

I can honestly say that I have never knowingly put out our waste bin on the wrong day. As far as I know our neighbours haven't, either; they wait for me to put ours out before deciding which bin - rubbish or recycling - to put out. What did happen last year was that the council issued a leaflet with all the collection dates for the two collections printed on it - all the wrong way round! If people had put the wrong bins out after reading the leaflet, and not picked up on the fact, they presumably could have been fined up to £1,000. Instead, the council had to print and post a whole new set of leaflets - and then collect the wrong ones for recycling!

Of course my local council wouldn't have been so silly as to try to punish people for its own mistake. That would have been unconscionable. The Government feels, however, that councils have been over-using the powers they have and have launched a consultation on curtailing said powers. Personally, I think the initiative was launched just so that environment secretary Caroline Spelman could be quoted as saying: "Heavy-handed bin fines have for too long been used to punish people for innocent mistakes. We are now consigning them to the scrapheap of history."
Boom-boom!

There is now a competition among energy providers to see who can claim to be lowering their prices most. Some would argue that energy prices should be high to encourage conservation, but few like to see increasing numbers plunged into energy poverty. Now there is also controversy surrounding the Government's new 'green deal' and Energy Company Obligation schemes, with some commentators branding them as "stealing from the poor to give to the rich".

The Guardian's George Monbiot stated in his blog: "The government's own projections show that its green deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) schemes starting later this year, which are supposed to improve the energy efficiency of our homes and help people to cut their energy payments, will lead to higher bills for the poor, but almost no change to the bills of the rich. They will also greatly reduce the amount spent on insulation and energy efficiency while doing almost nothing to address fuel poverty."

There is an opportunity for everyone to help address the issue of invasive species by reporting the presence of one of the 10 'most wanted' invaders. It's a joint initiative by The Observer Ethical Awards and the University of Hull. You can shop intruders such as the American signal crayfish via www.guardian.co.uk/environment . Follow the links to the DEFRA reporting site.