

# Community Network: Climate Change and the Voluntary Sector

What actions can small organisations take in regards to climate change?

**Tuesday 8 October, 6:30–8:30 PM**

Addison Centre, Bedford Road, Kempston, MK42 8PN



## Summary Report

## Introduction

The Community Network Event was held on Tuesday 8 October 2024, at Addison Centre, Kempston, where 44 individuals from 26 different local organisations and charities were welcomed to be part of an open conversation about climate change. This Community Network Event was an opportunity to share learning about the actions small organisations can take in response to climate change, and the things that can be considered when creating a Climate Action Plan.

## Speakers

### Dr Elisabeth Slack, Deputy Lieutenant

Dr Elisabeth Slack, Deputy Lieutenant, introduced the event and the topic for the evening. She gave an insightful speech about her life experiences through her career in agricultural and environmental science. Dr Slack spoke about the growing role that the voluntary sector and community groups continue to have in helping to shape local responses to climate change and raising awareness of the ways to cope with the issues that result from climate change such as floods and hot weather. Dr Slack noted the importance of voluntary and community organisations supporting climate responses, as the continuing impact of climate change exacerbates existing inequalities, and create challenges for people with chronic health issues and disabilities. Dr Slack highlighted the importance of changing our lifestyles on a day-to-day basis, and the need for partnerships and co-operation as climate change mitigation depends on forward-planning.

*"There are countless ways in which we can reduce our carbon footprints and most of us could include large numbers of these in our daily lives. A few people making an effort some of the time is not of much value. But if most people acted more fully on a daily basis, we would see more progress. We are living in an age of transition from fossil fuels to renewable fuels, and a transition to a more nuanced, ecologically-friendly way of inhabiting the planet. The challenge is that of changing our lifestyles to reflect the imperatives of our predicament, not for a short time or intermittently but permanently, until the hoped-for new equilibrium is achieved."*

### Nicola Schofield, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

Nicola gave a presentation around the actions that Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) has already implemented and her advice for other charities looking to build an action plan.

Nicola talked about the charity's existing Environmental Policy and the measures it has already taken in the three buildings they own to reduce their carbon footprint such as rainwater harvesting, solar panels and double glazing. BRCC investigated what they could measure and what tools they could use to do this. Nicola explained how an environmental survey with staff and volunteers proved effective, with questions such as

'How easy is it for you to be green in your workday?' BRCC looked to see what measures and actions would have the biggest impact and could be put in place quickly to make that difference.

## Tim Simmonds and Sian Pither, NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB)

Sian introduced this presentation by talking about the link between climate change and health, as there are a huge number of factors that affect health, including transmissible diseases, non-communicable diseases, malnutrition, mental health and wellbeing, migration, and difficulties with delivering services (such as supply chain disruption) Sian reported that the NHS is aiming to become a net zero carbon national health service and in 2022, BLMK ICB approved the ICS Green Plan which sets out a vision to be more environmentally sustainable and achieve a net-zero healthcare system within the region by 2035.

Tim noted that 4-5% of total emissions in the UK come from healthcare and there has been a lot of work already done to reduce emissions, but there is more to do and they want to work more closely with the voluntary sector. Tim noted that they are seeking views on what should be included in the refreshed plan and how the NHS and voluntary sector can work together.

The survey can be found online [here](#).

## David Brewer, Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)

David gave the room a quick overview of the environmental resources available on the CVS website, which include advice, frameworks, toolkits and local help.

The environmental resources section can be found online [here](#).

## Antigua Riley Corion Bedford Borough Council

Antigua Riley Corion talked about the Green Skills Development Project, is a collaboration between Bedford Borough Council, Deyton Bell, and Sustainable X, who have been commissioned to deliver a programme for new and existing businesses and individuals. There is one more workshop coming up, titled Greening Your Supply Chain: Strategies & Tools on Tuesday 5 November. If you would like to contact a member of the Bedford Borough Green Skills Development Programme Team, email [bbbb@deytonbell.com](mailto:bbbb@deytonbell.com) or call 07467 893630.

## Clare Wilkinson, Bedford Borough Council

Clare Wilkinson from the Environment Team at Bedford Borough Council spoke about HUG2 and the Mayor's Climate Change Fund. Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) is the Government's grant scheme to fund energy-saving upgrades to homes, with off-grid gas heating systems most likely to be impacted by the high cost of energy bills. The funding is open to private tenants, landlords and homeowners but it is only available until March 2025 which is also the deadline for when the upgrades have to be installed so early applications are encouraged. More information is available [here](#), and you can apply for the grant via <http://hugapply.co.uk/apply-now/>

The Climate Change fund offers voluntary and community groups up to £20,000 match funding grant for energy saving projects. Project examples include upgrade heating systems, boiler replacements, secondary/triple glazing and low energy lighting. Email [climatechange fund@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange fund@bedford.gov.uk), or visit the website [www.bedford.gov.uk/climatechange fund](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/climatechange fund)

## Group Discussion

### Reflecting on how small organisations can improve their approach to climate change

The groups were asked to discuss the following questions;

- Where is your organisation 'at' in responding to climate change?
- What more information do you need?
- What actions are you going to take after today?

Overall attendees expressed that they had started to make some changes in their organisation such as going paperless, reducing the number of rooms they use, making sure heating and lighting is off at the weekend, use of Green Bank, and using Teams rather than travelling to meetings. However, attendees felt that they could be taking the next step with what they are already doing, such as making their supply chains more local and being aware of the need to make staff regularly aware of existing environmental policies. Attendees did express that factors such as lacking the staff or time to lead on climate change, and stretched budgets, are having an impact on what they can do in regard to climate change actions.

In answer to the second question, attendees expressed that they wanted as much information as possible on the topic of climate change and suggested this could be in the form of toolkits, simple tips and easy guides, sharing of best practice, more of these type of events, sharing of stories good and bad to bring reality to the issues caused by climate change, celebrating changes and successes to encourage more progress and for all of these to be accessible to all parts of the community. Some attendees expressed that they would like to see a BSL video of climate for the deaf and hard of hearing community - for example flooding and training on how to save

money on fuel. One attendee asked if bigger organisations could support smaller ones with pro bono advice as part of their social responsibility.

Measurement of an organisation's carbon footprint was brought up by several tables and the importance of getting this right as there are many factors and variables. One attendee noted the importance of not just measuring scope 1 but also scope 2 and 3 emissions and that it is imperative to get third parties to supply this information. The three scopes are a way of categorising the different kinds of emissions a company creates in its own operations and in its wider 'value chain' (its suppliers and customers).

Transport was much discussed at the tables, with one attendee noting that transport is responsible for 40% of emissions. Attendees felt that public transport needs to be improved. Another attendee noted that anxiety around use of public transport can be an issue, especially when encouraging people to use public transport over other alternatives. Cycling was also raised at tables, with attendees noting that they feel that there are not enough people cycling in the Borough.

Attendees raised suggestions on other actions the Council could take such as using SignLive to save money on paying interpreter/mileage, offering support for businesses to work with their landlord in regard to building improvements/ improving energy efficiency and incorporating Sport England design guidance into planning and design.

In response to the third question, attendees expressed that they would continue to look into a variety of different actions including

- Creating a shared vision to inspire and engage colleagues, allowing ideas from all areas of their organisation
- Training for all staff at the induction stage
- Recycling bins, looking at heating sources and usage of equipment
- Use Teams/Zoom more to reduce travelling
- Looking into alternatives for driving round to do work i.e. home visits and other ways to offer services, encourage more working in the area you live in terms of allocation of areas that staff cover

- Look into use of more local supply chains
- Attend more events to increase knowledge in climate change
- Look at how we can offset our impact locally.

Some quotes that stood out to facilitators were:

***'Environmental attitudes in the workplace influence domestic thinking.'***

***'Can the voluntary sector and businesses/corporations team up to tackle climate change together?'***

***'Climate change as a mission needs to be something that everyone understands and owns.'***

## Some words from our stall holders

### The South Midlands Growth Hub

The South Midlands Growth hub is your fully-funded one-stop shop for business support, whether that be one-to-ones with business advisers, free workshops and events, taking advantage of our grants, or joining our Step into Net Zero programme for Bedford Borough Businesses.

Step into Net Zero is a fully-funded programme specifically for Bedford Borough businesses and organisations who want to take their first steps in the journey towards net zero and becoming more sustainable. You'll benefit from a 30-minute business clinic with our in-house Carbon Literate Team, as well as a workshop with our sustainability expert. You'll come away with the beginnings of a decarbonisation plan and all the tools to start implementing these changes into your business. For further information or to enrol on to the programme please visit our website [Step into Net Zero | Bedford Borough | Growth Hub \(southmidlands.org.uk\)](https://southmidlands.org.uk).

### Groundwork East

Groundwork East is an environmental and community charity that works across the East of England to improve prospects for people, places and planet. This takes the form of a multitude of projects including climate education, horticulture-based work, environmental improvements, youth work, sustainable business services and family-based programmes. We are always looking to engage with new people and organisations, and welcome ideas for new projects. If you would like to get in touch, please email [east@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:east@groundwork.org.uk) or visit our website <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/east/>

We have two key programmes running in Bedford at this time, with more on the horizon. Our Green Doctor programme supports people to reduce their energy bills and heat their homes. A variety of people are eligible for the service, which includes one-to-one consultations with our qualified Green Doctors, who can provide individualised advice and install energy efficiency measures such as energy-efficient lightbulbs, draught excluders, air fryers and slow cookers. Individuals can self-refer or organisations can refer people they work with using the form linked on this page: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/about-groundwork/british-gas-programme/> Many people are struggling to heat their home at the moment, often for the first time. Help is available and is free of charge

### The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts' work within their local communities to protect wild spaces and engage others with the natural world. We cover the three counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, and manage over 100 nature reserves in this area, which are free and open for all to explore - in this way we can show what well-managed wild spaces look like, and how they can be a refuge for wildlife and biodiversity,

as well as people; promoting a wealth of health and wellbeing benefits. 95% of people live within five miles of one of our nature reserves, and many reserves have additional management and facilities for accessibility, meaning that absolutely everyone can feel the benefits of immersing themselves in nature. Our engagement work is also extraordinarily impactful: informing and inspiring people at our outdoor education facilities, as well as delivering school visits, guided walks and talks to special interest groups and businesses. Nature is incredible, and there is so much to learn, so why not get involved and book a talk, or a guided walk for your group? Perhaps come to one of our many wonderful events, or join in with some practical management as a volunteer? There are so many ways to get involved.

The Wildlife Trust BCN is also able to support the growth of community organisations through the 'Team Wilder' engagement system. We provide strategic guidance and direction and can loan resources to help groups become established and sustainable.

### Kempston Climate Change Action Group and The Green Man Community Garden

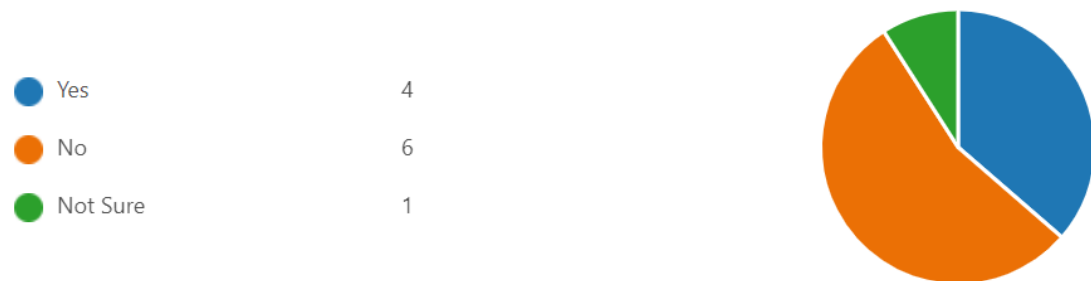
Kempston Climate Change Group and The Green Man Community Garden are two voluntary organisations in Kempston, working closely together to promote sustainable living, our natural spaces and improve the local environment. Upcoming events include a Tulip Bulb plant at the Transfiguration Church in Kempston on Sunday 17 November. The bulbs are donated by the Borough Council every year and given to voluntary groups to reuse and enhance green spaces during the spring when they flower. We also plan to have a stall at the Kempston Christmas Lights Switch-on at the Saxon Centre in Kempston on Sunday 26 November, which will provide a good opportunity for both groups to promote our aims, advise people on how they can live more sustainably and invite people to join our organisations. Finally, we are planning a Swish Event in January, we held one of these events earlier in 2024 and felt it was a great success. A Swish is where members of the public can bring along unwanted, good quality items (such as clothing, toys, books) and exchange each item for a token. They can then use these tokens to acquire items other people have donated. Find out more at [kempstonclimatechange.org.uk](http://kempstonclimatechange.org.uk) or email [info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk](mailto:info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk) and <http://www.facebook.com/GreenManCommunityGardenKempston> or email [kempstongmg@gmail.com](mailto:kempstongmg@gmail.com).



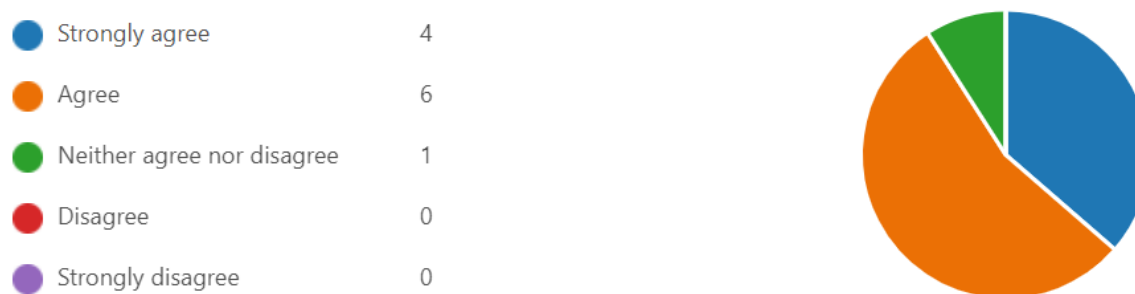
## Appendix 1 – Event Feedback

Participants were invited to complete a feedback form. This can help us to identify how we can improve the community network events, and understand what topics and discussions are most relevant to the voluntary and community sector. 11 people completed the form, and the charts can be found below.

1. Is this your first time attending a Bedford Borough Community Network event?



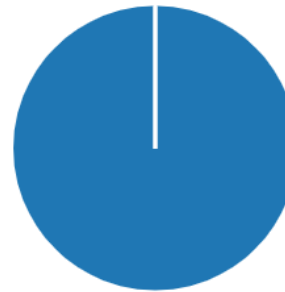
2. To what extent do you agree that attending this Community Network was a valuable use of your time?



3. Did you make any new contacts at the event?



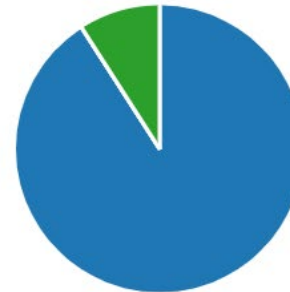
100% of the participants that completed this survey said that they made new contacts at the event.



4. Would you recommend this event to other organisations/groups?



10 out of the 11 participants who completed this survey said they would recommend this event to other organisations



5. Has this event inspired you to make any changes or implement new ideas within your organisation?

"Helped make some more connections."

"For me it was more about connecting with different organisations & hearing their needs/challenges."

"It has inspired me to think of new ways we can support other organisations towards Net Zero."

## Appendix 2 – Contact Directory

Name	Organisation	Email Address
<b>Adrian Spurrell</b>	Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)	adrian.spurrell@btinternet.com
<b>Alex Wrack</b>	Bedford Borough Council/ICB	<a href="mailto:alex.wrack@nhs.net">alex.wrack@nhs.net</a>
<b>Amila and Don Gunashinka</b>	Kempston residents	
<b>Anne Dorber</b>	Priory Country Park Volunteers (plus others)	
<b>Catherine Wright</b>	Deaf Access Bedford	<a href="mailto:info@accessbedford.org.uk">info@accessbedford.org.uk</a>
<b>Chris Stelling</b>	Carers in Bedfordshire	chris.stelling@Carersinbeds.org.uk
<b>Clare Anderson</b>	Sight Concern Bedfordshire	clareanderson@sightconcern.co.uk
<b>Clare Wilkinson</b>	Bedford Borough Council	<a href="mailto:clare.wilkinson@bedford.gov.uk">clare.wilkinson@bedford.gov.uk</a>
<b>Cllr. Hilde Hendrickx</b>	Bedford Borough Council	hilde.hendrickx@bedford.gov.uk
<b>Cllr. Jim Weir</b>	Bedford Borough Council	jim.weir@bedford.gov.uk
<b>Cllr. Lucy Bywater</b>	Bedford Borough Council	<a href="mailto:lucy.bywater@bedford.gov.uk">lucy.bywater@bedford.gov.uk</a>
<b>Cozmina Mosnegutu</b>	Green Man Community Garden / Kempston Climate Change Group	<a href="mailto:info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk">info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk</a>
<b>Danita Goodwin-Lapping</b>	Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)	<a href="mailto:info@cvsbeds.org.uk">info@cvsbeds.org.uk</a>
<b>David Brewer</b>	Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)	info@cvsbeds.org.uk
<b>David Porter</b>	Green Man Community Garden / Kempston Climate Change Group	<a href="mailto:info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk">info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk</a>
<b>Debbie Robson</b>	CHUMS	<a href="mailto:debbie.robson@chums.uk.com">debbie.robson@chums.uk.com</a>
<b>Dionne Deans</b>	BSL Interpreter	
<b>Dr Elisabeth Slack DL</b>	Deputy Lieutenant	lord.lieutenant@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
<b>Elizabeth Jones</b>	Green Man Community Garden / Kempston Climate Change Group	<a href="mailto:info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk">info@kempstonclimatechange.org.uk</a>
<b>Eloise Adger</b>	IMPAKT Housing & Support	eloise.adger@impakt.org.uk
<b>Fizz Heseltine</b>	Living It Up	fizz@lovelivingitup.org
<b>Hilary Touhy</b>	Age UK Bedfordshire	Hilary.touhy@ageukbedfordshire.org.uk

<b>Jane Eimermann</b>	Mind BLMK	<a href="mailto:jane.eimermann@mind-blmk.org.uk">jane.eimermann@mind-blmk.org.uk</a>
<b>Jemma Denton</b>	Bedford Borough Council	<a href="mailto:jemma.denton@bedford.gov.uk">jemma.denton@bedford.gov.uk</a>
<b>Jim Harris</b>	Cranfield University	<a href="mailto:j.a.harris@cranfield.ac.uk">j.a.harris@cranfield.ac.uk</a>
<b>Joanna Clark</b>		
<b>Karen Lawson</b>	Peabody Community Foundation	<a href="mailto:karen.lawson@peabody.org.uk">karen.lawson@peabody.org.uk</a>
<b>Lara Jones</b>	Wildlife Trust BCN	<a href="mailto:Lara.Jones@wildlifebcn.org">Lara.Jones@wildlifebcn.org</a>
<b>Laura Farrier</b>	Groundwork East	<a href="mailto:laura.ferrier@groundwork.org.uk">laura.ferrier@groundwork.org.uk</a>
<b>Lucy Nicholson</b>	Bedford Women's Centre	<a href="mailto:lucy@lawc.org.uk">lucy@lawc.org.uk</a>
<b>Marie Bassi</b>	Living It Up	<a href="mailto:gigbuddies@lovelivingitup.org">gigbuddies@lovelivingitup.org</a>
<b>Martin Trinder</b>	Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)	<a href="mailto:info@cvsbeds.org.uk">info@cvsbeds.org.uk</a>
<b>Michaela Martindale</b>	FACES Bedford	<a href="mailto:michaela@facesbedford.org">michaela@facesbedford.org</a>
<b>Natalia Ford</b>	Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire (CVS)	<a href="mailto:info@cvsbeds.org.uk">info@cvsbeds.org.uk</a>
<b>Nicola Scholfield</b>	Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity	<a href="mailto:nicola.scholfield@bedsrcc.org.uk">nicola.scholfield@bedsrcc.org.uk</a>
<b>Peter Blakeman</b>	Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire (CCNB)	<a href="mailto:pj.blakeman@btopenworld.com">pj.blakeman@btopenworld.com</a>
<b>Pip Sadler</b>	Bedford Repair Cafe	<a href="mailto:bedfordrepaircafe@gmail.com">bedfordrepaircafe@gmail.com</a>
<b>Rishi Lal</b>	Isle & Roe Holdings Limited	<a href="mailto:contact@rishilal.com">contact@rishilal.com</a>
<b>Ruth Roan</b>	SEMLEP	<a href="mailto:ruth.roan@semlep.com">ruth.roan@semlep.com</a>
<b>Sarah Broughton</b>	Bedford Foodbank	<a href="mailto:sarah@bedford.foodbank.org.uk">sarah@bedford.foodbank.org.uk</a>
<b>Sian Pither</b>	NHS ICB	<a href="mailto:sian.pither@nhs.net">sian.pither@nhs.net</a>
<b>Tim Simmance</b>	Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board	<a href="mailto:tim.simmance@nhs.net">tim.simmance@nhs.net</a>
<b>Valerie Morris</b>	Deaf Access Bedford	<a href="mailto:info@accessbedford.org.uk">info@accessbedford.org.uk</a>