



working locally to make a difference

Newsletter New Year 2008

Wishes for Wallingford

New Year is a time for looking forward and, after a busy 2007, Sustainable Wallingford has plenty to think about for the coming year.

We held our annual Open Meeting in November – in the excellent new venue at Wallingford Methodist Church – and were delighted with the number of supporters who came along to share ideas and offer practical help. We ended up with a wide-ranging ‘wish list’ and we are actively considering several of the ideas. These include:

- A corporate member scheme.
- Looking at ways to encourage household energy efficiency.
- A ‘sustainable safari’ – visits to houses that have been made eco-friendly in some way, so that people can share their knowledge.
- A community orchard.
- Working with charity shops on recycling.

We hope to collect more ‘wishes’ throughout the year so if you have an idea for a project that you would like to make happen, please let us know so we can add it to the list. The more people who get involved, the more we can do. Our hope for 2008 is to see as many individuals and organisations as possible in the town getting involved in these kinds of activities. We would love to see Wallingford become a byword for a sustainable community in action and a model of how – by working together – we can really make a difference.

If you would like to get in touch with Sustainable Wallingford, get involved in our activities, or have ideas or suggestions you'd like to put to us, please complete the new online form on our website www.sustainablewallingford.org. You'll find it by clicking on 'Contact Us'.

To become, or not to become, a charity

Supporters of Sustainable Wallingford may recall that last year we opened discussions

on whether or not it was time for us to become a charity. Because this would be an important decision for us, we set up a small group to look carefully at the issue and report back to the active membership. As well as canvassing the views of supporters, we also carefully studied the information provided by the Charity Commission, which regulates charities in England and Wales, And – thanks to the Environmental Law Foundation (see item below) – we had an extremely helpful free consultation with a solicitor specialising in charity law. All the advice and information we received was considered in depth at a special meeting of our active members last autumn. After much discussion, we agreed that the arguments in favour of becoming a charity were not sufficiently strong for us to take this major step at the moment and to defer seeking charitable status for the time being. We will revisit the issue at a later date and in the meantime look again at our constitution and the way we are structured.

Environmental Law Foundation (ELF)

The ELF is a national charity set up in 1992 to help people use the law to protect and improve their local environment and quality of life. Through its network of specialist lawyers and consultants across the UK, the ELF provides free guidance and continuing support to those in need of assistance. It aims to help communities and individuals be aware of their environmental rights and how to use those rights and enable them to use the law to protect and improve their environment. More information about the ELF and the valuable advice and services it provides can be found at www.elflaw.org.

Good news from Fir Tree

We have just had good news from the school governors at Fir Tree School that the vegetable garden will be able to expand, roughly doubling its size (to about 4800 square feet). This means we may be able to grow roughly 10% of the school's food; and the school will be cutting food miles even more.

It also means that Wallingford is inching a little closer to being more of a 'local' town, and is a tiny bit stronger in building resilience for the time when oil prices make the provision of food (and other petroleum-dependent products and services) from far away more tenuous.

And it brings opportunities to get involved: the increased size will mean that the garden will be relying on regular, weekly volunteer help from June to September when watering and harvesting are most intensive. There will be a rota for two days each week during those summer months for volunteers to come for about 90 minutes to harvest and water. We will also need help to process and freeze the harvested produce during the summer holidays.

If you would like to get involved, please contact Sam Settle on 01491 838 054.

Bagless Wallingford

Sustainable Wallingford is working with the Town Council on an initiative to reduce the number of plastic bags in the town. We were approached by Councillor Theresa Jordan to join forces on this issue and a working party is looking at ways of reducing the number of plastic bags until eventually Wallingford becomes plastic bag free.

We plan to survey shops in the town centre about their policy on handing out bags, and to look into alternatives. We will also be learning from other communities in the area, such as Wantage, who have already made progress on this.

This move is part of a growing trend. In 2007, the Devon town of Modbury became the first in Europe to reject plastic bags in its shops. Since then, many other cities, towns and villages have followed suit, gradually switching to alternatives to the throwaway plastic carrier.

According to campaigners in Modbury, the world produces over 200 million tonnes of plastic annually. Around half of this is used for disposable items of packaging that are discarded within a year.

You can find more information – and inspiration – about Modbury at www.plasticbagfree.com.

Naked Swap Shops: no more clothes

Since the first Sustainable Wallingford Swap Shop in October 2003, people attending these events have taken away several tonnes of material and so saved it from going into landfill sites. The true figure for what's been put to better use would also include the large items that people have swapped via the notice board without bringing them to the Regal Centre, a significant proportion of the leftovers (many of which get put to good use) and everything collected for recycling or reuse. These include well over a quarter of a tonne of batteries, many tins of paint, dozens of computers, and several dozen sacks of aluminium foil.

The latest Swap Shop, in September, was attended by over 450 people who took away over a tonne between them.

We are very grateful to all who support these events, but we would like to emphasise that Swap Shops are not the only way of ensuring that unwanted items are put to good use:

- Charity shops will take things that they think they can sell.
- If you have Internet access, the [local Freecycle group](#) acts as an online Swap Shop, putting people with things to dispose of in touch with those who might want them.
- If you are going to one of the County Council's waste recycling sites you can take items there (but don't make an extra car journey just for a small amount of recycling).

As from the next Swap Shop on 12th January, we will not be taking clothes; this is because we have found that there is often a large quantity of unwanted clothes left over after these events, and there are several other ways to get rid of them. As well as those mentioned in the previous paragraph, clothes can be taken to the SODC textile banks (there is one adjacent to the Regal Centre, and several others in Wallingford and the surrounding area) and the Sue Ryder shop in Wallingford collects rags. Otherwise, the range of what we take remains the same, but look out in case further subtractions or additions are announced before future Swap Shops.

We hope to see many of you on 12th January and at the following Swap Shop on 8th March, but don't feel the need to save things for these dates when there is a

satisfactory alternative; and even better, see if you can manage in 2008 not to acquire more things you don't want!

Energy from waste

In December, members of the Waste Group visited Chineham, an energy from waste recovery facility (near Basingstoke, and the nearest facility to Oxford). Chineham was the first of the three facilities in Hampshire to recover waste which cannot be traditionally recycled, and approximately 90,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste is processed there each year.

The visit was organised by the Oxfordshire-wide CAG (Community Action Group) Project, which provides funding and support for community events and initiatives that help to reduce the amount of waste we put into landfill in Oxfordshire. If you'd like to set up your own CAG group, see www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk for details.

News from the Local Sourcing group

Members of the Sustainable Wallingford Local Sourcing group have been supporting the new Local Producers' Market and are delighted to see how much of a fixture it has become in such a short time. The market is held on Saturday mornings in the Masonic Centre in Goldsmith's Lane.

The group is currently looking at the possibility of a community orchard for the town. This is traditionally a good fruit-growing area and there are already community orchards in the area, for example in Wolvercote. You can find out more about community orchards on the Common Ground website at www.commonground.org.uk/appleday/a-corc.html.

Although it's not a problem at this time of year, we've also been looking at what keen gardeners can do with their surplus fruit and veg. If you're a member of Freecycle or Wallingford LETS, you can probably find another member who is happy to take your surplus. If you prefer to sell, outlets include WAGS (Wallingford Allotments & Gardens Society) and the Wallingford Country Market. Local jam-makers can be happy to receive raw materials, and school kitchens (such as that at Fir Tree) may also welcome donations.

Following the Open Meeting, the group has been joined by some new members. We always welcome new members who have a passion for supporting local producers and cutting their carbon footprint by 'buying local'. Contact Dorothy Cussens on 01865 891 197 if you would like to join us.

No clones in Wallingford

The Clone Town Britain Survey II is designed to determine whether a town has become a Clone Town, increasingly indistinguishable from dozens of others around the country; or whether it survives as a Home Town, distinctive and recognisable as a unique place.

Members of Sustainable Wallingford, working with the Wallingford Business Partnership, carried out a survey for Wallingford in November and we are pleased to report that, since the first survey in 2004, it has maintained its position as a Home Town.

The survey was produced by the New Economics Foundation (www.neweconomics.org), who have created a Clone Town Index that measures both the identity (independent or chain) and diversity (number of different shop types) of outlets in the centre of the town.

What's the relevance to sustainability? Well, this is what the New Economics Foundation says: 'Economic systems that favour the large, remote and uniform threaten our local economies and communities, diversity and choice. Creating the right balance between local and global economies will help to increase individual well-being, reduce inequalities and promote environmental sustainability.'

Our results can be seen in full on our website, [by clicking here](#).

Local news

District council waste survey

Nearly 2000 people responded to a waste survey carried out by South Oxfordshire District Council. Results show support for a weekly food waste collection, kerbside collection of glass, and fortnightly collection of residual waste (what's left when all your recycling and composting has been removed). The council has now decided to introduce a weekly collection of food waste. They have also decided to collect glass from the kerbside for recycling, which will save

trips to the bottle banks. The biggest change will be to residual waste, which will be collected fortnightly. According to the council, evidence from other parts of the country shows that this approach encourages more people to separate their recycling and composting from their residual waste, which can make a real difference to the amount of waste going to landfill.

Local food for a changing climate

The Northmoor Trust is holding an event titled 'Growing Local Food in a Changing Climate: impacts and adaptations on allotments and gardens'. This gardeners' panel discussion with local allotment group members takes place at Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, at 7.30 on Thursday 24 January. Further details are available at www.northmoortrust.co.uk or by ringing 01865 409426.

Oxfordshire Green Pages

Sustainable Wallingford is just one of the many hundreds of Oxfordshire-based organisations, businesses and services listed in the new edition of *Oxfordshire Green Pages 2008*. Subtitled 'The Amazing Directory of Green Living', Green Pages carries details of the incredible variety of companies and organisations in the county that provide goods or services with a green and ethical slant. Oxfordshire Green Pages is on sale at the Wallingford Bookshop and Project Timescape in Little Wittenham, price £4.50. It can also be ordered online at www.oxfordgreenpages.co.uk.

Sustainability on business agenda

SODC is making sustainability the topic of a business breakfast to be held on Tuesday 22 January 2008. Places are limited, so if you are in business locally and interested in attending, please contact Claire Gothard on claire.gothard@southoxon.gov.uk as soon as possible, and by 11 January at the latest.

Dates for your diary

JANUARY

Saturday 12th
Swap Shop, Regal Centre, 10.00am-12.00
Tuesday 15th
Wallingford farmers' market
Thursday 24th
'Growing Local Food in a Changing Climate',
Northmoor Trust, 7.30pm.

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 19th

Wallingford farmers' market

MARCH

Saturday 8th
Swap Shop, Regal Centre, 10.00am-12.00
Tuesday 18th
Wallingford farmers' market

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

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