

# Sustainable Cottenham

Charitable Incorporated Organisation Charity Number 1188763

Trustees' report for Annual General Meeting 15 May 2025

For period 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2024

## **Our core structure**

2024 has been our fourth full year of operation as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and we continue to build our range of activities.

The Trustees were: Catherine Burch, Jane Heath, Justin Hiscock, Vicky Lacey and Christine Ward. Two of the founder trustees, Catherine and Justin, have recently stood down after many years of involvement. We are extremely grateful for their inspiration and support since the formation of the group.

There are currently 45 members (up from 40 in 2023). We gained more new members than these figures would suggest since some members have 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, currently consisting of trustees Jane Heath (Co-Secretary), Christine Ward (Chair) and Vicky Lacey plus Beth Fleetwood (Co-Secretary), Peter Pilbeam, Simon Ingate, Alison Gascoigne, Laura Osbourne and John Scott 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. The Nature Recovery group 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 is another sub-group headed by Beth Fleetwood.

We were one of the Co-op's Local Causes (part of their Local Connections Fund) for most of 2024. This provided additional profile in the local community as well as much needed funding.

Sustainable Cottenham has a website [www.sustainablecottenham.org.uk](http://www.sustainablecottenham.org.uk) and a Facebook page [www.facebook.com/suscottenham](https://www.facebook.com/suscottenham) with 673 followers (up from 640 in 2023) and 569 likes; and an Instagram account 'suscottenham'. There were 59 posts to the Sustainable Cottenham Facebook page (compared with 44 in 2023), most of which were shared to the Cottenham group (6.1k members).

## **Building our activities**

We have been pretty active in 2024:

- Taking a leading role in Cottenham Parish Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group, including the preparation of a Carbon Footprint Report which identified that energy use at the sports pavilion was disproportionately high. The Parish Council has subsequently switched from LPG to air source heat pumps for the building. We were instrumental in drafting the CEEWG Climate and Ecological Emergency Policy which was adopted earlier this year and from which we are developing action plans.

- Continuing to advocate for more sustainable diets and reduced food waste as part of the Eco Eats project. We have worked with community groups such as Cottenham Community Allotment and funded them to plant a community orchard. We also liaised with Cambridge Sustainable Food to run a session for the Youth Connections Bus on climate friendly diets and avoiding food waste.
- Supporting nature and biodiversity in Cottenham through the activities of the Nature Recovery group. Volunteers continue to manage wildflowers on the Village Green and hedges and new ponds in the Old Rec on Broad Lane. There is also an aspiration to improve access and woodland management at Fen Reeves community wood and eventually to enhance understanding of nature through information signs. Achievements have been greatly helped through collaboration with Cottenham Parish Council and the New Life on the Old West project.
- Running our first 'Swish' – an exchange of quality used clothes. We took in over a quarter of a tonne of clothes and shoes and rehomed over half of this in an hour and a half. The remaining 122kg of clothing went to the Arthur Rank Hospice charity shop in Cottenham.
- Holding a Mass Unwrap at the Co-op in June to draw attention to the level of unnecessary plastic packaging on grocery items. We could not have done this without the full support of the Co-op and their contact, Naomh Campbell, deserves special mention for her support and enthusiasm.
- Running the reusable cup scheme at the 2024 Fen Edge Festival – this involved managing the distribution and collection of almost 5000 cups as well as monitoring the collection of £2 deposits throughout the entire festival. We also ran a busy stand over the festival weekend.
- Continuing to provide free thermal imaging surveys to householders using a camera borrowed from Cambridge Carbon Footprint. Sustainable Cottenham is recognised as being particularly active in this area and CCF appreciate our ability to provide this service to multiple homes around the village. It also allows us to point people in the right direction for information and advice on energy saving, roof and wall insulation, solar panels and air source heat pumps. However, there is much more that could and should be done on this.
- Conducting two village litter picks (April and November) which involve residents and families spending a couple of hours improving their village environment (and enjoying tea and cakes afterwards.)
- Supporting Cottenham Repair Café which takes place every few months.
- Volunteering for shifts at the Cambridge Christmas Car Parks run by the Rotary Club of Cambridge South – which earned us £2,000 in January 2025.

## Looking forward

Our major challenge continues to be engaging people in events which might challenge their current behaviour/lifestyle and secondly, expanding the team who organise these 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.

Thanks to the Co-op and Rotary Club Cambridge South, we have the funds to spend on expanding our activities with new projects as well smartening up our publicity materials in 2025.

Broadening our membership base to include a broader range of Cottenham residents will continue to be important as well as extending the organising team to spread the load. I hope to be able to hand over the role of Chair to a fresh face to take the charity forward into 2025.

Christine Ward, Chair, Sustainable Cottenham