

An Introduction to Sustainable Chesham

Sustainable Chesham is part of the Transition Town Network and has been running as a community group for over 10 years. Sustainable Chesham aims to encourage and enable our community to work towards a more sustainable future. Run by local Chesham residents, we meet monthly, to discuss, promote and support local sustainable initiatives. Everyone is welcome to join us and get involved. Together we seek positive and creative ways to raise awareness, address the challenges of climate change and create a more sustainable town. At the moment we have a number of projects 'on the go', see below for more details.

Local produce market

Founded in 2010, the Chesham Local Produce Market is a collaboration between Sustainable Chesham and Chesham Town Council. It enables local food and craft producers to sell their wares to local people, thereby reducing food miles and keeping money in our local economy. It also aids creating community between producers and local residents. The Local produce market has been a very successful project over a sustained period and has engaged many people within the community. It is a popular market which shows how well Sustainable Chesham can work as a Town Partner, with the Town Council.



Tree planting

In November 2020, Sustainable Chesham received delivery of 300 trees (approx 60cm whips) from the Woodland Trust. These trees have now been successfully planted in and around Chesham by residents and community groups. Our aim was to have the majority in public places, we achieved this through discussions with local schools, the council, and local experts to ensure as many as possible were used as a community asset. We also distributed a number to local residents to plant in their gardens. We plan to repeat this next year, with more trees, as there was an enthusiastic uptake and the trees are best planted in winter months.



Community Energy Switch Programme

In July 2020 Sustainable Chesham set up a Community Energy Switch programme to encourage the local community to switch to 'clean' energy. The aim of this is to educate and empower people in Chesham to be aware of the choices they can make when choosing an energy supplier and how this might impact on the town's carbon footprint. As part of this initiative, we have partnered with BigCleanSwitch, a leading renewable energy comparison website which shows you can save money and the planet by switching your energy supplier. We hope to encourage as many people as possible to switch to an energy provider who supplies energy from renewable sources. This is only one of a number of ways in which you can switch and at the moment the team are preparing a roll out programme, and identifying key partner organisations and publicity requirements. We hope to see this promoted and taken up on a significant scale in 2021.

Repair Café

This initiative encourages people not to throw away their broken goods but instead take them to the local repair cafe where knowledgeable volunteers help owners understand what's gone wrong and show you how to mend it. Sustainable Chesham have been planning a Repair Cafe in Chesham for over a year now, but had to delay practical implementation due to Covid restrictions. Whilst on pause, the team have continued to explore venues, repairers, funding and partners in the scheme. Last November we were awarded some micro-grant funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, distributed by Transition Network, to help fund the first event, and have had interest from the community and local repair businesses including Workaid and The Artful Menders. We are hoping the first cafe will run as a socially distanced event and take place at the beginning of May 2021. If it takes off we would like to run the event regularly as a monthly event.

Community Assembly Series

Formed to support Chesham Town Council's Action Plan to tackle the Climate and Ecological Emergency locally, the assemblies aim to stimulate debate and discussions in the community, around environment related topics. As a structured and facilitated space it allows, people come to together to explore issues and generate solutions, with no one person or group dominating. It is an effective way of harnessing the collective wisdom of the crowd.

Our first assembly was held in December 2020, where we sought to identify community priorities for building our resilience to the effects of climate change. As a result of this initial assembly, and the suggestions from the group, we plan to hold a series of future assemblies to discuss water, transport, air pollution, rewilding, buildings and energy. Our second assembly takes place on 2nd March, and will focus on water issues. Each assembly will hear from experts on each issue and use an experienced facilitator to guide the process.

This initiative is supported by a number of other local groups, namely: Chesham and District Natural History Society, Chiltern Peace and Justice Group, Fairtrade Chesham, Chesham in Bloom, XR Chesham.

Community Rewilding

One of the council's staff members approached us in November 2020 with the idea of a community rewilding project. Around the same time, we were approached by a Masters student asking if she could support any of our initiatives as part of her Masters project. We are now bringing these two together, along with council involvement, local resources and expertise to research and initiate a community rewilding project. The project is in it's early stages, but has energy and expertise which we hope will result in the start of an amazing project.

Zone – 9 Cycling Group

This is part of the SC Umbrella, but has its own slot at the CB meeting, so is not discussed here.

Bucks Climate Action Alliance

Sustainable Chesham also support the Bucks Climate Action Alliance (BCAA) Group, which was formed just over a year ago to engage and campaign for the Climate Crisis to be central to Bucks County Council's decision making. Website [Bucks Climate Action Alliance](#)

Past projects

Community Orchard - Situated at the top of Lowndes Park, the Community Orchard has approximately 50 fruit trees including apple, pear, plum, medlar and cherry. This project was initiated by Sustainable Chesham to make organic fruit available to local residents to enjoy. It is also an excellent wildlife habitat and carbon sink, and a beautiful spot to walk and sit in simple contemplation. Over the years we have held events such as apple day and wassailing. All the trees were sponsored by local residents and businesses of Chesham. The orchard is maintained by a team of residents, members of Sustainable Chesham and local experts when needed.

Film Screening – Demain - In November 2018 we held a sell-out free screening of the award winning 2015 film 'Demain' at the local Elgiva. The film is a story about a group of people realising the ecological, economical, and social impacts of the climate crisis and their exploration of solutions.

Plastic Bag Free Chesham - In 2007 four Chesham residents (Julia, Donna, Sally & Alison) got together to try to reduce the mountain of plastic bags being given out by supermarkets ... and so Plastic Bag Free Chesham was formed! As a single issue campaign, it was well-received and made a big impact on the Chesham community. Following that project, Julia set up Transition Town Chesham which then became Sustainable Chesham in 2019.

