

SAVING THE PLANET THROUGH LOCAL ACTION

Go Zero, Chew Magna



A Fairtrade promotion event in Chew Magna (Source: Carol Moule)

Go Zero is a community project based in Chew Magna that raises awareness of the environmental and social impact of everyday actions and provides suggestions for change towards a zero waste society. It offers affordable and sustainable solutions to reduce and conserve resources and energy, to contract your carbon footprint, and to brighten the lives of the community while recognizing the responsibilities to encourage others throughout the world to do likewise.

The inspiration for Chew Magna Zero Waste was the RSA Coffee House Challenge which was launched on 22 March 2004 to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the society. The Challenge consisted of a series of debates and discussions in over eighty venues across the UK. The Bristol region held two events on the day, followed up with a series of further meetings both in Bristol and here in Chew Magna.

The small community group from the village of Chew Magna called itself Go Zero. Its aim was to create a zero waste parish and is structured around 4 focus groups: Waste and Recycling; People and Consumption; Transport and Energy; and The Converging World. As part of the process, Go Zero also developed links with an agency called Social Change And Development (SCAD), which has been working in Tamil Nadu, India, for nearly 30 years.

The purpose of the focus groups is to explore the issues around each subject and, more importantly, to stimulate action. All the groups are based on principles such as inclusiveness, transparency, clarity, effectiveness, and respect for others.

The three 'R's are at the heart of the Waste and Recycling group's aims. They may already be familiar to you: REDUCE the amount we consume, REUSE things wherever possible, and then RECYCLE as much as we can. With this in mind, Chew Magna works towards becoming a zero waste community.

These aims can only be realised by engaging and involving the local community. Commitment to the three 'R's may necessitate a change in behaviour and attitude and this takes time. The group's members, as committed reusers and recyclers, lead by example. The underlying message is that 'every little helps', and the group encourages everyone to do their bit, however small this may be to begin with.

Working within Chew Magna and the surrounding villages in the Chew Valley, the recycling group's objectives are to raise awareness of the environmental and financial costs related to waste; to initiate new waste reduction schemes within our community; to develop and deliver waste reduction projects and schemes; to work in partnership with Bath and North East Somerset Council where appropriate; to provide facilities to make reuse and recycling easier; and to help to affect changes in behaviour where this is necessary (and possible).

The other focus groups of Go Zero have similarly well-developed plans. The Transport and Energy group aims to raise awareness of the consequences of energy use, which hopefully gets people to reduce their usage within homes, businesses and schools. They also promote renewable energy projects and being carbon-neutral wherever it is possible. They are also developing a transport plan to minimise congestion and car use throughout the parish and improve bus links to Bristol and Bath.

The transportation, distribution, and collection of food constitutes the biggest source of household carbon emissions and twice what is used for heating, lighting and daily car use. For this reason, the People and Consumption Group targets food miles, with the aim to find ways to reduce them through promoting locally produced foods. The group published a Local Food Directory of over 31 suppliers within a 10 mile radius of Chew Magna and this has proved to be very successful in providing shopping choices closer to home.

The Converging World Group is based on the large and complex Converging World concept. It is a vision of a world where everyone has a fair and equal share of all the resources that the Earth can easily provide without jeopardising its potential to support life, whether human, animal, plant or otherwise. In a nutshell, environmental issues are inseparable from social justice.

The Converging World Group has spawned a charity, also called The Converging World, which helps community groups by providing services and support. It has developed a second generation carbon reduction scheme that addresses the criticisms raised against carbon offsetting. The charity can erect wind turbines in India near to where SCAD operate. The surplus income from the electricity generated is directed towards sustainable development projects with SCAD while the carbon credits are available back here in the UK.

Go Zero itself is now into its second phase, which is the crucial process of becoming an established part of the community life – with a sense of its own sustainability. Ultimately, the goal is to get as many people as possible to join in – it has a long way yet to go.

Facts and Information

- There are a number of ways you can participate and here are just a few suggestions:
 - Join one of the focus group meetings
 - Contribute to the Go Zero Carbon Offset Fund
 - Learn more about the people in Tamil Nadu and share experiences
 - Suggest your own ideas, tell us what you want to happen.
 - Buy more locally produced food.
 - Volunteer to help on one of the existing schemes
 - Volunteer to lead on one of the proposed schemes
 - Convert your car to run on chip fat
 - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle more of your own waste at home and at work.
 - Suggest your own ideas for ways the village can minimise its waste.
 - Tell people about the initiative and spread the word.

Further Resources

- For more information about Go Zero and Chew Magna, visit www.gozero.org.uk.
- For more information about The Converging World charity, visit their website at www.theconvergingworld.org.
- There are a number of reports and studies looking at Zero Waste in the UK. Here are a few:
 - Greenpeace have published a Zero Waste plan for the UK. Download the report here: www.greenpeace.org.uk/media/press-releases/britain-could-be-a-rubbish-free-society-says-ground-breaking-study
 - The Green Alliance have published A Zero Waste UK. Find out more at their website: www.green-alliance.org.uk/grea_p.aspx?id=956
- The Zero Waste Alliance UK promote and develop sustainable waste management strategies and best practice, education and support to encourage communities to embark on the successful zero waste policies. Visit www.zwallianceuk.org for more information.
- There are a number of other communities, through community groups or local authorities, working towards Zero Waste in the UK.
 - Powys Zero Waste – www.powyszerowaste.co.uk
 - BAN Waste (Byker and Newcastle) – www.banwaste.org.uk
 - Bath & North East Somerset Council
 - Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Published October 2007