

What's our Green Group up to?

Edited talk from the Society Green Group. 13 Oct 2022

Although the Society's Green Group has been operational for some months this talk marks the Groups first public step in developing its role. Tonight, the main aim is to offer an outline of the broad context and give voice to members views so that the Society can give voice to your priorities and so help define the make-up of the group and identify those interested in participating.

We will also review community response to the challenges of Climate Change (CC) & how the Society itself might best support local initiatives. I realise for many here, CO2 reduction measures are well in hand so apologies to the already active.

We're not telling people what to do and we don't have all the answers. We'll focus on local issues we might influence, taking for granted the obvious common-sense 'helpful hints'. But we should bear in mind reducing our CO2 emissions not only contributes to safeguard our quality of life, it also helps save countless lives in already hard hit nations. Tonight is just one perspective, your views will help direct our focus.

'Times they are a changin'

For 50 years the Society has monitored townscape, the Common & transport, but shifts in community priorities are clear, and suggest we broaden our agenda, which will, hopefully, broaden our appeal to new, younger, members. But rest assured all the Society's efforts to protect the quality of our townscape remain at the heart of what we do.

Climate Change has been underway since the Industrial Revolution and it's ironic that our own River Wandle provided its local green energy. But where heat was needed, coal was burnt and since then CO2 has increased by 47% (Src:Nat Grid) in the atmosphere.

Recently mother Earth has responded so we need to pick up the pace because the time to make a smooth transition is limited and Climate Change is real and affects all humanity: Pakistan 20% flooded; Europe & China see the worst droughts on record and Australia, California & France have endured huge forest fires. Meanwhile we in Wandsworth saw droughts and 40°C of heat.

If we managed our routines, lifestyle and choices **BETTER** could we not make a difference and slow or limit the pace of change?

Our Approach

We won't advocate gluing backsides to the M25 – but slow progress does increase fear and frustration. Being prepared is essential and the sense Society members will be more motivated by science and many are already 'making a difference'.

An early subjective conclusion is that we need a small but significant cultural shift to encourage everyone to come aboard. Like child safety, it becomes second nature, a reflex response, which can be expressed as:

Council & community need a culture that engenders a reflex response to cutting CO2.

Consultation

Consultation is essential when a council declares a Climate Emergency. But until now guidance has lacked any sense of **Urgency** which undermines community confidence.

The Council set up Wandsworth Environmental Forum (WEF), ably chaired by Judith Chegwidden, to provide a sounding board and ideas. It works to a degree bringing together those concerned about the environment. The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) is an initiative we have recently responded to.

The new regime is introducing Citizens Assemblies. Not a new idea, but how effective they are we'll see as they address 2nd draft of the AQAP report. Whatever format the consultation, it must be - *broad reach, objective, responded to, & Citizens assemblies need balanced participation.*

The Society's also lobbies by presenting objections to : WBC / GLA / GoL but on green issues we can add Supermarket CEOs / MPs / Min of Agri / Banks / Industry etc, i.e. those, apart from us, who bear some responsibility.

Environmental framework

The Environmental Crisis breaks down into two distinct but overlapping parts.

- **Greenhouse gases:** CO2 & methane warm the atmosphere , CO2 is absorbed by: forests, sea, soil, peat bogs and tundra – all are being degraded and livestock feed farms are destroying Amazon rain forest which soaks up millions of tons of CO2.
- **Planetary Pollution** also contaminates soil, sea, air we breathe, food, even breast milk mainly with waste we produce – remember smog!. This includes **PM2,5s particulates which contribute to 9000 Londoners deaths pa.**

WHO: *The World Health Org's previous health thresholds for pollutants: NO2, PM2.5s Ozone, SO2, Carbon monoxide, have all been reset at much lower thresholds. (Source: WHO exc CO2).*

Meanwhile Govt has made some progress in meeting CO2 targets (78% less than 1990). Their intervention is essential but so is our contribution. Could your ideas contribute to our CC resilience? If so send them in.

The chart below lists some of the many issues that can be addressed locally and those that require govt. regulation.

Planet Pollution inc CO2 ADDRESS LOCALLY	Food & Water Security & CO2 - GOVT. REG
Plastic Packaging. Ask for paper bags reject unnecessary plastic	Water Supply + 5 new reservoirs + pipe interconnectors
PM2.5s /NOX > drive / clean roads	Micro Plastic regulation
Land fill, gas leaks > recycle / charity shops	Diesel trains at Clapham Junction
Anti-biotic leakage > home & farm	Shipping & aviation decarbing
River contamination > chicken farms source	Jet plane emissions & vapour trails
Micro plastics > avoid	Loss of agricultural land
Food Waste > new WBC Report	Excessive fertiliser use
ICE engine emission > go EV	Livestock effluent in rivers
EV more chargers mean cleaner air	Soil nutrient depletion
Rain forest loss > eat less red meat	Soil contamination/ erosion
BBQs/wood burners >Need bye laws	Corporations farm takeovers
Take less flights cut CO2	Farm new practice & crops

Reasons to be cheerful

In 2020 UK GREEN electricity was 43.1% of total inc. biothermal (*Src. Nat Grid*). Recently the largest ever off-shore windfarm, has connected its 165 turbines off Yorkshire's coast powering 1.2m homes & taking us nearer 50% renewable electricity.

- 5 new reservoirs planned 2025 & Severn Thames pipeline (NIC) TBC.
- New tech drills can cut through granite to geothermal at power station sites replacing gas & coal. Relatively cheap & quick.
- Heated Sand Energy storage in Finland, hi-temp steam can last for days.
- EVs are like big batteries and can feed electricity into the national grid at night when solar not on.
- Red meat sales down. Soya substitute cuts forest loss to cattle feed farms clearing the AMAZON which is a great CO2 sink.
- ULEZ schemes do improve air quality / Elizabeth Line.
- Rewilding and extension of our existing forests has started.

Electric or Gas? That is the question.

Which is cleaner?. Which is cheaper?

It's a complex issue which might change when price stability returns.

- **Electric is greener** – as 45-50% is coming from renewables.
- **Gas is cheaper** per kWh but less efficient for hob cooking
- Studies are contradictory and item by item tests needed.

Use as little of either as possible makes sense. Brit Gas say we turn on central heating on 24 Oct on avg.

- Would a small movable oil heater be better than all radiators on?
- Use white paint on sun facing surfaces – cools by reflecting heat.
- In home woodburning is not the answer because of CO2 & PM2.5s.
- Wood burning produces 38% of PM2.5s (traffic 12%) (Src. HMG 2021)

Kitchen cooker power

The following lists are only indicative. Conditions on testing vary greatly. Boil large pan water test:

Gas	9.69mins (Source Guardian test)
Electric ceramic	7.47mins
Induction	4.81mins (Check pacemaker compatibility')
Electric kettle	2.16 mins (My kettle! 1 ltr)

- Gas loses about 40% of its heat round the edges of pans.

Appliances - Energy cost (Sunday Times Survey)

Vacuum	39p – per hr	Electric Kettle	5.7p – per Ltr
Slow Cooker	87p – per6 hrs	Shower	18p - 5ms
Tumble dry	213p – per cycle	Fridge Freezer	£127 - pa
Dishwasher	44p – per hr	TV 43”smart	26.5p - 10hrs
Electric Oven	39p – per hr	Washing mach	33p – per cycle

Save money and the planet! The figures speak for themselves.

Diet & Supermarket

Your 5 a DAY veg advice remains and being veggie or vegan protects rain forest from animal feed farmers chopping it down.

If only red meat was a very rare treat it would slow down forest clearing.

Beef non (Dairy)	48 kg	Kg of CO2 equiv per Kg of meat.
Lamb	37 kg	
Pork	12 kg	
Chicken	6 kg	
Farmed salmon	11 kg	(Source: AHDB / Poor & Nemecek 2018)

- Chicken greener but not great – feed needs farmland and effluent seeps into rivers. Also their enclosed conditions are far from humane.

- Organic: Fewer chemicals but less productive – limits rewilding. (G.Monbiot)
 - Advances in Synthetic protein are getting as tasty as the real thing.
- “Livestock is booming, wildlife is collapsing. We eat 75 billion animals pa. globally creating more CO2 than all other sources together”** (G. Monbiot)

Travel Issues

I defer to John Dawson our R&T lead & Susie Morrow of Living Streets, on 2 wheel issues but Michael McIntyre’s skip walk theory is clearly the future as you’ll know if you’ve seen his stand-up routine! But there are so many issues on transport:

- **ACTIVE TRAVEL** – promote to ALL who can walk, bike or scoot. Not all can! Can safety be improved through, better design/training/Award schemes?)
- **CYCLING:** New Nat Strategy? / Intermodality / Registration helpful or not? Mini-Holland Initiatives: 3 Councils trial. Will Wandsworth be added?
- **E-BIKES:** check insurance! E-scooter renters covered by owner insurance? Electric 2 wheeling - Treated same as mopeds? Registration?
- **ELECTRIC CARS:** cross path charging: cables/signage/LA regs / insurance. More chargers local & UK. Can feed Nat Grid at night. Less PM2.5s.
- **LTNs & Discriminatory Parking** can work but all need: research /consultation /clear signposting and community notification are essential .
- **PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** may suffer cut backs like some local buses 22? Lobby TFL / Measure passenger numbers?

What have we done so far

We have contributed in several WEF, ZOOM meetings and responded to the original drafts of WESS & AQAP—both showed some progress, both had common faults i.e. weak on ***urgency & communications guidance***.

Councils must lead by example but they must get the community to follow and if an ‘Emergency’ is declared any Council should respond accordingly. Devoting 1/3 of a brochure to their in-house progress is padding and should be cut.

Other glossing ploys should be deleted from the “PR handbook” - like:

- **Previously announced actions** should NOT be presented as new.
- **Padding:** terms like “we will...encourage / sustain / maintain / support / recommend /work with “ are simply padding. Some respect to the community’s intelligence please...!

A recent Govt U-turn on guidance to use less gas is welcomed and shows communications do matter. Did they spot the recent study saying most of us love being nannied?

Air Quality Action Plan

Society’s detailed comments on first draft included:

1. **SCHOOLS:** More School Streets welcome - Target 100%
2. **LTN's** as noted need: consultation. Some good, others create traffic jams as they did in Trinity Rd.
3. **PM2.5s:** We now have improved monitoring equipment for PM2.5s. We propose a Reduction Plan? Road cleaning and washing (as in France) improved driving behaviour and education.
4. **TREES:** More tree planting good but 10% more too little - a step change is needed 50-100% more. We note that tree selection may need to change to hardier species because of Climate Change.

The newly elected Council has since promptly published a 2nd draft AQAP promising greater urgency. It will include:

5. A Citizens Assembly & focus on Inter-school CC Coop'rtn & Resource Hub.
6. Communication questions? Like - A Tweet a day! **Really!?! And Mall Pop-ups; Promo Days: Clean air / Plastic free / Car free? Are these gimmicks or effective tactics? Feedback evaluation needed.**
7. WBC's communications (inc Brightside) need professional input to have impact. It was agreed to have an Agenda slot at the next WEF meeting.
8. REQUEST: More Trees & EV chargers with reserved parking.
Less rent bikes blocking pavements, more bike parking provision.

A promising start but proof of the pudding?

TREES role in AQAP

A mature tree takes an avg 20-40kg of CO2 and other toxins out of the air. London's total 2200 Metric tons of CO2 soaked up pa (LTA). The London plane trees outside Southside are doing just that and providing shade thanks to being saved by the Society. You probably already water your 'gated' tree. If not, they'd appreciate the occasional can of water so they can clean your air.

"Putney High Street notorious as the worst air quality in UK 2020"

The draft AQAP tells us air quality has improved and it certainly looks better with a few trees and wider pavements. But it's not clear if Covid & ULEZ traffic reductions were factored in to calculations and the extent of Electric buses and cars helped.

Checking sources – including me!

A politician said recently "We've listened too long to scientists & academics let politicians speak". Politics has its place, but in the veracity stakes science has quite a lead. The Scientific Method is based on: Replicable research, valid sampling and peer review. It can be useful to check sources of key information.

I have no academic qualifications to speak on the ENVIRONMENT? And reading "The Limits of Growth 2000" 50 years ago and making a TV series on green farming doesn't qualify me. What does, is that I'm a grandparent. My children &

grandchildren's future well-being is at stake and I have to know that what needs to be done, IS being done, and I'd like to contribute! I'm sure we all do.

Members speak

The response forms gathered at the talk and the views voiced during the open mike session are far too few for any numerical analysis and the talk itself would have had an influence so results should only be viewed as qualitative. However, the closed questions, gave a clear response indicated that most thought: govt & LA response & guidance was inadequate, (only one thought it adequate). And most were concerned about the risk of Climate Change to their family's well-being.

This chimes well with our views on guidance and suggests the Council review the quality of its comms. It is a welcome start that comms are on the agenda at the next WEF meeting.

The 2 open questions on green tips and priorities resulted in nearly forty different answers which tends to underline the huge size of the subject although public transport and CO2 reduction had more support than other suggestions.

NO Pain, NO Gain

We find ourselves living in planet Earth's sweet spot in history. We missed most of, WW2 and conscription, but have contraception and (unlike the USA) we have the NHS, sort of FREE, which has saved many of us already. Compared to earlier eras, at every level we Brits live better & longer. **To sustain us ALL in that heavenly scenario we need to be Greener.**

We may get away with just enough to feel the inconvenience, if we act now. But delay may introduce us to unwelcome lifestyle constraints – it's up to us, but with a Carbon Negative pub opening at Southside - how can we fail! Let me close by saying: Whether our grandchildren, will be satisfied with our efforts is rather up to them as future politicians, baristas, teachers or future parents, to decide.

BSJB

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