

# **It's Not Utopia, But Lifestyle Now**

## **Musings by Martyn Lowe**

Lifestyle is the key to a better tomorrow. No matter just how much of an ideal world we might all wish to live in, we will achieve nothing unless we consider what kind of lifestyle we lead. Much of what are considered to be utopian ideals are really only things which make for good practical common sense. I write here about what I hope to do, or hope to achieve, and that it might have a positive impact and help to create a better world. The good thing is that these are measures which we can all undertake right here and now. I present a few here below:

*Recycling and Current Energy Usage:* Perhaps one of the most lasting dreams about any Utopian society is that it should be full of both useful and beautiful objects (e.g., objects made out of natural and non-polluting materials, objects which are both functional and pleasing to the eye). Unfortunately, we have not managed to achieve that wonderful state of affairs, but at least we can do something about the waste of materials which surround us all now. Paper, glass, batteries, and compost materials are just a few of these. This is not to say that we will not have to recycle materials 'after the revolution'; just that it will not be a major problem if we apply a little forethought and some good design. In the meantime, we can all look to cutting down the amount of materials and energy which we waste. Energy saving light bulbs may be wonderful in terms of reducing energy usage, but it is better to use only such lighting as one really needs.

*Good Quality, Good Environmental Impact.* There is an old saying: 'You get what you pay for'. Call it good quality, or just good design, but they are both key factors in making objects which last a long time. It' is the difference between buying something which is cheap to purchase, but lasts just a year or two, or spending more money on a more expensive item which will last decades. Well made and well designed equate to low environmental impact. This in turn must equate to moving away from all of the values of a throw-away society, and

the kind of 'must have it now' short term economic thinking which has ruined the kind of societies which we all have to live in now.

*Walking and Public Transport.* Cities are for people. Cities are ideal places for walking, public transport (e.g. trams), and bike routes. For long distance trips there are the railways. Canals and rivers are ideal for the movement of goods.

*Vegetarianism.* There are many good reasons why one should become vegetarian, but most of the ones which people talk about are to do with improving one's health and stopping the exploitation or cruelty to animals. Historically, the eating of meat has been a luxury and it still so in most parts of the world. Fishing is destroying the world's oceans - and is totally unnecessary. Grow local and impact global. The environmental benefits from vegetarianism are very great indeed. But they can only achieve a major impact in conjunction with growing our own food locally.

*Wind Power & Solar Energy.* Many of our long term environmental problems may only be solved by energy conservation and the use of alternative energy. This all comes down to the use of the following measures: Better building, insulation - triple glazing, use solar energy, and widespread use of wind turbines. For further information on the development of wind turbines, see: [www.windpower.dk](http://www.windpower.dk)

In closing though, none of the above ideas are in any way difficult to achieve. Yet, in combination, they can help to bring about the kind of utopian world we might all like to live in. And while there might not be one technological fix to saving the planet, there are certainly a number of such progressive projects which are working towards making it a better place. None of the following project resources hold all of the solutions as to how we might build ourselves a utopian world, but they do show just what kind of Utopian's world we might all be able to build ourselves.

Airships are a practical alternative way of transporting heavy goods and carrying people around. See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airship>

Carbusters is a 32-page print magazine critiquing our society's car culture and exploring positive transport alternatives. See: <http://www.carbusters.org/index.php>

The Centre for Alternative Technology was founded in 1973, and is based in a former slate quarry in mid Wales. The role of the Centre is to explore and

demonstrate a wide range of alternatives, while communicating to other people the options for them to achieve positive change in their own lives. If you get a chance then you should try and visit the Centre. See: <http://www.cat.org.uk>

Marine Current Turbines has developed a tidal turbine technology to exploit currents in the seas, whether they are driven by the tides or by oceanic circulations. This is some of the coolest technology that I have ever come across! See: <http://www.marineturbines.com/>

Organic Food. Garden Organic is a K charity for organic growing. The charity explores how we might grow food in a more sustainable manner: both on the farm and in our gardens. See: <http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/index.php>

Practical Action is a charity which works with poor communities to develop appropriate technologies. See: [www.itdg.org](http://www.itdg.org)

Scientists for Global Responsibilities promotes ethical science, design and technology, based on the principles of openness, accountability, peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability. See: <http://www.sgr.org.uk/>

Scottish Ecological Design Association was set up in 1991 'to promote the design of communities, environments, projects, systems, services, materials and products which enhance the quality of life , and are not harmful to, living species and planetary ecology'. See: <http://www.seda2.org/>

Vegfam is a charity which promotes the growth of trees within developing countries. (Trees which help to provide both food and combat the effects of climate change.) VEGFAM helps people overseas by providing funds for self-supporting, sustainable food projects and the provision of safe drinking water. See: <http://www.vegfamcharity.org.uk/>

Wind Power Works is a website which provides information about various wind turbine projects throughout the world. See: <http://www.windpowerworks.net/>