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AIR QUALITY

CHECK YOUR AIR QUALITY

A website can help you identify the quality of the air where you live. The Homecheck website is postcode driven and allows you to check information such as air quality, risk of flooding, subsidence and landslide, proximity to landfill sites and radon risk. The information provided is free-of-charge at www.homecheck.co.uk.

Source: *Air Quality Management, November 2000*

BAD AIR IN LONDON

A report commissioned by the Department of Health identifies air pollution in London as a greater risk to health than road traffic accidents.

The report *On the Move* suggests that 380 deaths are caused per year by traffic-related pollution, (respiratory diseases and cancer) in London, compared to 226 deaths by road accidents (1998).

Source: www.doh.gov.uk/london/onthemove.pdf,
Air Quality Management, November 2000

BIRMINGHAM'S CLEAN AIR?

The City Council of Birmingham has decided not to declare an air quality management area (AQMA), in the belief

that it will meet air quality objectives. Most other urban areas are declaring AQMAs, making Birmingham as the second largest UK city, the exception to the rule. Most authorities have used dispersion modelling as the basis for their declarations; Birmingham has used computer models and historical data collected from a large number of monitoring stations. Current monitoring shows that the 2003/5 limits for seven air pollutants are already being met, although occasionally nitrogen dioxide limits are exceeded near busy roads. Existing trends and forecasts suggest that these levels will fall below 2005 limits.

Source: *Air Quality Management, November 2000*

POLLUTION CAUSES FACTORY SHUT DOWN IN DELHI

The Supreme Court recently ruled that factories in residential areas of New Delhi, India, be shut down on the grounds of pollution. Delhi is one of the most polluted mega-cities in the world. The government however had to back down on strict anti-pollution policy when thousands of factory workers took to the streets, leading to violence, building damage and at least 2 deaths. It now looks as though 60% of the factories originally facing closure will remain open.

Source: *BBC News, November 27th 2000*,
<http://www.e-volve.org.uk/articles.asp?ID=845>

MORE CASH FOR CLEANER FUELS

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, announced at the recent climate conference in The Hague, that an extra £69 million would be given to help tackle air pollution and promote cleaner, more fuel efficient cars. £30 million will be given to the UK Powershift Programme (see *Atm. Issues*, Sept. 2000 and www.est-powershift.org.uk), £30 million will be used to expand the Cleaner Vehicles Programme, particularly aimed at cutting urban air pollution and the remaining £9 million will be used to support new technologies such as fuel cells and hybrid vehicles.

Source:

<http://www.e-volve.org.uk/articles.asp?ID=813>

CLIMATE CHANGE

GLOBAL WARMING INFORMATION & ACTIVITY PACK

The UK Department of the Environment, Transport & the Regions (DETR) have released an excellent Global Warming Information and Activity Pack for Key Stages 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum.

With an information booklet, teachers' notes, seven activities (including a game) and a poster, the pack aims to provide pupils with an overview of the causes and effects of global warming, and to let them know about what they can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help to minimise the consequences.

To obtain a copy of the Global Warming Pack contact the DETR's Global Atmosphere Division (3/F3 Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London), or **aric's** Atmosphere, Climate & Environment Information Programme at the usual address.

WETTEST AUTUMN ON RECORD IN ENGLAND AND WALES

England and Wales have experienced the wettest autumn since records began in 1766. The total rainfall in England and Wales during the September to November period was nearly 500mm, well surpassing the previous record of 456mm set in 1852.

According to the Meteorological Office wet autumns were likely to become a regular feature of British weather as a result of climate change, although rainfall throughout the year will be relatively unchanged since summers are expected to become drier, particularly in the south east.

The record-breaking rainfall has been the result of frequent slow moving low-pressure systems from the Atlantic. Although not evidence for global warming on its own, this autumn's unseasonable weather could be expected to occur more frequently if global temperature continues to rise as a result of man-made greenhouse gas pollution.

Source: [BBC News Online](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-2000-11-27), 27th November 2000.

NEW UK CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

In November the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, launched the new UK Climate Change Programme, outlining the nation's clear strategy for delivering its 12.5% greenhouse gas emission reduction target under the Kyoto Protocol. The new UK Climate Change Programme includes policies that could cut the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by 23% below 1990 levels in 2010, while acknowledging that cuts of up to 60-70% globally may be necessary in the long term. Cuts of 19% in carbon dioxide emissions could be achieved, with further action delivering the domestic 20% goal.

The new Programme focuses on the challenge of preparing to make bigger emission cuts by ensuring a fundamental shift in the way we generate and use energy over the coming century. It announces that the Government plans a national debate on how the UK can make the transformation to a low carbon economy and that it will be reviewing the options for future energy choices.

The UK Climate Change Programme is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/climatechange/index.htm>

Source: Department of the Environment, Transport & The Regions Press Release, 17th November 2000:
<http://www.press.detr.gov.uk/>

CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS STALL IN THE HAGUE

Signatory nations to the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change assembled in the Hague, Netherlands, in November at the 6th Conference of Parties (COP6) to discuss the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, which aims to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2% by 2008 to 2012. Despite initial optimism that the Hague Conference would be another environmental landmark, the talks failed to produce concrete agreements amongst nations about how greenhouse gas emissions should actually be reduced in practice.

The main stumbling block came over the issue of whether and how "flexible mechanisms" like carbon sinks and emissions trading should be accommodated into national reduction strategies. The United States, along with its allies in the bloc known as the Umbrella Group - which includes Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia and the Ukraine - has argued that "flexible mechanisms" can help countries meet their domestic emission reduction targets without

threatening economic growth. The European Union, however, has opposed the inclusion of carbon sinks such as new forests, on the grounds that it allows polluters to circumnavigate their responsibility for actually cutting real emissions, and as such goes against the spirit of the Kyoto Protocol.

Further information about COP6 can be found at the Conference website:
<http://cop6.unfccc.int>

Source: Global Environmental Change Report, 24th November 2000.

EARTH 8°C WARMER BY 2100

New results from the latest Hadley Centre climate change computer model published in *Nature* (vol. 408, pp 184-190) suggest that the global average surface temperature could rise by 8°C by the end of the 21st century. For the first time, scientists have modelled the effects of climatic-induced change in vegetation, soils and oceans, thereby representing more realistically the Earth's coupled climate system.

The model predicts that if greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase unchecked at current rates, absorption of atmospheric carbon dioxide by ocean and land sinks (currently about 50% of man-made emissions) will actually be replaced by carbon dioxide release. Such a carbon cycle feedback significantly enhances the projected rise in global temperature. Without the carbon cycle link, average global surface temperature is projected to rise by 5.5°C. If realised, the Earth would become warmer than at anytime during the last 60 million years.

For further information, contact the UK Meteorological Office website:
<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk>

Source: Global Environmental Change Report, 24th November 2000.

DRINKING TEA & COFFEE CONTRIBUTES TO GLOBAL WARMING

Britain is a nation of tea and coffee drinkers but the way we make our beloved cuppa wastes energy and harms the environment, latest statistics from the 'are you doing your bit?' campaign show. The nation drinks a staggering 229 million cups of tea and coffee every day. That's enough to fill 22 Olympic-size swimming pools. It works out at an amazing 9.5 million cups every hour, 159,027 cups every minute and 2,650 cups every second.

But if each time we boil the kettle we use more water than we need, we also waste valuable energy and contribute to climate change. On average, we could all save 90 seconds each time we boil a kettle - by putting in only the amount of water we need. Such a simple action would also cut household electricity bills - overfilling each time we boil wastes enough energy in a week to light our house for a day or run a TV set for 26 hours.

Although it is not possible to attribute the recent floods to global warming, climate change is expected to lead to rising sea levels and more frequent severe weather conditions - such as heavy rainfall with the increased risk of flooding - together with their growing economic and human costs.

*Source: Department of the Environment, Transport & The Regions Press Release, 20th November 2000:
<http://www.press.detr.gov.uk/>*

ENERGY

OFFSHORE WIND POWER

In their report *North Sea Offshore Wind: A European Powerhouse*, Greenpeace has called on the five North Sea countries - the UK, Germany, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands - to

develop offshore wind power as an integral component of their climate action plans.

Currently most wind energy is generated by land-based turbines and windfarms. In the UK in particular, however, concerns have been raised about the visual impact wind turbines have on the landscape, and many windfarm development proposals have been rejected as a consequence. If wind power was to contribute a significant proportion to electricity demand, it is expected that many thousands or tens of thousands of extra turbines would need to be erected.

Siting wind turbines offshore, however, reduces their visual impact. Furthermore, Greenpeace believe that the full North Sea offshore wind potential is more than three times the current electricity consumption of the North Sea countries. If 1% a year of offshore resources for the North Sea countries were used to displace fossil fuels over the next 12 years (the end of the Kyoto Protocol first commitment period), a saving of 186 million tonnes per year of carbon dioxide emissions could be made, equal to over 10% of current emission rates. Such a resource would provide clean electricity for 6.5 million homes each year.

The Greenpeace report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/~climate/climatecountdown/dewifinal10.pdf>

Source: Greenpeace website:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/~climate/climatecountdown/>; Global Environmental Change Report, 24th November 2000.

