

Sustainable Cottenham

Charitable Incorporated Organisation Charity Number 1188763

Chair's report for Annual General Meeting 9 March 2021

For period 10 July 2019 - 31 December 2020.

A new beginning

After several years operating as a Working Group of Cottenham Parish Council it became increasingly advantageous for Sustainable Cottenham to become a separate entity able to operate a bank account and seek funding for its activities. This was triggered by involvement in supplying reusable cups at Fen Edge Community Association's (FECA's) Family Festival in June 2019. Not only did the initiative save well over 1500 single-use plastic cups from landfill and a sizeable profit for FECA it led to Sustainable Cottenham being awarded a share of the revenue from the event. Sustainable Cottenham became an unincorporated association on 10 July 2019 and subsequently a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 25 March 2020 with the following charitable objectives:

To promote for the benefit of the public in and around the civil parish of Cottenham Cambridgeshire:

(1) the advancement of education in the subject of sustainable living in particular, but not exclusively, by raising awareness of the issues associated with sustainable resource use

(2) the advancement of education in the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment, in particular but not exclusively by encouraging the prudent use of natural resources, reducing pollution and raising awareness of environmental issues

The Trustees are: Catherine Burch, Jane Heath, Justin Hiscock and Christine Ward. There are currently 20 members although many more people are active in sub-groups and activities such as litter picks, Sunday Socials, or, remotely, as our followers online.

A management committee, consisting of Catherine Burch (Treasurer), Jane Heath (Co-Secretary), Justin Hiscock (Co-Secretary) and Christine Ward (Chair) plus Clare Adamson, Sandra Cross, Beth Fleetwood, Terry Jackson, Vicky Lacey, Peter Pilbeam and Alana Sinclair, decides on strategy and organises activities. There are also two sub-groups: Plastic-free Cottenham (with additional members Glynis Pilbeam, Heather Scicluna and Elizabeth Sharpe) and Eco Eats (see below).

Sustainable Cottenham has a website www.sustainablecottenham.org.uk and Facebook page www.facebook.com/suscottenham

Activities

There have been three main activities over the 18 months since Sustainable Cottenham became an independent entity:

- reducing single-use plastic (through awareness raising, liaison with residents, schools and groups and supported by our participation in campaigns by Surfers Against Sewage)
- advocating more sustainable diets and reduced food waste (Sustainable Cottenham was awarded a South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Zero Carbon Communities grant to hold an Eco Eats festival in association with Cambridge Sustainable Food. Additional funding

was obtained from FECA.) Our partnership with CSF supported an Eco Eats online campaign for food waste reduction through October and November 2020.

- encouraging social sustainability through the fostering of Cottenham Connected, an initiative led by youth worker Andrea Cowley and Sarah Bellow of Cambridgeshire Care Network, which reduces social isolation through inter-generational social events and activities. The first events, monthly Sunday Socials, began in September 2019 and gave older and younger members of the community an opportunity to meet, make new networks and learn more about the help and support available. Approximately 30 – 40 people aged between 4 and 90 attended the Sunday Socials during this pilot period. Funding for this initiative has been obtained from Cambridge Community Foundation's (CCF's) Cultivate Fund and SCDC's Community Chest and Cottenham Feast Parade.

In addition, Sustainable Cottenham has organised twice-yearly village litter picks and cycle-path clean-up working parties. The last event under 'normal' conditions involved 60 or so volunteers about half of whom were youngsters including 15 Cubs. This translated to about 140 hours of volunteer time. In recognition of its proactivity in this area SCDC awarded Sustainable Cottenham 30 grabbers, hoops and hi-vis vests.

The feasibility of setting up a Community Fridge was also explored but success hinged primarily on having an enthusiastic volunteer to champion the initiative and none has been forthcoming yet.

COVID-19

COVID-19 restrictions have greatly limited Sustainable Cottenham's activities and plans since its conversion to a CIO. Two litter picks, the Eco Eats festival originally planned for October 2020 and the Sunday Socials have been postponed or suspended until restrictions are lifted and people are safe to mix socially again. Release of CCF funding for the Sunday Socials has been put on hold until it is agreed that they are safe to re-start. Committee and working group meetings have been conducted by Zoom as well the first Annual General Meeting.

Although we were not able to meet physically for much of 2020 we were active online and in social media – for example there were 40 posts to the Sustainable Cottenham Facebook page (297 followers), most of which were shared to the Cottenham group (3.5k members).

Looking forward

The main factor affecting future activities is, of course, the rate and extent to which life returns to normal after the COVID-19 pandemic is adjusted to. It is hoped that the Eco Eats festival will be able to take place in autumn 2021 and that Sunday Socials will resume in summer or autumn 2021.

In addition to restarting and revitalising existing activities there are new opportunities to explore: setting up a biodiversity sub-group to focus on what more we can do locally to support our natural assets and their key role in combating climate change; building a stronger relationship with the Co-op through their Member Pioneer and enhancing efforts in reducing single-use plastics by conducting a brand audit at the next litter pick.

Broadening our membership base will also be important as well as extending the number of trustees to include younger Cottenham residents who will have the vision to take the charity forward in the third decade of the 21st century.

Christine Ward

Chair, Sustainable Cottenham