

SCIENCE

Radio 4

COSTING THE EARTH

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PROGRAMME INFO

Thursday 21:00-21:30
Repeat Friday 15:00

Costing the Earth tells stories which touch all our lives, looking at man's effect on the environment and at how the environment reacts. It questions accepted truths, challenges the people in charge and reports on progress towards improving the world we live in.

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LISTEN AGAIN 30 min

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PRESENTER

TOM HEAP



PROGRAMME DETAILS

Friday 29 December 2006



One of the co-houses on the Springhill estate in Stroud, Gloucestershire. Residents have a mixture of private and shared facilities.

Solo Living

Researchers are claiming that people living alone are living selfishly and costing the planet. Their lifestyles mean they not only have more household goods and use more energy but they also occupy more land, create more waste and emit more carbon dioxide per head than people who share. However rising numbers of us are living alone. In twenty years' time it's estimated around 38% of the population will be living by themselves. Household numbers are expected to rise by more than 200 thousand a year in England alone - around three quarters of those will be people living by themselves.

Dr Jo Williams from University College London explains how not only are 'solo-livers' on the increase but a new breed is after a place of their own, who could be even more consumptive.

As a result of the anticipated demand across the UK, the Government's embarking on a mass home-building project - the Thames Gateway being one of the largest. But if solo living is

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so environmentally costly shouldn't we be looking at dissuading quite so many people from going this way? Tom Heap meets Tim Jackson, Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Surrey who argues the 'predict and provide' approach is not so much tackling the problem as encouraging it. He says the Government needs to tackle the drivers of the trend and explains how.

Tom also meets Peter Guegan, proud new owner of his own 2 bed flat near Solihull and takes him to experience one of the possible alternatives - co-housing. These developments, which originated in Denmark, offer residents their own private house or flat but with a shared common house and other facilities. While many have eco-appliances, residents say it's the community lifestyle which generates environmental benefits. But if it's so successful why have so few got off the ground and so few people even heard about them? And will Peter see it as a realistic alternative for people like him?

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