



www.wfeg.org.uk

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10



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Chair's Introduction

WFEG has completed an astonishing fourth year of activity in our community. Big milestones this year have included the launch of the new website and the very first online annual foot printing survey for our community, the establishment of a village food market and monthly WFEG stall, our very first Open Homes event, schemes to loan energy monitors to the village and, with the Energy Saving Trust, an offer of free ones to many households. Those are of course on top of a hugely successful third Big Green Fair, a Copenhagen vigil, continued production of our newsletter, and ongoing work with our community buildings.

In addition to continued initiatives in the Parish WFEG's activities this year have achieved a high profile outside our community. We have won two regional prizes – and one national one – the Energy Saving Trust/Guardian Newspaper award for the Best Rural Community Project in the UK – really quite astonishing recognition for our work.

Once again I would like to give my sincere thanks to all the members of the Management Committee who have worked very hard over the year; to the Chairs of our Committees, Nichola Balmer (Communications), Debbie Barnish (Events) as well as to our Secretary, Cynthia Knowles and Treasurer, Richard Green - all of them have done a tremendous job. And also to all our volunteers and supporters, both inside and outside the village who ways; and of course to our funders and sponsors including Staffordshire County Council, Lichfield District Council, Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Council, Perceptis Ltd (who manage and part sponsor our website and fully sponsor our electronic newsletter), Angel Tomney Garden Design, the Block Sealer Company Ltd and Riverford Sacrewell Farm.

Mike

Mike Kinghan
WFEG Chair

Our Carbon Footprint and Website

Last summer we launched our superb new website www.wfeg.org.uk with a range of new features, including an embedded carbon foot printing facility, making us the first community group in the country to have this. Over a seven week period we ran an intensive campaign to encourage members of our community to sign up and calculate their footprint on line. As part of this campaign we were able to obtain the help of a graduate student from De Montfort University (Leicester) who visited many homes in our community.

The excellent outcome was that 105 households recorded their footprint and most answered a series of other questions to help us understand the actions they are taking in relation to energy saving and other 'pro-environmental' activities.

The outcome of the foot printing gave us an average of 12.10 tonnes of CO₂ per annum per household for the 105 who responded – around 20% higher than the national average. This is 8.6% lower than the average from the 100 households who were foot printed as part of the MEA energy audits in 2007/08. But the 45 households who took part in both exercises showed an average reduction of 12.6%.

In addition the superbly designed new website allows for online membership sign-up and secure online donations and includes a Blog and Discussion Forum on a range of topics of interest to WFEG members.

Insulation Campaign

Our campaign 'to ban the unfilled cavity wall' was launched in 2008, to encourage the community to make sure their insulation is up to recommended standards. This was continued in 2009/10 and a further 30 installations were achieved to add to the 50 we had already reached at the end of March 2009.

Every cavity wall filled saves approximately 800 kilogrammes of CO₂ per annum, so that we arrive at a figure of over 60,000 kg per annum of CO₂ saved by this campaign alone.

Big Green Fair

Our third Big Green Fair was held on 6th February, again in Whittington Village Hall. This year the event was opened by the Lichfield Town Crier. The weather was kind to us and the snow kept at bay. A special feature this year was the presence of the Energy Saving Trust's Eco-driving simulator which challenged visitors to test their eco-driving skills along challenging electronic streets.

For the second year the marquee was utilised to house an additional range of stalls and again great entertainment was provided including old favourites Lichfield Morris, horse and carriage rides and, new this year, a unicycling juggler who put on a great display was much appreciated by the younger generation. There was a great variety of wholesome food available. Ingredients for the organic vegetable soup were kindly provided without charge by Riverford Sacrewell Farm Organic Vegetables.

While numbers seemed to be slightly down the stallholders seemed very happy there was a feeling that less crowded meant that longer and more stimulating

conversations could be held. As well as our community visitors came from afar including a young couple from Nuneaton who were cycling the 48 mile return trip!

Food Market

In October one of our leading members launched the first ever Village Food Market in the Bell Inn Car Park. While not initially an 'official' WFEG event, this was felt to be in line with WFEG aspirations to promote locally produced food and several members assisted with the organisation of the events. This initiative has proved popular and has now been jointly adopted by St Giles Church and WFEG who will take responsibility for running the market in alternate months (excluding the winter). WFEG has also run its own stall at most of the markets.

Open Homes Day

Another innovation for WFEG during the year was our Open Homes event in October. Four homes in our village opened their doors to visitors on one day. The households involved were all ones who had made particular efforts to reduce their energy consumption and carbon footprint by different methods and were willing to share their experiences with others who were looking to make similar journeys. Many interesting conversations were held and the event was accompanied by a mini-exhibition of installers in the Pavilion.

Community Buildings

Following on from the help given to our community buildings with audits and insulation (and low energy lighting for the Church Hall) in the previous year, the Parish Council were motivated to undertake some significant improvements to the energy efficiency of the Pavilion with the help of a grant from the Big Lottery (Awards for All). WFEG also contributed £1000 specifically to help fund an air source heat pump to improve the warmth. The WFEG contribution came from the 'referral fee' WFEG received from the insulation installations.

Country Fair

Once again we participated in the Whittington Country Fair in early September. For the first time members were able to sign-up for WFEG membership live and on line. And we had a constant stream of visitors coming in to talk about insulation, energy, lighting, wildlife and a host of other subjects.

Copenhagen Vigil

The wider environmental movement saw the Copenhagen talks as a hugely important pivotal point in the battle to avert tipping the world into potentially dangerous climate change. WFEG felt it important to mark this occasion and held a candlelit vigil at the Bell Pub followed by some Irish Music inside by the log fire. A small but passionate group of us participated, while three WFEG members made the journey to London to take part in the national march/rally 'The Wave'.

Energy Saving Trust

WFEG was selected as one of four communities in the region for the EST Advice (ESTAC) in the West Midlands to work with to help us develop our low carbon activities. This has been very helpful to us as the ESTAC have attended a number of

our events including our Open Homes day and the Big Green Fair. They brought their eco-driving simulator to the latter. As the year drew to a close, the ESTAC provided free energy monitors and a free home advisory visit for around 100 households who completed a Home Energy Check form. A renewables survey was also conducted at the same time giving valuable information on the level of interest in domestic renewable energy in the parish. We have also been awarded some funding to promote eco-driving in our community.

Awards and Publicity

WFEG's efforts received tremendous recognition during 2009 as we swept a series of regional and national awards. Our greatest moment was when we learnt – in November - that we had carried off the Best Rural Project award in the EST/Guardian Newspaper Green Community Heroes competition.

In May we had won the regional Carbon C+ award for the best Community Carbon reduction project in the region, announced at the Prince's Mayday Summit event in Birmingham – and again in November we received the RegenWM prize for the region's best People and Environment project, which brought us a prize of £1000.

We also entered the Department of Energy and Climate Change's Low Carbon Communities Challenge competition. This was a nationwide competition in which 22 communities were awarded funding of an average of £500,000 per community to set up loan and grant schemes for energy efficiency improvements and installation of renewables. Despite a well thought out bid supported by a whole range of village organisations and businesses we were unsuccessful. Although our bid was highly rated it did not quite make the cut. We were also, unfortunately, unsuccessful in a joint bid with Whittington school for around £0.25 million to install solar panels and a wood pellet boiler at the school.

We kept up our publicity campaign with 4 high quality newsletters, regular e-zines, frequent updates to our website and a series of press releases, once again receiving regular coverage in the local press and in the Birmingham Post (for the second time).

The Bigger Picture

WFEG's reputation has grown hugely in the past year, recognised in our awards. We are regularly invited to speak at events and to emerging low carbon community groups in Staffordshire and beyond. This year we have given presentations to, amongst others, Low Carbon Lichfield, Lichfield Local Strategic Partnership, Lichfield GO Green Conference, Fillongley Low Carbon group (Warwickshire), Tutbury Residents' Association, Stafford Borough Green Awards ceremony, Sustainable Staffordshire Annual Forum, Sustainability West Midlands AGM.

WFEG also participates in Lichfield District Action on Climate Change (which is seeking to promote the low carbon community idea to other communities across Lichfield District), in Sustainable Staffordshire, a Countywide network of sustainability organisations, Sustainability West Midlands and the national Low Carbon Communities Network.

Funding and Sponsorship

Much of the above could not be achieved without funding and we are extremely grateful to Staffordshire County Council who once again helped us through the

Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Grant Scheme (£14,000 in 2009/10). Lichfield District Council provided £450 through their grant scheme, and Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Council gave us a grant of £500. All these have been hugely important to our progress.

We would like to make special mention of Perceptis Limited - web design and internet marketing experts who manage our website and are heavily subsidising the website developments outlined above. Other business sponsors and supporters include Angel Tomney Garden Design, the Block Sealer Company Ltd. and Riverford Sacrewell Farm.

This year we have also had considerable assistance from the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre both financially and by their presence at events as mentioned in the body of the report.

WFEG's 20010/11 Action Plan

These are the WFEG Management Committee's proposals for the coming year - 2009/10.

We have been very fortunate in obtaining great support from the Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Fund over the last two years. Funding is likely to be harder to come by in the coming year, but we are hopeful of still being able to attract sufficient funds to continue our activities at a high level.

Overview

After 3 years of operation it is probably time for a fairly serious review of what we have achieved and where we are going. There a number of factors we will need to take into consideration – including feedback from volunteers – and the future resource position which may become more difficult as the Aggregates Levy Fund, which has been our major funding source, is under review and other public sector sources are likely to come under pressure.

Renewables and Retrofit

The introduction of FITs and potentially the Renewable Heat Incentive here offers a good basis for a drive – and the possibility of a SALGS bid based round promoting renewables and retrofit.

The programme to deliver this would include:

- Raising awareness of the availability of FITs via website, e-zine, Newsletter, stall, using EST leaflets and suppliers brochures at stall
- A series of in depth 'audits' with homes/businesses to help them look at the best option for carbon reduction and savings, funded through SALGS (and possibly EST). Total cost would be c. £500 and occupant asked to contribute £50-£100, with detailed options report – focus on solid wall buildings.
- Rerun of the Open Homes event – possibly in conjunction with LoCaL (we already have 3 solar PV installations in the parish with possibly more to come)

- Eco refurb/renewables workshop – a specific workshop or mini exhibition, possibly linked to the Open Homes day
- Work with school, church, village hall, local farms, pubs and other businesses to encourage installation of renewables – assistance with audits and sourcing of grants

We will also continue to explore more ambitious approaches:

- Exploration deal with a supplier for reduced price PV/solar thermal kit for the parish – with a reduction for bulk possible ‘introduction fee’ for WFEG i.e. similar to what we have done with cavity wall insulation.
- Look for funding to carry out a feasibility study to advise on the potential for energy generation and financial payback for wind power in the parish
- Keep the idea of a community energy company under review
- Investigate the potential for better exploiting the surrounding woodland for wood energy

Website/Foot printing Project

- Review foot printing sign up process to improve smoothness and clarity
- Reopen and vigorously promote an 8 week window in September/October
- Possibility of secondee placement to be investigated.

Transport

- Run an additional transport simulation event
- Promote free eco-driving lessons and information on eco-driving
- Seek SALGS funding to provide cycle racks in the village in conjunction with the Parish Council.

Food

- Support The Village Food market
- Promote the concept of locally grown and produced food wherever possible

Events

- Our highly successful Big Green Fair to be continued but moved to April (2011) to avoid weather problems
- Stall at Country Fair in September
- Stall at Church Fete
- Open Homes day

Communications

- Keep profile of WFEG and its messages/campaigns high via
- Producing 4 newsletters
- Monthly e-zine
- Regularly updating website with events and information
- Regular press releases and other publicity

Spreading the Word

- Continue making presentations to local and regional groups on our activities
- Participate in local and national forums such as Lichfield District Action on Climate Change, Sustainable Staffordshire and the national Low Carbon Communities Network

END



OUR AIMS

- To promote the concept of the Parishes of Whittington and Fisherwick becoming a low carbon community
- To improve our community's understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change
- To measure the community's carbon footprint and work to achieve a year on year reduction
- To encourage all residents, businesses and Parish organisations to take a series of steps to reduce their CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions, including energy saving measures, travel measures, 'reducing food miles' and reduction of waste
- To encourage all residents, businesses and Parish organisations to take steps to adapt to the consequences of climate change, including water conservation and helping wildlife to adapt
- To encourage positive attitudes and activities in the community relating to all environmental sustainability matters including waste reduction, encouragement of wildlife and reduction of pollution
- To share our experience with other communities and encourage them to follow a similar path