

Richard And Celia Walker, Largs



With the present concern about climate change all of us are expected to do our bit to reduce our carbon footprint. Your *Wee Paper* visited Richard and Celia Walker to find out what they have done and are doing to help.

How long have you been staying in Largs?

We retired from the Anglican ministry in England in September 2005. We love Western Scotland and have enjoyed getting to know many folk here in Largs.

Why have you tried to do something about climate change?

Climate change is having a really bad effect on the natural world and on people in less developed regions. But it's not only climate change. Fossil fuels and nuclear fuels are actually running out at a time when the demand for them is increasing. In the future everyone is going to have to reduce their dependence on these fuels, and the sooner we do it the less catastrophic it will be.

What have you done?

We have installed a heat pump with a 100 metre deep borehole in our garden. This is over 400% efficient so if we put 1 kilowatt of electricity into it we get about 4 kilowatts of heat out. This heats our hot water and radiators. Our electricity comes from Good Energy who source all their supplies from renewables such as wind and water. We have also put a solar panel on the roof which heats the water. From May through July with many sunny days we have hardly used the heat pump and have been enjoying free hot water from sunshine. We have also put some solar panels which make electricity on the roof. These have also benefitted from the sunshine but give a surprising amount even with thick cloud. Electricity which is excess to our needs is sent back to the grid and Good Energy pays us for all the solar electricity we produce.

These sound very expensive - how long is the payback time?

They are expensive, even after the almost £8000 government grants that we received. We have taken out a mortgage to help us pay for them. We are enjoying much lower bills but the payback time will be very long if we were only interested in recouping the money we have spent. There is only a certain amount of fossil and nuclear fuel stored in the earth. Our generation is using it up as if there were no tomorrow. Unless we use alternatives there will be no tomorrow for our grandchildren and their children. As Christians we believe everyone has a responsibility to look after the earth for other people and other creatures. It is a God-given privilege.

Many people would not have the roof space to put panels on.

That is true. But there are many houses and other buildings where these technologies could be deployed and other things that people can do. We had to make alterations to our home to create a south-

facing roof big enough. We enjoyed Hugh Richmond and his East Ayrshire builders working for us even though we had difficulty understanding them sometimes. We also enjoyed the other people who came to install things. But it was quite disruptive for a while.

Why didn't you use a more local builder?

We invited tenders from builders within a 30 mile radius. We believe Hugh was the best value.

Who else did work for you?

Our electricity supplying panels and the heat pump were installed by Solar and Wind Applications of Ayr. The heat pump installation was quite disruptive though they were able to fit it in amongst our other building work. We are thrilled with the results.

What else do you do to lower your carbon footprint?

- During the building works we greatly improved the insulation of our home. We have installed very low energy lighting and we have energy efficient appliances.
- We try not to use our vehicle preferring to walk or cycle for short journeys and public transport for longer ones. We have an excellent bus and train service in and from Largs.
- We eat little meat and buy local produce as well as organic and fairly traded things too.
- We grow some of our own vegetables.
- We recycle everything we can and pick up litter which we find on our walks. The litter on the beach especially offends us so we pick some of it up and recycle cans and bottles.

Would you be prepared to show people what you have done and talk to them?

Yes - if people are seriously interested. They could phone us on 01475 675225 and we would be happy to arrange an appointment. But we would be showing them part of our home and we hope they would respect that. They could also talk to the Energy Saving Trust on 0800 512 012 who will suggest suitable actions appropriate to each person's situation.