

# Off Grid, Off Oil – a low carbon life

Dates: May 9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

## Summary

Join us at the Camas Centre on the Isle of Mull for a week experiencing and discussing life on the other side of the oil revolution. Using the renovated Camas as our case study (with off grid electricity, locally produced and fair traded food, environmentally friendly toilets, simple lifestyle, and valuing its natural surroundings), this is a week to explore how we can live a satisfying and enjoyable low carbon life. It flows from the Iona Community's commitment to the Christian Aid 'Cut the Carbon Campaign' and will be of interest to people in Eco-congregations and those curious about what life might be like without oil. Start by travelling to Camas by public transport and sharing with others any difficulties you have had in getting here! Led by Raymond Young, a Regeneration Consultant and Member of the Iona Community.



## Details

The lifestyle in the western world during the 20<sup>th</sup> century underwent a dramatic revolution. The last century was one of unprecedented technological change, when electricity, plastic, TV, computers, worldwide transport, and the world wide web all became an accepted and indispensable part of most people's everyday life.

The majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century technological marvels are powered by and produced from naturally occurring fossil fuels such as coal, gas and oil. But these resources are being used up. And they are not being renewed. Even before they disappear completely, prices will rise, supply will become harder and harder. In addition, the burning of fossil fuels is a major contributor to climate change and CO<sub>2</sub> production.

What happens if oil supplies break down, become too expensive, or actually run out?

### **Is life possible without oil? Without electricity? Without plastic?**

Actually, the question we should be asking instead:

Is our **lifestyle** possible without oil? Without electricity? Without plastic?

Raymond Young will be leading 5 days of discussion and activities on the theme of 'Off Grid, Off Oil', assisted by the staff at Camas. As well as discussion sessions, activities could include:

- peat cutting with local peat cutters – is peat burning sustainable?
- tour of renewable and sustainable systems at Camas (solar heat, wind turbine, compost toilets)
- tour and work in the organic garden – there're always jobs for the green-fingered!
- visit to local 'Ecocroft' with wind turbine, heat pump and organic croft.
- visit to local organic weaving mill – adapting traditional skills to a modern way of life.
- sea fishing excursion – try your hand at catching your own evening meal!

Here at Camas the technological revolution almost passed by un-heeded. A granite quarry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; quarrymen's houses built 170 years ago; since then a salmon fishing station until 13 years ago; and, since the 1940s, a place for young people and adults to come and experience a different lifestyle, run by the Iona Community.

In 2006 the centre underwent a major refurbishment with improved accommodation, living spaces, wind turbine and solar panels. Off the electricity grid, with mains water only connected in 2006 – Camas offers you the chance to experience a lifestyle a few steps away from modern expectations. We use local resources (wood and peat) for heating, and lighting is provided by candles and lanterns, just like for the quarrymen and fishermen. In 2006, a wind turbine was installed and provides the centre with electricity for washing facilities, office equipment, and fire alarm systems.

We are still dependent on oil in many ways – but we like to think that Camas is a step in the right direction, or a step away from the wrong direction. What better place to come and explore ideas for reducing your oil dependency in your own home, area or country?

Raymond Young is the chair of Architecture and Design Scotland, a non-executive director of Historic Scotland, the convener of the Rural Housing Service, and a member of the Iona Community. He was a member of the UK Sustainable Development Commission 2000-2004, and runs a part-time housing and regeneration consultancy from a sustainable straw bale office in Perthshire. He used to work for Government agencies developing urban and rural community housing associations, and now does some training in sustainability for housing associations and other landlords.



## Things you should know before you come

Camas is based in old quarrymen's houses at a secluded bay on the Island of Mull. The Camas road end is reached approximately 2 miles before Fionnphort (location of the Iona ferry); however there is no vehicle access to Camas itself, which is reached by a walk of about 20 – 30 minutes (1½ miles) across a moorland track. This lends itself to a sense of isolation, adventure and an appreciation of the simpler things in life.

- All Camas staff members live at the centre; our working hours are from breakfast (usually 8.30am) to 10pm and someone is always reachable in an emergency.
- Staff take it in turns to cook and we also eat all meals with the guests who are staying at the centre.
- The food at Camas is vegetarian – please let us know of any special dietary needs in advance.
- Camas has 6 bunk rooms, each sleeping from 4-8 people, to a total of 28. Sleeping bags are essential (but we do have spares if necessary).
- Both staff and guests at Camas take part in daily chores, which are done in teams by rota. They include tasks such as washing up, cleaning toilets, cutting firewood and helping with the garden.
- The days at Camas are framed by morning and evening Reflections. These are generally led by the Camas staff, and focus sometimes on people's experiences at Camas and sometimes on wider experiences or on issues of social justice (such as Fairtrade). Everyone is invited to attend Reflections and to participate as fully as they wish.

## Cost and Booking

£210 (inc. VAT at 15%) for 6 nights (Saturday – Friday morning) including all food, accommodation and activities. Activities with external providers (e.g. fishing trips, ferry crossings) may cost extra.

For bookings and more information contact:

tel: 01681 700404 e-mail: [camas.bookings@iona.org.uk](mailto:camas.bookings@iona.org.uk) web: [www.iona.org.uk](http://www.iona.org.uk)

Camas Centre, Ardfenaig, Bunessan, Isle of Mull, PA67 6DX, Scotland, UK.

The Iona Community is a charity registered in Scotland No SC003794