

For the latest news and more information, please see our website

Sustainable Blewbury news

Blewbury Garden Market: every Saturday, 9.30 to 11.30 am at Blewbury Garage

We're having an excellent season, selling fresh, local garden fruit and veg (including some rarely seen in shops), flowers, home-made bread, cakes and preserves. Now also selling local honey and eggs, and produce from our permaculture garden (see below). Producers please bring items to sell from 9.15 am. For more info and sales forms see www.sustainable-blewbury.org.uk/food.htm.



Jam from the permaculture orchard garden sold at the Garden Market

Permaculture orchard garden

Our permaculture orchard garden produces a wide variety of soft fruit (much of it unusual), and some of our fruit trees are also starting to produce useful crops. We sell some of the produce at the Garden Market and helpers at our occasional working parties can take some for themselves. We could do with more help – want to find out about jostaberries, medlars or pick up some globe artichokes? Contact Eric Eisenhandler at e.eisenhandler@qmul.ac.uk or 07935232296 if you might be interested.

Apple juicing

Our annual apple juicing sessions will resume at the beginning of September. If you have very early apples, or too many for our sessions, the equipment is also available for hire. Contact us at info@sustainable-blewbury.org.uk

Interesting links and workshops

Recycled plastic might supply nearly three-quarters of UK demand

Recently, China and other countries have stopped accepting most of our plastic waste for recycling, so the UK should gear up to handle it ourselves. A recent report suggests how efficient use of waste plastic could supply a large proportion of our needs and greatly reduce how much oil is needed to make new plastic. See bit.ly/2LOdJGn.

Custom splitting

Abingdon Carbon Cutters' meeting on 20th June was about "custom splitting" of large houses, which was suggested could be "the single most efficient way to help solve the housing crisis, reduce carbon footprints, and allow people to stay in their own communities as they grow older". It sounds like a much better idea than destroying good farming land by covering it in large estates. If you would like to read more go to www.if.org.uk/research-posts/unlocking-englands-hidden-homes, which is the summary of a 2016 research report by the intergenerational foundation.

Sustainable Wantage workshops

Sustainable Wantage are running two very useful workshops on Saturdays at the Mix, 15 Mill Street, Wantage. These are open to anyone who is interested as a member of the SB supporters group.

Social media training for volunteers: Sat. 30th June, 10am – 1pm (free)

Which social media platforms are best for your group or organisation? Social Media trainer Elaine Ford will help you determine your key objectives, your target audience and where they are online, how to connect with them and what to share. We'll look at the top five social media platforms by monthly active users: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn and provide you with an overview of what each platform can offer you.



Supporting volunteers: Food hygiene training: Sat. 7th July, 1.30 – 5.30pm (£5)

CIEH Foundation certificate in Food Hygiene – recommended level of training for volunteers occasionally preparing and serving food at festivals and events.

To book a place on either course contact Jo on 07768 767787 or email joharvey100@gmail.com

Wild Oxfordshire

Local Environment Groups conference: Sat. 21st July, at Chadlington Memorial Hall OX7 3ND

The theme this year is “Bumble Bee Conservation for Local Environment Groups & Parish Councils”

Speakers:

- Gill Perkins, Director of the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust
- James Gillies, 100 Meadows Project
- Craig Blackwell, Ecologist
- Trust For Oxfordshire’s Environment (TOE2)
- Plus case studies from Oxfordshire’s community groups.



Places are limited, so please book: www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk. Or contact roselle@wildoxfordshire.org.uk or 01865 407429

The town that refused to let austerity kill its buses

By Jo Lakeland

This was the title of an article in the Guardian of 6 June 2018 by Aditya Chakraborty, describing how the determination and hard work of the community resulted in the creation of the West Oxfordshire Community Transport coop after Witney lost its commercial bus service in 2016. The full (and very interesting) article is at bit.ly/2KejLmL.

Bus services were one of the biggest casualties due to government cuts. Since 2010 funding for buses across England and Wales has been slashed by a third, but that was rarely mentioned by the press. Train cuts are much bigger news, although before the cuts 7.1% of journeys were made by bus, and only 0.9% by train. But expensive train commutes are for well-paid people who travel from afar to well-paid jobs in cities, whereas buses ferry around the less well off. “Bus cuts most hurt the lowest-paid, women and young, and old people who can’t just drive themselves about.”

I’d like to remind you about how these cuts also affected the villages around Didcot. On 20 July 2016, Oxfordshire County Council scrapped all subsidies for bus services. The devastation was instant: that same day, 54 routes stopped altogether, while many more



were reduced. Blewbury and the nearby downland villages were fortunate in that their service was *only* significantly reduced, and that their Parish Council representatives got together to fight for the best service they could get. They founded the Downland Villages Transport Group, which hires a minibus and driver to provide a weekly service to Wallingford on market day. It's mainly used by people who have no transport of their own, and ironically, it is the same bus and drivers that Oxfordshire County Council used to provide for free before the cuts!

The Oxford Low Carbon Hub

Compiled by Jo Lakeland

The Oxford Low Carbon Hub is one of those organisations that you have probably heard of, but you may not know exactly what it does. Their website is extremely informative, but unfortunately includes rather too much information to absorb easily if it's your first time trying to find your way around it. But it is worth persevering, because as the website says: "The Low Carbon Hub (LCH) is a social enterprise¹ that's out to prove we can meet our energy needs in a way that's good for people and good for the planet. The days of fossil fuels are numbered. The shift to renewable generation is gaining pace and gives us the opportunity to reshape the way we manage our energy."

The information that follows is largely an expanded version of the LCH About Us page www.lowcarbonhub.org/#about-us, with added information from other pages, so I decided to leave the "we" and "us" as they are used on the website.

We develop community-owned renewable energy in Oxfordshire

We do this in partnership with schools, businesses and community groups, at no cost to our partners. Of the 41 current projects described on their Projects page www.lowcarbonhub.org/projects, 27 of them are solar photovoltaic panels on the roofs of Oxfordshire schools.

*For example, the Low Carbon Hub installed 192 solar panels, with a total capacity of 49.9 kWp, at **Didcot Girls' School (DGS)** in September 2016. They will save 358 tonnes of CO₂ over their lifetime.*



Most of the earliest projects were to install solar panels on school roofs, but as their portfolio of installations grew they became more varied.

*For example, the first hydro project, in 2015, was **Osney Lock Hydro** in Oxford. It is the first community-owned hydro scheme to be built on the River Thames. The LCH helped provide funding for legal and share-marketing costs. The 49 kWp project started generating in May 2015, and is expected to raise £2 million for local environmental projects over its lifetime – as well as an enormous 3200 tonnes of CO₂ to be saved over the project lifetime.*



We raise money to build these projects through community share offers

Please note that this article is meant to be purely informative, NOT an attempt to get you to invest in the Low Carbon Hub.

To make these projects happen the LCH offers people the opportunity to invest in them directly so their money can help consign fossil fuels to history. The structure of the LCH organisations is illustrated in the diagram below.

¹ A **social enterprise** is a business that uses commercial techniques to make its money in a socially responsible way. They may re-invest their profits into their projects, but do not have to do that.



“Investing in the Low Carbon Hub could be seen as more of a social than a financial investment. LCH investors want their money to do a social good and investing with them is different from investments made solely for financial return.” See the website for more information.

We re-invest 100% of our own surplus in our mission

As a “social developer” the LCH is part of a much larger global movement using social business models to combat climate change and deliver social change. We re-invest 100% of our own surplus (after costs and investors are paid) in our mission to (1) scale up community-owned renewable energy in Oxfordshire and (2) reduce fuel poverty, CO₂ emissions and energy demand. Our Community Benefit Strategy is what separates us from commercial developers. Is this the future model of business? We hope so!

An example of this is the **Oxford Bus Company Project**. Low Carbon Hub offered the Oxford Bus Company free solar panels, a significant saving on their electricity bills, a way to meet their carbon emissions targets, and a chance to generate community benefit funds for energy-saving measures in a deprived area of Oxfordshire. At the time of installation, it was the biggest solar PV scheme in Oxford. In its first year, the project generated £12,000 in community benefit funds.



We are a hub, a helpdesk and a mentor for local community groups

We offer practical support to groups who want to set up their own renewables or energy-saving projects. Sustainable Blewbury is one of the groups that decided to become a LCH Community Interest Company (CIC) Community Shareholder. This means that Sustainable Blewbury can seek the LCH’s advice and also apply for small grants for community projects that will save energy.

We run pathfinding innovation pilots

To help the community energy sector in Oxfordshire expand more rapidly, we bring together people who can break through obstacles like grid constraints or technology gaps. These are described on the Projects page:

- Projects in design, e.g. **grid management**. One key challenge of increasing deployment of distributed renewable energy is the capacity of the national and local distribution grids to accommodate this. Capacity can be constrained by a number of reasons including a lack of thermal capability, voltage regulation and ground-fault levels. We are working with our local

Distribution Network Operators, as well as other partners, to find innovative ways to resolve these issues.

- Projects in operation, e.g. the **OxFutures phase one programme**, led by Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and key delivery partner and social enterprise, the LCH, was funded by Intelligent Energy Europe to deliver around £18 million of investment into renewables and energy efficiency in Oxfordshire by 2017.
- Projects supported, e.g. **Powering Down East Oxford**, a thermal imaging project to reduce the carbon emissions of households in East Oxford.

We collaborate with our local councils

Local government is a major driver of community energy around the world. We work closely with our local councils to identify opportunities for renewable energy generation and demand reduction in Oxfordshire. E.g. Oxfutures, Warming Barton, Powering Down East Oxford.

Our vision

Starting with a wave of community-benefit solar PV and hydro schemes, Low Carbon Hub's ambition is for the whole of Oxfordshire to be powered by an interconnected series of smart micro-grids centred around multiple small-scale, community-controlled renewable energy schemes.

Project impacts to date

Thirty eight renewable energy installations, 1562 tonnes of CO₂ saved every year, 4.2 GWh of total installed capacity, £1.6 M lifetime anticipated savings on electricity bills by hosts, £2.4 M lifetime anticipated community benefit donation to Oxfordshire communities.

Awards

June 2016: Low Carbon Hub won the UK Ashden Award for Sustainable Communities. Ashden is the world's leading green-energy award.

Our clean-energy social enterprise is a joint winner with Repowering London. The award ceremony included winners from the UK, Africa, Indonesia, Mauritania, Asia and Central America – a truly global party!

The judges said: "Low Carbon Hub has an extremely compelling vision for the rivers and rooftops of Oxfordshire to be the power stations of the future, delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for residents. Ashden's case study of Low Carbon Hub is here:

www.ashden.org/winners/low-carbon-hub.

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***We have a substantial programme of activities in and around the village.
Getting involved is fun and can make a very positive contribution to village life and local environment. If you'd like to get involved in what we do, or to receive our free Newsletter, email us at info@sustainable-blewbury.org.uk or phone John Ogden at 01235 850372.***