

HERITAGE &  
ENVIRONMENT  
NEWSLETTER

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Important points of interest in this issue:

- 'Green' services offered by WLDC this Christmas
- How to choose the right paint for your historic building
- How the changes to the GPDO may affect you
- Meet our new Environmental Strategy Officer
- How to make your Christmas Poinsettia last



## Dreaming of a 'Green' Christmas?

The festive season will soon be upon us, and whilst its a great time for celebrations it is important not to forget the environment this Christmas.

This doesn't have to mean a 'bah humbug' approach to the holiday season, just a little care to ensure you minimise your impact on the environment and you can have yourselves a very merry, 'green' Christmas. Here are some ideas to help you celebrate Christmas without increasing your carbon footprint:

**Get real!** Approximately 6 million Christmas trees are grown and sold in the UK each year. Make sure yours doesn't end up in landfill by recycling it for compost or buying a potted one that can live in your garden after Christmas.

**Save a tree.** Around 1 million Christmas cards are thrown away every year. If all Xmas cards are recycled we could save 250,000 trees. Alternatively, why not give the money you would spend on cards to charity.

**Light up your life.** Buy LED fairy lights, they are 3 times brighter, use 80% less energy than conventional lights and last 10 times longer. Solar powered Christmas lights are also available.

**Buy locally sourced produce.** The average Christmas dinner has travelled over 25, 000 miles before it reaches your plate! Support your local farmers market and enjoy seasonal winter vegetables and naturally raised meats.

**Compost!** Approximately 4,000 million sprouts are bought the week before Christmas; add to that the vegetable peelings and any cardboard packaging; it will do wonders for your garden!

**Bag it up.** An estimated 83 square kilometres of wrapping paper ends up in rubbish bins each year. Use gift bags that can be re-used next year or choose wrapping that contains recycled paper.

Merry  
Christmas  
and  
Happy New Year



**Drink and be merry.** However, don't forget to recycle all your bottles, plastics and cans once the party is over. Also avoid disposable items such as paper cups and plates.

**Dec the halls with real holly.** Naturally made decorations such as holly and mistletoe give your home a traditional festive feel. Avoid buying plastic decorations and give any old ones you no longer want to charity.

**Be a Sustainable Santa.** Try to avoid buying over packaged gifts. Every Christmas 4,000 tonnes of products arrive from China, resulting in a very large carbon footprint. Buy locally and donate unwanted gifts to charity.

**A New Years Resolution** to do your bit for the environment. Switch off, save a bag, walk to the shop, recycle... it will save you money too!! For more information on 'doing your bit' visit the web pages below.

**WEST LANCASHIRE'S SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

Turn your Christmas tree into bark mulch for your garden in Coronation Park, Ormskirk on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. For more information telephone 01695 585147.

Remember to use the Council's recycling services.

Compost bins are available free of charge to West Lancashire residents. To order your composting kit visit the Council website or call 0845 077 0757 (quoting reference 'lake').

More information on all of these issues is available on the West Lancashire District Council website: [www.westlancsdc.gov.uk](http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk)

## A PAINTED FINISH



*This wood has been protected for a short period of time by modern gloss paint, which has become too brittle to cope with the slight movement of the wood and has cracked along the edges of the wood grain. The resulting curling back of the paint exposes the wood to UV radiation and loss of adhesion and flaking is followed by decay of the timber.*



*Good timberwork enhances the look of a property*

Wood is one of the oldest and most flexible of building materials. It can make the most wonderfully delicate windows or the strongest of frames or floors. It does however have one problem – it is essentially a biodegradable material. Decay can be caused by UV radiation from sunlight and water penetration facilitating attack by moulds, fungi, and insects. There are many methods of dealing with these issues, remembering that prevention is always better than cure. Paint is one of the oldest, best and widest used protective measures for both exterior and interior wood. For those of you who wish for some form of authenticity and good protection for your timber a short consideration of the subject follows.

### EARLY TREATMENTS

Seasoned wood has a marked degree of protection from the elements over unseasoned wood. So wood should be allowed to dry out properly before use. Except perhaps for the hardest and most durable seasoned timber such as Oak, additional protection is generally required. One of the earliest systems was to use the same material as was being used in between the timber frame – a thin coat of limewash. A regular application would help protect the wood and fill in gaps and cracks. Later a coal-tar derivative and its successor, Creosote, were used for many years until banned for non-industrial purposes. There are now safe modern alternatives.

### LATER DEVELOPMENTS

The ideal properties for a substance to apply to protect wood is an opaque film that adheres firmly to the wood, moves and flexes with it and has a certain degree of microporosity allowing moisture to move in and (importantly) out of the wood, reducing the risk of rot.

The combination of white pigment (lead carbonate) with linseed oil, the most widely available drying oil, formed white lead paint: a wonderfully flexible adhesive film. Rather than cracking or becoming brittle this would gradually weather away to a matt surface which could be easily recoated. However this paint was considered dull and took a long time to dry. The addition of varnish to add shine and speed up drying made it become inflexible providing poor long term protection. These perceived faults and the toxic nature of white lead paint and other substitutes based on heavy metals lead to the development of synthetic alternatives in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Now, an awareness of the undesirable properties of solvent based systems and a desire

to move away from the inauthentic texture and look of modern paints has led to a revival in the use of traditional paints.

### MODERN TREATMENTS

There are many hundreds of finishes available to the modern householder. Considerable confusion can arise from the multitude of 'historic' paint ranges that are now on the market. Most of these reproduce the colours from former periods but do so in a modern alkyd or emulsion paint. Stains are not an historic finish and are not to be recommended for historic properties. With several 'traditional' paints or their ingredients no longer available it is not always possible to be authentic. White lead paint is still available but only Grade I and II\* listed buildings will be granted the special permission necessary to use it. There are however at least two good alternatives:

Linseed-oil paints are available (generally now made by Scandinavian firms) which will give a long life and weather to an attractive finish. Ensure that the linseed oil has been treated to avoid attack by mildew. These paints can be time consuming to apply especially as surfaces need to be completely free from older layers of 'modern' paint and take a long time to dry.

Another alternative is to use a water-borne acrylic paint in either gloss or matt finishes. These water based paints are quick drying, non-yellowing, release no harmful solvents, easy to apply and are flexible as they age. They are best applied to a clean surface free from old failing paint and are long lasting on exterior surfaces.

### APPLICATION

Whichever system you choose to apply, there are a few good principles that must be followed to achieve a good solution and avoid premature failure:

- ◆ New wood must be properly seasoned and of the highest quality
- ◆ Old wood must be sound and any rot or decay treated prior to painting
- ◆ Preparation is key – seek advice from the supplier and ensure you or your contractor carries it out
- ◆ Choose a coating that will remain flexible and has microporosity
- ◆ Regularly inspect your property – Remember: 'A Stitch in time...'

For more information and lists of suppliers follow the link on our website ([www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/heritage](http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/heritage)) to The Building Conservation Directory website.

## CHANGES TO PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA

New criteria covering when planning permission is required for alterations and extensions to domestic properties came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008. This includes changes to what is permitted without the need for planning permission on properties in conservation areas.

The principle changes, **as they relate to conservation areas**, can be summarised as follows;

- Two storey extensions are *not permitted development* (Class A.2c)
- Side extensions are *not permitted development* (Class A.2b)
- Detached curtilage buildings i.e. garages and sheds are *not permitted development* if they are located on the side of the property (Class E.3).
- Any chimney, flue or soil/vent pipe is *not permitted development* where it fronts a highway and is located on either a principle or side elevation (Class G.1b).

Other amendments, which do not specifically relate to new development in conservation

areas, include clarification over alterations to a roof. Under Class C development is *not permitted* if the work protrudes more than 150mm above the plane of the roof, involves an alteration or replacement of a chimney/flue or soil/vent pipe or the installation of solar panels. Under Class F new areas of hard-standing (of more than 5 square metres) are required to be made of porous materials or have provision to enable any surface water run-off to be dealt with from within the curtilage of the property. The revised Order also confirms that the erection of any building, enclosure or oil/gas container in the curtilage of a listed building requires planning permission.

Please be aware that the changes in the Order are numerous and complicated and that before commencing any alteration or extension to your property you need to check first with the Councils Planning Department to ascertain whether planning permission is required or not. Unfortunately ignorance of the changes in legislation is not a defence in cases of unauthorised development and planning enforcement matters.



*Grey squirrels are a particular pest for beech trees*

## PESTS & DISEASES: BEECH

Continuing the series of Pest and diseases of trees this issue focuses on Beech.

Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and the Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea') are well known trees that have been extensively planted throughout Britain. Generally it is considered not to be a native tree although it may have been established in the south of England prior to the last ice age.

Beech is particularly prone to climatic changes; in part due to its shallow rooting system and can suffer from the effects of hot dry summers. Although that has not been a problem in the last few years, particularly in the north of England! With the threat of climate change it is likely that Beech will not survive in the south east of England.

Once Beech has become weakened by stress factors such as drought then it can be much more susceptible to pest and diseases and in particular **Honey Fungus** (*Armillaria species*). Yellowish-brown (honey) coloured mushrooms, usually in clumps, on or near the base of the tree or old stumps, in late summer and autumn.

The tree's canopy may appear healthy for many years but the roots will become decayed and die back with the potential for the tree to collapse as the fungus progresses. Extensive decay will cause the area under the bark (cambium) to decay and black strands, commonly known as boot laces which are the mycelium part of the fungus, can be found.

### BEECH BARK SCALE (COCCUS) AND BEECH BARK DISEASE

Infested trees, may appear to be covered with snow. Varying sizes of white fluffy "wool" covering tiny yellowish insects on the stem are indicative of active insect attack during, or in advance of, canker formation.

The pest renders the tree vulnerable to infection by fungi which can cause a serious condition called Beech Bark Disease. This in turn causes extensive cankering and deformation of the stem, making the trees unsuitable for any use other than as firewood.

Beech Bark Disease is becoming more widespread and impacts on mature trees. Very young or very old trees are rarely affected. Dead patches of bark and tarry sap may indicate the first signs of Beech Bark Disease. Later, large areas of bark may die and leaves turn yellow.

Other pest and diseases can include cankers, mites, woolly aphids, and galls. One particular notable pest for Beech is the **Squirrel**, not our native Red Squirrel but the North American Grey Squirrel. They strip bark from the trunk and branches which can lead to the die back of branches and not uncommonly to the death of the whole tree when the base of the tree has been girdled by squirrels feeding on the sap in mid summer.

**Although Beech may not be the most resilient of trees to pest and diseases it is undoubtedly an attractive tree that deserves to be planted.**



*Beech forest*

## West Lancashire District Council

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## MORE INFORMATION

**NEW ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY OFFICER.** A warm welcome to our new officer, Christina Iball. Tina joins the Council from a large design consultancy where she worked as an environmental consultant specialising in air quality. Previous to that she spent three years at Manchester City Council as an air quality action plan coordinator. Tina said "I'm very pleased to be part of the team and am looking forward to progressing the West Lancashire Climate Change Strategy".



**ORMSKIRK TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL 2008** The public exhibition is being held in the Chapel Gallery between the 25th Nov and the 12th Dec. In case you miss it you can still view the information on our website ([www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/heritage](http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/heritage)) and get your comments in by the deadline of the 9th January 2009 by post or e-mail to the addresses on the left.

**FREE TREE SCHEME** 170 households have taken up the Council's offer meaning that more than 1400 trees will be planted during this year's National Tree Week.

## HOMEOWNER AND TREE SURGEON FINED

A homeowner and his tree surgeon have been fined for cutting down protected trees at a property in the Upholland Conservation Area.

Mr Gauld of Aughton, instructed Mr Michael Branker of Bickerstaffe to remove 5 sycamore trees at a property at Grove Close, Upholland, which were protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

The tree felling was undertaken without acquiring permission from West Lancashire District Council.

On 30<sup>th</sup> October, Mr Gauld pleaded guilty at Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and was ordered to pay a fine of £2,800 and also pay prosecution costs of £1,200. At an earlier hearing in September Mr Branker had been fined £5000 and ordered to pay the Council's costs.

Commenting on the verdict, Cllr Martin Forshaw, Portfolio Holder for Planning, said:

"Preserving the District's tree heritage is important. The Council strives to maintain the attractiveness of our local environment as it makes West Lancashire such a distinctive place to live and work.

"This case should serve as a reminder to residents that we will rigorously pursue and take a hard line against those that breach Tree Preservation Orders. Homeowners in West Lancashire should contact the Council if they are unsure whether any trees and woodlands are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or are within a conservation area."

More information about Tree Preservation Orders can be found online at [www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/trees](http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/trees)

## POINSETTIA

The Christmas plant we know today as 'the Poinsettia' has a very interesting history. The ancient Aztecs are first to be linked to this plant, as it is native to Central America. Like most plants it has medicinal qualities and potions to treat fevers can be made from the sap.

The Poinsettia gained its common name from the son of a French Physician 'Joel Roberts Poinsett' who was appointed the first US ambassador to Mexico. Poinsett was a keen botanist and he became enchanted by the red blooms during a visit to the Taxco region. He sent a number of the plants back to his own hothouses in South Carolina in order to propagate them and sent them out to friends and botanic gardens. One such friend gave the plant to another friend, Robert Buist, who was a Pennsylvania nurseryman. Buist is thought to

be the first person to have sold the plant under its botanical name, *Euphorbia pulcherrima* that means "the most beautiful Euphorbia".

Poinsettias are very difficult plants to keep from year to year and it is too complicated a process to go into here. However, the coloured bracts can last six months by keeping the plant away from direct sunlight and draughts; temperatures below 13°C (55°F) and overwatering will quickly damage plants. Only water, thoroughly, once the surface of the compost begins to dry out. A humid atmosphere will prolong bract life. The bracts on plants which show yellow pollen will not last as long.

Although they are usually disappointing in the second season, plants can be kept by hard pruning and repotting in April, and growing them in a cool, light place through summer.