

# Wycombe Friends of the Earth - Minutes

For Zoom meeting on Wednesday 7th April 2021 at 7.30pm:

**Present online:** 17

**Apologies:** 3

Names in **bold** indicate action required by that person.

2 new people were welcomed to the meeting and we heard a little about them.

## 1. Finance

The new treasurer has completed and sent off the necessary forms to become a signatory.

## 2. Ecotip for April will be:

**Two tips to help your garden wildlife. It could make a huge difference.**

### **1. Reduce your workload - don't mow!!**

*Do your bit for wildlife this summer and avoid mowing your lawn or your grass verge.*

Benefits:

1. Less effort for you
2. Less pollution and energy usage if you have a motorised mower
3. Will increase the number of visiting insects and pollinators
4. Will attract lacewings and ladybirds etc. which feed on 'pests' around the rest of your garden
5. You won't need to water it, so conserving water
6. Tall grasses look gorgeous, especially when moving in the breeze

*If you think that grass left to grow looks untidy, just mow a path through it or a narrow border round the edges, and it makes it look a feature.*

### **2. Sow wildflowers**

*During the next month or two, sow a patch of wildflowers, either in a patch in your garden or in a pot. They look colourful and attract pollinators. Seeds are cheaply available, or look out for any organisations giving out free wildflower seeds. Work with your neighbours to do the same, maybe in your front gardens, and create a much-needed wildlife 'corridor' in your street.*

## 3. Climate and biodiversity campaign and BCAA and the council elections/climate pledge

- Members are asked to engage with council candidates to encourage the climate emergency message and ascertain which potential councillors will take this issue seriously.
- BCAA is encouraging candidates to sign a pledge to take action on the climate emergency.
- BCAA are leafleting one ward on Sunday from 10am. Members are asked to help with leafleting if possible. A member will send out a relevant email.
- Chiltern Society has no political leanings but they can encourage their members to ask their councillors about their potential actions on climate change.
- BCAA has organised a Bucks-Wide Climate Hustings for the council elections. The hustings will be held on Monday 19 April at 7:30. If you wish to attend, you must register in advance, via Eventbrite. Here is the link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/climate-action-hustings-for-buckinghamshire-council-elections-tickets-146385576199>

- A suggested letter will go out to BCAA member groups for their members to ask their candidates about the Climate Emergency.

## 4. Wycombe Environment (WE)

- This is currently investigating solar streets and wildflower planting.
- A market stall has been booked to hand out wildflower seeds and advertise WE.

## 5. Campaigning around COP26

COP26 will take place in the Autumn in Glasgow.

- National Friends of the Earth will campaign on climate justice - here and internationally. They will also target distractions like off-setting which does not reduce carbon. National FOE has a 6-point plan on the Climate Emergency but resources are stretched and they have fewer paid campaigners than previously.
- WFOE could join with other groups to do some joint campaigning, possibly XR and BCAA for example. Ideally this will be county-wide and involve local media and then push the newly elected council to take some action using COP26 as an impetus. Aim to target the Government and the general population. Campaigning may well be a local approach across the country because of Covid. There are a couple of webinars from FOE coming up. The coordinator would like to get the thoughts of other groups so that there can be a group approach.

Members are asked to let Steve know if they know of like-minded groups who might be interested in a joint campaigning approach.

- It was agreed that the coordinator would put a notice on our Facebook page. After the local elections, BCAA will continue campaigning on the Climate Emergency towards COP26..

## 6. Bucks Council Community Boards

Community Boards hand out grants and members are asked for approval. He suggested that perhaps such applications for grants should be required to outline how they will take account of climate change, or at least demonstrate that they would do no harm. A member will contact the council to ask if this could be put in place and will circulate a draft text through google groups.

- Not sure when community board meetings will resume in person but there may be an opportunity to join them online.

## 7. Local Environment Groups

A member has compiled a list of local environment groups. This is on the WFOE website. Members are asked to view this and note any omissions.

## 8. Living Streets

A member gave a report on 'Living Streets' virtual annual conference.

LS campaigns for better facilities for walkers. There were good speakers, some from abroad.

- Government minister gave a brief address. Initiatives in Oslo and Rotterdam for instance were highlighted.
- Main theme of the conference was to encourage more people to walk and cycle by engaging with the local community. Local government needs to take the lead rather than National government.
- An Essex county council officer said they promote active walking and cycling through their website. They have dedicated walking and cycling routes and engage with the public.
- Bucks are behind what other places are doing, especially with regard to involvement with the public as they tend to make decisions first rather than asking the public first. Speaker from ARUP, talked about the fact that councils draw up LCWIPs and there is one in progress for

Wycombe although there is little actively being done at present. Bucks has little in terms of involvement with local communities apart from some work in schools and the Walk to School theme. There might be opportunities locally, perhaps through Community Boards to promote local walking schemes. Could involve trying to get car parking off the streets and reducing speed limits but needs more coordination for Bucks to be effective in this area - it could contribute to Bucks carbon footprint reduction.

- There is funding from National government for this but the government is now against dual usage paths for cyclists and walkers. Opportunities for increasing walking routes are easier than routes for cycling. There is interest in a West/East route in Wycombe perhaps via the old railway line. Other routes involve hills which it is thought might put people off, although the number of electric bikes is increasing, making hills more manageable.
- In transport decisions, projects should need to demonstrate that they enhance walking and cycling or at least do not make it more difficult.

Living Streets Walking Manifesto (for local elections):

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/6076/a-manifesto-for-walking-nationwide-version-new.pdf>

Living Streets Campaigner Briefing (including suggested questions for candidates):

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/6075/local-election-2021-campaigner-briefing.pdf>

Webcast of Bucks TECC meeting 11.03.21:

[https://buckinghamshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/552220](https://buckinghamshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/552220)

(The report on Cycling & Walking can be downloaded from the 'Resources' tab)

**9 AOB** - none

**10. The next meeting** will be on Wednesday 5th May 2021, 7.30pm, via Zoom.