

## Abingdon Carbon Cutters Annual Summary of Activity July 2015-June 2016

It is good to be able to report that, in addition to ongoing activities in the well established areas of our work, significant advances have been made with regard to our progress as a town in transition. In January we were able to provide support and encouragement to Town Councillors when they successfully persuaded the council to adopt a policy which committed the Council to 'reduce carbon emissions by 20% by 2020' and 'aim to become carbon neutral by 2030....' This decision by the Council is a very welcome first step for the town in achieving an energy descent plan – one of the key aims of a Transition town.

Two new initiatives have developed linked to this Town Council resolution. The Town Council established an Environment Working Group to take forward the implementation of the resolution and a member of ACC has been co-opted onto this group. As the resolution was being adopted ACC were engaging a Student Consultancy Team from Oxford University to research the measurement and reduction of Abingdon's Carbon Footprint with particular reference to the Council's energy usage. The report of the Student Consultancy Team (SCT) was well received in March by the Working Group and two further SCT were engaged. One SCT was to specifically research ways in which the carbon emissions of the activities of the Town Council could be reduced. The other SCT was to focus on strategies for estimating the carbon footprint of various sectors of the Abingdon community. Both SCT reported back at a meeting of ACC on 15<sup>th</sup> June with very useful findings which will:

- a) feed into the Town's Working Group's deliberations
- b) provide valuable suggestions on where the key foci should be to achieve reduction in carbon emissions across the community.

One immediate outcome from these consultancy reports has been the decision to seek further SCT to help us take forward this energy descent work.

Unfortunately whilst making this progress with the Town Council and mapping out town-wide strategies for carbon footprint reduction, it was very disappointing to receive the news that the Abingdon Hydro Project would not be able to go ahead. Despite the strong support of Councils and of hundreds of shareholders, when the tenders for construction were received the sums required were well in excess of working assumptions and made the whole project financially unviable. The project had been developed by key members of ACC and other directors who all deserve a great vote of thanks for all their hard and detailed work. Hopefully we will be able to make use of their acquired expertise in other projects in the future. ACC has also now become a community shareholder in the Low Carbon Hub Community Interest Company which will enable us to bid for project funding from the profits fund arising from the LCH solar energy schemes.

The other strands of ACC activities have developed well during the year. The Wild Flower maze, the two Bee Beds and the Edible Abingdon Plot in the Abbey Meadow were all successful and well received by the public. A notable extension of this work has been the installation of a container-based vegetable growing plot in the grounds of Old Station House Care Home showing how food crops can be grown in ways which do not require a garden or allotment. Apple pressing was again a major focus of activities in the autumn with two sets of pressing equipment in intensive use for over two months. As a result 11,512 litres of juice were pressed, 53 different people hired the press, approx 5 of which were for community events, and £1569 was raised. Work with the South Abingdon Children's Centre and Caldecott School has continued during the year, the meadow is flourishing and the January Wassail was much enjoyed by all who joined in. Planning has now started for the development of work in South Abingdon in the future after the closure of SACC in March 2017.

Once again our activities have been enhanced by support from members of Green Gym, Abingdon Horticultural Society and Larkmead Foundation Learning Garden team. Monthly meetings continued to attract a varying audience with topics including: Particular: The Art of Knitting, Chemistry and Gentle Protest, Building Energy Efficiency, the City Dark film, Getting the Best from Raised Beds, Vale of White Horse Council officers explaining how the Vale has reduced its carbon emissions and hearing about the Buzz Tour visiting projects across the country. Through meetings and the other activities of the group this year we have increased our contact group by a further 10%, the number signed up now is 436. As ever, the officers are very grateful for the hard work and support of the members of the core group who meet on the first Wednesday of each month to plan activities and the wider group of other members who are involved in looking after the bee beds, the Wild Flower maze, Edible Abingdon beds, Caldecott Meadow, working with SACC and Caldecott School, etc. We are particularly grateful this year for the efforts of the three student teams from Oxford University in providing such well focused and useful consultancy reports.

Cliff Marshall

July 2016

Officers for the year 2015-16:

Co – chairs: Richard Howard, Cliff Marshall

Treasurer: Linda Coker

Secretary: Sally Reynolds