

COMMUNITY CLIMATE CHAMPIONS

Notes from meeting held at Centenary Hall, Usk

On Tuesday 27th April 2010

Present:

Sue Parkinson	Monmouth Green Transport Day
Annette Baker	Monmouth Links Project
Vivien Mitchell	Transition Monmouth
Haydn Cullen-Jones	Monmouth FoE
Phil Bly	Monmouth Sustainable Transport Group
Richard Lewis	MCC Supporting Community Enterprise
Jackie Bradshaw	Abergavenny FoE/Abergavenny Climate Action
Marcus Perrin	Transition Chepstow
Phil Powell	Transition Chepstow
Hazel Clatworthy	MCC Sustainable Development Co-ordinator
Amanda Peters	MCC Policy and Partnerships Manager
George Ashworth	MCC Head of Planning
Cllr Val Smith	MCC
Megan Mathias	Kafka Brigade
Irwin Turbitt	Kafka Brigade

Apologies:

Janet Rawlings	Chepstow FoE/Transition Chepstow
Rod Walters	Abergavenny FoE
Cllr Phil Murphy	MCC
Ian Hoccom	MCC Energy Manager
Ian Bakewell	MCC Head of Housing
Roger Hoggins	MCC Head of Operations
Simon Brown	Transition Monmouth

1 Introductions and Welcomes

Megan and Irwin were invited by Amanda and introduced the role of the Kafka Brigade. This organisation aims to untangle the web of bureaucracy. Since the LSB are focussing on carbon reduction, they are exploring whether Kafka could help make the introduction of renewables more straightforward. Megan and Irwin were here to observe.

2 George Ashworth, Head of Planning

George explained that:

- The planning officers make recommendations which Members of the Planning Committee decide on.
- There is always a balance to make when considering applications e.g. the potential impact of wind turbines on bats, or hydropower on fish.
- The Tintern Angiddy Project is a good example of how these various issues can be overcome, since TAP had many factors to consider e.g. biodiversity, archaeology, Scheduled Ancient Monument consent, location in SSSI and AONB etc. However, most other people would have given up long ago!
- Officers and Councillors have acknowledged the need for detailed guidance on renewables, so Supplementary Planning Guidance will be developed in conjunction with the development of energy related policies within the new LDP.
- The LDP deposit plan will be consulted on in the Autumn, and the new SPG will be consulted on at the same time. There will be plenty of opportunity for debate and consultation on this.

- In answer to questions about wind turbines, George confirmed that: 25 wind turbine applications have been received, (all except 5 since 2006) and the only refusal was by Planning Committee against officer recommendation at Tesco in Chepstow. (5 are still current or invalid). These have generally been small scale domestic applications. There have been no applications for large turbines, only preliminary approaches, perhaps because WAG's Technical Advice Note on renewables doesn't include any large turbine sites in Monmouthshire.
- George advised that officers e.g. biodiversity officers, are always happy to advise on the suitability of sites for renewables before planning permission is actually applied for.
- Phil Powell talked about the turbines Gwent Energy are involved with at Redwick (Newport side) where large (60m to centre) turbines will generate an income which will benefit the community and help with coastal defences. Gwent Energy is a Community Interest Company, and Phil feels that a lot of opposition to wind energy would go if the benefits were community owned.
- George stressed that the focus on renewables shouldn't just be on wind. Richard pointed out the air source heat pumps that heat the Scout Hut.
- Discussion on Feed In Tariffs brought up that FiTs are only received if registered installers are used, which are much more expensive. Phil has lobbied Jane Davidson AM on this.
- The CAMCO/CDN study on renewable energy for the LDP is due out in a week or too. Comments submitted by this group have been taken on board, but are still only given a brief mention. The suggestion was made that if there had been consultation on the scope of the study, these problems could have been avoided. However, these comments can feed into the development of the SPG instead, since the study only informs policy, not dictates it.
- George agrees that the process for applying for planning permission for renewables needs to be streamlined, and the Environment Agency and Countryside Council for Wales have said the same thing.
- It was suggested that the SPG should include energy efficiency measures too, as well as renewables.
- Marcus asked how the important areas of peak oil and building community resilience fit in with planning. George explained that the LDP aims to minimise use of the private car e.g. by encouraging developments at key settlements, putting employment near housing etc. However, WAG still want more housing in Monmouthshire, even though that will encourage more commuting. There is also a very low uptake of employment sites in Monmouthshire, meaning it is easy for developers to say it is not needed.
- Discussion took place around Monmouth not being a key settlement in the Wales Spatial Plan, so receiving less investment in transport infrastructure. However, MCC would consider it a key settlement in the LDP. George to raise issue of a high speed bus from Monmouth to Newport with the relevant council officer. **Action: George**
- Hazel raised the question of whether a detailed SD Checklist could be used for development applications, like the version from Chelmsford, which Rod has circulated previously. George to look into this. **Action: George**
- Val reminded us that we need to concentrate on energy efficiency, not just renewables.

George was thanked for his helpful presentation and answers to questions.

3. Terms of Reference

There was a brief discussion about our terms of reference. It was agreed that something should be added about building resilience in the face of peak oil, and also some kind of indicators or measures of progress. The following is suggested.

The aims of these quarterly meetings are to:

- share ideas, experience and communication between the council and the community on climate change and energy work,
- think about ways we could help each other,
- plan the most effective ways we could work together to address our common goals of reducing our impact on climate change and building resilience in the face of peak oil,
- develop some measures of progress and publicise our progress.

There was discussion on how information from these meetings was disseminated back to County Hall and to Councillors. Amanda is doing a review of all the partnerships and developing a routemap of what information should go where, so it is hoped that this will be resolved through this. **Action: Amanda**

Annette explained her frustration at lack of feedback from council working groups she has been involved with, in particular the Transport working group. Val to ask the chair to give a report to Annette. Annette to contact Richard Cope about the rerouting of a bus route. **Action: Annette**

Membership of the group was discussed. Hazel to contact Cllr Anthony Perrott and Graham Harris about representation from Caldicot and Usk. **Action: Hazel**

4. Ideas for Joint Projects

At the last meeting a green business directory was discussed. However, it was felt that the Monmouthshire Green Directory on GreenWeb should be built on instead. GreenWeb is to become a galaxy site of MCC's website. The question was asked as to whether local businesses in the directory could be plotted on a map. Hazel to find out. **Action: Hazel**

Phil has contacted the CE of MCC about a proposal for wind turbines on council owned land at Crown Hill nurseries. He is still awaiting a response. He has also circulated information about various renewable technologies and their scope for use in the County, and how they could bring income into the community. Amanda explained that through the 10:10 Campaign we have baseline energy data for MCC buildings and have identified priority buildings.

There was also discussion about the 4 Leisure Centres and Haydn discussed the viability of a community heating scheme at Bridges, Monmouth, the hospital and local school and housing. PFI means that it is hard to identify where to go next.

Amanda to organise a meeting with the CE, Roger Hoggins, Phil Powell and one representative from each town to discuss the way forward. Each town to let Hazel know who they would like to attend this meeting. **Action: Amanda/All**

5 Quarterly Action Planning Updates

Thanks to each of the groups who **ALL** sent their updates through to Hazel for circulation prior to the meeting! There was no time to go over these at the meeting, but they have been circulated separately.

6 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 13th July 2010 at 7pm, Rogiet Primary School with a tour starting at 6.30pm.