



I was intrigued to catch sight of a headline on the *Guardian Environment* site that read "Riding-hoods: how to beat the rain". Cycle capes, I thought, the original hi-vis garment.

My ageing mind clawed its way back to schooldays cycling to and from the daily drudge, protected from the incessant downpours (even then!) by the bright yellow oilskin one-piece, cleverly designed to cover the handlebars so your arms and hands were covered and there was just the spray from the road to soak you from the bottom up!

I eagerly navigated to the page to read Laura Laker's bike blog. Alas, it was a fashion piece - no sign of oilskin anywhere. The first item reviewed was a natty number in tweed (or plaid, it says; doesn't she mean tartan?) that costs \$250! I didn't hold out much hope for the rest.

I loved the picture of her trialling the 'uberhood', an umbrella that fixes to the handlebars. It is very like the contraptions for fixing to a baby's pram. Those, however, can be snapped up for a little less than the £47 quoted. Plus, I don't think it would stand up to a furious pedalling (a friend of mine used to claim he was once pulled by the Bobbies and ticketed for 'riding furiously').

Everything on her list demonstrates the adage that people will pay almost anything for what they fondly imagine to be a new idea. Anything 'green' is instantly hiked to cash in on conscience. The fact is cycle capes were commonplace once upon a time – even the police had their own version in blue!

I can still picture the wondrous sight of my old music teacher, a 6ft-plus beanpole who would sweep into the school car park on his bicycle, replete with trouser clips to keep his grey suit

clean, cape and white motorcycle crash helmet. Happy days!

Two stories cropped up regarding wind farms, at least into my consciousness. Firstly, a newsletter from my local county councillor – a Tory – condemned the imminent 'destruction' of a local landmark to build an access road to a proposed wind farm. The wind farm will be built across the border in the neighbouring borough, whose refusal of planning permission was overturned on appeal.

The story illustrates again the ambivalent nature of environmental issues. The wind farm itself is not supposed to be the issue (although I suspect the councillor in question would like to see the development halted); what is at issue regards the value of what would be destroyed to enable its construction.

The other story is the one that brought me to bicycle capes in the first place. *Guardian Environment* has reported that 95% of the investment in the so-called London Array is by foreign firms. With elements in government so opposed to supporting renewable energy that situation is sadly unlikely to change. The reports states that even the HP sauce on the buffet table at the press launch was made in the Netherlands. I checked the bottle at home and he's right!

**Chris Stokes**