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Light at the end of the tunnel

Welcome to the Northerner, Guardian Unlimited's weekly digest of the best of the northern press

David Ward

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Talking of Blackpool, the Liverpool Daily Post reports that the town's bright lights could be powered by donkey dung. Or at least partly powered because, unless stuffed with prunes, it seems the resort's donkey herd may not be able to defecate with the volume, frequency and enthusiasm required to light up every bulb during the annual illuminations.

The Daily Post explains that a London-based design team has developed five prototype machines able to use waste from the resort's donkeys to power lamps. They hope the experiment will be a start in their search for alternative sources of energy.

At first the designers were going to power the machines with kitchen waste but then decided to make use of the donkey ride byproduct available on the beach.

The Daily Post goes on to provide a brief explanation of how the prototypes, but not a donkey's innards, work. It seems that the manure ferments, produces methane and carbon dioxide, and the gas is then burnt off to power lanterns. Do not try this at home.