

CONNECTING LOW CARBON GROUPS ACROSS THE COUNTY

Low Carbon Warwickshire Network Newsletter

January 2021 Issue 2

The Low Carbon Warwickshire Network aims to connect low carbon groups across the county, sharing ideas and stimulating and supporting new activity. Although primarily rural in focus, we exclude no one.



<https://www.harburyenergy.co.uk/warwickshire-low-carbon-network>

Welcome to the Low Carbon Warwickshire Network (LCWN) Newsletter

The LCWN aims to create a central hub providing guidance, information and inspiration for new and existing groups, mainly in rural areas. 'Creating Low Carbon Communities' events have been held in Harbury, Napton on the Hill and Henley-in-Arden with others planned for Kenilworth, Church Lawford, Snitterfield and Bishops Tachbrook.

The RSA, Harbury Energy Initiative, Act on Energy, Community Energy Warwickshire (CEW) and community partners are working together to help secure the resources the Network will need to grow and deliver on its vision.



Canalside Community Food Community Supported Agriculture

Zoe's experience of finding community and delicious food



2020 has been quite a year. There was much to appreciate for me during the first lockdown: the simpler life we found ourselves living; the wonderful spring weather; the time spent foraging and working on the vegetable plot; the walks; the deepening knowing of home territory. Lockdown two was harder, as the bleak weather, the work of caring for family members, and the isolation all took their toll, against the backdrop of growing inequality and the climate crisis. I thought about what 'building back better' on a personal level might mean. What I wished for, more than anything, was community – working side by side with others in a shared endeavour. This, I realised, was something that had been missing for me even before the pandemic.

I had been on the waiting list for a veg share at Canalside Community Food for a long time, but meanwhile had passed up the chance to become a 'social member'. Although this might not seem relevant in a pandemic, it allowed participation at volunteer work mornings, which continued to run. I signed up, and one Wednesday morning in early November, I ventured down the lane to the farm.

Since that day, I have spent one or two mornings a week at Canalside, working with others – weeding in the polytunnels, trimming strawberry plants, pulling leeks, grading potatoes and trimming hedges. Luckily for me, a vacancy came up for a 'volunteer share', which means that in return for a weekly work commitment I am rewarded with a share of the veg. And the veg is glorious. We help ourselves, from crates of freshly harvested crops set out in a great arc at one end of the pole barn – fat carrots with the clay still wet on them; kale fresh with morning dew; an abundance of salad leaves; new crops to try, such as Hamburg parsley. Chalk boards list the weight of each crop per share, and we weigh out our produce on

muddy scales. At the end of the line there are always extras – perhaps sprout tops, or roots and salad leaves that didn't quite make the grade.

The Canalside community, founded fourteen years ago, was able to buy most of its own land in 2018, and is now raising money to purchase an additional two and a quarter acres for a new orchard. It is a time of change for the farm, as it also seeks a new main grower – someone to lead the task of producing vegetables to feed nearly two hundred families every week of the year, with the help of the land team and volunteers. The community is better able to bridge this transition period because it has the support of Five Acre Farm – another, younger community farm at Ryton, which was formed, in turn, with the support of Canalside.

It is no wonder that the two farms are successful. Membership ticks so many boxes, providing exercise, fresh air, vitamin D and community, as well as healthy, local, fresh, organic food, not to mention purposeful companionship in a relatively safe, outdoor environment. I see families with children of all ages at Canalside, playing outdoors and being part of growing and harvesting their own food. It is also home to The Willows – a project offering adults with special educational needs the chance to join in with farming and crafting activities.

Both farms are known as 'CSAs' – CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture. There are over one hundred CSA projects in the UK, and only two in Warwickshire. The Canalside waiting list suggests there might be room for more.



Useful links

- <https://innerpeacework.co.uk/2020/12/30/finding-community-and-delicious-food-in-csas/>
- <https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/>
- <https://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk/>



Have your say— What do you want to see in future editions?

This is your newsletter and only as good as you make it – it is your opportunity to :

- publicise any on-line events you are holding
- let other community groups know what you are currently up to
- share your experiences

Ideas, requests, offers, Q & A, hints & tips

WANTED – people who live in Hampton Lucy, Charlecote and Loxley. There will be a zoom starter conversation on Tuesday 19th January about growing a sustainable community. If you want to find out more, email us and we will put you in touch with the organiser.



Please send all news items, case studies, details of events, comments, suggestions and enquiries about this newsletter to: lowcarbonwarks@gmail.com referring to the issue date and number for queries or phone Jacky Lawrence on 07906 440496.