



Building work starts to progress – in time for the eco open house event

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Ann Link and her partner Richard Hudson at their home in Lewes
Photograph: Frank Baron/Frank Baron

Just when it looks as if the [building works will go on for ever](#), with the garden in a mess and the portable toilet man falling into next door's shrubs, things start to improve in time for the eco open house event this weekend. The builders will clear up a lot today and it will be easier to assess progress.

The insulation and render (a kind of exterior plaster) on the outside walls and dormers is nearly finished. Months ago we carefully chose colours for this and told the planning department. Then we forgot to tell the builders, who put on their standard lime-rich surface layer, so now we have a cheaper and quicker pale grey surface, which we rather like. We originally said we would have a brick shade on the lower walls but we will see how the grey looks first.

The first [chestnut windows will arrive next week](#), and then the upstairs can be finished. All the [roof insulation](#) is done and the new bedroom cupboards look good. The old [bedroom](#) door has been re-hung, cropped because the sloping ceiling is now lower. Since the portable toilet incident, the plumber has installed our new loo in the bathroom, and the bathroom door has returned also.

To get daylight into the shower room, we have a 300mm diameter sunpipe (there is also one to light a dark area of the bathroom). These are like a giant fibre optic cables. They have a [dome on the roof to catch the light, and a tube lined with highly polished aluminium to reflect it downwards](#), even around bends. The ceiling fitting gleams on dull days and is almost too bright in sunshine.

Once the back dormer window arrives, its render can be finished and roof changes to accommodate the sunspace can be completed. The foundations and first layer of concrete, incorporating rubble from an old patio, have gone in, and there will be insulation and more concrete. We can see the area we will have for growing food, airing washing and enjoying the sun.

There are two huge ex-juice containers in the garden, each 1,000 litres in volume. These will be partially sunk into the ground and connected to the rainwater collection system. The internal piping and header tank in the loft have been done with the [Rain Director system](#) recommended by [Simon Beach](#) who is doing the stove and plumbing. The tanks we have so far cost around £140 for two plus carriage. We may get more when we have worked out more about the garden layout. [Maria, our designer](#), wants to practise [permaculture design on our garden](#) but it's difficult to study it until more of the building is done.

Case history Ann Link eco house Lewes July09 RWH 052
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