

West Berkshire Green Exchange AGM

25th September 2019

Chairman's Report

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

It has been a momentous year for climate change activists such as ourselves. In October last year came the IPCC special report which shocked everyone into more urgent action by announcing that 2°C was no longer a safe threshold for increased global temperatures, and that 1½° has to be the limit. Also in October last year, WBGE held its conference on reaching zero carbon in West Berkshire, with Professor Sir Brian Collins, Paul Allen from CAT and Rt Hon Richard Benyon MP as guest speakers. The subsequent work from that conference was presented to the new West Berks Council in May and was a factor, I believe, in their declaring a climate emergency. They are still writing their strategy and I would like to remind everyone that West Berks Council have arranged a public conference on 28th October so do book up for it if you haven't already.

October last year marked another significant event, the formation of Xtinction Rebellion. This group, whose mission is to achieve recognition of the planets' dire state both in terms of global warming and species extinction, espouses disruptive actions without violence because not enough is being done by politicians and corporations. It has been highly effective in catching the public's respectful attention. Our own Christine Essex, one of our founding members, is now the local XR representative. Together with the striking schoolchildren and Greta Thunberg, and following the IPCC report, XR has elevated the profile of global warming, or global heating as we are now being encouraged to call it. At last the problem is generally recognised, in this country at least. The difficult task is, as it has always been, to turn that recognition into general behaviour change and political action.

In March we had a well-attended members' meeting when Miriam Lee, convenor of the West Berks Climate Action Network Facebook group, gave a presentation on climate change that she had written to give to groups as and when invited. She was joined by Jenny Kirby who told us about her facebook page, Thatcham & Newbury plastic free, recycling and zero waste group. Although she

wasn't present, Jana Karstova Little's efforts to recycle plastic articles that Veolia won't take was also mentioned. We celebrate the efforts of all of them and I am delighted to say that Miriam has agreed to join the committee.

In June we held a joint meeting with WBCAN when Anthony Sampson from Reading University spoke to us about the reasons for switching to electric cars or, better still electric bikes, and I should here like to record my thanks to Velospeed for showing is some of their range this evening. That meeting in June was clearly of interest to many people although I am still waiting to hear whether any of them has actually made the switch.

Finally in July, following a presentation in Thatcham by Ben Vickers on his work in more exotic locations, we had a highly successful barbecue attended by over 20 people.

I should like to thank the committee for all their work during the year. I am delighted that Yvonne is back with us following, as many of you will know, her devastating experience with a very nasty infection. She has been very brave and determined, and I am glad to say, hasn't lost her zest for life and for our cause.

Finally, we still have money to support local environmental initiatives. I am delighted that, earlier this month, we had the opportunity to support GreenFest, a wonderful exhibition of stalls, talks and displays hosted in Hampstead Norreys on the theme of climate change and sustainability. If you, or anyone you know, is thinking of organising a local event and wants financial help towards venue hire and publicity, please get in touch.

Thank you.

Richard Foster