



I know I've been going on about water for quite some time, but there is one story about water that is actually a good environment news story. It is also a terrific yarn for those interested in medieval history.

Many moons ago my wife and I enjoyed weekends in the Ribble Valley in Lancashire. The Ribble is joined by the River Calder near Whalley, which has a historic abbey. On the Calder near Whalley Abbey there has been a weir for some 600 years, which originally powered the corn mill and is now to be used for producing electricity. Planning permission was finally granted to Whalley Community Hydro this month, following a long process of feasibility studies.

This is a small-scale, community-based project that will resurrect a historic feature of the man-made landscape for a modern version of its original use. As an industrial and provident society Whalley Community Hydro will be able to sell the electricity and reinvest the money in more renewable energy schemes for the community.

The monks of Whalley Abbey (now, incidentally, a Church of England retreat and conference venue) would have been delighted.

The Whalley scheme is just one of hundreds of community-based renewable energy schemes supported by the energysave network. Boosted by the popularity of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's TV series, it brings together people who are trying to set up their own renewable energy schemes.

Returning to the issue of wind energy, other environment news concerned a survey carried out by Ipsos MORI for RenewableUK and published on 19 April shows that over two-thirds of people in the UK are in favour of wind energy. The survey returned a figure of 38% strongly in favour and 28% tending to be in favour, while only 8% were against. The publication of the survey result co-incided with the launch of a campaign in Parliament opposing wind energy.

Maria McCaffery, chief executive of RenewableUK, said: "It's clear that the majority of those surveyed are supportive of energy from wind – strongly indicated from our survey results. Wind is an abundant, clean, secure and affordable energy source. It is therefore not only undemocratic to allow the vocal anti-wind minority to derail the UK's plans for renewable energy, but also damaging to our economy, undermining investment and jobs that will help to rebuild communities across the country and put the UK on a path to future economic prosperity."

Members of RenewableUK, a trade association for wind and marine energy, can be found in the Environment Directory.

Reporting on the survey, The Guardian noted that the figure was slightly higher than a survey carried out by itself in March, which showed 60% of people in favour of wind farms 'near their homes'. Clearly there aren't as many NYMBYs as previously thought.

Chris Stokes