

THE NOVERS VISION (The Past Guides the Future))

INTRODUCTION:

The increasing certainty that the earth is in the grips of an episode of climate change, whether this is natural, partly or wholly of anthropogenic origin remains uncertain, but it is clear that the projected changes will impact adversely on large areas of the earth. Similarly concerns over the dependence of human food production on the finite resources of oil as a power source in agriculture are becoming increasingly a cause for concern.

Fundamentally our post war dependence on oil for food production is such that it requires "10 calories of fossil fuel energy to produce a single calorie of food". **While such statistics must be treated with caution**, it is indisputable that our reliance on oil does present a very real problem as we approach 'Peak Oil'. This is the moment when we meet maximum oil production, after which the resource will decline. Today we are using four barrels of oil for every one discovered. It is not hard to imagine what effect a falling availability of fuel will have on small rural communities over what is an alarmingly short period of time

But this does not and should not be a wholly negative message, our children are faced with an uncertain future, so it is imperative that we approach these problems from a positive perspective, such problems can present opportunities.

Our present day industrialised consumer based culture is no more than a thin veneer, even providing food by farming is a very recent development, no more than 10,000 years old. The human species evolved over millions of years based on sustenance from an optimum diet, comprising a wide variety of wild plant material, meat, eggs, insects, fish and shellfish. Indeed it seems certain that a pre-agricultural diet provided a more superior nutrition. Studies of prehistoric skeletal remains show that people were up to 15cm taller before the adoption of agriculture. A typical hunter-gatherer life style would use as many as a 100 plant foods during a year, modern humans generally use less than 20, with a greater emphasis on products containing starch, wild plant foods are higher in nutrient content.

The human physique is tailored by evolution for foraging, we are physically framed and neurologically hardwired to find a vast range of food within a landscape, more so than in any other species. It can be argued that our instinctive reaction to landscape, for example the beauty that we perceive in a varied landscape of woods, hills and lakes is a hardwired response at a subliminal level to the foraging opportunities that such a landscape offers.

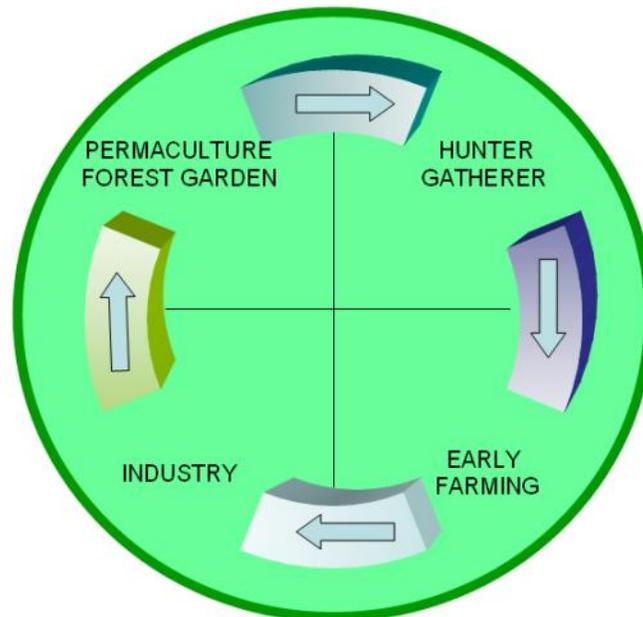
THE VISION:

- To create a unique educational facility for local and more distance schools and educational organisations. The 30 acre Novers site contains a varied topography and land cover which offers exciting potential for a range of educational activities.

Overall the woodland will be managed as a permaculture forest garden designed to provide foraging opportunities for as wide a range of native wild food plants as possible. In turn this will provide a diverse habitat for an equally wide range of fauna.

- It is proposed that the site be zoned into three areas relating to human survival strategies there will be therefore:
 1. **A hunter gatherer zone**
 2. **Agriculturalist zone**
 3. **Industrial zone**

Each zone will present information relating to the particular survival strategy and will be managed as such. Casual visitors will be able to follow a timeline from zone to zone.



In addition it will be possible, by appointment to live in a zone according to the technology of the zone for a short period of time. This latter facility will be offered in association with The Pioneer Centre, Cleobury Mortimer.

In its first stage the project will have a very low physical profile with minimal infrastructure, limited to the type of structure used within a hunter-gatherer culture, simple and temporary and of local materials.

In the longer term consideration will be given to the creation of a field study facility, built using sustainable building techniques and sustainable energy technologies incorporating a variety of innovative environmental benefits from energy efficiency to waste management. The influence of such a showcase centre, promoting energy efficiency and sustainability in a rural environment, has the potential to make a long term contribution to alleviate some of the sustainable energy problems that rural communities are likely to face in the future.

There will also be potentially in the future, within the agricultural zone a residential facility, possibly in the form of an Iron Age Round House. This will be built as a community project using local materials.

- The centre will explore innovative ways of presenting information on the many diverse information streams relating to the Novers itself and the wider landscape of Titterstone Clee Hill (geology, natural history, prehistory, history, quarrying, mining history) of the hill.
- Increased perception on the rich and diverse natural environment will inform, enthuse and encourage a future conservation ethic, sympathetic to the needs of this complex and sensitive landscape.
- The use of renewable and sustainable building techniques, energy generation and water management will showcase and promote these environmentally sensitive technologies within a rural environment.

The project is initiated and will be managed by the Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust.

Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust (TCHT) was formed to:

- (i) Conserve and enhance Titterstone Clee Hill and its surrounding environs, its heritage, history, flora and fauna, geology and substantial cultural remains
- (ii) Make known to the people of Shropshire visitors to Shropshire and the nation at large the unique nature of Titterstone Clee and its features of special archaeological, geological, historical and natural historical interest
- (iii) Establish and run a resource/study/visitor centre in furtherance of objects (i) and (ii) above built using sustainable building techniques and sustainable energy techniques and thus promoting energy efficiency and sustainability in a rural environment

CONCLUSION:

Titterstone Clee is a regionally and nationally important and arguably an internationally significant landscape, strategically positioned on the main arterial route from the densely populated industrial West Midlands westwards, as such it has enormous potential for visitor presentation. There is clear potential for such a resource, sensitively managed, to become a significant part of the local economy providing locally based jobs in the tourist sector.

The Novers Limeworks, the subject of this report, forms an integral part of the over-vision for the hill which encompasses a range of other potentially significant visitor attractions which include: The largest prehistoric enclosure in West Midlands, Bronze Age landscape elements, extensive medieval mine and quarry workings and one of the first hydro-electric schemes in the world.

The Novers project **offers a key** to unlock the considerable potential of this little known landscape and to breath new commercial life into the villages and rural towns lying within its hinterland.