

As Green as it gets...

by Alison Macklin, shop manager

It is fair to say that this shop is unique! Brockweir is set in the Wye Valley, with Hewelsfield just up the hill. Both are right on the edge of the Forest of Dean in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Wales is just across the river and the world of supermarkets feels a very long way

away. The shop was set up as a community enterprise, to fill the gap left by the closure of the last commercial shop and post office in the area.

The people involved were keen to make their new shop as



environmentally friendly as possible, years before that idea became mainstream. Some very effective fundraising enabled the committee to turn their dream into a very impressive reality and the enterprise opened in 2003.

The building was designed to be exceptionally energy efficient. It is made out of local green oak, which allows it to blend into the local area, and is very well insulated. Several large windows make it light and airy. It has a ground source heat pump providing under floor heating and hot water.

This works by extracting energy from a field adjacent to the shop. Water circulated through pipes below the field arrives back at the heat pump about 5 degrees Celsius warmer. It does not sound a lot, but as there is about 230 litres of water in the pipes, this represents a considerable amount of energy.

The photovoltaic roof is covered with solar electric tiles called shingles – a total of 300 of them. The amount of electricity produced is considerably less than the theoretical maximum. Originally it was hoped that the shop would be able to export electricity to the National Grid but in practice the output is only enough to contribute to our own electricity consumption. The shop has been at the forefront in encouraging all manner of green approaches, many of which are now catching

on more widely. We encourage people to Refill, Reuse and Recycle:

- We recycle glass, cans, plastic bottles, card, paper and foil
- We compost all our café waste
- We encourage people to arrive on foot, bike and by horse and provide shelter and water
- We encourage customers to return jars which we then pass to our local suppliers for reuse
- We use Ecover for all our cleaning and allow customers to refill containers to reduce packaging.
- We do not provide new plastic bags but we accept old plastic bags for people to use again. We have our own design of re-usable bag.
- We collect old printer cartridges and mobile phone for various charities
- We only use recycled paper wherever possible.
- We also have a Klargester and Hippos in our cisterns to reduce water use.
- We sell as much local produce as possible to cut down on food miles and hence carbon emissions
- Our shop light bulbs are energy efficient and our outside lighting is on sensors
- We are part of The Forest Food Producers Group - www.forest-food.co.uk
- More information about our shop can be found at: www.bandhvilageshop.co.uk and www.theloftatbrockweir.co.uk