

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the very first newsletter from the Congleton Sustainability Group, we hope you enjoy it.

We want to share with everyone how we have got to this point, what we are doing right now and suggest something for you to do; so here goes!!

Just what is Congleton Sustainability Group?

Congleton Town Council is supported in its market town regeneration ambitions by its strategic delivery arm; the Congleton Partnership. The Partnership, made up of business, third sector and local authority organisations, has developed six project groups to help deliver 22 specific outcomes. Congleton Sustainability Group (CSG) is one of the six project groups, formed to deliver the Town's ambitions to become a Transition Town in 2010.

So, that's the formal words, we are a group of enthusiasts meeting monthly working to raise the profile of the climate change agenda in a positive way in the Town. The Town is inevitably going to change in the future; all we are trying to do is engineer change in a way that helps us all.

When we first all sat down and explained why we had joined the group, it was amazing to hear about all the positive things going on in the Town that are already working towards climate change. Things you might not think about at first – it is a bit of a list I'm afraid, but it just shows you:

- **Congleton Cycling Campaign** - www.congletoncycling.co.uk – who, for instance, publish the Congleton Cycle Network map, which was updated in 2009. The map is available for local distribution, and was also sent to all primary school children in years 5 and 6. The CCC also campaign to improve cycling safety in the Town.
- **Congleton Eco-Schools programme** – their work is easiest explained here; www.eco-schools.org.uk Suffice to say if you have child or grandchild in a Congleton Primary School they will be part of a very successful eco-schools programme. Ask them all about it; they are learning about growing fruit and vegetables, making compost and how to reduce energy consumption at their school. Currently 7 schools have reached silver level with Marfields and St Mary's RC attaining their Green Flag.
- Our **Town Council** have been refurbishing the Town Hall - hence all the scaffolding - and improving its carbon footprint by eliminating window leaks and fitting the latest boiler technology. They have signed something called the Nottingham Declaration too, which commits them to supporting climate change actions. More information here www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/nottingham .
- Dane Housing have been fitting the latest technology as they refurbish homes under their control – 12 ground source heat pumps at Wavertree Avenue, 7 air source heat pumps, 2 domestic solar water heating systems and all gas boilers that are renewed are replaced with 'A' rated condensing boilers. To show their commitment to staying at the forefront of the latest building technology Dane Housing have submitted a bid for the Governments 'Retrofit for the Future' £10m competition – this is to showcase new emerging technology for sustainable energy in older properties. A real challenge which we watch closely!
- The very successful Food Festival in the Town championed local food and shopping locally, which all fits in brilliantly with the 'Transition Town' philosophy!

What's a Transition Town'?

They are communities evolving themselves whilst thinking about climate change – i.e. rethinking everything we do, whilst using less and less energy. So, its' guiding principles are ideas like:

- Carbon reduction – both at home and travelling, by using the least fossil fuel possible, it helps your pocket too...
- Consume closer to home – if you shop closer to home it saves fuel

- Produce closer to home – make more things locally, the very opposite of what's been happening for years.
- Play closer to home – there's lots of good things around us locally, enjoy more of them rather than going further a field.
- Decentralised energy infrastructure – produce energy locally, from the River Dane for instance.
- Greater re-skilling – some of the changes require new skills, so let's encourage local businesses to play their part.
- Localised food – so help our local farmers grow more food for us
- Energy descent plan – when we know how and when our plans are going to use less energy, we can track our progress
- Local medicinal capacity – the planned super-surgery is a good example of being able to look after ourselves more locally
- Community awareness – speaks for itself, convincing everyone to play their part.

Right now?

We are meeting monthly; more and more people are finding out about the group and deciding to join us. Encourage your friends to join in too, either by subscribing to the Newsletter themselves, just ask them to email peteraston@btinternet.com and they can be added or join our Facebook group; just sign on to Facebook and search for 'Congleton Sustainability Group' and press 'become a fan'. You can then keep more up to date with the news!

We have collected 450 lbs of apples and Eddisbury Fruit Farm and they produced 106 bottles which were first on sale at last Friday night's Christmas Lights Festival! Congleton Apple Juice vintage 2009 is lovely and there's not much of it so be quick!

Our biggest task at the moment is we have applied for one of 20 Government DECC LCCC grants of £0.5M, see here www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/news/pn109/pn109.aspx, lots of paperwork and planning. We've heard this week that 450 other low carbon communities have applied, but even so, the enormous task of filing our application is teaching us huge amounts! See our registration at <http://www.decc.gov.uk/challengeregistration/List.aspx>

W³ Weekly Watch Watts:

There is a national campaign www.1010uk.org that's signing up everyone who's trying to reduce their energy consumption by 10% next year. So, one of the group, Mike Taylor, has designed a very simple poster and guidance notes to help you track your savings at home. I promise you it's great fun and very interesting – why not print a copy (attached) and try it for yourself?

If you're already bored of the information from the group, feel free to reply to this email and ask to be removed from the newsletter circulation list!

Any questions, comments or input at all, please reply to me and we'll get back to you!

Kind regards,
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