

Community Environment Conference

30 November, Devizes School

The conference is free and open to representatives of community groups as well as interested individuals. The aims are:

- To encourage practical community-led environmental action throughout the county, by showcasing examples of successful initiatives, both quick and easy projects and those requiring more long-term commitment.
- To encourage networking and sharing of experience, and provide information on support available.
- To raise the profile of community environmental action and generate a greater sense of momentum.

Programme

- 9.30. Registration. Tea and coffee available
- 10.10. Welcome and introduction to the day
- 10.30 Workshop session 1: choose one of 6 workshops
- 11.35 Workshop session 2: choose one of 6 workshops
- 12.45 Lunch, networking, displays and advice surgeries
- 2.00 Workshop session 3: choose one of 6 workshops
- 3.00 Close

Displays and advice stands will be provided by the following organisations, as well as by many of the workshop leaders and others. The emphasis is on how county level (and wider) organisations can best support and work with community groups.

[Community First,](#)

[DEVELOP](#)

[Severn Wye Energy Agency](#)

[Sustrans](#)

[Wiltshire Council](#)

[Wiltshire Wildlife Trust](#)

List of workshops

Please click on the highlighted links for more information.

Workshop session 1. 10.30-11.25.

1. Oakfrith: managing a community woodland

Oakfrith Wood (14.1 ha) is now one of the few remaining blocks of semi-natural ancient woodland in the country. The Friends of Oakfrith Wood were formed in 1994 and under their stewardship the wood has been sensitively managed and won several national awards, including the Royal Forestry Society Community Woodland Award 2012 (Excellence in Forestry). The wood became a Designated Local Nature Reserve in 2004. It is a vibrant community resource. Workshop Leader: Ian Maidment. Friends of Oakfrith Wood.

2. Nothing new!

Find out how to support your community in consuming and wasting less. Swishes, repair cafes, give and take days, recycling directories and freegle groups: there'll be plenty of tried and tested ideas to get you started. Workshop leaders: Emma Croft, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust; Jane Weller and Sue Dowle, Transcoco; Shirley Pryor, Transition Marlborough; Sarah Benson, Devizes Freegle.

3. From allotments to Community Supported Agriculture

Locally grown, seasonal veggie boxes and weekly volunteering opportunities on the field: the [Bradford on Avon Community Agriculture](#) (BoACA) project is now in full swing! Meanwhile, over in Pewsey, the communal allotment is just getting off the ground. Workshop leaders: Nicky Couch, BoACA; Iona Hassan, PEAT (Pewsey Environmental Action Team).

4. Pushing the bike

Devizes town_centre and its suburbs are all within easy level cycling distance, and yet only one in a hundred commute by bike. As part of urgent action on local air quality, Devizes Community Area Partnership (DCAP) pioneered [Cycle Devizes!](#) a year ago to promote a vision where two wheels become the natural choice for everyday trips. The group has organised two major events, rides, helped develop cycle paths, parking and more. [20mph speed limits](#) where people live are critical to that shared vision and will be a focus for the workshop. Workshop leaders: Kate Freeman, DCAP Transport Group and Margaret Nightingale, Cycle Devizes.

5. Affordable Warmth: What can communities do?

An introduction to the latest government approaches to helping those who struggle to pay their energy bills, what's happening in Wiltshire and some ideas on what groups can do to help. Workshop leader: Lisa Jones, Affordable Warmth Officer, Wiltshire Council.

6. Carbon Conversations

[Carbon conversations](#) bring together small groups of 6-8 people to talk through how they can cut their carbon footprint, with the help of a facilitator. Surprisingly, even committed environmentalists find that they can cut their carbon emissions by as much as a half. Ruth Popplestone, a member of [South Wiltshire Agenda 21](#), is a trained Carbon Conversations facilitator, with lots of experience of working with small groups. Workshop leader: Ruth Popplestone.

Workshop session 2: 11.35-12.30.

7. Kennet Community Energy Ltd: investing in community renewables.

[Kennet Community Energy](#) Ltd (KCEL) is an Industrial and Provident Society, set up in 2012. Following a successful share offer this summer, its first project was to install PV on the roof of the Wadworth Brewery Visitor Centre. The workshop will review the options for community investment, including the impact of changing government policies, and the potential for working with community partners. Workshop leader: Dr Nick Stedman, KCE.

8. Green Spaces: making vital connections

With the double challenges of climate change and development pressures, [networks of green space](#), from football fields to nature reserves and private gardens, are even more essential for both people and wildlife. The community-led [Salisbury Greenspace Partnership](#) encourages volunteers to get involved in surveying and mapping all local green space to find out where the gaps are and ensure more effective and sustainable management into the future. This work supports the development of Wiltshire Council's Green Infrastructure and Public Open Space strategies. Workshop leader: Nicola Lipscombe, Acting Chair, Salisbury Greenspace Partnership.

9. South Wiltshire Green Doors

10 pioneering homes welcomed visitors in the first [Green Doors](#) open homes project in Wiltshire this summer. Homes ranged from high-profile new build to traditional cottages, all showcasing different energy technologies. According to [experience elsewhere](#), the majority of visitors then go on to make changes in their own homes. The initiative was organised by [Wilton Community Land Trust](#) (WCLT), who are now planning an even bigger and better event next year. Workshop leader: Suzanne Butters, WCLT.

10. Woodland to woodstove: what's happening in Wiltshire?

Sales of wood burning stoves have shot up over the past decade, and biomass boilers are getting a big boost from the government renewable heat incentive. But how much wood and biomass fuel can we produce in Wiltshire? Who will process it? Where do biomass boilers work best? And is there a role for community groups? Workshop leader: Alastair Shankland, Biomass Supply Officer, Wiltshire Council; Local installer: [Vertdegree](#).

11. River Bourne Community Farm

This is a [traditional 1960s sustainable working farm](#), near Laverstock, Salisbury. It began operating as a Community Interest Company in 2010, and now has livestock including cattle, sheep, pigs, hens, goats and bees. The general public, local schools, community groups and BTEC course students all make the most of the farm as a learning resource. The farm produces eggs, honey and meat which is sold to the community via the farm shop. Crops are grown using an agri-environmental scheme, parts of the farm are rich in wildlife. Workshop leader: Benjamin Parker, Chairman, River Bourne Community Farm.

12. Planning - barrier or opportunity?

This workshop will provide an overview of the planning system, look at how it can support low carbon developments, and explore what community groups can do. The workshop leader is responsible for taking forward sustainable construction within the Council planning team, and is also working on local energy mapping. Workshop leader: Ralph Perry Robinson, Wiltshire Council.

Workshop session 3: 14.00-14.55.

13. Juicing apples: Marlborough young people take action

Members of Marlborough Youth Development Centre have collected enough apples this autumn to make over 400 bottles of juice. They are raising money to support youth activities, learning about running an enterprise and getting involved with local politics and decision making. They are looking to buy their own apple press with support from the Area Board to develop the project next year. Workshop leader: Milly Carmichael (MYDC volunteer).

14. Community buildings: encouraging low carbon action

The Quakers of Bradford on Avon cut their gas bills by a third in just a year, with several of those involved going on to make changes at home, as well as organising joint environment workshops with other churches. Church and village halls, schools and scout huts: they all offer a great opportunity to raise awareness of how to save energy and cut costs at the same time. And you don't need to be a technical expert to get the process going. You can get plenty of support from the Village Halls and Community Buildings Advice Service (VHCBA). Workshop leaders: Liz Stephens, Bradford on Avon Quaker Meeting; Carol Southall, VHCBA.

15. Community land trusts: what are the low carbon opportunities?

The [Wiltshire Community Land Trust](#) helps community groups take on ownership and management of assets, such as land for growing food, nature reserves or development. The manager also has extensive experience of community-owned renewable energy. The [Wilton Community Land Trust](#) is the first local community land trust in Wiltshire and is working with commercial partners to develop the Erskine Barracks as a centre of excellence in sustainable living. Workshop leaders: Rose Seagrief, Wiltshire CLT; Suzanne Butters, Wilton CLT.

16. Biss Meadows: a community nature reserve.

The Friends of [Biss Meadows](#) in Trowbridge was set up in 2009, and has just completed a major £80k pond enhancement project. It organises regular work parties and events, and has plans for a new nature trail. Supporters have grown to over 200 adults plus a new and growing junior arm. Development of new housing nearby brings new challenges, as well as new users. Workshop leader: Alan Cooper, Project Manager, Friends of Biss Meadows.

17. Sustainable travel: Marlborough

Practical improvements, research and joint action: that's [Transition Marlborough's](#) approach to more sustainable local travel. New cycle racks, a new town cycle path and an improved train service (working with [Great Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group](#)) are some of their recent achievements. They are now exploring the possibility of re-opening Marlborough Railway Station. Workshop leader(s): Sam Page, John Yates (Transition Marlborough)

18. Buying together in Bradford on Avon

So far over 30 households have bought PV systems through the community purchase scheme set up by [Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon](#) (CFB). After a rigorous selection process, [Southern Solar](#) was chosen as their favoured supplier. The benefits go well beyond the discounts offered. Workshop leader: Rowena Quantrill (CFB).