

West Berkshire Green Exchange AGM

17th September 2014

Chairman's Report

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you to this, the fourth WBGE AGM.

These are difficult times for climate change activists, something I said last year and the year before but it is still true. In the past year the headlines have been grabbed by the economy, the international situations in Syria, Gaza, Ukraine and Iraq, ebola, immigration, the European elections, the World Cup, the Commonwealth Games, Scotland.... in fact a large list of topics that, while important, should not occupy the attention of politicians and the public more than climate change. Yet that is what happens, so it is doubly important that we remain active at the local level. Yes we had some floods in the winter, but one weather event does not convert more than a few people. As the Guardian puts it this week: "the answers (to scientific checks on observations of man-made climate change) all point in just one direction..... The science is rigorous, the political response must be vigorous."

During the past year we had a great conference last November at the Elm Farm Organic research Institute as the guests of Nic Lampkin and his team. The day included a presentation from the Love Food Hate Waste campaign and a look at the IPCC report's first working party's findings. Then in January we had a forum which included a session on tree hubs, a session on West Berkshire Council's management of energy and a visit from Pewsey Environmental Action Team (PEAT). In April we met at the new location in Bone Lane of the Community Furniture Project where we had a tour of the facility and a presentation on fracking. In July we had a social gathering for a barbecue kindly hosted by Robert and Penny Pattison. If there is a specific topic that you would like to be explored at a future forum, please let the committee know.

We still have funds available for communities wishing to embark on a Greening Campaign stage or something similar. The funds typically go towards the costs of venue hire and promotional costs. If you know anyone in West Berkshire starting a scheme please let them know we can help them.

I would like to remind you about this year's conference on 22nd November when we will return to the Community Furniture Project premises. We have talks scheduled including new nuclear energy, and from the Energy Savings Trust on Electric Vehicles. I am personally interested in this latter topic having recently purchased a Nissan Leaf. With the infrastructure now in place for rapid charging at motorway service stations I believe the era of electric vehicles has finally arrived.

I should like to thank the committee for their work and support during this year and I would particularly like to thank Evangeline for her work as our secretary in organising us.

Richard Foster