**Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group AGM Report from the Chair**

I am pleased to report that PAWS has had an exciting and successful year, with new members, new ideas, new events as well as our previous successful programmes.

It has been a good year for interest in climate change due to the perseverance of the UN, various Institutions and education establishments making the problem comprehensible to most people. This resulted in the young people ‘getting it’ that it was their future that was at risk and, led by Greta Thunberg, they held protests around the world. This has galvanised many governments, including that of the UK, and our local governments to announce a Climate Emergency. Until the lockdown due to the pandemic, our Parish Councils, West Berks Council and a number of other local Councils have recognised the need to start making plans to meet the demands of a low carbon budget. When the pandemic is over we must make sure that we are at the forefront of raising the issues again to ensure that the new ‘normal’ we create will mean the use of the ‘new’ energy sources, technologies and ways of doing things rather than going back to the ‘old’.

In light of this, one of our new ideas for this year is particularly apt. Rob Hill and his team have put together a proposal to create A Community Energy Scheme. We are hoping to have your comments on this plan and gain your support for it this evening.

Also, Jackie Simpson has been working to get the information together to see how we can help the Parish Council to do a carbon audit so that it can make plans to help reduce the carbon emissions associated with the village. Jackie and Jo Smith have been actively working on increasing the types of recycling that can be undertaken by the two villages.

Jackie S suggested last year that we try a children’s clothes swap, which we did, and this coming year we hope to build on this initiative.

We have been in close touch with the Pangbourne Parish Council over this last year and have been involved in planning a renewal of the recycling area by the Dolphin Centre on the Pangbourne Meadow and the new initiative for a Village Clean-up day.

The Pangbourne Fete, held June 2019, was again a recycling success thanks to the amazing work of the volunteers, who made sure that all the bio-degradable plastic went into the recycling bins. Once again the amount of litter was reduced as people were more aware of the need to bin it. This year we were hoping to build on our earlier success. George Tubb has been our representative on the Fete Committee and has plans in place for a future, completely plastic-free Fete. He has also taken the ideas from the Hampstead Norreys completely Green Fete that was held last September on climate/sustainability related topics, and is hoping to get more ‘green firms’ involved with the Pangbourne Fete.

Following the 2019 Pangbourne Fete we have established a new membership. We have a Junior PAWS Group. Under their own initiative the Group were very active at the Pangbourne Fete where they engaged with the public to raise awareness of sustainable world issues.

Another new initiative for this coming year was introduced by Whitchurch Pre-School fundraising Committee. They wanted to hold a WhitFest, and requested that we help them make their festival completely plastic free. We agreed to do this but because of the pandemic the festival has had to be postponed. They are hoping to go ahead in September 2020 but this depends on the present pandemic.

Our three old favourites from previous years, the Meadow walk, Apple Pressing and Barn Dance were all once again a success. We had fine weather for the Meadow Walk and Apple Pressing which always makes a difference. The meadows were once again a great pleasure and, amid fears of there being no apples for the pressing, an amazing number of them turned up. Again the children helped enormously with the processing of the apples. We would like to thank Sally Woolhouse and James Norman for the Meadow walk, and Sally and her husband for the refreshments on both occasions. We need to thank the Thorne family for their efforts in the Apple Pressing and even more for the Barn Dance. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the dancing, and the refreshments were once again much appreciated and brilliantly prepared, served and cleared by volunteers orchestrated by the Thorne family.

Another of our on-going interests that I want to acknowledge is the regular production of articles on PAWS that appear in the Pangbourne Magazine. Heather Thorne has continued to write her informative and interesting articles for the Magazine that not only encourage behavioural change in our local community but maintain the high profile of these issues.

In terms of more modern communications, we have to thank Rob as he has initiated, organised and driven through a new web site for us, and also opened a new Facebook page. It has taken a lot of hard work and learning for Rob, and he has done a great job.

At the planning meeting in January it was suggested that we hold a vigil for the plight of the people of Australia who were o extend the vigil to include all the areas of the globe that had suffered from extreme weather related disasters in the previous year. Jo Smith and Heather took up this idea and organised the very successful vigil. Rather fittingly the rain poured down on the evening and the vigil had to be held in the Village Hall.

Our last event, just before the lockdown, was the opening of the new drinking fountain on the outside wall of the toilets in the Pangbourne Village Hall car park. APT Trustees (the Charity that runs and maintains the toilets) wanted to raise the profile of the drinking fountain and so they arranged for the toilets to be ‘dressed’ for the occasion, as in the medieval style. They asked me to open the fountain and I asked the Junior PAWS members to help. Once again they did a brilliant job by producing posters and talking to the gathered ‘crowd’ (a very impressive number given it was pouring with rain) about the importance of reducing the amount of single use plastic.

In terms of fund raising, this year has not been so successful. The Barn Dance in particular just about broke even. We accept that it is a fun evening that we all enjoyed, but feel that in 2020 we should rest the idea.

Thanks to all our active members, our activities and publications have raised the profile of PAWS in the Community to a new high, and we are hoping with our new calendar of events to build even more interest in PAWS and the issues we raise, when this becomes possible.