Celebrating 20 Years of Climate Action

Over a hundred people from Bradford on Avon and the surrounding area came together on Friday 30th October to celebrate 20 years of Climate Friendly. Our group was founded in the spring of 2006 when Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT), recognising the impact of climate change on nature, wanted to set up a network of climate friendly communities around the county. A local resident, Jane Laurie was taking a sabbatical from WWT when she and her neighbour, Rowena decided to create a climate friendly group in Bradford on Avon.

There was a lot of local enthusiasm and, with support from the WWT, a number of people came together running stalls at town events and raising awareness. The group was soon flourishing, and a grand official launch took place that Autumn 2006 in the presence of politicians from the three main parties and featuring drama by the students of St Laurence School.

So it was that two decades later we decided to organise an evening to celebrate the fact that Climate Friendly was not only still in existence and going strong but was managing to exert an increasing influence both in the local area and further afield. We invited members, supporters, former volunteers and other guests to the evening, which featured stands, displays, talks about the history of CFBoA, refreshments and a special guest speaker.

The stands included Vicky's Community Climate Action Plan; Ros and Jonathan's sustainable food; Eunice and helpers on the Swift stand; Kate, Biodiversity, Deb with Zero Waste and the Repair Cafe; Amy and Jes who focussed on Energy and Transport and Becca with the Schools Project.

Rowena got the evening underway at 7pm with a brief introduction and was followed by Jane Laurie and her recollections of the early days and how it all started. Rowena then showed several photos of past events and people over the years and described the significance of each one in a very entertaining manner. There followed a showing of a Melting Polar Bear video from 2008, where an ice sculpture of a slowly thawing Polar Bear symbolised the loss of habitat due to global warming.

The ice sculpture was unveiled by Richard Angwin, at the time a weather presenter on BBC Points West. His unveiling speech had a sneaky but funny twist in it to make the point about challenging the views of people who deny climate change. The video shows the gradual but dramatic and poignant melting of the polar bear.

To lift our mood after the video, Vicky Stone, our current Climate Friendly chair gave an upbeat presentation about her plans for creating a Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP).

After a break for refreshments our guest speaker was introduced. Arthur Snell is an author, historian and blogger and former diplomat, with a huge knowledge of many of the world's trouble spots. His fascinating talk was a set of reflections on the current geopolitical global problems and the implications of climate change on these, both now and in the future. He didn't shy away from describing how challenging our current situation was but avoided doom-mongering by focussing on potential solutions.
Arthur is an excellent speaker, and his talk left his audience riveted. There followed a Q & A session with several thoughtful questions, including one from our local MP, Brian Matthew, who was one of the guests.

It was an inspiring and uplifting evening.