

Gloucestershire Quakers: some 'sustainability stories' from meetings and individuals, September 2016

From meetings

Cheltenham

See 'Green doors' attached. Cheltenham Friends plan a meeting for learning on sustainability in October to enable Friends to share experience.

Alison Crane reports:

That there are sustainability grants available from QPSW, closing date for applications early October <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/grant-making/sustainability-economy#heading-1>

This money has supported training for short courses in "footpaths to a greener life" and "carbon conversation" groups.

Painswick

The meeting house and its use

We have installed insulation wherever possible/permissible in a listed building and heat the building only during periods of use. All food and drink consumed on the premises is fair trade. A small dishwasher and instant water heater, both of which we believe reduce our energy and water requirements.

Many of us live outside Painswick and we make a conscious effort to lift share when this is practical. For the same reason, there is not a lot that we can do corporately to promote sustainable issues but most of us have taken up the key recommendations of how to live sustainably in terms of energy use, purchasing local food, recycling etc.

At our meeting for business, other particular tips were suggested, including these:

MAUREEN ROWCLIFFE QUARRY: Faced with a 'refusing-to-spin-14-year-old-washing-machine' - what do you do? I decided it was worth an attempt to get it fixed and with a set of new brushes it's still going (a bit reluctantly sometimes) - many things are fix-able and there are more upcycling events and opportunities.

I had some trouble with the paper feed on my almost antique inkjet printer, and nearly bought a new second hand one at a summer fair, but the guy selling it told me that if you run some emery paper on the feed wheels to get rid of the ink build up, it will go again - and it's fine now

JOSIE COWGILL: I cook everything that can be cooked on a hob in a haybox. It works just like a slow cooker and is great for cooking grains and pulses or stews. Grains, lentils and mung beans don't take any longer to cook in the haybox than they do on a cooker. Any box can be used and any insulating material can be used eg: hay, woollen blankets or polystyrene.

PATRICK CALLAGHAN WRITES: Recently my Printer packed up just as I was about to print a document. I was used to the printer cartridge running out of ink but this time

the ink cartridges had still plenty of ink in them. The power and paper button lights were flashing and a warning came up “parts of your printer have reached the end of their serviceable life” My first thought was: Will I have to buy a new printer? But after a little research on the internet I found that the printer could be fixed and that the part which had apparently come to the end of its life was the waste ink collection tray. The ink jet printers supposedly count according to the printer's discharge of waste ink; once the counter considers that the pad(s) which absorb the waste ink are full the printer then stops working and Epson advise replacing it

The Ink tray which collects waste ink can be cleaned out but for that you have to take the top half of printer off and it can be a tricky job depending on the printer model. The pad in the ink tray which absorbs the waste ink is unlikely to overflow: as it's water based it's more likely to evaporate over time. I found a piece of free software on the internet and I installed it and within a few minutes it enabled me to reset the counter and my printer works fine now. The point to remember is that just because something stops working does not necessarily mean it cannot be easily fixed by even a novice.

CLEMENT JEWETT ADDS:

Apart from the usual being modest and careful and resisting consumerism which I expect most if not all Quakers practice, I have a large Apple Mac computer with a big screen which I need as a composer in order to read and write scores. I have had this machine for 10 years now, which makes it definitely obsolete from the computer technology point of view, and indeed in 2014 the software controlling screen images appeared to be malfunctioning: the screen started breaking up the images. A friend who had bought the same machine when I did ditched his at that time.

However, a thought occurred, and I applied the vacuum cleaner to the air entry vent. Ten years of dust had been sucked in by the internal fan; and now out it came. No trouble with the screen since!

Stroud

Minute of a meeting to discuss sustainability and climate change Tuesday 5 July 2016

We are conscious of how wide-ranging this topic is. It has profound economic, social, environmental and spiritual aspects. It links to all four of our Quaker testimonies – to peace, equality, simplicity and truth.

The issues are complex and difficult to get into perspective. It is not easy to discern what we as individuals, or even collectively as the Society of Friends, can usefully do. This can lead us to feel guilty or helpless. We need to get past these feelings, and find a way of focussing on the practical things which we can do.

Some Friends have told us that they have found the book “How Bad are Bananas?” by Mike Berners-Lee useful in as a guide to the practical issues of sustainability in our everyday lives. We suggest to our meeting that we organise one or more meetings for learning based on this book. We might also arrange a visit to the (Quaker sponsored) Northfield EcoCentre in Birmingham.

We are aware that the perspectives on sustainability of comfortably-off people like ourselves may not be relevant, and may even appear antagonistic or patronising, to people who are disadvantaged or who feel alienated. Action on sustainability needs to take account of society as a whole, not just of the more vocal sections of it.

There are some reasons to be cheerful, particularly when we look back on what has changed over the last 20 or so years. Renewable energy has grown and become an important part of our national energy mix much faster than many people imagined. Recycling of a significant part of our domestic waste is now widely practiced. In many respects, the task is to accelerate and extend what is already happening.

We have thought about what our Area Meeting might do. We are conscious that many groups and organisations are already active, often with the involvement of individual Friends, especially in a place like Stroud! There is no point in duplicating what these groups are already doing. We suggest:

- that Area meeting establish a Sustainability Focus Group to promote better understanding of sustainability issues in the Area Meeting; to link with and support relevant initiatives by others; and to foster links with other local faith groups who share our concern for a more sustainable world. We think though that such a group would only be worthwhile if a sufficient number of Friends (at least 12) are prepared to commit to its work.
- that our Trustees continue to keep our property portfolio under review to see what opportunities there are to reduce energy use

From individuals

Colin Brown (Forest): on building an eco house

In 2009 our children had nearly all left home and our house and garden were becoming too big for us. We inherited a little capital and decided to build a new energy efficient house on half of our land.

On TV programmes, “eco-house” often seems to mean just timber rather than bricks, with PV panels and a woodburner, or maybe straw bales and lime free cement. We were lucky to secure the advice of a real expert who explained the things that would really make a difference to energy consumption: a lot of insulation, passive solar heating, and above all, air-tightness.

With these in place it is almost a “passiv-haus”; solar *thermal* panels (not PV) feed a thermal store (300 litres of water) which in turn heats our hot water and rarely needed underfloor heating, requiring the support of a small 12kW wood pellet stove for just an hour or so a day during the colder months. (£250 of pellets per year). The exceptional air-tightness comes from the insulated panel construction. So that we can breathe, there are hidden ventilation pipes and a pump, which also transfers 95% of the heat in the outgoing air to the incoming air.

Even though we chose to save money on decor, bathroom and kitchen fittings etc, the eco features did make the house more expensive to build. However it is better for the

planet, as well as a lot cheaper to run! We also use rainwater for flushing the toilets and in the washing machine and have PV.

John Meadley (Painswick): on pasture-fed livestock

Having spent a lifetime involved in agriculture, mainly in the developing world but more recently in the UK, my particular interest and focus is on the food and farming sector, which is routinely criticised for being a significant source of Green House Gases – particularly through the raising of animals that produce meat and milk. There are good reasons for reducing our consumption of industrially produced meat, which consumes a third of the world's grain (mainly fed to pigs and poultry), encourages the conversion of forest to cultivation and pollutes the atmosphere and environment.

However, ruminants (mainly cattle and sheep - have been around in very large numbers since well before the industrial revolution - the often quoted start of climate warming) are accused of being the major source of putting carbon into the atmosphere. Whilst ruminants do produce methane, when raised naturally they are part a biological cycle that takes carbon **out of the atmosphere**. In contrast, the production of rice from paddies is responsible for a tenth of all GHGs from global agriculture and around a tenth of all the world's methane emissions.

There is more than twice as much carbon in the soil as in the atmosphere and plants plays a vital role in taking it out of the atmosphere and storing it both in themselves and in the soil (see this [four-minute film](#)). So how we manage the soil is a major determinant over whether atmospheric carbon increases or decreases.



Two thirds of the world's (and the UK's) farmed land (and more than a quarter of the world's land area) is pasture. The world's grassland soils are the largest terrestrial reservoir of carbon, containing five times that of the world's forests. Pasture is indigestible to humans - but fortunately grazing animals, mainly ruminants, can convert that pasture into milk, meat and leather and through the action

of grazing they stimulate new growth of the diverse species in the pasture (encouraging biodiversity) and with it the absorption of CO₂. At the same time their manures replenish the pastures with nutrients – a virtuous cycle.

So feeding grain to ruminants does not make sense when the world is awash with soil-improving and carbon-sequestering pasture. I have tried to address these complex issues through my involvement in setting up the Pasture-fed Livestock Association (www.pastureforlife.org) in which we seek to demonstrate that there is another way to raise ruminant animals that is good for the animals involved, for the environment and for us as consumers. Three of the original directors of this community interest

company are Quakers.

