington) published the following five tips, which are all eminently feasible for those with gardens:

1. Don't tidy your garden too much-If you want to "tidy up" your garden, do any weeding, trim the edges of your lawn etc do this in the summer and not in the autumn, or you will be throwing insects that have hidden in plant stems, seed heads and leaf litter away with the plants. If you tidy up, leave bags open for a day to allow any insects to crawl out before taking them to the tip, or even better make a compost pile. Once September is here, leave your garden until the weather warms up again, usually April. The exception is to prune hedges and trees which you shouldn't prune between March-August because of nesting birds. If you are able to leave some areas untidy and have them on a 2-year clear-up cycle, even better.

2. Grow wildflowers and native plants in your garden. Many species of insect need native plants for their young to feed on. If you spot holes in leaves, instead of thinking "what's eating my plants?" flip that around and think: "what creatures are my plants feeding?"

3. Avoid pesticides at home and in the garden. If you have a balance of prey and predator insects, biodiversity such as birds, frogs, and hedgehogs visiting your garden, and healthy plants growing in a healthy soil, you shouldn't have a problem with aphids or any other "pest" insect.

4. Minimise outdoor lighting. Two-thirds of invertebrates are partially or wholly nocturnal. Out of those insects attracted to light, up to a third suffer from

at the right time too. The situation is so serious that light pollution is reducing the nocturnal pollinator visits to flowers by 62% in some areas, and surveys in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire showed a reduction of moth caterpillars by about half in lit areas. So have outdoor lights on a timer or a motion sensor so they aren't on all night, choose amber lighting rather than bright white lights, shield them or angle them down and reduce the wattage.

5. Buy organic food where possible - it is usually more expensive but not always, so do check. If you can't afford organic food all the time you can support the Pesticide Action Network or other similar charities who work towards making all our food more organic, or sign petitions for change and vote for politicians who have biodiversity as an important part of their manifesto.



More Travellers' Tales

After an epic trip to Norway by multiple trains and several ferries last year, and a few trips around Europe by train to follow Brighton & Hove Albion in the Europa League, we have continued our European train and ferry adventures in 2024! This time, we managed to grab five days in the Scottish Borders and a week in Germany whilst sampling the delights of GWR, LNER, ScotRail, the DFDS ferry from Newcastle to Amsterdam, Deutsche Bahn, and Eurostar. Everything worked remarkably well - with special shout-outs to (a) the ferry trip, and (b) the return journey from

If you're looking for some inspiration for a rail-based holiday, the following resources may be helpful:

The Man in Seat 61: <https://www.seat61.com/>

The Guardian's great section on rail travel:

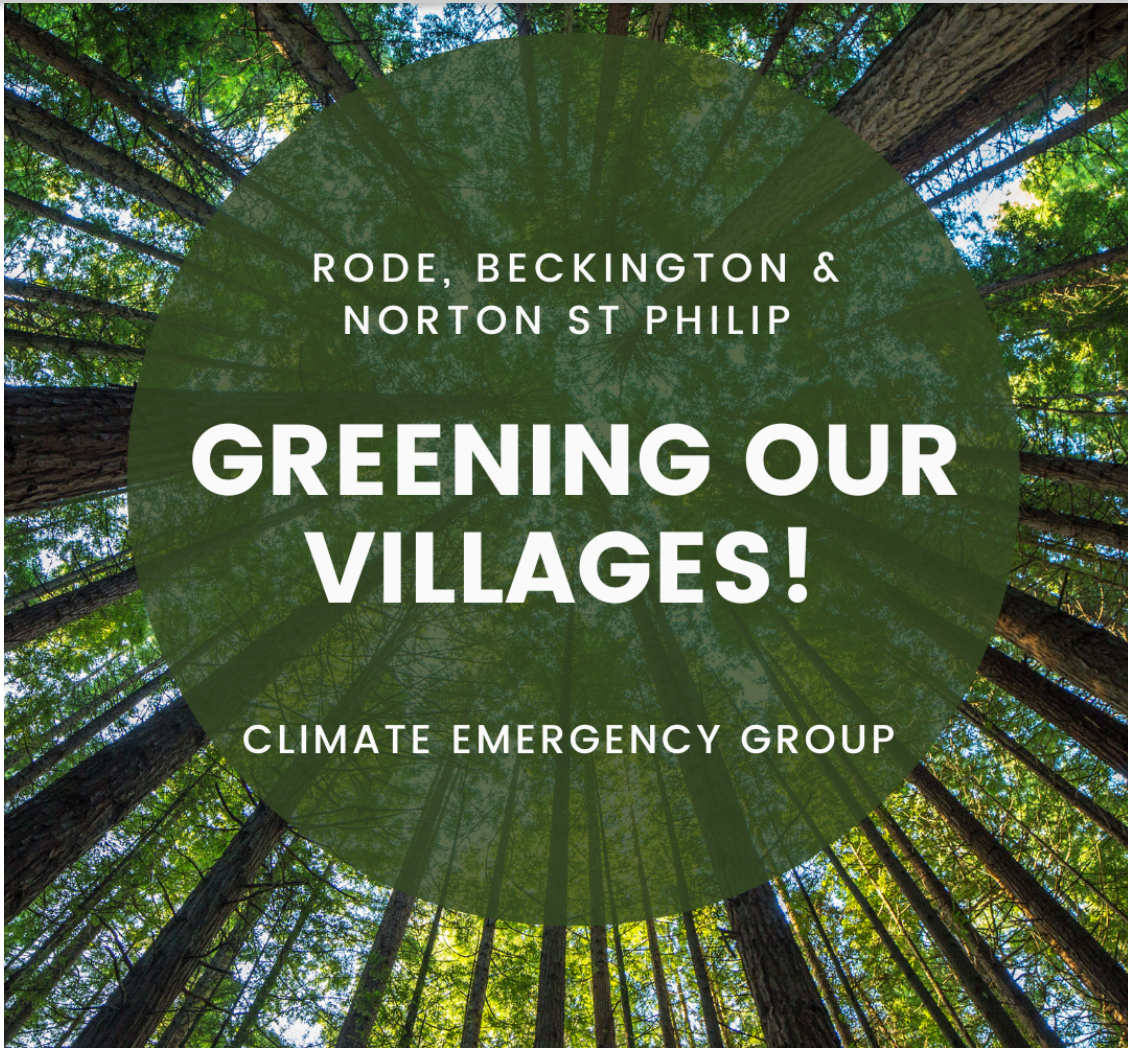
<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/railtravel>

Byway Travel: Absolutely loads of itineraries and suggestions....and they also offer curated "package" trips if you don't want to organise the trips yourself:

<https://www.byway.travel/>

Below: Leaving Newcastle en route to Amsterdam



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CLIMATE EMERGENCY GROUP

Finally, a quick reminder that I will be stepping back from "leading" the Climate Emergency Group in the summer. By then I'll have been in the hot-seat for three years and I think it's time for someone with more expertise, energy, and time, to take on the mantle - and in particular to inspire us to reach the next level. If you think that person is YOU - please drop me a line....and, if it's not you, but you know someone who could be interested, please ask them to get in contact.

Email: jim.mcauliffe@btinternet.com



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