



Working locally to make a difference

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Visit to New Earth Solutions

Last September three Sustainable Wallingford members went on an educational visit, arranged by the CAG Project (<http://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk>), to a major waste management site in Dorset. This presented an opportunity to learn about the state-of-the-art technology which could be applied in our region. We were given a comprehensive tour by a spokesman who was obviously keen on sustainability and interested in dealing with waste in the most environmentally friendly way possible.

Compostable material such as food and garden waste is dealt with by in-vessel composting -- the composting process takes place in large sheds and can be carefully controlled, with the right levels of water, aeration and turning, to produce a high-quality product. The process takes about 10-12 weeks from start to finish. Air from the sheds is treated to remove any contamination before it is released to the atmosphere; this is done by passing it through a 'biofilter' consisting of 3 metres of chopped bark.



Some of the visitors with the compost turning machine



Green waste reception area with compost heaps in the background

Unlike the alternative technology of anaerobic digestion, composting doesn't produce methane that can be used as fuel, but it is apparently a much more robust process, less affected by the variety of material in domestic and commercial waste. The heat that it produces is currently lost, but it is hoped that greenhouses will be built next to the site to use it.

The site also deals with residual waste, i.e. material which can't be recycled, and mixed waste that the public have not sorted into recyclables and other waste. They sort this by a variety of methods (mechanical, optical, magnetic, etc.) to remove what can in fact be recycled; remaining organic matter is converted to low-grade compost or to fuel, and as little as possible goes to landfill (currently 20%, but they hope to reduce this to 10%).

A neighbouring plant on the same site, run by an associated company, recovers demolition waste and sorts it into different grades of sand and broken stone; apparently the majority of this can be reused.

For a more detailed account of the visit by another participant, see <http://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/>

Mark Palmer

Sustainable Wallingford Planning Day

On the afternoon of January 17th twenty five members of Sustainable Wallingford met in the Methodist Hall. Our purpose was to develop a framework for action for Sustainable Wallingford for 2009 – 2010, designed by members and the different Action Groups. It was a very enjoyable, as well as productive meeting and members brought some lovely foodie treats, (chocolate brownies featured heavily!) to sustain us through the afternoon. It was also good to have new members, recruited through the Climate Change questionnaire, come and join us.

After a brief introduction, we started with a huge piece of paper on which everyone drew the activities they would like to see happening in the area in the next 20 years which will contribute to its sustainability. This exercise led to much discussion, explanation and lots of laughter at our superb artistic abilities! The resulting collage included a variety of renewable energy sources including hydropower production on the Thames, increased sources of local food such as a community orchard, woodland and gardens, a traffic free town centre, cycle ways, using the river for transport and a whole variety of other things too numerous to mention, but producing an inspiring vision for what a truly sustainable community could look like. One person had drawn a large number of people placed all over the drawing and joined together by a line. It was to signify what can be achieved when the people in a community work together.

We followed this with an ‘Open Space’ session, during which we brainstormed possible activities under four headings – A Local Economy, Sustainable Living, Campaigning and Awareness Raising.

Everyone then divided up into their Action Groups and each group took the ideas from the Open Space

categories which seemed most appropriate for their group to lead on. They discussed if they were deliverable in the short, medium or long term and which might be a priority.

At the end of this session it was agreed that, since not everyone had been able to attend this planning session, at their next meeting each Action Group would decide, linked to what had come out of the afternoon, the focus of their work for the next year. This would be fed back to the management group and jointly provide the Action Plan for Sustainable Wallingford for 2009-10, to be shared by all of us. Each group will be aware of what other groups are doing and where there are complimentary activities they could undertake. Some actions, such as publicity, had relevance to all the groups and have been taken back to the Management and Communications Groups to lead on.

During the afternoon, a flipchart was left at one side of the room. We asked people to fill it with any ideas for events we could hold during the year. By the end, it was filled with a variety of excellent suggestions and from this we will prepare a programme of Sustainable Wallingford events for the year ahead.

We finished the day with a bring and share supper, which offered delights to tempt the most discerning palate. Altogether, it was an excellent day, providing the opportunity for us to get to know each other better and to collectively develop a positive plan for Sustainable Wallingford for the year ahead.

Jacinta Thorley

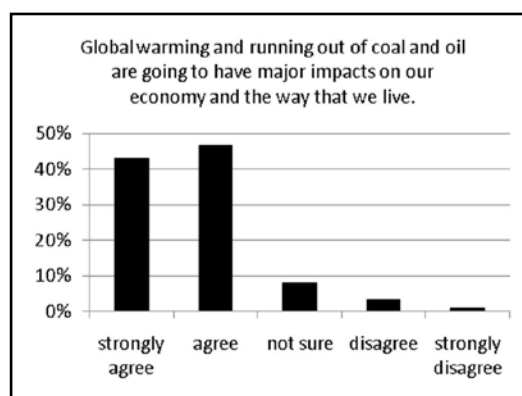
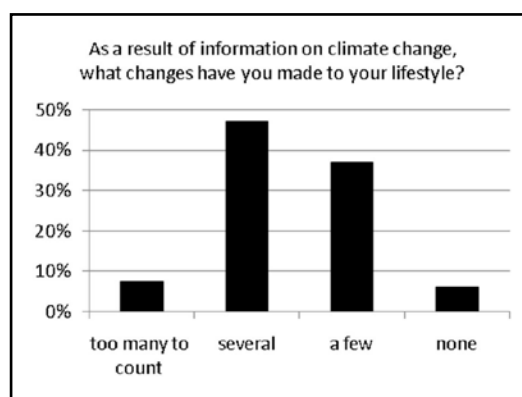
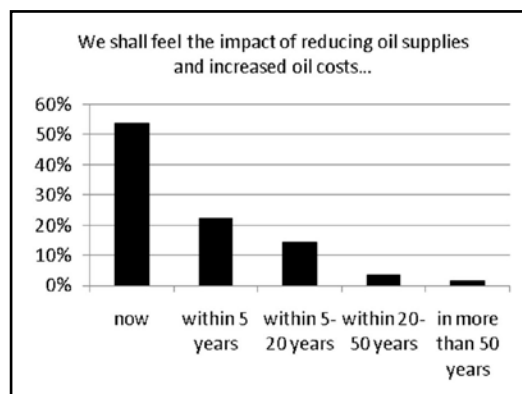
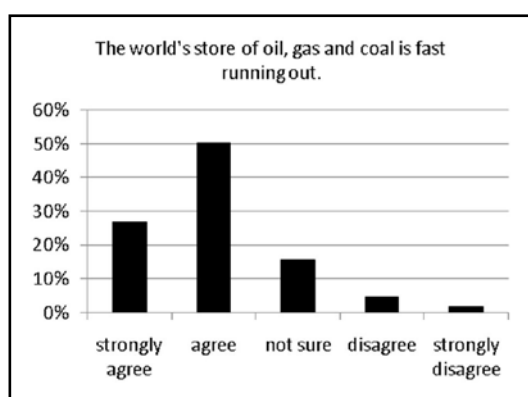
Climate change and Peak Oil

Questionnaire results

During last autumn, we completed the largest scale survey of its kind ever carried out in the Wallingford area of views on climate change and fossil fuel depletion. The full results from our 563 responders can be seen on our website via the link from the home page. They are presented in the form of 14 charts covering every aspect of the survey, together with opinions people supplied on how to solve the problem and what they are doing about it. The website also presents results from Sustainable Wallingford, USA, whose 104 returns are pretty close to our own.

The survey is a snapshot of local views. It is not and does not claim to be based on a systematic cross section of the population of Wallingford and surrounding villages. But despite this limitation it does seem to show that many of us are, however tentatively, moving towards more sustainable lifestyles.

Some of the principal charts are shown here.



We are very grateful to all those who gave their ideas and opinions, which ranged from ultra-green to sceptical. In the light of these findings we are now considering our programme of action for 2009, and in particular how to create effective partnerships with local bodies such as SODC, Wallingford Town Council and the Wallingford Partnership.

Groups News...Groups News...Groups News..

Energy Group

The Energy Group has recently been resurrected with current activities including a review of possible renewable energy options for the town and Wallingford's first Carbon Footprint. Please check the Sustainable Wallingford website for more details.

As well as investigating alternative and low carbon sources of energy we are also interested in promoting ways of using energy more efficiently. With that in mind, it is worth checking whether the insulation in your home meets the government's guidelines for keeping your home warm in this, the coldest winter since 1995!

For loft insulation it is now recommended that you have 270mm of insulation. And if you have cavity walls, has the cavity been filled? There are now a number of grants available towards covering the cost of improving insulation. The Energy Saving Trust (www.energysavingtrust.org.uk) is a great source of information on how to save energy and information on those grants.

If everyone makes a few small changes, the overall effect is considerable, so please don't ever feel that you cannot make a difference. You can, and it would be great if you can tell us about your successes so we can inspire others.

As the group is newly formed, things are at an early stage. If you have any skills and/or ideas to offer and would like to be more actively involved, do please get in touch. Contact information is on the website or phone Catherine Somerville on 01491 201229.

**SwapShop 7th March,
10-12, Regal Centre**

Local Sourcing Group

Directory of Local Suppliers

The current directory was a great success and all copies have gone out. We hope to have the new updated Directory ready for launch on 25th April 2009.

There is however, still time for inclusion and we would very much welcome new entries – from local growers, producers, suppliers and craftsmen selling local goods made from recycled materials.

The Application for funding is in its final stages and everything looks positive.

Community Orchard and Woodlands

We have looked long and hard for suitable land in Wallingford, but after one or two raised hopes, we have drawn a blank.

We have recently approached Northmoor Trust and are in discussions with them for making some land available to use. We would like to create an orchard and possibly a woodland for coppicing – so that we could grow fruit and nuts and wood for burning.

Northmoor Trust have agreed in principle to our having a piece of land for an orchard. The way in which we proceed with this is still under discussion and if you would like to be involved in this project we would be pleased to hear from you.

In the meantime Northmoor Trust have passed the first stages of an application for funding which will create financial resources; a variety of different community groups are involved and there will be a meeting of all these groups in March to take the project forward.

STOP PRESS--TRANSPORT GROUP

Sustainable Wallingford's new cycle leaflet is published: see it at the 7th March SwapShop, town information office, Rides On Air, library and on the website.

Fir Tree School - Veg garden update

Since the Vegetable Garden at Fir Tree School began three years ago, parents and family of school children, in addition to other regular volunteers and the children themselves, have given their time and talent to help the garden thrive. Their generosity is most visible at the twice-annual Saturday work parties. Also, in 2008, a Fir Tree mother began helping regularly each week with gardening tasks, as well as lending a hand when groups of children came out to work and learn. And at the beginning of 2009, another parent (of a future pupil) who grows a tremendous amount of food at her home in Ipsden began contributing her veg-growing skills each Friday.

The relationship between the garden and families has taken another big step forward with the launch of a three-strand scheme developed by the school called Let's Get Cooking, Fit and Gardening. This scheme allows six families to gain familiarity and skill, as a family, in these areas, over the course of a year. It reflects the holistic approach to learning and to addressing the needs of the community, not just the children, that is characteristic of Fir Tree School and probably other schools in the area.

So, as part of the gardening strand of the scheme, a group of six families – parents and their children who are released from the classroom for part the time – has been relocating part of the herb garden, shifting a soil mound, painting signs and cleaning the greenhouse glass. Soon it will be time to dig over more beds for planting and sowing, filling the greenhouse with seed trays and planting onion sets and sowing peas. Everyone is pleased that the garden is being used to help meet this need.

There are other key people that keep the garden in shape: Gareth from Cholsey has been involved from the beginning. He can often be found kneeling on his piece of old carpet, or 'prayer rug' as he calls it,

which protects his knees, as he repairs the vegetable bed frames. Semi-retired psychoanalyst Liz brings her gardening knowledge and enthusiasm when she can and her decisive energy is always welcome. Sam (a different Sam – two Sams in the garden now!) has arranged with his employer in Little Wittenham to have the afternoon off every other Friday so he can offer his experience and interest in gardening to this community project. Peter comes many Fridays straight from Wallingford School to lend his elbow grease and intelligence as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award work.

The commitment from these friends, plus continued support from the school, helped the garden produce 14% of the school's food budget last year. We expect that figure to rise in 2009, as a new section of garden reaches full productivity.

A big highlight for me last year was the appearance of a hedgehog while a group of children was having a working lesson in the garden. And, as we surmised by the remains of something squishy and orange that she left behind when she moved in to the undergrowth, she had been munching on a slug. Perfect timing! She reinforced what I have been trying to communicate to the children since the beginning about the need to provide habitat in the garden for insects, birds, and even hedgehogs and how it is good to encourage as much biodiversity as possible, just for the intrinsic value of the creatures and plants, regardless of what they do for us, as well as their extrinsic value as controllers of pests and pollinators. I wanted to find her and slip her a fiver.

Another high point was a visit to Preston Crowmarsh with a group of children to see the three-acre organic garden of Mark Powell, who sells at Wallingford's Local Producers' Market. So impressed was Izzy by Mark's layout and obvious enjoyment and commitment



Parents and children pitching in at last year's Spring work party

to his work, that she said as we were leaving, "I want to be a vegetable grower when I grow up." One of the secondary aims of this project is to inspire children to consider vegetable production as an enjoyable and viable career. As oil becomes scarce, transportation costs rise, and we become more aware of the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we will need our vegetables and fruit to be grown much closer to home, and many more small-scale organic growers like Mark Powell, Mark Stevenson and Cyd O'Brien in Warborough, Ash at Green Bean in Little Stoke, Tolhurst Organic Produce in Whitchurch, and Close to the Veg at the Northmoor Trust. A few months later, Izzy joined other children in displaying produce from the Fir Tree garden in the WAGS autumn show, and capturing a few of the prizes.

This year we are holding two more work parties that you, Sustainable Wallingford members, friends, family and the general public are invited to. The Spring date is TBC so please keep an eye on the Sustainable Wallingford website but 3rd October is a confirmed Autumn date. They will both be on a Saturday, from 10:00 – 13:00 and are followed by lunch at the school. Stay for as long as you wish, just

come for a look, bring your own spade and fork if you can. We are also looking forward to the Willow Workshop on 28th February, when participants will make willow structures for the garden, baskets and a living willow hedge. The last space has probably been taken, but if you are interested, ring Carolyn at the school on 01491 836 341, as she will have started a waiting list.

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News from the editor...

Hello, I'm Anthony Hurford and I have taken over editing and production of the newsletter from Chris Cussens who was doing an excellent job but needed a change. I hope you enjoy the newsletter and would love to hear from you with any comments/ contributions/ suggestions to: aphurford@hotmail.com / 07930 616789

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. We will post details of meetings and other events so please do check for updates.