

CONNECTING LOW CARBON GROUPS ACROSS THE COUNTY

Low Carbon Warwickshire Network Newsletter

February 2022 – Issue 14

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. 'Low Carbon Communities' events have been held in Harbury, Napton on the Hill, Henley-in-Arden and Church Lawford.

A range of partners are working together to help secure the resources the Network will need to grow and deliver on its vision.

Wanted – Steering Group Members

The Steering Group, who are all volunteers, meet (mostly on-line) about once every five months unless we have something specific to discuss (such as funding bids and developing the Facebook page), give advice and support to LCWN event organisers and contribute to the Newsletter. If you are interested in joining the Steering Group, please contact Bob Sherman by email: lowcarbonwarks@gmail.com

Do you want to host an event in your community?

If you would like to host a "Low Carbon Community" event where you live, please email: lowcarbonwarks@gmail.com and let us know where and when and we will support you in planning it. You will not be on your own.

Climate Optimism

To cheer you up during the dark winter, here is an optimistic guest blog by Neil Kitching, Scottish author of Carbon Choices on the Common-sense Solutions to our Climate and Nature Crises. You can see more from Neil at <http://www.carbonchoices.uk>.

Climate optimism? Why on Earth is a serious writer on climate change writing an article called 'Climate Optimism'? Simply, because the solutions to climate change have multiple benefits for people, society and the environment. Action on housing, city and rural land-use, travel, shopping and our diets will all improve the quality of our lives in so many ways.

Powering our Homes

Do you want your electricity to be supplied by coal or even by gas? Coal mining is locally destructive whilst burning coal causes regional air pollution and global climate change. It is also a dangerous occupation for the workforce and is a bulky, dirty material to transport. Whilst gas emits less carbon dioxide, methane can leak at all stages causing further climate warming.



Conversely, most renewable sources of electricity are far cleaner, eliminate air pollution and are generated more locally. Jobs are created in your country and you can cut your dependence on foreign imports - Europe has an unhealthy financial and security dependency on importing gas from Russia and the Middle East. Prices are more stable because you are no longer dependent on the fluctuating global price of fossil fuels.

In the UK most homes are heated by so called 'natural' gas. We bring a dangerously flammable material into our homes that also heats our planet. Traditionally it is cheap so we don't even bother to insulate our homes. We can, and should, build homes with very high levels of insulation. That way our homes will be cheaper to run and it will reduce fuel poverty. If we need some heating, this can be provided from heat pumps that run off electricity. No need to pay for an annual safety check. A cleaner fuel, local jobs and more comfortable warm homes.

Travel

Have you ever cycled in a dangerously busy city centre street, been overtaken by fast driving cars passing too close to you, then being stuck at a red light behind an old bus belching diesel fumes into your face? Not a nice place to be.

Electric cars and buses are not perfect (batteries and weight), but they are quieter, emit no air pollution and are carbon free at the point of use.

Now imagine a future where the traffic volume is reduced and calmed. Where there is a segregated cycle lane and all the buses and lorries have been converted to electric or hydrogen. The air is clean and safe to breathe making it safer for families with children to live in cities. This future could be coming soon - if we choose it.

City Land-use

Many young people live in cities whilst attending university or college then move out to the suburbs when they start a family. This results in wasting your valuable time commuting and more travel to visit shops. Often children are driven by private car to school. We need to revitalise our cities to make them cleaner, greener and more attractive places to live. We need to stop building on greenfield sites and restructure our suburbs so that schools, shops, leisure centres and workplaces are within a 15 minute walk or cycle of where we live. We need to refurbish existing apartments and ensure there are parks and gardens everywhere.

That way we can walk or cycle more, live in densities that are suitable for public transport and therefore reduce our dependency on private cars. Walking is healthy, more sociable and will reduce road congestion and air pollution.

Car parking spaces can be massively reduced, freeing up land for more productive uses - more homes, cycle lanes, more parks and greenspaces. Perhaps children could meet their neighbours outdoors and play on traffic calmed streets once more?

Rural Land-use

Our natural lands have been devastated by the expansion of intensive agriculture and extensive grazing land. Biodiversity has retreated into small pockets of protected land. Our soils are being degraded and rainfall washes straight off the soils along drainage ditches to cause flooding downstream. Pesticides have decimated all insects, not just the 'pests'.

We need to restore some of this lost natural wilderness to benefit nature and ourselves. Planting new trees, restoring soils and protecting peat and wetlands will all store carbon, reduce soil erosion and flooding and benefit wildlife. Rewilding our countryside will bring more jobs - in tourism, outdoor hobbies, forestry, craft industries and specialist food and drink services. Attractive countryside is good for our mental health, encourages us to take exercise and encourages pollinators which are required for our crops and fruit.

We also need to rewild our seas which have been devastated by overfishing, pollution and fishing boats dragging their nets along the seafloor. By regulating fishing, and replanting seagrass and mangroves nature will respond quickly. The seas can store more carbon, storm damage will be reduced and young fish will thrive in the new habitats. By temporarily reducing fishing pressure this can lead to an increase in sustainable fishing in the future.

Shopping

Have you ever been indecisive over which product to buy? Perhaps can't choose between many different brands of umbrellas or which mobile phone to buy? The umbrella then blows inside out the first time you use it, the phone needs to be replaced after 18 months. And at the back of your mind you fear that a child has been labouring under the hot African sun to mine the metals needed for your new phone.

My proposal is for government to mandate compulsory product guarantees, say 10 years, on consumer products like washing machines, fridges and even the humble umbrella. Overnight this would force manufacturers to design their products to a high quality standard. Retailers would offer repair and refurbishment services - creating jobs and a long-term relationship with the customer. Although we might pay a bit more up front we would all benefit from buying quality, long lasting products. And the Earth would benefit too, from less need to extract more raw materials.

Our diets

Our diets are unhealthy and fattening; full of salt, sugar and fats. Much of our food is produced on the other side of the world, perhaps on land that was recently tropical forest now cleared for agriculture and doused in pesticides, fungicides and insecticides. The soil is exhausted but kept 'productive' through the application of artificial fertilisers which emit nitrous oxide. Meanwhile we have a high dependency on meat and dairy products resulting in the excessive use of antibiotics, methane being belched out and ammonia causing air and water pollution.

Fortunately there is a strong correlation between a healthy diet and a low carbon diet. We can choose to eat local food, change our diets to a predominately vegan or vegetarian diet and reduce our intake of chemical residues if we eat organic or at least crops with fewer chemical inputs. 'Regenerative' farming is the future - no ploughing, avoid bare land by growing winter cover crops and the use of crop and animal diversity and rotation. Remarkably, this will increase the carbon content within the soil which reduces the need for fertilisers and retains water preventing flooding and soil degradation. Another win-win.

Amidst all the bad news, there are grounds for hope and optimism - Carbon Choices is an easy to read but comprehensive popular science book that concludes with a green action plan for government, business and individuals to make better Carbon Choices. <http://www.carbonchoices.uk/index.php/buy>

Written by Neil Kitching, January 2022

Neil is a geographer and energy specialist from Scotland. He wrote his first book, Carbon Choices on the common-sense solutions to our climate and nature crises. He works for a public sector agency promoting the opportunities for business to benefit from low carbon heating and water technologies. Neil



had a mid-life career change from accountant to working in sustainable development then energy. Carbon Choices arose from Neil's frustration that so many people lack a basic understanding of climate change and its serious impacts. Education is the first step towards taking action. Neil also writes blogs on climate issues. Neil is also a member of Authors and Educators on a Mission - a group of authors who are passionate about making a difference for climate action and environmental education.

<https://twitter.com/carbonchoicesuk>

<https://www.facebook.com/carbonchoices>

<https://www.instagram.com/carbonchoices/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/neil-kitching-55833314/>

Who are we? Introducing

This month we get **John Stott** from **Henley in Arden** to talk to us about his low carbon journey.

1. What is your first memory of when you realised things needed to change?

Sometime in the early 2000's, not exactly sure when. Back then, there was a lot of doubt amongst the general public about whether climate change was real - could humans really wreck the climate and make parts or maybe the whole planet uninhabitable for humans. Looking at the science, I became sure that the answer was yes, but many people still doubted. It was a difficult topic of conversation. It's taken 15 years for this difficulty to be largely overcome.

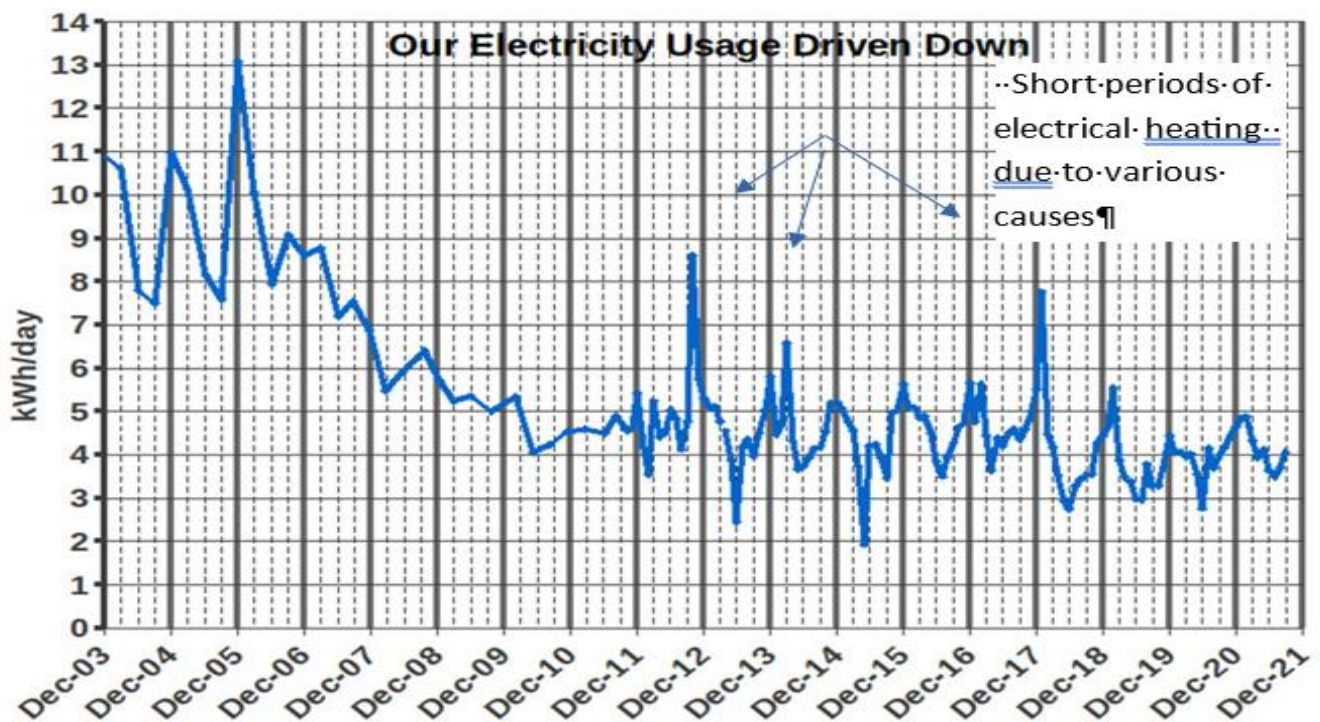
2. What made you commit to doing something?

Realising that the ultimate consequences of inaction will be famines, mass migrations and wars and very likely extinction of most life. Even if not the latter, breakdown of civilisation as we know it.

3. What have you done?

- Low carbon home - Improvements to the energy efficiency of the house (draught excluders on all the 1970's windows & doors**¹. Upgraded loft insulation. Heating only the parts of the house that we spend time in with internal doors closed. Already had cavity wall insulation. Installed low carbon energy by solar panels & wood pellet boiler (replaced oil) plus reduction in electricity consumption by behaviour change (switch it off at the wall when not in use, lights off and TV off if nobody is in the room), low energy lighting and appliances - see graph on the next page.
- Occasionally run through a carbon footprint check online. Here's one you might not have come across. <https://www.sw-consulting.co.uk/carbon-calculator>
- Anything that can be repaired is repaired. Just repaired a 10-year-old toaster.
- For 10 years, I wrote the green column for Henley News Online (a local electronic newspaper, unfortunately now closed).
- Stopped flying. Any long-distance travel is now by rail. Hybrid car. Cycle some of the shorter local journeys
- Support the Green Party, FoE, Greenpeace and other pressure groups such as Avaaz, 350.org, oil change international, Stratford Climate action, "Henley Climate Action" group but currently struggling to do much because of Covid.
- Hardly buy any clothes. Clothing repaired when possible. Penny is very good at this.

¹ **Interestingly, with low carbon heating, the carbon payback time of replacing single glazed windows with double glazed is too long to justify.



- Eight-week Exeter University MOOC on climate change was very good. Read about the subject in various books. I recommend "There is no planet B" and "How bad are bananas - the Carbon footprint of everything" both by Mike Berners-Lee. Regularly read "Ethical Consumer Magazine" (<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>).
- Presented a talk entitled "The Climate & Money" to several Groups. Gradually moving investments away from carbon intense funds. Changed bank from 1st direct (HSBC) to nationwide because HSBC supports fossil fuels. Wrote to 1st Direct to tell them why the account was closed.
- Invested in lots of community energy and renewable energy projects.
- Written to and lobbied my MP many times and other politicians.
- Chair of Heart of England Community Energy, 15 MW solar farm just west of Stratford on Avon. See <https://www.hecommunityenergy.org/>. If you visit the website, you'll see that we use our surplus to assist people in hardship and fuel poverty. We've also hosted visits for schoolchildren to help them learn about renewable energy.
- Eating less meat - more vegetarian diet. Try "Meatless Farm" sausages and burgers and many other plant-based foods now available in supermarkets.

4. What's kept you going? What sustains you?

The answer to 2 above plus the subject is endlessly interesting.

5. If there was one thing/one solution you wished everyone knew about/did – what would it be?

To understand in their hearts that spending money causes climate change and to adopt a different attitude to wealth and spending.

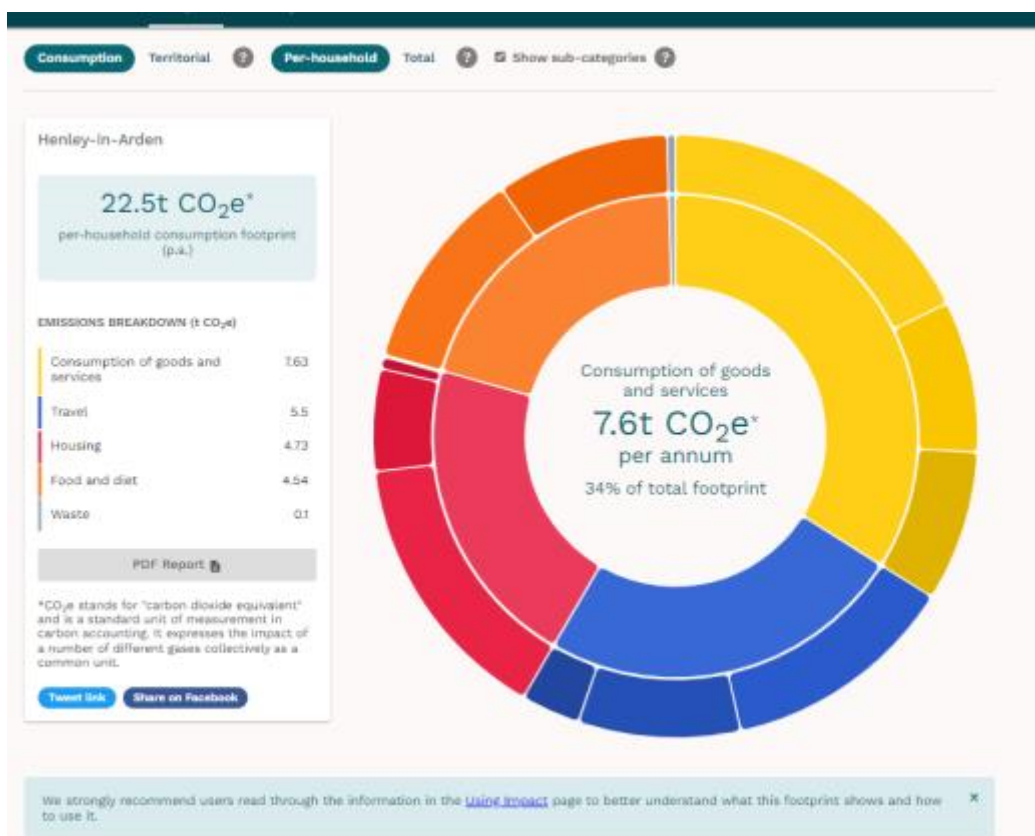
John Stott, January 2022

Have you looked at your Parish or Town carbon footprint yet?

Do you agree with the results?

The aim of the Impact carbon footprinting tool is to give small communities data on their carbon emissions that is easy to interpret, easy to share, and which gives them a clear idea of their main 'impact areas' – those big segments where concerted, community-based action could really make a dent in local emissions. The information is displayed visually via a series of charts. However, for those who do want to access the raw data, you can visit the Downloads page to do so. [Impact | Community carbon calculator \(impact-tool.org.uk\)](https://impact-tool.org.uk)

A footprint for a geographic area (what this tool considers) may be produced on a strict territorial basis (all emissions occurring within the area) or on a consumption basis (all emissions caused by residents of the area, regardless of where geographically they occur). For example, territorial emissions (who to lobby) would include those from all industry, agriculture and transport activity within the area (even if the agricultural output is consumed in a different place). Consumption-based emissions (what local people can do), on the other hand, would include upstream and downstream emissions from residents' consumption of manufactured goods, food and their own transport activity, regardless of where the emissions occur.



Henley-in-Arden per household (p.a.) consumption carbon footprint

News

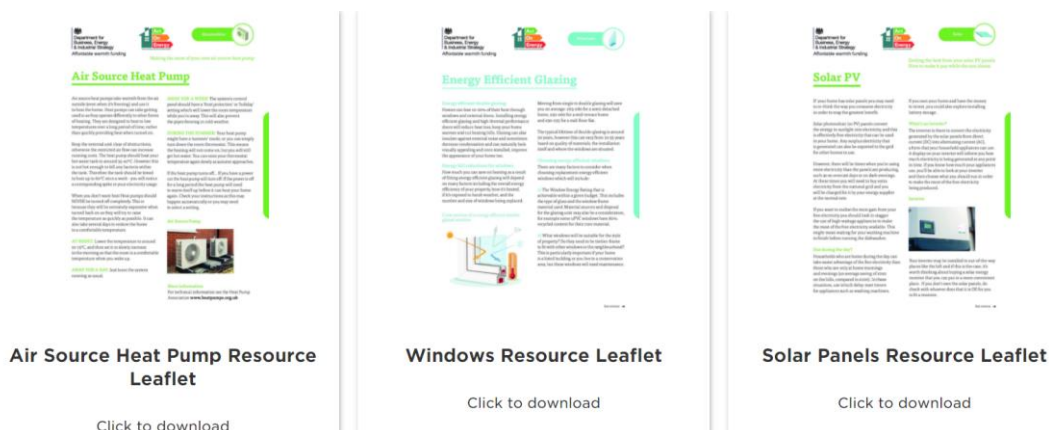
Harbury Energy Initiative has been shortlisted for a Green Energy Award in the community energy initiative category. Winners in all the categories will be announced at the awards event in the Bath Assembly Rooms on 30th March. [Green Energy Awards 2022 - Regen](#)

LCWN now has a Facebook group set up by Emma Powell for everyone to share useful things. Please like and follow it. Please send any comments to emma.powell@octoenergy.com

Act on Energy have some really useful resources on-line

[Resource Archive - Act On Energy](#)

[Quick Tips to Save Money - Act On Energy](#)



New Building Regs

Watch this space - George Martin, Kenilworth All Together Greener, Director of the UK's Building Performance Network and Chair of the Sustainable Development Foundation will give us an update soon.

Events and Meetings

If covid restrictions allow:

- The Spring LCWN face to face community is likely to be in April, probably with Rugby Transition Town.
- The Summer LCWN face to face community event will hopefully be with Kenilworth All Together Greener.
- The Autumn / Winter LCWN face to face community event will hopefully be with friends in Snitterfield or Upper Boddington.

Useful Links

- Please take a look at our new page (Link below) and like / follow us <https://www.facebook.com/Low-Carbon-Warwickshire-Network-101562702401683/>
- Ryan Rushton, Younity, Business Development Manager, T: 07816 602 323, A: Co operative House, Warwick Technology Park, Warwick, CV34 6DA [Community Energy UK | Younity](#)
- LCWN Facebook group content e: emma.powell@octoenergy.com
- Janet Palmer, Stratford-on-Avon Friends of the Earth, Stratfordonavonfoe@outlook.com
- Bob Sherman FRSA BEM, Chair Low Carbon Warwickshire Network, e: lowcarbonwarks@gmail.com, T: 01926 612277, M 07919 157224
- [Warwickshire Low Carbon Network – Harbury Energy Initiative](#)
- www.harburyenergy.co.uk
- Community Energy Warwickshire Fund <https://www.heartofenglandcf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CEW-2020.pdf> The fund aims to:
 - • Support the development and installation of renewable energy projects
 - • Encourage the sustainable use of energy and reductions in carbon emissions
 - • Promote public awareness of environmental issues and support educational initiatives
 - Available Funding - There's grant of up to £2,000. Funding must be spent within 1 year. [CEW-2020.pdf \(heartofenglandcf.co.uk\)](#)
- [Green Energy Awards 2022 - Regen](#)
- [The-Climate-Action-Plan-Checklist Jan21.pdf \(climateemergency.uk\)](#)



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 and other news
- share your experiences



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

Please send all copy (by 5th of each month), 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.