

Meeting Notes Wildlife, Biodiversity & Environment Meeting 6th June 2023

In attendance:

Parish Councillors Roy Hawkesford, Pam Heap, Carol Lloyd
8 members of the public
Parish Clerk

Presentation – Charity & Community Enterprise Ideas

Resident Andrew Poynter gave a presentation about two possible community enterprise projects:

Idea number one. Set up a Community Energy Project.

While there are many ways to sustainably micro-generate electricity, not all are appropriate or possible for the area or particular situation. The focus would therefore be on solar generation.

From 2011 to 2019, those that installed solar panels could benefit from Feed in Tariffs (FIT). These would pay the owner of the solar panels for the electricity they generated regardless of whether they consumed that electricity themselves or exported it to the grid. FIT contracts provided the owner of the solar panels with a 25-year contract. This was designed to incentivise the installation of solar panels at a time they were expensive to install and relatively inefficient.

With the reduction in cost of solar panels and improvement in technology the government changed the system of support. From 2019 onwards, owners of newly installed panels (or those that had not registered for FIT ahead of the deadline) can make use of the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG). This means that owners of the panels will now only get paid for the electricity they export into the National Grid. The onus is now on the owner of the panels to agree a contract with a SEG suppliers (a full list can be found on Ofgem's website). These contracts are usually for 12 months at a time and payments range from 2p per kWh to 15p per kWh so it pays to shop around!

The average cost of installing a 4KW system of solar panels (the largest you can install on a single-phase electricity supply without obtaining District Network Operators (DNO) permission) is £7,000. If you have a three-phase electricity supply you can install a 11KW system without prior DNO approval.

My idea is to work with local organisations, such as the Village Hall, School, Churches and Cricket Club to raise funds for the installation of solar panels. One way to do this would be to set up a Social Enterprise, allowing funds to be raised by the issuing of shares, mainly to local residents.

Once installed, the electricity generated by the solar panels and used by the organisation would be sold to them at a lower rate than drawing from the grid. Any excess electricity generated would be sold to the grid using the SEG. This income would provide an agreed percentage return to the investors and any excess income/profit could be used for further initiatives or donated to organisations within the village.

The nearest geographical example of my idea is Harborough Energy in Market Harborough. They launched their first project in October 2015. Eventually installing a 160KW system on the

Academy and an 11KW system on the local Health Clinic in 2016. Going on to build a 103KW system in 2018.

Idea number two. Set up a Charitable Organisation.

The impact of this would be much slower but has potential to last for future generations. Apart from the potential longevity, I see the advantage of setting up an charity as its ability to apply for funding from government and other organisations such as the lottery etc. receive funds via donations and bequests and to react with those funds faster than other organisations may be able to do.

The purpose of the charity would be to buy up land in and around the parish. The land would then be rented (in most circumstances back to the previous owner) for agricultural use or similar. However, the leases would contain requirements to farm in environmentally friendly and sustainable ways, increase access for the general public and to improve the landscape for wildlife and biodiversity.

Once all suitable land has been acquired, the income received could be used to help local organisations and residents with energy efficiency measures to reduce the parishes impact on the environment and to reduce fuel poverty.

As well as the environmental impact and benefits, this approach would place the control of surrounding land in the hands of an organisation designed to protect it for the enjoyment of residents long term and may help avoid situations as experienced on the Horton Road

Updates

- Parish Council is exploring the possibility of solar panels with the Village Hall. This could be extended to the Cricket Club, School and museum
- Is there anywhere that charging stations could be located in the parish?
- A small-scale community recycling scheme for blister packs will be based at the Coffee Shop. Article to be placed in Mag'
- Awareness and education articles to be placed in Mag'. The School is keen to take part
- The Meadow volunteers have planted more shade tolerant plants in the spinneys and hope to obtain PC funds to plant wild garlic and wood anemones. The butterfly patch has been re-seeded
- The WI flower labelling project is now a County project
- The Churchyard Group is delighted with the 1m unmown strip in the Churchyard. In one afternoon 25 species were identified in it. They are working with the PC to install log piles, birdbath and small pond
- The Womble continue to fight the litter blight and have a meeting next week with the PC and highways about additional bins etc
- A local farmer has planted 80 acres of wild bird seed and some grass and wildflower corners in fields incorporating 20 native species
- The working party is to approach the PC for funding for wildflower seed packets for each household (**update – now approved**), an autumn community bulb planting project and is looking at ways of improving the beauty and biodiversity of the Meadow

Other ideas

- Library of things – tools etc
- Directory of Skills
- How can we reduce the barriers to using the recycling centres
- Larger recycling schemes for example aluminium cans
- Share capacity in green bins for example if you are on holiday

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