

Make A Difference

World Environment Day takes place on 5 June, but where do CIWM and its members fit in to the wider "environmental" picture and, more specifically, this year's theme – connecting people to nature? We asked CIWM CEO Colin Church for his thoughts...

World Environment Day is a UN Environment-led global event and, as one of the 24 current licensed bodies of the Society for the Environment (SocEnv), CIWM is keen to play its part in raising awareness of not only the global day of action, but of the relevant events closer to home and to highlight what we, as individual members of CIWM, can do.

SocEnv, naturally, sees itself as a champion of World Environment Day (WED) and has been encouraging its own members to get involved and highlight the event. And it has its own World Environment Day conference – "Innovation, Partnership And The Value Of Nature" – taking place on the day in London, where it aims to share and discuss examples of best practice and environmental protection. A series of specialist speakers, such as Prof Carolyn Roberts – Vice President of the Institution of Environmental Sciences; David McHugh – Trustee of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM); and Dr Peter Matthews CBE OBE – Former President of CIWEM and Chair of Society for the Environment, will provide insight into their respective fields, highlighting how their work is contributing to the underlying principles of World Environment Day.

But as we ask at the top of this page, what role do CIWM's members have to play? Over to Colin Church to explain...

Share Your Knowledge

"THE ORIGINS of professional waste management come from protection of human health and the environment – that's why laws were introduced to stop people dumping waste into the streets and the countryside...out of that our entire sector has grown up.

"But it's grown further than that and people are recognising the importance that sensible resource use can have in avoiding environmental damage in the first place. If you no longer have to stripmine Amazonian rainforests to get raw materials, that's clearly an environmental benefit. Recycling aluminium, paper, plastics... that's avoiding environmental damage, so sensible resource use – careful extraction, sensible management and maximising its useful life – is a fundamental element of managing our environmental impact."

What's the message to CIWM's members around WED...

are they doing the right things, or is this an opportunity to say "step up and show us more", we asked Colin.

"Beyond doing their best to recycle at home and at work, which I'm sure they do, the next thing they could do would be to share their understanding with those around them... friends, family, neighbours, in the pub..." Colin added. "Explain to them why it makes sense to 'do things properly' and that simple recycling and reuse is linked to protecting biodiversity, reducing energy use and helping avoid dangerous climate change".

"So my message is: share your knowledge and your concerns with others around you. CIWM members are, by the very definition of them being a member, people who have committed to demonstrating high standards – doing this on World Environment Day is just part of that commitment.

"The most influential people are the ones you know and respect, so our members can be very important in sharing knowledge and changing behaviours," Colin explained.

On World Environment Day itself, and the role days such as these have to play, Colin added: "Temporary headlines are one way of shifting behaviours; it's an important element, and everything seems to have "a day" now, so it would be very odd if one of the most fundamental elements to our existence didn't have its own day.

"It's important because of the message it sends and the totemic nature of such a day. And if CIWM members take up that challenge of trying to persuade just a few people to be more careful about how they recycle at home, for example, then that's tens of thousands more people doing their bit for the environment every day. That can only be a good thing, can't it?"

And the theme for this year: connecting people to nature? Do we fit in with that?

"Look at what we said earlier about biodiversity and the impacts of unregulated and uncontrolled waste... there's some scary stats about the fragments of discarded plastic in our oceans, and our fish. There's a very current, and high profile, link between sensible waste management and biodiversity impacts, and therefore nature. CIWM and its members certainly have a role to play on World Environment Day," Colin concluded. ■

For more on SocEnv's free to attend World Environment Day conference visit www.socenv.org.uk/events