

Trinity College, Bristol & The John Ray Initiative

# Environmental Decision-making



## Does Theology Help?

### Dilemmas of the Severn Barrage Proposal

“Plans to build a giant barrage across the Severn Estuary are set to divide much of the treehugging community in two. The Severn Estuary boasts the second highest tidal-range in the world. On the one hand, this means it has the potential to power somewhere between 5 and 10% of the UK's energy needs, on the other it is a unique habitat for wildlife which would be irreversibly changed by such a massive project.” (Sami Grover, [www.treehugger.com](http://www.treehugger.com))

**Saturday March 10th 2007**

# Environmental Decision-making

Albert The Great,  
patron saint of theologians



## Does Theology Help?

**E**nvironmental decisions are seldom clear-cut. It is not sufficient to be well-meaning, or ‘ethical’ when presented with the practical dilemmas of trying to benefit one part of the creation at the expense of another. No current issue highlights this better than the plan for a Severn Barrage. Tidal power is ‘free’: but at a cost, not only to natural beauty, but to a whole ecology, and to creatures which will have to adapt or perish.

Theologians have refined ever more closely the meaning of human ‘dominion’ in creation. The sense of our real responsibility has grown, alongside the science that helps us understand how ecology works. But are we any better at knowing how to prioritise the human and the creaturely? Can we favour both?

In this conference we are bringing together insights from Engineering, Ecology, Theology and Ethics, and, incidentally, assume no answers. Real choices require good information, but they also need wisdom, not least to avoid unintended consequences. We are thankful that Jesus Christ left us not only an ethic, but his living Spirit, the Counsellor, who surely must be at the heart of environmental decision-making.

## Programme

9.15 – 9.30	<i>Arrival and registration</i>
9.30 – 9.40	Opening prayers and welcome to Trinity: John Bimson
9.40 – 10.20	Ian Arbon – What is the Severn Barrage and what will it do?
10.20 – 11.00	George Gibberd – Are there alternative renewable energy uses for the Severn Estuary?
11.00 – 11.30	<i>Coffee</i>
11.30 – 12.10	Les Batty – Biological impacts of the Barrage
12.10 – 12.30	Questions
12.30 – 1.40	<i>Lunch</i>
1.40 – 2.20	John Bimson – Barrages, Birds and the Bible
2.20 – 2.30	Margot Hodson – Introduction to the workshops: Ethics and decision -making
2.30 – 3.30	Workshops and plenary conclusions
3.30 – 3.45	Margot Hodson – Does theology help? Closing Reflection
3.45 – 4.00	<i>Tea and depart</i>

# Speakers

**Ian Arbon** is Chairman of the Energy, Environment and Sustainability Group of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMEchE). He is a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow of IMechE, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Energy Institute; he also holds an MBA and an MSc in Renewable Energy Technology. His consultancy company, Engineered Solutions, specialises in sustainable engineering, particularly in the fields of renewable energy and energy-from-waste, where he has 30+ years experience in delivering practical solutions. He is Chairman of the John Ray Initiative.



**George Gibberd** is a Chartered Mechanical Engineer with twenty years' experience in the power industry, much of it in the hydro-electric industry. After fifteen years with Atkins Consultants, George was the Engineering Manager at Marine Current Turbines, where he was responsible for the design of the Seaflow rotor system on the world's first large-scale tidal turbine. He was subsequently responsible for the engineering of a 1.2MW commercial class twin rotor tidal machine.

**Les Batty** is a Senior Environmental Scientist with Halcrow, working on coastal, wetland and flood management projects. He holds an MSc in Estuarine & Coastal Science & Management (with a focus on the Barrage), and an MPhil in shorebird ecology. He was a lecturer in ornithology, ecology and conservation for 20 years, and was one of the founders of A Rocha.



Brean Down, site of the Barrage, (David Thistlethwaite)



**John Bimson** is Lecturer in Old Testament at Trinity, Bristol. An authority on Old Testament history, and its relationship to ancient Egypt, his studies have involved excavations in Israel. He has been an enthusiastic birdwatcher since childhood, and for the last fifteen years has been exploring the interface between theology and environmental issues.

**Margot Hodson** is Chaplain of Jesus College, Oxford, and holds degrees in Geography and Theology. She has had a longstanding interest in environment and theology, and has taught widely, including last summer at the Prague Baptist College. With her husband, Dr Martin Hodson, she is active in Sage, Oxford's Christian environmental group. She is a director of The John Ray Initiative.



## Booking Information

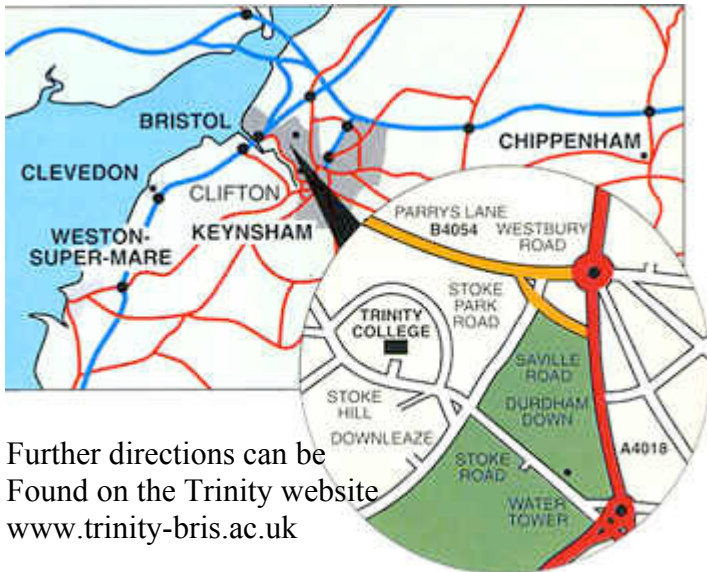
The cost of the conference, including a hot lunch, is £35.

Bookings should be made using the enclosed form to:

Fran Brealey, Trinity Conference Administrator  
Trinity College,  
Stoke Hill  
Stoke Bishop  
BRISTOL  
BS9 1JP

For any enquiries, please phone Fran at 0117 968 2803

## Directions to Trinity



The John Ray Initiative, Room QW212, Francis Close Hall, University of Gloucestershire, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, Glos, GL7 7EF  
[www.jri.org.uk](http://www.jri.org.uk); [admin@jri.org.uk](mailto:admin@jri.org.uk); 01242 714821



# Environmental Decision-making: Does Theology Help?

## Booking form

Please book me a place for the Environmental Decision-making conference on Saturday March 10th 2007 at Trinity College, Bristol.

(Please complete in CAPITAL LETTERS and do a separate form for each person booking).

Name and Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Any special dietary needs \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a cheque for £35 (per person, including lunch) payable to Trinity College, Bristol

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to Fran Brealey,  
Trinity College,  
Stoke Hill  
Stoke Bishop  
BRISTOL  
BS9 1JP

Email [fran@trinity-bris.ac.uk](mailto:fran@trinity-bris.ac.uk), telephone 0117 968 2803