

Sustainable Cottenham

Charitable Incorporated Organisation Charity Number 1188763

Trustees' report for Annual General Meeting 15 May 2024

For period 1 January 2023 - 31 December 2023

Building our activities

2023 has been our third full year of operation as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and we have been continuing to build our range of activities.

Our charitable objectives are:

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, Vicky Lacey and Christine Ward.

There are currently 40 signed up members (up from 38 in 2022) although we gained more new members than these figures would suggest since some members moved away from Cottenham. Many more people are active in sub-groups and activities such as litter picks and nature recovery work parties.

A management committee, consisting of Catherine Burch (Treasurer), Jane Heath (Co-Secretary), Justin Hiscock (Co-Secretary) and Christine Ward (Chair) plus Sandra Cross, Beth Fleetwood, Vicky Lacey and Peter Pilbeam decides on strategy and organises activities. There are also two main sub-groups: Eco Eats (headed up by Jane Heath) which directs our climate-friendly diet activities and the Nature Recovery group. After the sudden death at the beginning of 2023 of its founder and main driving force, John Loveluck, members of the Nature Recovery group have regrouped and organised work in collaboration with New Life on the Old West on parish council owned green spaces in Cottenham. They have developed a link with Employee Volunteers, a CIC which provides teams of corporate employees seeking environmental volunteering team-building opportunities. Plastic Free Cottenham has not been active in 2023.

Sustainable Cottenham has a website www.sustainablecottenham.org.uk and Facebook page www.facebook.com/suscottenham which has 543 likes (up from 495 in 2022) and 640 followers. There were 44 posts to the Sustainable Cottenham Facebook page (compared with 52 in 2022), most of which were shared to the Cottenham group (5.3k members).

Activities

Our main activities in 2023 were:

- Continuing to advocate more sustainable diets and reduced food waste with the Eco Eats project. Unfortunately, due to events beyond our control plans for a meal and quiz in collaboration with Cottenham Primary School PTCA and cookery workshops at Cottenham Village College did not materialise. However we continue to liaise with community groups such as Cottenham Community Allotment to communicate the value of locally grown food.
- Taking an active role in Cottenham Parish Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group, including the preparation of a Carbon Footprint Report which identified that half the Parish Council's emissions resulted from gas and electricity consumption at the Village Hall. Armed with this information, the Council was persuaded to switch to renewable tariffs.
- Supporting nature and biodiversity in Cottenham through the activities of the Nature Recovery group. Volunteers have managed the hedges and wildflowers around the new ponds in the Old Rec on Broad Land and continued to improve woodland management at Fen Reeves community wood. As before, achievements have been greatly helped through collaboration with Cottenham Parish Council, the New Life on the Old West project and Cottenham Scouts.
- Continuing to collaborate with Cottenham Community Centre to present a second Home Energy Saving event in September - providing information and advice on energy saving, roof and wall insulation, solar panels and air source heat pumps. Despite extensive publicity the event was not as well attended as we had hoped, but those who attended were very appreciative.
- Conducting two village litter picks (April and November) which this year involved youth groups such as Cottenham Scouts as well as residents and families willing to spend a couple of hours improving their village environment (and enjoying tea and cakes afterwards.)

Sustainable Cottenham also supports Cottenham Repair Café which takes place every few months.

Looking forward

Our major challenge continues to be engaging people in events which test their assumptions and secondly, expanding the team who organise such events. Many people enjoy turning up for work parties and litter picks when they can spend a couple of hours in the fresh air and see a clear impact afterwards, but it is much harder to get people to attend events where their views might be challenged, or put hours into discussing and planning events. We have an excellent core team but could always do with additional help and enthusiasm.

Sustainable Cottenham members continue to be active in Cottenham Parish Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency working party.

Broadening our membership base will continue to be important as well as extending the organising team to spread the load and include a broader range of Cottenham residents taking the charity forward.

Christine Ward, Chair, Sustainable Cottenham