

ESK AND TWEED ECO-NETWORK

Peebles Old Parish Church Monday 29 October 2012

The Esk and Tweed Eco-congregation network held its second meeting on Monday 29 October 2012 and enjoyed the hospitality of Peebles Old Parish Church. 16 people attended, four churches being represented.

The meeting began with a talk on personal energy saving from Joanna Thomson, formerly of the Tweedgreen project. She explained a wide range of activities which can be readily undertaken by all of us and which reduce energy consumption and/or make better use of the energy that we do consume. She pointed out that this will save us money, as well as helping the planet! Her talk was followed by a lively question and answer session. To support her talk, Joanna mentioned a list of thirty energy-saving activities that one can pursue in one's personal life and has since kindly made these available; a summary is attached to this note.

After a break for “tea, chat and goodies” (including delicious “cheese bites” which this reporter devoured shamelessly!), the meeting heard a series of short presentations from members from Carlops about their preparation and successful application for a third-level Eco-congregation Scotland award. They stressed that size of congregation, or the lack of it, is not a constraining factor, as assessors take account of that in relating a congregation's activities to the awards criteria. They attributed their success to five factors:

- Careful communication with the whole congregation and listening to what everyone wants to engage with.
- Maintaining good working links with the whole community, not just church-goers.
- Interpreting apparently daunting award criteria in everyday ways and “translating” them into achievable practical actions.
- Being willing to lobby, formally and informally, and make one's views known.
- Generally, involving people and *doing*, rather than talking!

Margaret Warnock, an Eco-congregation Scotland co-ordinator, spoke about the development of the movement itself and of some changes that have been put in place recently to make the organisation more hospitable to new and existing members.

- The organisation is now formally established as a charity. Member congregations are invited to pay a modest annual subscription to support it, but those preferring not to do so may still attend events (though without voting rights) and participate in the awards programme.
- Enrolment as an eco-congregation has been simplified; now, one needs only to write to Eco-congregation Scotland (over the signature of the minister or Session clerk or equivalent), express interest and request to become a member.
- New members will be assigned a peer-mentor experienced in Eco-congregation activities and procedures to support them as they develop from enrolment towards a first award.

- Criteria for awards, application forms and guidelines for applicant congregations and assessors have all been reviewed, simplified and clarified.

Margaret stressed that revised information about all of the above can be found on the Eco-congregation Scotland website.

Finally, information was provided about two future meetings of the Esk and Tweed Eco-congregation network.

- Thursday 17 January 2013, 6.30pm, in Carlops Church when the network will entertain Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Scottish Environment Minister, and have an opportunity to brief him on the eco-congregation movement and its aims and activities
- Monday 11 March 2013, 7.30pm; Penicuik North Church; topic to be determined.

The meeting closed with expressions of thanks to Peebles Old Parish Church for hosting the meeting and providing hospitality.

On the following page you can read Joanna Thomson's energy saving suggestions.

Energy-saving actions *after Joanna Thomson*

Easy

Turn lights off when you leave a room
Air dry your hair
Wash clothes at 30 degrees
Use a hot water bottle instead of an electric blanket
Wear slippers around the house
Switch computer and monitor off
De-frost fridge and freezer regularly
Shut doors
Iron only clothes that need it
Do not shield radiators with furniture
Change to a green energy supplier
Talk to your neighbours about energy-saving
Turn appliances off when not in use, instead of using stand-by mode
Maintain adequate circulation space behind fridge and freezer
Turn hot-water cylinder down to 60 degrees
Fill the washing machine; don't process half loads
Air dry clothes instead of tumble drying
Put a reflective sheet behind radiators
Cut your TV watching time!
Use a sausage draught excluder behind doors
Hang a heavy curtain behind the front door
Wear a jersey instead of turning up the heating#
Take shorter showers
Use low energy light bulbs

More challenging

Site fridge away from the cooker
Install individual radiator thermostats
Increase loft insulation
Replace draughty windows with double glazing
Use thermally insulated curtains
Investigate cavity wall insulation
Replace an old boiler with a modern more efficient model
Investigate installing photo-voltaic cells on your roof
investigate installing a bio-mass boiler
Replace older fridges or freezers with newer, more efficient models