



working locally to make a difference

An Inconvenient Truth

It wasn't just fireworks that drew crowds on 5th November. Wallingford's Corn Exchange Cinema saw a packed house for the first of two screenings of the film *An Inconvenient Truth*.

The former US Vice-President Al Gore's hard-hitting presentation on the impact of climate change was followed by a discussion led by Sustainable Wallingford. 80 people stayed behind to share their responses to the film and discuss what action local people can take in response to a global threat.

We encouraged people to discuss their reaction to the film, what action they would take personally and what action a local volunteer group could take. It was really encouraging that so many people turned out to see the film and talk about the issues it raises. The discussion was lively, with lots of people participating.

Some good ideas were recorded for the local action group, but we now need people to help make these ideas actually happen. With your help we can turn ideas into actions.

An OSCA for Sustainable Wallingford

Sustainable Wallingford's work on the Fir Tree School Vegetable Garden was a winner at the Oxfordshire Sustainability and Conservation Awards in October.

The awards, organised by Oxfordshire County Council, recognise schools, community groups and businesses that have taken action for the environment (see www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/

oscas for more information). Our project was joint first prize winner in the biodiversity and grounds development category, sharing the £1000 prize with Hurst Water Meadow, a wildlife haven near Dorchester which is used for recreation and learning by the local community.

Sam Settle, who co-ordinates the project, said: 'Visitors to the garden have always said what a great project it is – timely, important, practical, involving many parts of the community – and it is nice to have that confirmed with the award. We grew over 550 lbs of vegetables for the school this year, at a value of £740. Of course there is another value, inestimable, of the children working in the garden, learning about sustainability, and having lessons centred on processes and elements of the garden.'

Funding for the garden is now secure through to September 2007, thanks to the generosity of the Thames Valley Partnership, Habitat, the Fir Tree School PTA, Wallingford Charities Fun Day 2006, and the OSCA award. We are deeply grateful for their support and good will.

Open meeting

Sustainable Wallingford's annual Open Meeting on 16th October saw over 30 people fill the Friends' Meeting House. Representatives of our various Action Groups described what they had been doing over the past year and outlined their plans for the future.

As the event was close to the annual 'Apple Day' celebrations, refreshments were also on offer in the form of different

varieties of locally-grown apples and products made from this wonderfully versatile fruit.

Many of the activities of the past year, which were presented at the meeting, are described elsewhere in this newsletter. Looking ahead, 2007 promises to be at least as busy and – we hope – as successful as 2006.

Future plans include: working more closely with teachers in local schools; building on the success of our recycling initiative at the 2006 Bunkfest; encouraging yet more new parents to use washable nappies; producing an updated and expanded version of our Buy Local Directory; and launching a new Climate Change action group (see page).

We are also proposing to take the important step of becoming a charity – a move that received broad support from those at the meeting. Charitable status will enable us to apply to a broader range of funding sources than we are able to at the moment. As a next stage in the process, we will be reviewing and amending our Constitution in line with Charity Commission requirements before voting on it at a further meeting.

The Annual Meeting also offered an important opportunity to acknowledge the practical and financial support we have received from so many people and organisations. Now in our fourth year of existence, and with environmental issues gaining ever more public attention and a growing range of local activity, we look forward to an increasingly sustainable Wallingford.

Recycling success at Bunkfest

A recycling drive at this year's Bunkfest, led by Sustainable Wallingford, meant that 77% of the waste collected on the Kincroft during the festival was recycled.

Three recycling stations were placed around the festival site as well as

containers for plastic beer glasses at the beer tent and the Cross Keys pub. Three bottle banks were provided for glass. Sustainable Wallingford volunteers, supported by the Community Action Group (CAG) project and Oxfordshire County Council, set up the recycling stations and emptied the bins at regular intervals.

Brian Landowski, who co-ordinated the Bunkfest recycling, says: 'To expand on our success at this year's festival I would like to focus on the reduction of waste, with both recyclable and landfill materials at next year's festival. Putting forward the idea of reusable hard plastic glasses for the beer tent, and persuading food traders to be more proactive with reuse and recyclable materials at next year's event, will really help in reducing the waste impact that the festival has on the environment.

'I am also working with the CAG group to refine the recycle system that we used at the festival so other local events can have access to the equipment, thus helping to promote recycling across the district.'



News from the action groups

New climate change group

Ten people attended the first meeting of Sustainable Wallingford's new Climate Change group on 21st November.

A number of members were becoming increasingly concerned about the issue, and the response to the recent screening of *An Inconvenient Truth* (see page 1) showed that local people are interested in environmental issues. Climate change is being heavily reported in the press, and the publication of the Stern report has emphasised that Climate Change is

an economic as well as an environmental issue.

The group is looking at a number of ideas for action. The first is likely to be a local event in Spring 2007 to help members of the public do a household carbon audit to see their own contribution to Climate Change. Other ideas include:

- Educating our members more.
- Encouraging and advising St Nicholas School to become more energy efficient.
- Establishing and maintaining links with similar local volunteer groups to lobby Government.
- Contacting SODC to understand what funding is available to the local community for renewable energy.

The next meeting of the group is on 9th January.

Sarah Webb, who chairs the new group, says: 'Climate change is here and we need to act now to reduce the effects. Lobbying of Government is needed, but we don't need to wait for their response before we make changes ourselves. Climate change is not someone else's problem, it's ours – yours and mine.

'Each of us contributes to climate change by emitting CO₂, so we should take responsibility for our own actions/choices and act now to use less energy. We should try to influence those around us, in a positive and constructive way, rather than criticise others or wait and hope that someone else might fix this problem. Individually our CO₂ contributions may be a drop in the ocean, but what is the ocean, if not a collection of drops?'

If you would like to be involved and join the group, you don't need to be an expert, just to have enthusiasm and a motivation to do something about climate change. Contact Sarah Webb on 01491 838618 or by email to sarah.webb@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Our tip for a green Christmas

Consider buying services rather than goods (which may have travelled hundreds or thousands of miles). For example, buy a facial or massage, tickets to football/cricket/rugby match, or a trip to the cinema/ice skating.

Waste Group

Since the last newsletter, the group has organised yet another successful Swap Shop: the number of people visiting was nearly 400 and the total weight of items swapped was nearly half a tonne. Over the year, dozens of computers and computer items and significant quantities of batteries, aluminium foil, paint, light bulbs, tetrapaks and other items that aren't included in kerbside collections have been collected for recycling or reuse. We hope we have also helped to raise awareness of waste issues among the public.

We already have two Swap Shops planned for next year (see Diary). A plea: if you are bringing tetrapaks for recycling, please wash and flatten them first!

To help recycling in the gap between Swap Shops, we have recently set up a battery collection point at Just Trading (80, High Street).

Our tip for a green Christmas

Rather than using sellotape to seal Christmas presents and tearing off the paper, use elastic bands and remove the paper carefully – it can last for many years this way.

Local sourcing group

We continue to support the Fir Tree School garden project and are delighted at their recent successes. For 2007 we are planning a second edition of our 'Buy Local' directory, which we hope to expand considerably. We are currently working on raising funds for the production of the booklets so if anyone has talents in that area please let us know!

Our tip for a green Christmas

Buy local! A typical Christmas dinner made from imported ingredients travels more than 24,000 miles – but it's easy to cut down your food miles. You can get everything from your turkey to wine from local producers. You can find details of local suppliers on the Sustainable Wallingford website (click on 'buy local'), and the next Wallingford farmers' market is on Tuesday 19th December.

Schools group

Schools are a central part of any community and the children or young people within them are the decision makers of the future. We believe it is important that they understand the imperatives of sustainability from an early age and feel empowered and excited about the possibilities for a sustainable lifestyle.

The issue of sustainability is increasingly being embedded in the school curriculum, but there is much more that could and should be done, so the next generation understand the importance of addressing the challenges sustainability presents. Sustainable Wallingford has been working with local schools since 2003, exploring issues such as recycling, local food and fair trade. We have continued to build these relationships during 2006.

This Christmas we're encouraging schools to save their Christmas cards for recycling activities later in the year, and giving out flyers to local schoolchildren about having a sustainable Christmas.

Our tip for a green Christmas

Save this year's cards to make tags for next year's presents.

Real nappies

This is now an established project, offering a 'nappy bucket trial' to new parents. The principal aim is to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, by persuading more people to use washable, reusable nappies rather than

disposables. The overwhelming majority of people who borrow the bucket rave about how much better real nappies are than disposables and how pleasantly surprised they have been at how easy the nappies are to wash.

Sally Eccleston reports: 'The buckets have not been in such demand during the last year as they were previously. I believe that this is because more and more people are choosing to use real nappies on their babies and many make that decision before their baby is born.

'The percentage of babies in the Wallingford area using real nappies is definitely significantly higher than it is nationally. Every month I go to Wallingford Community Hospital and Wallingford Medical Centre to talk about real nappies generally and promote the Sustainable Wallingford Nappy Bucket Trial. On a recent occasion I was talking to a postnatal group of six new mums. Out of these six new mums, four were already using cloth nappies on their babies. This is a great result.'

Ed Vaizey, our local MP, is actually borrowing our bucket and trying out the nappies as we go to print.



Local news

Award for Council

South Oxfordshire District Council has won second place in the South East Renewable Energy Awards for its commitment to renewable energy. Recent projects contributing to the Council winning this award include funding a wind turbine at Berinsfield School and adding solar panels to public toilet blocks in the district.

Recycle your videos and CDs

You can use now dispose of old videos, CDs, DVDs etc, in a recycling bank. South Oxfordshire District Council has recently installed five new visual /audio banks for recycling (the banks have been supplied by the British Heart Foundation). One of the banks is located in Goldsmith Lane car park, Wallingford (the old Waitrose car park). Items must be of usable quality. For more details go to www.southoxon.gov.uk and click on 'Recycling' under the A-Z of council services.

Recycling roadshow

South Oxfordshire District Council is on the road in December with a Christmas recycling promotion. They will be handing out free Christmas recycling sacks, giving away free recycling goodies (magnets, pencils, calico bags), providing information on Christmas tree recycling, and talking to residents about reducing waste and recycling. You can find a timetable on their website www.southoxon.gov.uk.

Adopt a newt

The Northmoor Trust has launched an 'adoption scheme' which allows you to 'adopt' anything from a bat box to a hedgerow for a year: could be a good last-minute Christmas present. See www.northmoortrust.co.uk for details.

Hot water at the council

South Oxfordshire District Council is currently installing solar hot water heating at the Council offices. A real time display in reception shows the cumulative energy generated by the panels. Two panels are currently in place and a further three will be installed by the end of March.

Christmas food promotion

Look out for 'foodie' gift packs produced by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire food

group, which include gift cards and vouchers. They would make great stocking fillers. Local stockists include Down To Earth in Wallingford.

Christmas tree recycling

There are lots of ways to get rid of your Christmas tree this year. You can put it in your brown bin (you may have to cut it up to get the lid closed); take it to Drayton, Oakley Wood or Redbridge recycling centre for composting; or take it to one of the local garden centres where the council are organising recycling. Dates and details are available from the Public Amenities Team South Oxfordshire District Council (01491 823416; public.amenities@southoxon.gov.uk; www.southoxon.gov.uk).



Help wanted

Make it your new year's resolution to get more involved! We are always looking for more volunteers to take part in our activities. If you would like to join a particular group, please contact them on the details below. If you would like to help out on a more informal basis, we are currently looking for:

- people to help the Waste Group at Swap Shops (and, looking ahead, at Bunkfest next summer). Please contact Mark Palmer.
- people with experience of fund-raising. Please contact Dorothy Cussens.
- people to help with schools liaison. Please contact Louise Robinson.
- reliable volunteers from June-September to harvest and freeze summer crops for use at the school in the school year. Contact Sam on 01491 838 054.

We are also looking for a volunteer to help with our communications. If you have professional experience of working with the media, good writing skills and time to spare, we would be glad to hear from you. For further information, contact Rachel on 01491 834743.

What's new

We are currently updating the Sustainable Wallingford website (www.sustainablewallingford.org). We've now expanded our coverage of Biodiversity, and also added a new section on Climate Change. Please take a look!

Who's who

Sustainable Wallingford is a group of volunteers who share a passion for making a difference locally. Membership of Sustainable Wallingford is free. You can commit as much or as little time as you are able to. You can help us to promote sustainability in Wallingford by receiving our newsletter, helping us organise events or working with a specific action group on initiatives that motivate you.

Contacts:

Waste: Mark Palmer 01491 839 230

Local Sourcing: Dorothy Cussens
01865 891 197

Schools: Louise Robinson 01491 835 420

Transport: John Griffin 01491 838523

Climate Change: Sarah Webb 01491 838618

Communications group/Media

contact: Rachel Viney, 07980 803969



Dates for your diary

DECEMBER 2006

Monday 4th

Council Christmas recycling promotion,
Wallingford Market Place

Tuesday 19th

Wallingford Farmers' Market

JANUARY 2007

Saturday 13th

Swap Shop and Collection Day at the
Regal Centre, 10am–12 noon

MARCH 2007

Saturday 10th

SwapShop and Collection Day at the
Regal Centre, 10am–12 noon



From the editor

We aim to produce this newsletter three times a year to keep members and supporters in touch with what's going on. Don't forget that in between newsletters you can keep up to date via our website at www.sustainablewallingford.org. We will post details of meetings and other events so please do check for updates.

If you have any items for inclusion in the next newsletter, please contact Penny Kiley.

Happy New Year!

As we look forward to 2007 we would like to say a big thank you to all the individuals and organisations who have supported Sustainable Wallingford over the past year.