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[www.sustainablecrediton.org.uk](http://www.sustainablecrediton.org.uk)

## Annual Review 2012

Sustainable Crediton was 6 years old in March 2013.

**Our roots:** We started out with just six members as Crediton Climate Action in early 2007 and became affiliated to the Transition Town organisation in June that year. In the past 6 years the organisation has grown steadily in size and influence. We changed our name to Sustainable Crediton three years ago in order to better reflect the range of activities in which our supporters are playing an active role in the community .

**Our structure:** Currently we have approximately 560 supporters who receive our electronic newsletter monthly including local, district and county councillors and our MP. The organisation is facilitated by a Core Group of nine people who oversee policy and finances, and events are organised by a number of very active Action Groups. These work under the umbrella of Sustainable Crediton on different aspects of sustainability, both in response to the current and future needs of our local community, and to a smaller extent, on regional, national and international issues.

**Funding:** We receive no public funding, operating on the goodwill of our volunteers and with the aim of as many of our activities as possible achieving a 'break even' point financially. Where this is not feasible we apply for grants and awards to cover costs when necessary. A copy of our accounts for 2012 will shortly be available on the website.

**AGM:** At our AGM in March 2013 a summary of the activities of Sustainable Crediton for the past year was given by the facilitators of the Action Groups and also by the 2012 Chair, Gerald Conyngham. The range and depth of the work carried out is surprising and most encouraging. It is summarised below with the most sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed their time and energy to make all this possible.

*Gerald Conyngham*

**Outgoing Chair  
April 2013**

## **General Achievements:**

### **A New Website:**

In September our new and greatly improved website [www.sustainablecrediton.org.uk](http://www.sustainablecrediton.org.uk) went live. This was as the result of the collaboration of a team of people from the Action Groups with website designer and Sustainable Crediton member Sarah Green over several months. The new website now receives around 80 page views per day. It generates our monthly newsletter semi automatically as well as providing a storage facility for all our archived material, links to many other relevant websites and a members area where supporters can advertise their own goods and services. This new resource will greatly improve our ability to expand our reach into the community as a whole as we develop its usage over the next year.

### **Meetings with MP's and the Local Councils**

**With our MP:** Core Group members have attended surgeries run by our MP Mel Stride to discuss issues such as renewable energy and the Feed in Tariff.

**With our MEP:** In November Core Group members also met with our MEP Graham Watson and briefed him on our activities especially in relation to energy which is an area where he has particular expertise and interest.

**With the Town and District Councils:** We have developed excellent links with the local and district councils which have resulted in Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) consulting us on a range of issues to do with the environment especially in the fields of Waste Management and Planning and the Town Council featuring us widely in the Crediton Town Information Booklet.

**Seminars for MDDC:** These links were enhanced by a series of seminars run by us for senior officers and councillors of MDDC just over a year ago and have been continued through the influence of John Downes, Crediton Town Councillor and Mid Devon Councillor who is a member of our Core Group.

### **Devon Community of the Year**

We were entered into the Devon Community of the Year competition organised by the Community Council of Devon. We featured in their magazine 'Village Matters' and were delighted to be awarded the runners up prize.

### **Joint Workshop with Crediton Town Council on the Future of Our Town**

In January 2012 we held a joint workshop with Crediton Town Council at the Boniface Centre at which representatives of a number of the independent businesses and town organisations joined Town Councillors and members of Sustainable Crediton. Altogether over 80 people were present. We looked at some of the future challenges facing the town as a result of climate change, resource depletion and the economic challenges likely to occur over the next 20 years. This was followed by a brainstorming session at which ideas about how we can change our behaviour at a personal, business and Council level to improve the town's sustainability were surfaced.

### **Shrinking the Giant Hamster – a talk on our economic future**

We arranged this talk at the Boniface Centre Crediton in February 2013 for all our supporters and the general public. It was given by Simon Tytherleigh of Bradninch Climate Action, a very able and knowledgeable speaker, to look at the effects of economic contraction and how we can develop a new kind of economy. It was well attended and followed by some stimulating discussion. The numbers attending reflected how more people are now seeing the importance of looking at the links between climate issues, sustainability and economic development.

### **Xmas Tree Festival**

We were represented at the 2012 annual Xmas Tree Festival at the Holy Cross Church by not one, but three Xmas trees, one each for the Credit Union and the Womens Environmental Network, and a Sustainable Crediton Tree based on the theme of sustainable transport.

### **Memories and Skill Project**

In collaboration with Crediton History Society we have begun a new project called 'Memories and Skill'. The aim is to interview and record the memories of older members of the population to enable their skills, which might otherwise die out, to be passed on to others. A similar project has been carried out in Totnes with great success.

## **Action Group Activities and Achievements:**

### **Food Group**

**Community Markets:** The main activity for 2012 has been organising and running five Community Markets in CREDITON Town Square during the spring, summer and early autumn. The markets have had special features such as a transport roadshow and a pedal powered smoothie maker in addition to a wide range of stalls. As the markets are becoming better known their popularity is steadily increasing and they will be repeated in 2013 with more stalls featuring surplus garden and small holding produce welcomed and encouraged.

**Event Catering:** The Group has catered at two events during the year, the Sustainable CREDITON Clothes Swap and the CREDITON Food Festival. Home made soup, cakes and a salad bar made by members using largely local ingredients have featured at these events. The group also had a stall at Quicke's Apple Day in October in association with Tim Harris 'the Devon Chef' featuring yummy apple pancakes.

**Bring and Share Lunches:** Seasonal suppers were discontinued in 2012 but two 'Bring and Share lunches' have been held at members homes at which all Sustainable CREDITON supporters have been welcomed.

**Seed Sharing:** A Seed Share Day was held in February 2013 and was very successful with nearly all the donated seeds and gardening items disappearing rapidly. In addition there was an interesting variety of Food and Gardening related stalls and home made lunches featuring local produce.

**Devon recipes:** In April 2012 the group held a special Devon recipes event led by Paul Cleave which featured food tastings that were much appreciated.

**Local produce Website:** The local produce website set up by the group has also continued to function and the group sends recipes based on local and seasonal produce to parish magazines and the CREDITON Courier as well as publishing them on the website.

**Local Food Bank links:** 2 members of the Food Group also attended a conference on the future of Farming in Devon which prompted them to get in touch with the local Food Bank and to give them some seasonal low cost recipes.

**Fruit & Vegetable Gardener Support Group:** During the summer of 2012 the group organised 4 enjoyable sessions for new fruit and vegetable gardeners featuring visits to each others plots to discuss problems and progress. The aim is to repeat this in 2013 if a co-ordinator can be found.

## **Energy Group**

**Solar Photo Voltaic Project:** The Energy Group has had an active and successful year. It began with the solar photo voltaic project, begun in 2011, in full swing. The installer Solar Sense was under intense pressure to complete all installations before the Government reduced the feed in tariff to 21p, but did so successfully. As a result 70 sets of PV panels were installed and a second year agreement was set up with Solarsense in June 2012. Most of the householders who have had panels installed have also now received their 15% rebate from Solarsense – a nice surprise to some who had forgotten it was coming!

**Warm Homes Project:** In September the group entered a bid for the Renewable Heat Premium Payment Communities Scheme administered by the Energy Savings Trust on behalf of the Department of Energy and Climate Change (The Warm Homes Project). We were one of 38 communities nationwide to be successful and £40,000 was awarded based on the 24 households who had expressed an interest in the scheme due to end on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013. To date 7 of the 24 households have taken up quotations from the chosen installers and are having the appropriate technology fitted. The scheme has now been extended to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013 so the group is hopeful that with some more work on their part more installations will be achieved.

**Firewood From Hedges Group:** In November the group organised a ‘Firewood from Hedgerows’ demonstration event with the aim of setting up a hedgerow management group. The event was well attended and a group subsequently formed and reached an agreement with landowner John Quicke to work on his land. 3 working parties were held in February 2013 with 14 people taking part and a grant has been applied for to ‘Awards for All’ for chainsaw and hedgerow laying training for the group before the 2013/14 season begins.

**Additional Achievements:** In addition to these achievements the group have also formulated a wind turbine policy for Sustainable Crediton, lobbied MDDC to become planning consultees on relevant planning applications, had a talk by Tony Norton, Head of Exeter University’s Centre for Energy & Environment and also researched home energy performance assessments.

## **Waste Action Group (WAGs)**

**Waste Plastic Recycling Project:**WAGs began the year with a continuation of our Waste Plastic Recycling Collections begun in 2011. Three more collections were held in Morrisons Car Park in January, June and July 2012 and a petition containing over 500 names was collected at these events asking Morrisons to install a permanent facility in the recycling area of the car park. As Morrisons subsequently refused to co-operate collections were moved to a neutral venue, Peck & Strongs on Lords Meadow Industrial Estate in January 2013. Here they have proven equally successful and they will continue roughly once every two months until at least January 2014.

Each collection has achieved between half and three quarters of a tonne of waste plastic recycle which is collected from us by Peninsular Waste Services of North Tawton for recycling. This represents roughly one double decker bus full of plastic at each collection that is saved from landfill. We receive a small sum in landfill credits from MDDC for this tonnage.

In March 2013 we also started a subsidiary collection in the village of Cheriton Fitzpaine which proved very popular and will be continued on a regular basis in conjunction with the main collections.

We have observed the collections are gradually changing the public's attitude to plastic waste with more people taking their waste to the recycling centres between collections and new recyclers coming forward at each collection.

**Annual Clothes Swap:** In March 2012 we held our second annual Clothes Swap in conjunction with the Food Group, with over 150 people attending and more than 1,000 items of clothing and accessories being swapped. The clothes swaps attract a different audience to other Sustainable Crediton events and so spread our message into the wider Crediton public. Another event is planned for March 2013.

**Recycling at The Crediton Food Festival:** In June 2012 a number of our volunteers organised the recycling at the two day Crediton Food Festival. This gave us the opportunity to educate the public about just how much waste it is possible to recycle as well as keeping a great deal of the food packaging produced by the event out of

landfill. Since the festival we have been working with the organisers to encourage stallholders to use 100% recyclable packaging in 2013.

**Lobbying and Relationship Building:** In addition to these events we had a useful meeting with Kevin Finan Head of MDDC in January 2013 to express our views regarding the Councils recycling plans for the next few years and to let him know the public's view about plastic recycling in Crediton – that this should be carried out by the local authority on the doorstep. We have also built a good relationship with the new management of Punchbowl recycling centre near Crediton and intend to continue with our lobbying and bridge building work during 2013.

## **Plough & Share Credit Union Service Point**

Devon's Credit Union now has a presence in the town thanks to Sustainable Crediton. Twelve volunteers – almost half that number new to Sustainable Crediton – now promote the Plough & Share and work at the Service Point, which has been open since September at the Fire Station Community Room on Saturday mornings from 10.30 a.m. to noon.

A slow start was anticipated but it is encouraging that in the first six months 31 new Credit Union members signed up, Crediton attracted £3,000 in savings and £6,000 in loans was issued to local people. Using payday lender rates, these loans have kept over £4,000 in local pockets and in the local economy that might otherwise have gone out of the area.

Links have been formed with local organisations including the CAB, Children's Centre, CISCO, Fishtank at the Congregational Church and the Library Work Club. A generous individual has also given £2,000 to help support the work, although sadly MDDC chose not to double this with a hoped-for grant.

## **Transport Group**

**A Cycle Path for Exeter:** The Transport Group concentrated this year on exerting influence, particularly to build the case for a cycle path to Exeter. The high point was a meeting of the County Highways and Traffic Orders Committee meeting held in Tiverton on 22 October, when our campaign encouraged unprecedented numbers to show their support. One Councillor said: "I've never seen so many in the public gallery at one time". By year end the first stage of the route, a cycling contra flow in Belle Parade in Crediton, had been agreed.

**Additional actions:** Other actions included three members contributing to a national leafleting campaign at Exeter rail stations to encourage passengers to express their views about New Year fare increases. The group has also written in support of an improved bus service to and from the village of Cheriton, and written a simple guide to local public transport for the Sustainable Crediton website.

## **Women's Environmental Network (WEN)**

The WEN group has had a quiet year due to some active members having left the area leaving the remaining members to reassess what WEN is about and what they can achieve.

**Holy Cross Xmas Tree:** The group did however have a lovely tree at the 2012 Christmas Tree Festival at the Holy Cross Church which was decorated with homemade tree decorations produced by the members' children at some craft workshops and made from natural materials such as pine cones and teasel heads.

**Kitchen Garden Restoration at Coombe House:** Members also spent some very productive time from May onwards working as volunteers helping to restore the kitchen garden at Coombe House. This is a rehab unit for women with mental illnesses which is a step down unit to living independently. The volunteers worked alongside patients to clear weeds, sow vegetables and manage a polytunnel. This was enjoyable work and one or two patients were exceedingly enthusiastic about the project. So it was sad to hear that Coombe house was closing in February 2013.

## **Tree Group**

The Tree Group is a small group of enthusiasts who are concerned with establishing more trees and green cover within Crediton and with protecting and enhancing the town's existing trees and hedges.

During 2012 the group has communicated extensively with Devon Highways and Mid Devon District Council with the aim of planting more trees in Crediton and also with British Telecom, who own land adjacent to Crediton Town Square.

Despite a number of challenges there have been some notable successes. New trees have been planted on BT land in Parliament Street Crediton, new hedging has also been planted along the Devon Heartland Way and there are plans in place to supply Crediton Library with a new tree for ground behind the library.



