

Berkswell Parish Council

Report on Climate Change conference

(see Appendix 1 for a local news report)

I recently attended a Climate Change/Low Carbon conference in Henley-in-Arden which was coordinated by the RSA but was mainly targeted at identifying initiatives for local action in Henley-in-Arden itself.

There were a number of speakers on the need for change/action and some examples of initiatives elsewhere. It appears that the RSA are happy to run similar events if asked.

The main activity of the day was a number of working groups discussing options for local action and then a full session to determine which were deemed to be immediate priorities. Interestingly the highest ranked options were communication to and education of children and adults.

Recommendation

The Parish Council does not have the resources to manage additional projects outside of current activities.

The Council can support resident activities where legislation allows.

The Parish Council should review operations and policies to support actions to reduce our own carbon impact (see Appendix 2 for a list of areas to consider).

Motion for next Parish Council meeting

“The Parish Council recognises the need for action on Climate change. The Council will review operations and policies to reduce our own direct and indirect carbon impact including a formal policy statement to be drafted and included in the next review of Council Policies.

The Council will support where practicable local resident initiatives and nominates Councillor Hitchcock to liaise with any local groups engaged on related issues.”

APPENDIX 1

Extract from Henley News

Climate Change and the Local Community

On Saturday 26th October, 57 people turned out for a public meeting in the Memorial Hall, Henley-in-Arden.



The meeting, chaired by former High Bailiff, Ray Holding, was organised by John and Penny Stott and a volunteer team. It was supported by the Royal Society for the Arts and Abigail Campbell, RSA area manager for this region, opened by describing a recent talk in Leamington Spa, where she had been addressing a group of students about the waste in throw-away clothes fashions. She had asked for a show of hands by people who were wearing an item of clothing over 6 months old (many hands up), two years old (somewhat fewer) and five years old (very few). The same question in Henley produced many hands up for clothing over ten years old – so Henley clearly thinks twice before disposing of perfectly usable clothing! The question and the answers are indicators of the extent to which resources are wasted in a “Take, Make and Dispose”, energy-hungry economy.

Three speakers addressed differing aspects of the Climate Change debate. First up, David Middleton, formerly the founder and CEO of the Midlands Environmental Business Network and author of books bearing on the subject, presented a talk centred on the problems arising from the take - make – dispose way of life. He spoke of the need to strive for a “Circular Economy” with the best possible re-use of what may currently be regarded as waste. One solution suggested was the combining of different industries where the waste from one is used by the next, resulting in reduced waste. David’s talk was interposed with several illustrations – some of them alarming - of the way in which carbon emissions have escalated in the last 150 years and how the impact has already been felt. The science had long been understood but largely ignored by governments: the science section of an American newspaper in 1912 had pointed out the impact of industrialisation on the future of “our only planet”.

Second up, Colette Bond, Head of Education at Garden Organic. Among many related activities, this major national charity supports and mentors work in the production of food and has worked in all sorts of public and other bodies including 10% of all UK schools. Colette provided numerous illustrations of school projects imparting understanding of food sources and gardening techniques, such as composting – another instance of re-use of resources. Even schools with no spare land had participated using window-boxes or pots. Some schools have been allocated a piece of an allotment. The out-of-classroom physical activity encouraged a community spirit – but called for extra skills from teaching staff! A knock-on effect has been improved diet, with children starting to eat their own healthy produce and in some cases being suppliers to the school dinner menu: a sign saying “lettuce from our own garden” had quite an impact!

There was much discussion over tea and cakes, after which our third speaker, local climate activist John Stott spoke about Climate and Money. This was a real eye-opener, as a different slant on the problem and its drivers. Graphs from the website “Our World in Data” showed, for a large group of countries, the relationship between personal income and personal carbon footprint, but also between personal income

and “happiness” (to use John’s word – a shorthand way of stating a complex bunch of statistics). Once average wages reach \$20,000 per annum, people get no happier from earning more. Costa Rica is just as happy as the UK, but on half the income. Finland came out as being happier for the same income as the UK, possibly as a result of a much narrower spread (lowest to highest) of personal incomes than in the UK. What could we learn from these countries? A further graph showed that in the recession of 2009, spending fell and so did CO2 emissions. There was a clear relationship showing that spending creates carbon pollution. Money drives the climate problem. The UK has reduced CO2 production over the last ten years, though if we take account of things made overseas for UK use we just managed to keep the CO2 level. But, stopping global warming demands a big reduction.

Finally, discussion groups were set up to consider priorities for action on a local community basis and an initial shortlist of ideas was generated, using a voting system run by Abigail who had used the method elsewhere. Using the results as a starting point, the plan for continuation is for a small local group to be created to “tease out” positive, practical actions to follow up, for us as individuals and as a community. Anyone interested in joining this group should contact Penny Stott (01564.792251) or Ray Holding (01564.792512)

Appendix 2

Berkswell Council activities (and options to change):

Meetings – meetings impact includes heat, lighting and travel as well as paper. Options to reduce impact could include: Less meetings, meetings in daylight hours and meetings held in more accessible locations.

Paper - Options to reduce the volume of paper used to be considered. Including greater use of IT by councillors.

Operations - The land management practices of the PC for its own land and that in its care. To specifically consider reducing the amount and frequency of mowing. To consider including carbon efficiency as part of the council supplier tendering process.

Grants - Require a statement of Carbon impact/sustainability on all grant applications. Where applicable prioritise “Green” grant applications for local projects.

Planning - Consider carbon impact/sustainability on any planning applications. Also at the time of the Berkswell NDP review to specifically consider climate change.