

SEA Report to Saltash Town Council

1. 'Future proofing your home': understanding the role of insulation and renewable energy in domestic properties

Instigated by the Climate Change & Environmental Working Group (CC&E WG) , we look forward to welcoming Dr Tim Jones from Community Energy Plus to speak to a meeting at 7.30pm on 25th October, in Isambard House. The public and especially Council Members are invited. Dr Jones knows that Councillors are likely to be present and is willing to answer questions on possible roles of Councillors in the climate emergency and home energy crisis.

SEA has recently bought a thermal imaging camera (to identify heat loss around the home) and will start loaning it to individual members this Autumn. It would be useful to discuss this project with Tim Jones at the meeting.

2. Climate literacy training for Councillors

CC&E WG asked us to investigate this. There is a confusing range of issues that could come under the 'Environmental' banner. Training courses on 'carbon literacy' focus on the main priorities: *An awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.*

Community Energy Plus (cep) recommended the course run by the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) in Wales, specifically designed for anyone working in local authorities, including elected representatives. CAT have an initiative called Zero Carbon Britain: and in that, they offer 'Carbon literacy training for Local Authorities Online'

<https://cat.org.uk/events/zero-carbon-britain-carbon-literacy-for-local-authorities-3/>

The course is run over 2 consecutive mornings (next in February 2023) plus 2 hours study. It involves tuition and Q&A sessions and accreditation. The cost is £140. The learning can also be delivered as a bespoke course. Other courses are available elsewhere.

Cep also suggested Councillors might like to read of the green action taken by Helston: <https://www.helstonclimateaction.earth/climate-action-plan/>

3. Carkeel roundabout development

While this roundabout has understandably attracted criticisms for an untidy appearance and litter, it is less widely recognised for its contribution to wildlife habitat. We have identified 46 species of wildflowers in the surrounding banks and verges alone, goldfinches have been seen feeding there, and kestrels hover overhead. It could be a significant oasis for Nature.

SEA strongly urges the Council to take every opportunity to promote the this area as a wildlife reserve that will make a highly appropriate entrance to Cornwall, the first county in the UK to declare a climate emergency.

The question then becomes how to make the appearance more widely acceptable.

Wildflower meadows are inevitably 'untidy' (better called 'informal'!) at certain times of the year, though they can be mown as normal from September through to early March. The informal look seems more acceptable if it is confined to limited patches – for example, by mowing the margins of road verges. SEA suggests three or four sweeping but narrow borders of agapanthus, decorative grasses, and robust, drought tolerant plants like the salvias, lavenders, sedums with the space in between managed as wildflower meadow. The border plants can be chosen carefully to provide colour before and after the wildflowers' main flowering time. The extreme periphery of the roundabout could be gravelled to reduce maintenance.

An information sign saying 'Welcome to Cornish wildlife' or similar might help make it acceptable.

SEA would be willing to be involved in helping with design, construction and maintenance of the roundabout.

4. Victoria Gardens

The planting in the Gardens could benefit from some refurbishment. One approach would be to plant evergreen trees, reminiscent of the original Victorian concept shown in old photographs, though using more modern tree discoveries which will be more attractive, varied and reliable than those available 120 years ago. Evergreens should need little attention once established, provide all-year round structure, absorb some traffic noise, and cause little problem with leaf-fall. SEA and Tree Wardens would willingly collaborate on planting plans.

The planting could include a permanent Christmas tree (Norway spruce, e.g.), which would avoid the cost (in cash and carbon dioxide) of buying one every year. It would need some protection until established, in the same way as the temporary one is fenced at Christmas.

Looking ahead, the magnificent Monterey Pine will probably need to be felled sometime before 2040 (branches shedding, root extension damage etc). Therefore we could consider planning for one of the newly planted trees to become dominant to take over as an icon of Saltash.

The planting should also include some brighter and more cheerful planting of flower beds, an authentic feature of Victorian gardens.

SEA has a contract with STC for a small 'pollinator' planting area in Victoria Gardens and would be happy for this to evolve as part of the overall development plan, whether on its current bed or elsewhere in the Gardens.

5. Community allotment

SEA is responsible for 2 allotments in Grenfell Avenue, which are run as a community allotment, on organic principles. We seek permission to make alterations to allow wheelchair access. We have been offered support from a local company, and Coop Local Community Fund. Alterations which would involve 1) accessible pathway: levelling the access and the existing path (parallel to the road) and a small seating area, ballast and 'Ecogrid' or similar paving grid; and 2) a raised bed.

6. Tree Saltash

We are finalising plans to plant about 17 trees and 4 areas of hedging in urban situations round Saltash during the Winter planting season, Phase 1 of our Tree Saltash project. The Woodland Trust are offering to fund at least some of the trees, but we shall be applying to STC for funding for accessories such as stakes and cages in this current financial year. We plan to continue the project in future years and already have identified some sites (and are open to further suggestions) for Phase 2. In coming months, we hope to discuss some support from the council in maintaining the trees during future periods of drought.

Adrian White Chairman SEA 12th October 2022