

West Berkshire Green Exchange AGM

26th September 2018

Chairman's Report

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

We exist as an organisation to bring people together to share ideas on how to combat climate change caused by excessive greenhouse gas emissions that are due to human activity. It is very difficult to say how successful we are in that endeavour. Every so often we hear of a new environmental event, like the breaking off of an ice shelf, or a new piece of scientific research, that not only confirms that global warming is happening, but that it is happening faster than had been predicted. Yet, instead of being a shock, it seems to be accepted as something that has to be lived with, and people ignore it and get on with their daily routines. The press may give it a couple of column inches, but they then turn their attention to Brexit. We may understand human-caused global warming better, and more of us, indeed most of us, may accept it, but we are not giving it the **priority** that it deserves. So I think our focus in WBGE is shifting slightly from persuading people that there is a problem, to persuading them that they have to take personal responsibility for it, and not leave it to others, or to “government”.

That is one reason why our next event will probably be the most important of the coming year, a conference entitled “Towards a carbon-zero West Berkshire” where we can discuss ideas on policies that we would like to see in this area over the next decade. It will be here on 13th October and I do hope you will all come. Details are available separately.

On 21st February this year we had a very interesting talk from Ian Brady and Jack Byerley of Harpsden Wealth Management on ethical investing. It was clear that this is an area of investing that he and others like him are taking increasingly seriously. For some time now there has been an acronym for it: SRI: Socially Responsible Investing, but investors have differing ideas about what “ethical” means, so now a new acronym has emerged: ESG: Environmental/social/governance, enabling more specific measurement of the performance of environmental funds. Ian and Jack showed too that ESG funds can generate excellent returns. This is one area where anyone with an investment in shares can make a difference.



In July we once again held a barbecue at Bunker Farm and we are grateful to Ken and Carole Neal for their generous hospitality.

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 should like to thank your committee for their work during this year, our speaker today, Richard Marshall, Ken Neal, Tony Jons, and our secretary Yvonne Redgrave. All are willing to continue for another year.

Finally, thank you all for coming and for your support.

Richard Foster