



The Urban Ecology NEWSLETTER

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Convenor's report May 2012

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Our vision: "The UEA vision is the transformation of human settlements into Ecological Cities – vibrant, equitable, socially supportive, ecologically sustaining and economically viable communities."

I conducted a little experiment recently looking at where the state government's vision, the Adelaide City Council's vision and ours intersect and it was very interesting to see the overlap. The good news is that we are all looking in the same direction, but what is also evident is that we don't necessarily work together. We will focus on this in the coming months.

Some members of the UEA Board and CW residents attended a Sustainable Communities SA forum by Professor Peter Newman. He gave a really good presentation, essentially about the advantages of rail, electrically powered using renewable energy sources over roads, cars trucks etc. (See p 4 for Andrew Tidswell's report on the talk)

I thought I'd share the 2 things that we got out of it most; 1) you can't peddle despair, it paralyses people and while he agreed that it was all very scary he insisted that you must be positive and cheery or you will never get things done, 2) that you must focus: it took 10 years to pull some things off but they never stopped trying. They wanted a rail line

restored; they initiated action until they got it. Then they wanted a new one, same thing. Instead of doing bits and pieces of lots of things, they put all their considerable effort into the one area. Another good lesson for us, we have so many good ideas and want to do so much that we can lose our focus on our vision.

In the coming weeks some of you will come across our latest intern Liam Cooper who is undertaking a PhD in resilient communities and he will be using Christie Walk as part of his focus. I will be putting out an email soon asking people who want to be involved in the interview process, but if any of you wish to meet him or have any questions to put to him/be involved in his research please let me know at gilbeysue@hotmail.com.

Radio Program: UEA pays a nominal fee for access to **A Peace of the Action** on Radio Adelaide. If anyone has any ideas on what they would like put on air, or would like to contribute in any way, please contact me.

Tax time: This year is zipping past way too fast! The end of the financial year is nearly upon us!

Urban Ecology Australia Inc (UEA) wants all tax payers, particularly those who keep all their receipts in a shoe box to consider donating to our education and advocacy program while at the same time reducing your taxable income.

Too good to be true!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Not at all!

Make sure you get the tax deductions you deserve and at the same time support our efforts in influencing urban planners, business leaders and politicians to improve the way our cities are planned and developed.

This has to be the best news for the shoe box, for the environmental consciousness and for us!

A tax deduction reduces the taxable income on which tax is calculated so by donating, you get a tax deduction because we have deductible gift recipient status and we keep on growing and promoting more developments like Christie Walk.

We keep our overheads down so that the maximum value is achieved for every dollar we receive.

We don't ask membership fees, UEA wants everyone to be a member whatever their financial situation, but we do depend on your contribution to keep us viable.

In the past year we have hosted visits from around 2,000 people, 1,600 of them students; our very important message is getting out there. Throw away the shoe box and make a weekly, fortnightly or monthly contribution to UEA and at the end of the financial year we will send you a tax statement. Alternatively make a one off donation now and see the effects in your tax return. We are very flexible, donate via our website, www.urbanecology.org.au or by credit card, direct deposit or cash. For more details on this win: win situation ring +61 8 8212 6760, email urbanec@urbanecology.org.au or phone one of our volunteers on 0431 112898 or 0417 874517.

Sue Gilbey

Christie Walk Tours, the DVD & the curriculum!

Visitors on tours of Christie Walk have increased in the first half of the year to 1,400 compared with 1,000 for the same period last year. This big increase included 550 students taking advantage of grants UEA received from the Dept of Environment and Natural Resources and from the Adelaide City Council, which provided free or subsidised places on the tours.

As it will not be possible to keep increasing numbers of visitors (residents are already very understanding) we are trying to encourage schools to purchase the Christie Walk DVD/CD Pack which provides a movie 'virtual tour' as well as a huge amount of supporting material for classroom use. The DVD is also suitable for community groups looking at energy or water saving ideas so please spread the word!

And there is a new resource that is available for teachers which includes units of work on sustainability:

www.globalwords.edu.au

Globalwords is a FREE online resource, supported by a FREE series of national professional learning events, for primary and junior secondary teachers and students.

The twelve (12) units of work are designed to support students and teachers to meet the demands of the Australian Curriculum: English and the learning aims and outcomes outlined in *Global Perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian schools*.

They address aspects of the Geography, HSIE/SOSE curricula and additionally allow students to engage meaningfully with the three interrelated English curriculum strands of Language, Literature and Literacy.

UEA and outreach

Transition Adelaide West tagged Urban Ecology Australia in a post.

Transition Adelaide West wrote: "New York City's green infrastructure initiatives <http://nyti.ms/sgknyc> - sounds positively Transitional! One for Transition Voice, Growing Cities, Ecocity Builders via Urban Ecology Australia"

Germany's solar power plants produced a record 22 gigawatts of energy on Friday, equivalent to the output of 20 nuclear plants. The country is already a world-leader in solar power and hopes to be free of nuclear energy by 2022.

"Never before anywhere has a country produced as much photovoltaic electricity. Germany came close to the 20 gigawatt (GW) mark a few times in recent weeks. But this was the first time we made it over," Norbert Allnoch told Reuters news agency.

**Weekly UEA Total Reach last week in facebook
1,074**

Report on forum held in the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre held on May 9th, hosted by Just Sustainability Australia Inc.(JSA)

The key presenters, Ifti Rashid and Harun Bhuyan focused on the vulnerabilities Bangladesh faces. Ifti made the point very strongly that for a country only 41 years old in terms of independence they have come a long way. Furthermore they are one of the only countries in the world where climate change has bi-partisan support and is mentioned as a threat in the constitution. His finishing point was resilience not relief (ie foreign aid). Harun in his presentation reported that while significant progress has been made, women are still the most vulnerable because of their limited mobility and access to resources and information. This is reflected in the deaths of nearly five times more females than males in floods and cyclones (Aguilar 2008). Widespread poverty has made Bangladesh extremely vulnerable to the effects of tropical storms and flooding. He gave a startling statistic that almost 50 percent of deaths from cyclones worldwide occur in Bangladesh, even though it experiences only 1 percent of all cyclones. (Amadore et al. 1996).

Harun went on to say:

"This happens as thousands of people of Bangladesh live in climate vulnerable areas and as women's participation in

paid work outside home is low in South Asia, especially in Bangladesh, changes in crop, fishery, poultry and livestock production will severely impact the livelihoods and well-being of women and their children. Given the gender differential in vulnerability, it is important to have social assessments and institutional analyses that include gender-based experiences in collective actions and support from local institutions/networks when developing inclusive 'strategies for developing resilience to climate change'



Bangladesh & Climate Change

Professor Fran Baum gave a brilliant presentation on public health and climate change and Brian Caton brought climate change right home with his talk on local sea level rise. JSA will have another such forum in November and we are planning a conference in 2013 to establish networks of grass roots activists and climate and refugee professionals in an attempt to develop practical strategies for displaced people generally, particularly those in the delta areas of the Bay of Bengal, the Mekong delta and the Pacific Islands. We will encourage representatives of the people most affected to participate, particularly women. For further information or to join JSA contact Sue Gilbey on gilbeyesue@hotmail.com

Books, articles... reviews

Jan Gehl was in Adelaide last year at the Festival of Ideas.

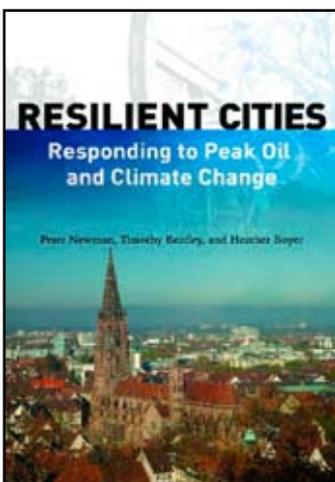
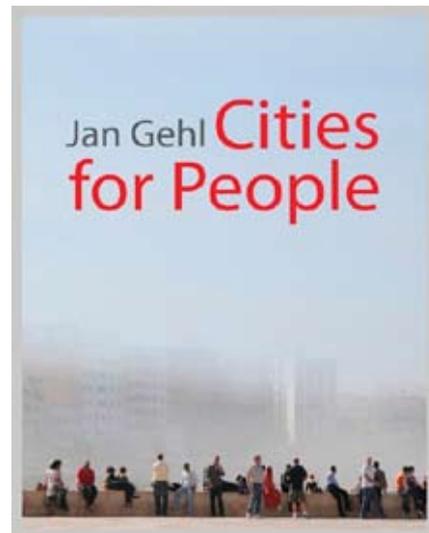
UEA Board member, Alan Stewart, reported on his address in the November 2011 issue of the Urban Ecology Australia newsletter.

Gehl's recent book is *Cities for People* - beautifully illustrated with photos from around the world. In the preface Gehl points out that "It is now generally accepted that city life and regard for people in city space must have a key role in the planning of cities and built-up areas."

This book has six chapters: • The human dimension • Senses and scale
• The lively, safe, sustainable, and healthy city • The city at eye level
• Life, space, buildings - in that order • Developing cities.

In chapter 4 he stresses the importance of turning cities from a car culture to a bicycle culture. He states: "if it is possible to take bicycles on the subway and by taxi, then travel can be combined over great distances". For Adelaide and most Australian cities we need to be able to take bicycles on the tram as well as on buses. This could be done with racks on the back of the vehicle but will need a strong lobby and some planning of public transport vehicles before it can happen.

In the meantime let us push for safer cycle routes in the city. Adelaide City Council has recently drawn up a draft Integrated Movement Strategy, and we urge you to respond to this strategy either on the website (pictureadelaide.com.au) or pick up a form from one of the ACC libraries or community centres. **But there is not much time** - submissions close on June 8.



Professor Peter Newman was in Adelaide recently, speaking at a forum organised by Sustainable Communities SA. (see p 4)

The book, *Resilient Cities*, was written by Peter Newman with Timothy Beatley and Heather Boyer. It looks at the cost in terms of quantities of fossil fuels consumed and the high levels of greenhouse gases emitted because of inefficient transportation systems and poorly designed buildings. It tackles many of the issues raised in the book by Jan Gehl (above).

In the concluding chapter the authors spell out ten strategic steps toward creating a Resilient City. '*Resilient cities can be created out of the challenge of peak oil and climate change.*'

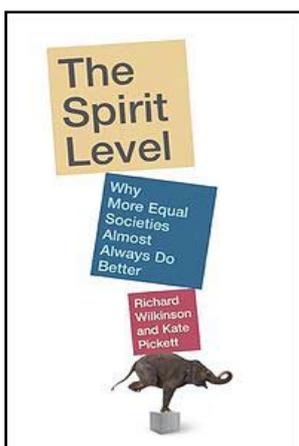
Overall it is a positive book and reflects Peter Newman's philosophy about the need for hope! And there are examples of cities that have developed peak oil and climate change strategies - the city of Brisbane is cited and '*could become a model for any city.*'

This book is published by Island Press 2009.

Inequality Matters

Book review: *The Spirit Level*

Alan Stewart, PhD



No doubt you have noticed this. Mention of it comes from all around, locally and internationally. Just recently featured on the front page of *The Advertiser* (22 May, 2012) was '**Close our class divide.**'

This was a call to attention from Keith Bartley, head of SA's public education system that the system was marked by inequalities which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The Occupy Movement, now spreading over our little planet, 3rd from the sun, is an expression of grave dissatisfaction at the massive differences in opportunity among rich and poor in diverse countries, both 'developed' and 'developing', to live with economic security.

Just why equality matters in today's world is the subject of a book entitled '*The Spirit Level - Why more equal societies almost always do better.*'

Written by two epidemiologists - people who study the

patterns of disease in populations (*broken down by age and sex, according to an old joke!*) - Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2009) the book has reportedly "taken the UK by storm and gained admirers from both sides of the House."

See <http://truth-out.org/news/item/8985-why-equality-matters> for an historical overview of philosophical notions and everyday manifestations of inequality, including in educational practice, together with the main argument in the book that inequality in any society affects the vast majority of the population, not just the least well-off.

What stands out for me from the implications of the careful analysis at the core of the book is that reducing income inequalities and making educational opportunities more widespread is critical to the effective response of humanity as a whole to global warming.

The authors suggest, in their concluding chapter 'Building the future', that "to give ourselves the best chance of making the necessary transformation of society [in order to address issues such as climate change] we need to remember that the aim is to make a more sociable society ... to increase people's sense of security and to reduce fear; to make everyone feel

cont. p4

that a more equal society not only has room for them but also that it offers a more fulfilling life than is possible in a society dominated by hierarchy and inequality.”

A ‘scenario’ written in 2084 from Mandela City indicates how this came about through “massive participation in healing the planet by the global citizenry.” See:

The Great Transition Today: A Report From The Future by Paul Raskin, head of the Great Transition Initiative (GTI) <http://www.gtinitiative.org/> and parent body Tellus Institute in Boston

<http://www.gtinitiative.org/documents/PDFFINALS/2GTToday.pdf>

In this Raskin and his colleagues, together with Wilkinson and Pickett, spell out that the transformation of society is a project in which we all have a shared interest. And that, while there are different ways to pursue this enterprise, ‘greater equality is the gateway to ways of living for all of us and is essential in the development of sustainable economic, environmental and social systems (**a program for social interaction**).

Smart Cities by Peter Newman



Dr Peter Newman (Professor of Sustainability at Curtin University, Perth) visited Adelaide recently to give a public talk “Sustainability – what it can mean for people and communities”.

Unlike many people, Peter Newman believes that the term ‘sustainability’ still has some useful life left in it, describing the necessary integrated approach to economic, social and

environmental thinking. Sustainability in cities is about increasing liveability while reducing the ecological footprint. This should govern all our planning and actions and can deliver truly smart cities.

His experience in Perth beginning in 1979 with saving the Fremantle rail line and subsequent years of successfully revitalised rail transit has convinced him that a few people dedicated to a worthwhile cause can make a significant difference.

Train travel has grown from 9 to 58 million passenger trips per year since 1990 in Perth, compared with Adelaide’s growth from 9 to 12 million trips per year in the same period. This success in Perth was achieved despite the ‘experts’ saying it was a waste of money and wouldn’t work.

He stressed how important it will become to reduce our car dependency as oil becomes increasingly expensive and in shorter supply. This requires much better public transport and a higher population density in our cities. The smart and resilient cities of the future will be those that address peak oil.

His lesson from Perth is that not only is it possible to change attitudes but that such things are good economics, good politics and good public policy. People will change their behaviour if they are given good options. Perth, along with all other Australian cities and most cities in the developed world, is currently experiencing a reduction in overall car use.¹

Perth has added some 130 kilometres of new train lines since 1982, and the next major change being planned is to add a network of light rail linking mixed use centres. (seems a bit like TOD’s).

Peter argues that developing rail transit should not be seen as a cost that we might struggle to afford, but that it is an investment that creates new opportunities for economic development around such centres, encouraging the development of the polycentric city. This in turn reduces car travel and creates opportunities for more walkable and liveable communities.

We get the best outcomes when communities, governments and the market place concentrate on what they do best. Peter described these as:

- Community – good at setting values and providing visions
- Government – best at providing infrastructure and regulations
- Market place – best at delivering goods and services.

The main lesson he proposes is that if we want to pursue an agenda (like he did with rail travel in Perth) we have to have a strong focus, a simple message, promote it relentlessly and positively to all those in authority, and always have good information to back it up. Be persistent and consistent. Change can happen quicker than we could otherwise believe.

Andrew Tidswell.

¹ Australian Infrastructure Statistics Yearbook 2011.
Peter Newman

Ecocity developments

Miller’s Corner is a unique community-focused subdivision in the heart of Mount Barker, South Australia. Located just 3 minutes walk from multiple shopping centres and with a 45 min express bus service to Adelaide on the doorstep, this subdivision has a location that beats all others.

Mount Barker is a beautiful, well-serviced country town in the Adelaide Hills, just 30 km from the city of Adelaide. The town has many historic stone cottages and is blessed with a cooler European-Mediterranean climate.

At the centre of the subdivision is the communal “Forest House” designed to be the heart and soul of the subdivision where the community can gather for social occasions. The subdivision includes a communal orchard and veggie gardens, open spaces and secret hideaways.

There are 15 blocks, 3 have pre-existing properties already sold, and the remaining 12 are vacant awaiting development.

from the website: <http://www.millerscorner.org/>

A program for social interaction to make Adelaide more liveable

Alan Stewart, PhD

(Note: This is adapted from my submission about this initiative of the Adelaide City Council)

The Draft Strategic Plan 2012-2016 of the Adelaide City Council was recently available for public consultation and feedback. Of the six proposed **Outcomes** the one which took my attention is **4: Liveable City**, in which are listed several characteristics.

Among these and associated potential strategies to help achieve 'A Liveable City' is:

Create places and programs that promote social interaction

I put to you that, while 'social interaction' is an admirable aim it does not 'just happen.' It does require **places** where it may occur, as listed in the Strategic Plan, such as 'neighbourhoods, streets and public spaces which are safe and welcoming.'

And in multi-storey buildings, facilities such as a community room in which residents can have functions such as 'bring-a-plate' social gatherings ...no focus on results, no strategy to consider. At very little cost to participants.

For some it happens through participation in projects such a communal garden or in finishing or beautifying components of a development. In many instances this is not applicable.

A vital prerequisite for social interaction to happen successfully city wide, in my opinion, is **programs** to create the opportunity for people who may not know each other to engage well.

For example, developers include ways in which residents of particular multi-storey apartment blocks can connect with each other. Planners and others in the Adelaide City Council promote engagement by citizens through **actually talking to each other**.

I see no mention in the Draft Strategic Plan of any consideration given to such programs.

What do you say to the notion of developing a culture in which occupants of particular buildings specifically and the citizenry more generally know how to – and do – connect well?

Supposing there were people available who are skilled in the art of hosting gatherings in public places in which the purpose is for participants to engage well with people they may not know through enjoying lively and enriching conversation? Who could help organise and then facilitate face-to-face get togethers in hospitable spaces in which there is nothing for participants to 'do'- no problems to resolve, no focus on results, no strategy to consider.

Where all that is asked of participants is that they give of themselves by expressing interest in the persons with whom they will spend time in uninterrupted conversation. And from which does emerge experience of a deeper sense of human connectivity plus a lot of fun – and perhaps more confidence

to converse (treat each other well) in everyday life.

(For explanations of why this is important in enabling people to enhance and expand their sense of wider community, no matter who they are, see:

The Death of Intimacy - A selfish, market-driven society is eroding our very humanity. By Martin Jaques

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/sep/18/britishidentity.comment>
See his conclusions: "...What, after all, could be more important than our humanity? Perhaps if enough people realise what has happened, what is happening, we might claw back a little of ourselves, of what we have lost."

The Flight From Conversation. By Sherry Turkle

"We live in a technological universe in which we are always communicating. And yet we have sacrificed conversation for mere connection."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/opinion/sunday/the-flight-from-conversation.html?emc=eta1>

Loneliness on the rise as our cities atomise

<http://theconversation.edu.au/loneliness-on-the-rise-as-our-cities-atomise-6068>

This recent report by the Grattan Institute in Melbourne entitled **Social Cities** (See also <http://www.indaily.com.au/?iid=61067&sr=0#folio=2> and http://www.grattan.edu.au/publications/137_report_social_cities.pdf) indicates that "A lack of face-to-face contact can put our health at risk."

And that "Unfortunately, there are worrying signs that isolation and loneliness are growing in Australia. Furthermore, that the very nature of urban design exacerbates the lack of opportunity for face-to-face social contact.")

When opportunities for deeper connection become available in widespread places it could bring attention to the people who recognise that, while green building is the way of the future, community building is equally vital.

The means to create such opportunities is to hand, at least in Adelaide. By this I refer to a program to train people here who would host gatherings in diverse public places in which people can and do talk well.

I know how to do this. See <http://conversare.net/?p=838> .

For when this happens it would be a first on our little planet, 3rd from the sun. Could this be a source of pride for the people of South Australia?

How do you think this may come about?

Disclaimer: I would welcome your support for this in any way you see fit. <smile>

End note:

Meg Wheatley is the person who made the comment: 'Whatever the problem, community is the answer.'

If you go along with this sentiment you will likely greatly appreciate her item entitled:

The Promise & Paradox of Community

which can be heard at

<http://seekingcommunity.ca/content/margaret-wheatley-promise-paradox-community>

Appointment of Fred Hansen

In May 2011 the Urban Ecology Newsletter featured an article by Andrew Tidswell about Fred Hansen's final lecture as SA's Thinker In Residence. Andrew's concluding remarks were:

"We wait with interest to see how Fred's vision and plan gets supported and implemented. He said that it was important to learn from good models that exist, and Portland is one model that we can easily learn from. The State Government seems to be looking at Portland as a model for us, let us hope it has the courage to take the necessary steps to implement Fred Hansen's proposals."

We are now pleased to report that Fred Hansen has recently taken up the position as director of the new Urban Renewal Authority (URA) which replaces the old Land Management Corporation (LMC) with elements of Housing SA and Defence SA. His appointment is for 5 years. The URA will have a much broader mandate than the LMC.

An article in the May edition of The Adelaide Review says that 'Hansen will oversee the development and renewal of Adelaide's CBD and its surrounding suburbs ...' This appointment seems very timely in particular as the Adelaide City Council has recently developed a draft Integrated Movement Strategy - the consultation closes on June 8. We hope that UEA members have taken the few minutes needed to complete the submission in support of better pedestrian and cycling neighbourhoods, ie ecologically sustainable human settlements.

In Fred's words: 'the URA will focus on making development and redevelopment more sustainable and creating "vibrant communities" -

Some websites for your interest

- **How exercise can slow or reverse "normal" brain decline:** <http://tinyurl.com/7mresp> Walking, or any other aerobic exercise, such as cycling or running. Possibly weights too, but that wasn't studied. But walking and cycling can reverse the decline of cities as well...

Richard Risenberg

- Also from Richard Risenberg: Distributed indoor urban farming with LEDs would boost food supply, save energy & water: <http://tinyurl.com/86ckdfu>

- Debunking the Peak Oil Debunkers <<http://evworld.com/news.cfm?newsid=27872>>

- NYC recently funded three new urban agriculture projects: a rooftop garden at a settlement house, a vegetable garden near the Gowanus Canal and a commercial rooftop farm atop a Brooklyn Navy Yard building. <bittman.blogs.nytimes.com>

Mark Bittman is now following Urban Ecology on facebook and twitter

- <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs072/1100594> is the website of the Ecocity builders newsletter: *Ecocities Emerging* The May 2012 issue includes a dedication to Ernest Callenbach (see below)

Epistle to the Ecotopians..., was found on the computer of "Ecotopia" author Ernest Callenbach (1929-2012) after his death on April 16th. Written in the throes of the Vietnam War, "Ecotopia" tells of a secessionist nation - carved from what was once Oregon, Washington and Northern California - that by 1999 has evolved toward a "stable state" of bioregionalism, in which each territory cultivates its distinct ecological character. Ernest was a longtime friend and advisor to Ecocity Builders. We will all miss him and we salute a life well lived.

- Kirstin Miller, Executive Director, Ecocity Builders

- world-carfree-news_eng@lists.riseup.net. The May issue includes the following "It ends all tax breaks, special financing arrangements and federal research and development funding. We ensure that never again can a company like BP take a tax deduction for money spent cleaning up its own mess in the Gulf of Mexico." These are the words of Sen. Bernie Sanders, one of the lawmakers involved in introducing a new bill in the USA that would end fossil fuel subsidies.

- Debunking the Peak Oil Debunkers <<http://evworld.com/news.cfm?newsid=27872>>

Also see: <http://www.roperld.com/science/minerals/crudeoilusresurgenceno.pdf>

- http://www.thegreenpages.com.au/news/bike-lanes-economic-benefits-go-beyond-jobs/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Green+Razor+177&utm_content=Green+Razor+177+CID_d24ab12865499752e5e4bbad05ef5f51&utm_source=Green+Razor+Email+Campaign&utm_term=Read+More The success of raising cycling rates in Copenhagen and Portland illustrates the benefits of strong and sustained investment in a network of bike lanes. As these integrated networks expand and connect the places people want to go to and from, this creates greater use, better network efficiencies and better returns on investment.

..."Just as you are more likely to buy an iPad the more applications it has, you are more likely to switch from car to bicycle the more bicycle lanes (and therefore destinations reachable by bicycle) are available. Doubling the number of bike lanes more than doubles the number of cyclists likely to use them." from an article Brad Pettitt

- April 11th is the day when the first Green Map was published back in 1992. UEA published the first Green Map in the Southern Hemisphere in 1995 and now our original Green Map is being donated to the world's most famous Map Collection at the New York Public Library! This came from Chérie Hoyle who initiated the publication of the Green Map in Australia.

Bangladeshi visitors



This photo was taken at the small gathering in the Community Room at Christie Walk on Thursday May 9th at which Ifti Rashid and Harun Bhuyan were special guests.

See page 2 for the report on the forum at which Ifti and Harun were the keynote speakers.

Building in Straw Bale



A reminder that four of the dwellings in Christie Walk are constructed from Straw.

A recent ABC gardening program mentioned

- must use straw which is crop stalks which are baled after they have dried, not hay which is baled green and has more moisture content
- best straw is tritikale (pron trit-uh-car-lee, it's a hybrid of wheat and rye), preferred for its longer and stronger stalks
- bales do need to be the highly compacted kind, and the standard size 900 x 450 x 350mm (like our sample)
- don't use cement in the render as it needs to breathe
- can build straw bale walls on a raised timber floor, does not require concrete slab

- main concern is to keep straw dry, hence about 45mm thick render and important to have wide enough eaves to avoid rainwater running down walls
- people sometimes put an interior straw bale wall as sound insulation between kids and parents parts of a house
- can cut out extra door or window spaces to modify an existing straw wall if necessary

[Thanks to Simon Fisher for this report]