



Want to save the planet? Move to the city...

Most of us would probably equate 'going green' with a River-Cottage-style existence in the countryside. Yet, according to Martin Ince, author of *The Rough Guide to The Earth*, one of the best things we might do to save the planet is move to the city.

"Since 2006, and for the first time in history, most people live in towns. This is good news for the planet. It means we can use energy more efficiently, travel less and occupy less land. We tend to think of cities as unnatural and environmentally damaging places and the countryside as much 'greener' but there are good reasons why urbanization might actually be beneficial for the planet" explains Martin Ince.

People in big cities often have shorter journeys to work, fun or the shops. And whereas country-dwellers in the rich world have to start every activity by getting in the car, those in the city can, and do, use public transport. UK Government statistics show that people in London walk more, use more public transport and use cars less than those who live in the rest of the country¹.

When it comes to heating and lighting our homes, the close proximity of houses in cities provides a dual benefit. In a logistical sense they can be connected to electricity and fuel supplies by shorter power lines and pipes. In addition, there is evidence that cities use less energy for heat per person because apartments are more energy efficient than separate homes. Work done by the US Department of Energy shows that New York uses less heat per person than Chicago or San Francisco in line with its higher population density, and gets through only 57% as much electricity per person.

Urbanites can also benefit from economies of scale in the raw materials they use and in the technology used to recycle or remove their leftovers.

The fact that more people live in cities means of course that less people live in the countryside. This in itself might be a good thing for the planet. Martin Ince believes that it would not be a bad idea to 'clear' more rural areas and give the land over to national parks and reserves *"in which people are scarce and go only to look, not to carry out primary economic activity unless it has been pre-approved by centuries of proven low-impact success."*

He said: *"People all over the world are now realising that our activities need to have a far lower impact on the Earth. There are already large national parks all over the world. The world's urban areas only add up a square 600 miles on a side – there is plenty of scope to help the Earth by setting aside major areas for nature to run without our help."*

Notes to Editors:

- The Rough Guide to The Earth by Martin Ince has just been published by Rough Guides, £10.99. ISBN: 978-1-84353-589-8
- Martin Ince is a freelance science journalist, formerly science correspondent of the Times Higher Education Supplement. He is treasurer of the Association of British Science Writers and a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society.

To speak to Martin Ince regarding this press release please contact martin@martinince.com
For further information about Rough Guides or for a copy of 'The Rough Guide to the Earth' please contact the Rough Guides press office on 0207 010 3701.

¹ Region in Figures: London, Office for National Statistics, 2004. ISSN 1740-6129