

SRUC Elmwood allotment club springs into action!

The allotment club at the Elmwood Campus of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) is springing into action – by celebrating its third year.

Safety must be always be the top priority, but UK and US bans on carrying electronic devices on aircraft leaves questions unanswered – Richard Burden

Richard Burden MP, Labour's Shadow Aviation Minister, responding to the announcement of a cabin baggage ban on laptops on certain direct passenger flights to the UK from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, said:

“The safety and security of passengers must always be the overriding priority for Government and for airline operators. If the Government has evidence the level of security checks on passengers carrying electronic devices is of exceptional concern in the countries listed then it is right that prompt precautionary action should be taken.

“This announcement leaves a number of important questions unanswered and we are seeking urgent clarification from Ministers. It's important the Government set out clearly the precautionary steps they have taken in response to advice from security services to reassure passengers and the public. The Government must also work with airline operators to ensure all passengers are given the necessary information and flights can continue where appropriate with minimal disruption as possible.”

The extreme Centre

I see Mr Blair and others are out and about complaining that the centre is not strong enough. He thinks the centre ground needs reinforcing, as he dislikes the way it is assailed by Brexiteers of all persuasions, and by the Corbyn tendency in the Labour party. He still sees new Labour as ideal, as the perfect balance between "the extremes". It is high time this piece of self serving nonsense was exposed to some criticism.

The problems with New Labour were their three main extremisms.

They took an extreme view about UK intervention in Middle Eastern wars, believing we could use military force to create liberal democracies in various Middle Eastern countries. The public disagreed, and the results of their military actions despite much bravery and heroic effort by our forces were disappointing. They did not understand or manage the politics of the Middle Eastern countries well, relying too much on force.

They took an extreme view about the ability of the economy to withstand a huge build up in public and private debt and credit, before making an even more extreme judgement to bring some banks crashing down for no good reason. They told us they had abolished the boom-bust cycle, only to preside over the biggest boom-bust since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

They took an extreme view about EU integration and government. Whilst telling us each Treaty was a mild tidying up exercise with all the potency of the Beano, they signed the UK up to a comprehensive cradle of laws and controls making democratic government in the UK difficult. They always denied the public a referendum vote on their centralising tendencies, always denied their significance, and always claimed when challenged that EU laws were for the best regardless of what they said. Their EU actions led directly to the referendum which they helped lose.

Mr Blair needs to grasp that the world has moved on from New Labour. We now know their economic claims were false, as their era ended with major recession and banking crash. We know their EU policy was based on the lie that the EU was only of interest to Conservatives, and that nothing important was happening. We know their policy of favouring large corporations and encouraging cheap labour from the continent to take the low paid jobs they created was not popular with many voters.

ICC adds one year to Bemba's

conviction for attempted bribery of witnesses

22 March 2017 – The United Nations-backed International Criminal Court (ICC) today sentenced the former Congolese Vice-President, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, to another year in prison and about \$325,000 in fines for interfering with his trial.

Judges ordered that the sentence be served consecutively to Mr. Bemba's existing 18 year sentence for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Central African Republic between October 2002 and March 2003.

In their ruling, the judges ordered the fine to be paid within three months to the ICC and then transferred to the Trust Fund for Victims, according to a press release.

Mr. Bemba, along with two of the four other people accused, were found guilty in October 2016 for having jointly committed the offences of intentionally corruptly influencing 14 defence witnesses, and presenting their false evidence to the court.

Mr. Bemba was also found guilty of soliciting the giving of false testimony by the 14 defence witnesses and attempting to corruptly influence two defence witnesses.

These charges were in addition to the main ruling issued in March 2016, in which the ICC found Mr. Bemba guilty beyond reasonable doubt on two counts of crimes against humanity (murder and rape) and three counts of war crimes (murder, rape and pillaging) committed in the Central African Republic in 2002-2003.

Mr. Bemba had been the commander-in-chief of the former Congolese rebel group, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo, as well as a vice-president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the 2003-2006 transition.

Wastewater should be recognized as a valuable resource, UN says on World Water Day

22 March 2017 – In a world where the demand for water continues to grow and the resource is finite, a new United Nations report argues that wastewater,

discarded into the environment every day, once treated, can help meet the needs for freshwater as well as for raw materials for energy and agriculture.

Needless to mention, treating wastewater and removing pollutants can also remarkably reduce the impact on the environment as well as on health.

Improved wastewater management is as much about reducing pollution at the source, as removing contaminants from wastewater flows, reusing reclaimed water and recovering useful by-products [as it is about increasing] social acceptance of the use of wastewater,” noted Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General in her foreword to the *World Water Development Report 2017* – *Wastewater: An untapped resource*.

The report, launched today in Durban, South Africa, on the occasion of World Water Day, also highlights that improved management of wastewater is essential in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It's all about carefully managing and recycling the water that runs through our homes, factories, farms and cities,” said Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Chair of UN-Water, urging for reducing and safely reusing more wastewater.

Everyone can do their bit to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target to halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and increase safe water reuse by 2030.”

Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) has specific targets on halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally (target 6.3) as well as supporting countries in wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies (target 6.a).

Health and environmental dimension – particularly stark for low-income countries

The report also revealed that low-income countries are particularly impacted by the release of waste water into the environment without being either treated or collected, where, on average, only 8 per cent of domestic and industrial wastewater is treated, compared to 70 per cent in high-income countries.

As a result, in many regions of the world, water contaminated by bacteria, nitrates, phosphates and solvents is discharged into rivers and lakes ending up in the oceans, with negative consequences for the environment and public health.

For instance, in Latin America, Asia and Africa, pollution from pathogens from human and animal excreta affects almost one third of rivers, endangering the lives of millions of people.

Furthermore, growing awareness on the presence of hormones, antibiotics, steroids and endocrine disruptors in wastewater poses a new set of complexities as their impact on the environment and health have yet to be fully understood.

These set of challenges underscore the need for urgent action on collection, treatment and safe use of wastewater.

Wastewater as a source of raw materials

In addition to providing a safe alternative source for freshwater, wastewater is also a potential source of raw materials, noted the report.

Owing to developments in treatment techniques, certain nutrients, like phosphorus and nitrates, can now be recovered from sewage and sludge and turned into fertilizer. It is estimated that nearly 22 per cent of the global demand for phosphorus (a depleting mineral resource) can be met by treating human urine and excrement.

Use of treated wastewater has long been practised by astronauts, such as those on the International Space Station who have been reusing the same recycled water for over 16 years

Similarly, organic substances contained in wastewater can be used to produce biogas, which could power wastewater treatment facilities as well as contribute to energy needs of local communities.

In addition, use of treated wastewater is growing for agricultural irrigation. At least 50 countries around the globe are now using treated wastewater for this purpose, accounting for an estimated 10 per cent of all irrigated land.

Lastly, the report also mentioned that treated wastewater can augment drinking water supplies, although this is still a marginal practice. Cities such as Singapore, San Diego (United States), and Windhoek (Namibia) have been treating wastewater to supplement drinking water reserves.

A great example is use of treated wastewater, long practised by astronauts, such as those on the International Space Station who have been reusing the same recycled water for over 16 years.