

Chair's Report for ST AGM 2016 -2017

Following last year's AGM in June 2016, we agreed plans for this year to include occasional meetings, to complete the run a series of skills workshops and later we began work on transport issues. During the year we also spent time commenting on several planning consultations, both local and regional. The regular attendance at the Thornbury Town Council Environment Committee and Tree Groups continued and also Grow Your Own Food and the Orchard Group. Reports from these groups are below.

Our second series of skills workshops took place in May and June 2016. The format was mostly the same as the previous series, with the events being as practical as possible. We agreed that we wanted to open the events to as wide an audience as possible. Given the cost of employing teachers for most of the events plus the venue hire, we agreed that we would rather charge a relatively low fee and accept the probability that the workshops would make a loss. In the event, the seven workshops made an overall loss of £318. Attendance at each workshop varied from 4 – 11. There was a positive response from attendees for all but one of the workshops but it was felt that we should now leave some time before we consider running any further skills workshops.

In the autumn we met to consider future activities. We made plans for a public lecture on Energy which was given in November 2016 by member Andy O'Brien, who is also a director of Bristol Energy Co-operative. The topic was *Community Energy Generation – the way forward?* We also took up the proposal that we should begin work on transport – an issue not tackled yet in detail. We set up a working group which brought proposals to the group in January.

As is often the case, we found ourselves commenting on several substantial planning consultations. The most time-consuming was the consultation on The Joint Spatial Plan and Transport Study for the West of England. This revealed major plans for our area in the next 20 years for substantial housebuilding, road building and transport infrastructure changes. We provided a response to both papers and await the next stage in the planning process. The process for development of the plans for a new nuclear power station at Oldbury has begun but at this stage, it is purely technical issues which are being considered.

During the year we gained some new members and increased participation in the GYOF and Orchard/Wildlife groups which is good news.

The following are reports from those who attend or run the various groups:

Town Council Environment Committee: Felicity Harrison

I have attended virtually all the Environment Committee meetings. At each meeting I have reported something about us and what we are doing. This is a useful way to keep councillors abreast of our activities and to find out about future proposals.

Grow Your Own Food Group: Marian Stephens

Since the 2016 ST AGM the GYOF group has continued to hold monthly meetings with up to 14 enthusiastic members attending. We take turns to lead and have covered the following subjects - Best varieties to grow in this area, No Dig method, Harvesting, seed saving, our favourite gardening

books, planning and crop rotation, slow worms and other predators. Two were open meetings at the Chantry. We gained interest from 3 new people. Thanks to Brett for the seed saving talk and Alan for Soft fruit propagation. We enjoyed ample food at our Bring and Share Harvest meal.

Thornbury Orchard Group: John Mills and Marian Stephens

In June 2016 South Gloucestershire Council agreed that our project to create a Wildflower Meadow could proceed. *Buglife* confirmed that the preparation and seeding could be funded through the 'B-lines' initiative.

In September we organised a scything course in the meadow and five members of Sustainable Thornbury attended with other Stakeholders. Having cut and cleared the field of cut grass a second time, where more members of the Orchard Group came to our rescue, it was seeded in early November.

This spring the annuals and yellow rattle are coming up and promise a great show for later in 2017.

At a volunteers' meeting in the Thornbury Council Chamber we reported progress in the meadow. Thornbury In Bloom members were very excited and have since entered the Meadow and Orchard into the RHS *Its Your Neighbour* scheme.

Following our stall at the volunteer fair, The Orchard/wildflower group have gained a few more active members. We meet twice a month Saturday and Wednesday doing regular maintenance including planting a Cherry tree. Work parties are now publicised on *My Thornbury* and ST websites and in magazines and The Thornbury Gazette. We have also produced posters and leaflets.

Transport Group: Danny and Jo Bonnett

The newly formed transport group met to discuss priorities and projects.

We have done the following;

1. Contacted the developers at Park Farm to ask about cycle path provision. No response yet received.
2. Contacted the previously existing bus group to ask whether 'express' or commuter buses have been considered or consulted on. Response was that they had not.
3. Organised the 'electric car event' in St Mary's centre, which was well-attended and generated lots of interest in electric bikes and cars.
4. A transport survey is planned. Potentially for launch at the carnival in July 2017.
5. Contacted the council regarding provision of public electric car charging points. Leisure centre and rock street car park identified as potential sites. The survey may demonstrate demand.
6. Contacted a possible car club provider. We need to establish level of demand- also one for the survey.