

Civic Pride Column for Wednesday 3 March

by Caroline Townsend of Abingdon Carbon Cutters

Abingdon Carbon Cutters is a local group committed to fighting the Climate and Ecological crises, by working to reduce carbon emissions and by promoting environmentally sustainable projects in the town.

We manage two 'bee beds' with annual & perennial flowers in Abbey Meadow, and three "Edible Abingdon" vegetable beds which demonstrate what can be grown in a small plot; passers-by can pick their own. One of these projects grows salad and herbs in recycling boxes outside Old Station House residential home. With the help of Abingdon Naturalists and the Green Gym we have created a glorious Wild Flower Maze on Abbey Meadow. In 2020 our Trees group planted 520 trees, and 1,500 bulbs on Boxhill.

The Food group promotes healthy eating & home cooking using local & seasonal ingredients. We hire out apple juicing/pasteurising equipment to local schools & the community, and run drop-in juicing sessions in the Autumn. We have a table at St Ethelwold's, where people leave garden produce etc, "for sale" for a donation of £1. In 2020 the proceeds of £619 went to Christchurch Food Bank:

We have strong links with Abingdon Town Council, which aims to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 by "following a programme of energy reduction, carbon offsetting within our town and using renewable energy".

A sub-group, Abingdon Cuts Plastic, is affiliated to the national marine charity "Surfers Against Sewage", who granted the town the status of "Plastic-Free Community" in 2019. We had to meet 5 objectives, including recruiting 12 businesses as "Plastic-Free Champions, and schools and other community groups as Allies: we are building on this progress. Our aim is to increase awareness of the harmful effects of plastic pollution on our ecosystems, and to encourage people to "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle". A current issue is the amount of litter from disposable coffee cups, which can't be recycled: we suggest people take a re-useable mug when buying takeaway coffee, or carry takeaway cups home for disposal.

Until lockdown, Carbon Cutters ran a successful Repair café at Christchurch once every 2 months, with volunteers mending small electrical items, bikes, toys and clothes. We will resume after lockdown.

In 2020, some Carbon Cutters formed "Abingdon Liveable Streets" with members of the Town Council, and local cycling and walking groups. They aim to reduce traffic, increasing safety and reducing harmful emissions. The group lobbies for local routes to be improved, so that more people feel able to walk or cycle to school, and active travel will be easier for all, including wheelchair and scooter users. Our route map, with recommendations for improvements, has been received positively by OCC. We hope this will be integrated into our Neighbourhood Plan, and also form the basis for an LCWIP (Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan)

We support the Cosy Homes initiative, which carries out assessments of the energy lost through people's homes, and makes recommendations for retrofitting measures for more efficient insulation and heating.