

The Benefits of Sustainable Living.

All too often people see "Sustainable living" in an entirely negative light. "Oh dear I will not be able to have all the pleasant things and luxuries and life will be grey, restricted and dull." This is part of the mind set into which we have been manipulated and conditioned by the drive towards the consumer society.

However the reality is that in order to indulge in all those "pleasant things and luxuries" people have to earn lots of money and have to work long hours in order to do so. Whereas in the past only one member of a couple would work, now the average young couple has both members working and often working long hours. For years we were promised that automation would reduce the number of hours that people worked. It has not happened. Yet living sustainably will require that we use less of the Earth's resources and that in turn means that we will buy less. Further that means we will spend less and will therefore "need" to earn less.

So "sustainable living" does imply a change of lifestyle. It will involve living with less useless throw away junk. It will result in more making do and mending. But it will also mean needing to work less.

Another aspect of "sustainable living" that we have not even begun to face up to - is the need to reduce the world population. Already we have an unsustainable number of human beings in the World. The planets life support system cannot sustain our present numbers and lifestyle - the resources are simply not available. Already it is predicted that fishing will cease to be a food source within about 50 years. Minerals and even renewable resources like timber are being used up. Even with a simpler lifestyle we cannot support an ever growing population. We have to come to terms with setting out to reducing the numbers of people on Earth. That means smaller families, single child families and childless men and women.

Then consider travel. In order to "fit" many things into our lives we rush about all the time. Many people drive about a great deal in order to be able to "get all the things in". "Great we can do lots of things". The downsides of course are that all our localities are noisy, and congested, that air quality in towns is poor causing respiratory diseases, that walking in large parts of towns and cities is unpleasant, that driving is a boring and frustrating experience.

"Sustainable living" requires that we travel less and that we do so more efficiently. That implies public transport and shared journeys. "Sustainable living" embraces the greater use of locally produced goods, not shipping apples to France to be waxed, then back to Covent garden to be wholesaled and finally back to Dorset shops. Sustainability requires that we buy British goods rather than have them made in China from Indian steel and then shipped here. More local goods imply less lorries trundling all over the place. Sustainable living could reduce traffic to a quarter or even a tenth of its present volume. How much pleasanter life would be then.

So:- we work less and have more leisure, the localities in which we live are pleasanter, as are the places we go to visit. Yes we can still go and visit other places - not travelling so far and going by public transport. Flying either not at all, or very much less (flying is and inevitably will remain extremely environmentally damaging), but going out for the day, holidaying if not so far afield will remain activities.

But what will we do with all the leisure time? Won't life be boring? Well life will be far more what we make it. We will be able to engage with people much more. We will be able to devote much more time to our families, but also with our neighbours and communities. Most voluntary organisations struggle desperately to obtain supporters "everyone is too busy". Travelling by public transport is far more sociable than private transport. One can see "sustainable living" producing more vibrant communities.

In essence "sustainable living" is a recipe for "win win win".