

Summary of Great Green Bedwyn (GGB) launch

23 March 2022

Approximately 30 people attended the launch event. We were all delighted with the excellent response to the Great Green Bedwyn climate change survey, with 147 responses received. A detailed summary of the survey results is available on the Parish Council website. After presentation of the results there was a good general Q&A discussion followed by topic-based groups covering;

- Efficiency of home energy and generating community energy
- Bio diversity and reducing river pollution
- Reducing, reusing, repairing, recycling and sharing
- Reducing transport emissions

Improving energy efficiency and reducing home energy costs (53% of votes,)

The most popular requests in the survey were for advice on grants or loans (71%), a heat loss survey (63%), advice on making a house more eco-friendly (54%), on practical changes (49%) and on group discounts (45%). The following actions were agreed:

- With the recent dramatic increase in energy costs, GGB should prioritise activities in this area, as it will take months to retrofit or install renewables before the winter comes. The most cost-effective way of reducing energy costs is to insulate and stop draughts.
- We will organise an evening meeting on home energy efficiency on 25th May at 7pm in Village Hall
- We will undertake infrared heat loss surveys as long as the weather allows and assemble a “lessons learned” document once we have done more.
- We will organise a local Green Open Homes event on the weekend of 11/12 June to enable people to see these improvements & technologies in action.
- Warm & Safe Wiltshire <https://www.warmandsafewiltshire.org.uk/> is a good source of advice, especially on government grants for those on low incomes. Free helpline: 0800 039 5722, or email: warmandsafe@cse.org.uk

Community energy generation (66% votes)

There was considerable support for generating energy locally as there are already many wind and solar energy farms in the UK. Some have been developed by communities investing in them and the energy is ‘owned’ by them which might be possible for our community. There are several options to be explored:

- While onshore wind is the most cost-effective source, currently it might be difficult to get planning permission within our AONB.
- A new solar farm could be located out of sight on poor agricultural land. Solar farms can help increase biodiversity by partly shading the ground under the panels.
- More Photo Voltaic (PV) panels on individual homes, the school, the village hall etc, possibly facilitated by a bulk purchasing scheme like in Reigate: <https://news.surreycc.gov.uk/2021/05/24/surrey-county-council-launches-solar-panel-buying-scheme-for-residents/>
- More large local anaerobic digesters using chopped maize or other crops to generate methane that is added to the gas grid or burned to generate electricity. Small scale biogas might also be possible see: <https://www.calthorpecommunitygarden.org.uk/environment>

More work is needed to explore the feasibility of these and GGB will organise an expert-led event in the autumn.

Supporting biodiversity (49% of survey votes, 58% voted for reducing river pollution)

Reducing river pollution and increasing wildlife and plant life were all strongly supported by survey responders. Many were already supporting biodiversity in their gardens, eg. planting for pollinators (90%), feeding wild birds (87%), stopping use of garden chemicals (73%), making holes for hedgehogs (68%) and planting trees (67%). 43% supported the idea of a community woodland. There were many suggestions about allowing green spaces and road verges to grow unmown till later in the year and to work with local farmers to improve and grow more hedges and encourage regenerative farming. The following actions were discussed as possible ways forward:

- Collaborating with Open Gardens (on June 26th) to promote biodiversity in our gardens
- Promote road verges for wildflowers – join the “Blue Heart” campaign & make signs to inform council contractors to avoid mowing verges – <https://bluecampaignhub.com/>
- Work with the local farm cluster (Southern Streams) to support wildlife & reduce runoff & pollution
- Organise an expert-led discussion in the autumn about practical ways to reduce river pollution

Reduce, reuse, repair, recycle & share (46% of votes)

Over 90% of respondents are already doing a lot to reduce, reuse, repair, recycle & share. Helpful comments included the need for a swap shop or swapping events in the village, a village tool library and better recycling facilities for specialist materials. The following were discussed as possible ways to do more locally:

- Workshops for mending things, including sewing etc
- Sharing people’s skills, tools, toys etc.
- Local recycling facilities for food waste and other more difficult items
- A regular car boot or jumble sale in the Bedwyns.

How to reduce transport emissions & costs (29% voted for EVs / charging points)

Many respondents were already doing a lot to reduce their emissions from travel. There were many comments about the need to improve public transport to make it more regular and reliable, as well as more affordable. 78% had already taken action to reduce the number of flights they took and use more public transport (52%). 46% supported a speed limit of 50mph on rural roads. However, only 11 responders already had an electric car or planned to get one in 2022; but 78 said they would get one soon after.

- Organise an electric car discovery day in the Village Hall car park on Sunday May 15th 3-530pm.
- Partner with Wiltshire, Marlborough or Pewsey passenger groups to improve public transport.
- Promote cycling and eCycling
- Investigate the possibility of EV charging points at station for commuter & resident use
- Working from home or commuting could benefit from a well-designed workspace in the village to help people avoid commuting

Conclusions

There was general approval – and enthusiasm - for the approach taken to encourage climate action in a positive way through small scale individual actions and identifying widely-supported community projects. We would like to get more people involved to enable the community to learn about and engage with climate change. We hope to move forward as a community and increase participation from the younger generation

Finally, our current approach is to welcome anyone who is interested in supporting and helping. However, should we formally widen the scope to Little Bedwyn & other local villages? All views welcome.