



working locally to make a difference

Annual open meeting – your invitation

Our annual open meeting takes place on Monday 12th November, 7pm (venue to be confirmed). Come and meet us, hear about what we've done in the past year, discuss with us our plans and hopes for next year, and share with us your own ideas for things we might do in the future (see below). Put the date in your diary now, and look out for more details nearer the event.

Steps to sustainability

As we approach our annual open meeting, we are taking stock of what Sustainable Wallingford has achieved so far and what the future might bring. Over the past five years we have carried out regular activities, such as Swap Shops and schools work, through our Action Groups; have run several information events in the town; and have networked with and supported like-minded organisations and individuals in the Wallingford area and beyond. We have also set up several projects, including:

- Producing re-usable cotton shopping bags to encourage people to use less plastic.
- Setting up a washable nappy trial scheme.
- Producing a directory of local producers to encourage people to 'buy local'.
- Setting up a school vegetable garden at Fir Tree School which provides food for school meals.
- Setting up a recycling system for Bunkfest which is now being used around the county (see page 2).

What the above have in common is working, step by step, to make our town more environmentally sustainable and to reduce its ecological impact.

We'd like to put together a 'wish list' of future projects. What would you like to see on this list? Please let us know – and if you'd like to be one of the people making it happen please let us know that as well!

Travel slowly and see the world

It is possible to travel as far afield as Mongolia and further without getting on an aeroplane. Sustainable Wallingford member Mark Palmer did it by starting on the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway.

Some people hear calls to cut down on air travel and think that environmentalists are a bunch of killjoys. In fact the environmental impact of air travel is just one more reason for people interested in the world around them – one of the main reasons for travelling anywhere – to use forms of travel that give the chance to see more of that world on the way from A to B. With a little planning, even a journey to the Far East can be made without great difficulty without getting on a plane, as exemplified by a trip that I made with a friend earlier this year.

I began my journey on the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway, and we both travelled by train all the way from London to the coast of China, stopping to look at places of interest in Russia, Mongolia and China, and then crossed by sea to Korea, taking just under three weeks in all. We booked most of our travel through an agency in London who took most of the complications out of dealing with Russian bureaucracy; the Internet made booking the other parts easier than it would once have been.

Once we were on the way, our travel arrangements went generally smoothly, allowing us to appreciate the gradually changing scenery, friendly people and interesting cities that air travellers miss as they are lifted out of the world in Europe and deposited in Asia after a few uncomfortable hours.

I make no claim to environmental sainthood, having had to fly home to get back to work. But 'slow' travel in both directions can often be combined with plenty of time at the destination: if I had omitted the intermediate stops I could have had a week in Beijing and returned by train, and most of Europe can be reached quickly enough to make little

difference, apart from the more interesting journey, to a holiday of a week or two. It may not be as ridiculously cheap as air travel sometimes is these days, but by making fewer and longer trips you can have a more worthwhile experience than a series of short breaks, and reduce your environmental impact even more.

Much the best place to start looking for information about non-flying travel is www.seat61.com, which provides a wealth of information and inspiration.

Festival recycling beyond Bunkfest

Last September many of you will remember that Brian Landowski, and a team of volunteers from Sustainable Wallingford, pulled out all the stops to encourage recycling at Bunkfest. A staggering 77% of rubbish at the festival was recycled. The clever recycling stations that Brian designed went into storage over the winter at South Oxfordshire District Council's depot in Burcot but have emerged this season to be put to good use over the summer festival season.

Following advertising by the Community Action Group (CAG) Project the bins went into service at the highly successful Children's Food Festival held in July at Abingdon Airfield. Many members of the public used the stations to recycle their picnic and 'free sample' rubbish. As a volunteer at the event it was most encouraging to see both visitors and traders walking around the stations deciding which bin to use for their recycling. Encouraged by the presence of the recycling stations, and an enthusiastic band of volunteers, traders took huge quantities of cardboard to the recycling skip.

The recycling stations went on from there to The Battle of Newbridge, a Sealed Knot re-enactment event, on the banks of the Thames near Standlake the following weekend. The stations were all in place by Friday morning ready for an early start on Saturday... and then the heavens opened! It was the Friday of the rains, the Thames burst its banks, and the whole event was flooded off. The organisers battled against the elements to rescue all the recycling signage and all but seven of the bins which appear to have drifted off down the Thames!

At the time of writing it is likely that the bins will be in use on Sunday 2nd September at Wychwood Fair and they are already booked

in for their last outing of the season to Leys Fair on 8th of September.

It is wonderful to see the 'Bunkfest bins' in use this season, encouraging other festival goers to think a little more about where their rubbish goes. If you know of more festivals that would like to use the bins next year please contact the CAG project (www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk).

Moira Dorey

Ban the bag

'Packaging Unwrapped' was a national day of activity to highlight the over-packaging of our everyday shopping. Sustainable Wallingford took part, as Caron Spence of the Waste Group explains.

On 30th June, Packaging Unwrapped events took place across the county organised by Community Action Groups (of which Sustainable Wallingford is one). These events were activated and supported by Oxfordshire County Council Community Action Waste Team and the WI: the latter initiated a similar event a year ago. The idea was to bring to people's attention just how many of the items that we buy are over-packaged, particularly in supermarkets, and help them to see how they can take action themselves.

Our first intention was to have a stall on this day within the foyer area of Waitrose, this having been both agreed and supported by the manager, who came up with ideas of how we could work together. However, at the eleventh hour, he was given a 'no go' from head office. So our stall was moved to the Regal Centre, to be held alongside our quarterly Swap Shop, which had been scheduled for the same day.

Adorned with bunting made from plastic carrier bags and some interesting items made from recycled materials – including purses made from tetrapaks – our stall held a wealth of facts and information to read or take away. Hot off the press was the great news that Modbury in Devon had banned plastic bags when all of its 43 street traders backed the ban. So come on Wallingfordians, what say we ban the bag too!

We spoke to about 40 people and gave out about 30 of our cotton shopping bags. Some

other people said they already had cotton bags but forgot to take them shopping, so we suggested ways of giving yourself a reminder to take them shopping (see below). Many people agreed that there was too much packaging on many things and it needs to be reduced. A high percentage of people said we should just get rid of plastic bags so we would have no option but to use bags for life. So what are we waiting for?

How to remember your shopping bag.

1. Always keep a carrier bag in the pocket of your most used coat.
2. Always keep a bag or two in a pannier of your bicycle.
3. Get your children in the habit by making it their job to collect the bags together before a shopping trip.
4. Keep it in the car, and get in habit of returning it there after you have unpacked shopping. Leaving it on the front door mat to fall over is a good way of remembering to return it to the car!

New Transport Group

As reported in the last newsletter, the Town Council Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) Working Group has effectively become the Sustainable Wallingford Transport Group. Town Councillors are still attending and supportive. We are currently looking at the following issues:

- Three of the group are also on SODC's Wallingford Air Quality Management Steering Group, and hoping to achieve more through that than just traffic management – looking at supporting pedestrians and cycling and making the town more people-friendly.
- We have recently met with the Henley Partnership's Environment Panel and exchanged views about integrated transport strategy and other issues.
- The South Oxfordshire bus subsidy review is coming up and we want to encourage people to use the integrated bus service that Thames Travel has developed with Wallingford as the hub: buses are much better around Wallingford than in many places. The Oxford & Reading express services are now very good and quite well used, but some other routes could be under threat from funding cuts.

If you are interesting in getting involved, please contact John Griffin (see Contacts on page 4)

Energy group

Are you interested in joining a Sustainable Wallingford Energy Group? Recently, some members and supporters have expressed an interest in reviving the energy group – now we need someone to organise this! If you'd like to get involved, please let us know so that we can bring together enough like-minded people to start the group.

Harvest time at Fir Tree Junior School

Fir Tree students from years three and four began working in the garden when they returned to school after the summer, harvesting carrots, kale, tomatoes and beans for school meals. Last year, all students in the school had at least one turn during the Friday afternoon slot. This year, just two classes are working in the garden, but students of all ages come to offer their help on Friday during lunch break and free time outside, including before and after school.

We always welcome volunteers with gardening interest and time to spare on a Friday. Please contact Sam Settle, project co-ordinator (01491 838 054/ juliasam@tiscali.co.uk). We would love to see you on Saturday September 22nd when the Vegetable Garden is having its autumn work party, open to the public. We will be cutting back the hedge, collecting seeds for next year, preparing an area for planting rhubarb crowns, and tidying the garden. We will also be enlarging some of the beds to increase the growing area. We will be working from 10am–4pm and home-made lunch with some ingredients from the garden will be provided at 12.30. Contact Sam if you are attending so we know how many to cook for.

Local news

Tetrapaks

Local residents can now recycle paper-based beverage cartons – aka tetrapaks – at the country council's eight waste recycling centres, including Redbridge, Drayton and Oakley Wood. The council advises it is best if they are washed and squashed, to ensure a cleaner and more economical payload. You do not need to remove the plastic elements

as they can easily be dealt with during the recycling process.

While we would encourage you to take your cartons direct to the council's collection points, we will continue to collect tetrapaks at Sustainable Wallingford's Swap Shops along with the other 'hard to recycle' items that don't go in household recycling bins. Again, please wash and flatten them first.

New local producers market

A new weekly market is to take place every Saturday from 15th September. The Wallingford Local Producers Market will be at the Masonic Centre Hall on Goldsmiths Lane every Saturday from 10am to 1pm. Local farmers and producers will be selling vegetables, fruit, meat, cakes and preserves and there will also be a café available.

Waste Consultation Questionnaire

South Oxfordshire District Council is inviting residents to have their say on the future of waste collection in the district. They have produced a waste questionnaire called 'Your Shout – Talking Rubbish...' The questionnaire is available online at www.southoxon.gov.uk/haveyoursay and the consultation runs until 28 September.

Who's who

Sustainable Wallingford is a group of volunteers who share a passion for making a difference locally. 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. If you would like to join a particular group, please contact them on the details below.

Contacts:

Waste: Mark Palmer 01491 839 230

Local Sourcing: Dorothy Cussens 01865 891 197

Transport: John Griffin 01491 838523

Communications/Media contact: Rachel Viney, 07980 803969

Dates for your diary

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 15th

Launch of Wallingford Local Producers Market, Masonic Centre Hall, 10am-1pm

Saturday 22nd

Fir Tree School Vegetable Garden autumn work party, 10am– 4pm

Friday 28th

Deadline for SODC's waste consultation

Saturday 29th

Swap Shop, Regal Centre, 10am-12 noon
Wallingford Farmers' market

OCTOBER

Tuesday 16th

Wallingford Farmers' market

NOVEMBER

Monday 12th

Sustainable Wallingford AGM, 7pm

Tuesday 20th

Wallingford Farmers' Market

Mailing list

If you are on our mailing list, you will have received this by email. If you've picked up this copy elsewhere and would like to be kept in touch with Sustainable Wallingford, please contact Chris Cussens on chris@mokescorner.co.uk and ask to join our mailing list.

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 on penny.kiley@virgin.net

