

## Towards a Sustainable Girton



'Towards a Sustainable Girton' is a project designed to encourage ecological awareness and environmental practice in Girton. Its focus is a 1940s electric float which is being restored and used as a high-profile vehicle for a variety of recycling and reuse activities.

The float, which had been part-restored by Friends of the Earth in the 90s for a project which failed to materialise, was eventually passed to Douglas de Lacey in 2004.

In October 2004 a small committee formed itself to restore the float and use it for various projects around Girton. The first task was to test interest. Soundings were taken with organisations such as *Tools for Self-Reliance* and *Emmaus* who were keen for us to collect for them, and local recycling officials were enthusiastic. Those responsible for the Village shredder were also extremely grateful for the offer of transport.

The next step was to make the float properly roadworthy, and we are extremely grateful for generous grants from both the Girton Town Charity and CCORRN (Cambridgeshire Community Reuse and Recycling Network). Thanks to them we can put it back onto the road and into service for the community. Starting in June 2005 we shall embark on a number of projects while continuing restoration work.



We hope the Sustainable Girton Project logo, representing the float, will soon become a means of alerting the village to various 'sustainability' projects in which we can all participate for a safer, healthier environment. These will include composting, recycling, reuse, and safe disposal of toxic waste.

Our proposals for the future include:

- A formal launch on May 28 2005. We hope this will both encourage interest in the project and provide an opportunity for deepening awareness of sustainability.
- Regular use of the float to transport the Village Shredder. The shredder is cumbersome to transport and needs to be dismantled to fit into a car. The float is the ideal vehicle to use.
- An educational programme advertising the benefits of reuse, recycling and reducing waste. We hope to have a presence at village events such as the proposed Village Feast day and the Girton Show. The float would be available as a resource for the Glebe School and other children's organisations in the Village.
- Occasional collections of items which would otherwise be just waste. When people replace items like tools or white goods, they often forget that the old ones could be valuable to someone else. So we plan to make it easy for residents to allow otherwise useless things to be recycled or reused.
- Occasional collections of items which should not go into landfill, such as paints and batteries. These can then be recycled where possible or otherwise safely disposed of.
- And anything else which will help! If you have suggestions please mail them to [sustainable.girton@de-lacey.org](mailto:sustainable.girton@de-lacey.org).

## What is 'Sustainability'?



Sustainability means, more or less, living within our means. For the planet that entails learning how to replace non-renewable energy sources and to stop global warming. But what does it mean for a small local community? Ideally it would entail zero waste: that no waste products are exported from the Village.

Such an idea might appear to be unthinkable, yet many communities in the UK and elsewhere are beginning to plan zero waste strategies in response to global problems. Birmingham and Doncaster have both published theirs in the past few months. Chew Magna had a much-publicised 'zero-waste day' on 30 April 2005.

The first step is to see waste not only as a problem but also as a resource. The

strategy is then often defined in terms of 6 R's:

**Redesign.** Manufacturers need to redesign products and (especially) packaging with sustainability in mind. Some are beginning to get the message: computers often come packaged in cardboard now, not expanded polystyrene.

**Reduce.** Consumers can simply reduce the quantity of packaging they will accept. Many people now unwrap goods in the store and leave the packaging there. Eventually, stores will put pressure on suppliers to use more appropriate packaging in the first place.

**Reuse.** The popularity of jumble sales indicates a general desire to reuse. Passing things on can be a valuable way of helping others; for instance *Tools for Self-Reliance* provide much-needed tools in the Third World.

**Repair/Refurbish.** Repairing old equipment can be both economical and ecological.

**Reclaim.** Even if a piece of equipment is no longer useable its components may be. There is a significant industry dedicated to recovering precious metals from old computers.

**Recycle.** Waste materials can be converted into other things. I use a pencil which claims it was once a plastic cup. Shredded garden waste produces rich compost.

## Towards a Sustainable Girton

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