

THE GREAT GREEN NEW YEAR GATHERING Saturday February 26th, Kingston Environment Centre



Co-hosted and organised by Jean of Kingston Environment Centre and Marilyn of Transition Town Kingston, ably facilitated by Tony Williams and fuelled by coffee and biscuits, the gathering brought together about 20 representatives from a range of local green groups¹ with a variety of interests and experiences to share. A few participants came late and/or left early, and some green issues were perhaps under-represented despite our best efforts, but there was a great deal of positivity, energy, goodwill and desire to collaborate at the meeting, which we can surely build on.

INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting began with introductions and our hopes for outcomes from the meeting, which included: reducing local energy consumption; learning more about what was going on locally; finding helpers and volunteers for our various projects; tackling climate change and other environmental problems locally; participation in Kingston Carnival 2019 Green Zone; networking and mapping the local green community; more use of KEC and sharing projects on Kingston Green Radio and participation in the “Special Events” calendar set up by Jean²; working with Kingston University’s Sustainable Design team and with the Environment Trust’s Green Infrastructure, Energy and Water Project...

Introductions were followed by suggested issues for discussion on and then a vote (with 3 dots each to distribute) to identify the 3 issues we most wanted to focus on. The issues overlapped quite a lot and voting was close, but the final choices were **Air Quality & Transport** and **Climate & Social Change** in 2 parallel groups, to be followed by a plenary on **Education, Awareness-raising, Public Engagement, Events, Communications...** Other issues raised (Housing, Energy, Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure, Local Aesthetics and Development) sometimes came up in the two group

¹ **Groups represented** included: TTK, TTK Energy Group, KEC, Ham United Group and Green Screen, Hogsmill Community Garden, Canbury Community Garden, Friends of Kingston Road Recreation Ground, Kingston University, The Community Brain, Save The World Club, Kingston Cycling Campaign, Kingston Beekeepers, Kingston Green Party,

² **“Special Events” calendar** – if you can’t access or edit it contact [Jean](#) or [Marilyn](#) for permission-
<https://calendar.google.com/calendar?cid=czFpYWxyN3U3N2c1Mzg0cWp1MjluODBqNThAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXluZ29vZ2xILmNvbQ>

discussions, but themes that did not get enough attention this time could perhaps be returned to at another gathering.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

(Actions already happening, or which have a lead and will happen in **green**; useful ideas which need a volunteer/lead to turn into action in **orange**)

Air Pollution & Transport



Many questions were raised in this group and it was clear that **some kind of crib-sheet/FAQs on air quality (AQ)** would be very useful:

- What is the **impact of cycling** on AQ?
- Do **buses** do more harm than good?
- What about **wood-burning stoves, bonfires, and BBQs**?
- How effective are **trees and hedges** in improving AQ?
- What is the **contribution of transport** to air pollution compared to other factors? Local impact will be mostly noise pollution and increased road traffic – but air travel makes a huge contribution to CO2 emissions and thus to climate change.
- What is the local strategy re **electric vehicle charging** – and do electric vehicles do as much as one hopes to reduce pollution (they have heavy batteries and still produce tyre and road dust, depends how the electricity is generated)?
- What about **waste incineration**? Do the filters work? Does the energy generated by incineration compensate at all? Is landfill, with its methane emissions, even worse? Shouldn't we just create less waste? But how?

Other transport matters

- **Air travel – Heathrow consultations** tend to be biased, assuming the need for a 3rd runway. The business case is weak, most air travel is recreational according to Plane Stupid and HACAN.³ **A consultation event on proposed flight paths is coming up at Kingston University on 14/2/19.**

³ HACAN - <https://hacan.org.uk/> - "A voice for those under Heathrow flightpaths"

Plane Stupid - <https://planestupid.com.archived.website/> and <https://www.facebook.com/PlaneStupidUK> a network of grassroots groups that take non violent direct action against aviation expansion.

- **Local traffic:** promoting active travel – walking and cycling – is important. Can KEC set a good example by **getting a cycle-rack** (free from TfL)? To counter the rise in car use, van deliveries, and traffic pollution, we need more car-sharing, car-clubs, more EV charging stations, anti-idling campaigns, “walking buses” instead of the school run, last-mile deliveries by bike or EV, encouragement of cycling and walking...
- There is **information available about AQ and AQ monitoring** in Kingston and Greater London – how do we disseminate it? 2 new monitoring stations are planned in Kingston, and New Malden residents are also monitoring their area. The London **Ultra-Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ)** will soon extend to the North and South Circular roads. Drivers get more pollution inside their cars than pedestrians and cyclists!⁴
- Interested people/groups could join **Make Air Safe & Clean** – a Richmond-based group and Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MakeAirSafeClean> - which shares actions and useful info on AQ, and/or **Kingston Clean Air Now (CAN)**, 1st meeting Sun 3 February, at KEC at 3.00pm.

Climate & Social Change



Climate change was now an urgent issue, with just 12 years to prevent catastrophic over-heating – so this group was generally sympathetic to the line taken by Extinction Rebellion⁵ and felt we could and should **campaign more**, alongside our local projects. It was a difficult issue to get across, to make immediate or attractive, with major life-style changes, e.g. reductions in travel, consumption, needed. (TTK is a member of The Climate Coalition, attends its meetings, and reports them and upcoming actions and events in K E News). There was still a need to **raise awareness on climate** (not everyone was as environmentally aware as this gathering), and to encourage individual action and behaviour change, as well as Government and Council action. The Quakers had undertaken personal carbon audits as a way of educating themselves and promoting behaviour change (average Quaker annual carbon emissions totalled 10 tons, which is high, mostly due to air travel) – could we **promote personal carbon calculating** locally? Was carbon off-setting useful – should we encourage this? We should encourage conservation of green spaces and planting trees and hedges – though how much carbon can greenery absorb? What are the local

⁴ See KEF's work on AQ at <https://e-voice.org.uk/kef/kef-issues/air-quality/> for more useful fact and arguments

⁵ Extinction Rebellion - <https://www.facebook.com/ExtinctionRebellion/>

climate issues and campaigns – energy efficiency, less travel, Heathrow expansion...? Could we **campaign outside the Guildhall** and what would the message/ask be?

Inevitably, much of this group's discussion overlapped with that of the parallel group and/or was contributed to the following plenary on awareness-raising etc.

PLENARY: Education, Awareness-raising, Public Engagement, Events, Communication...



The consensus was that there was a need to raise awareness locally about our concerns and to **provide simple messages with feasible actions to undertake**. There was some concern at the narrow demographics of local green groups and this gathering: where were young people, for example? But is it understandable that some groups would want to work within their own groups, and is there perhaps a lot going on independently, e.g. at the University, amongst ethnic and religious minority groups... How do we engage with the wider public (Climate Outreach⁶ has some useful tips)?

Various actions, means and media were suggested:

- **Use local projects, e.g. community gardens**, to make links to environmental concerns and reach out beyond our usual networks.
- **Use events e.g. street stalls, local fairs** for outreach. Eagle Brewery Wharf and Memorial Gardens are free to community groups wanting to put on events and administered by the Council. Clarence Street and Ride London pitches are managed by Kingstonfirst and you have only to ask!
- **Schools** – are environmental issues on the curriculum? Can we complement what schools do, exploit “pester power”? Kingston Beekeepers have spoken in school assemblies. Can we encourage schools to participate in TfL Stars programme, promoting sustainable travel to school - <https://stars.tfl.gov.uk/>?
- **Carbon Conversations:** <http://www.carbonconversations.co.uk> - can we use their resources to engage e.g. in neighbourhoods, residents' groups...?
- **Make links with Kingston University Sustainable Design dept** – green groups could provide real-life projects and needs, they could provide design solutions...

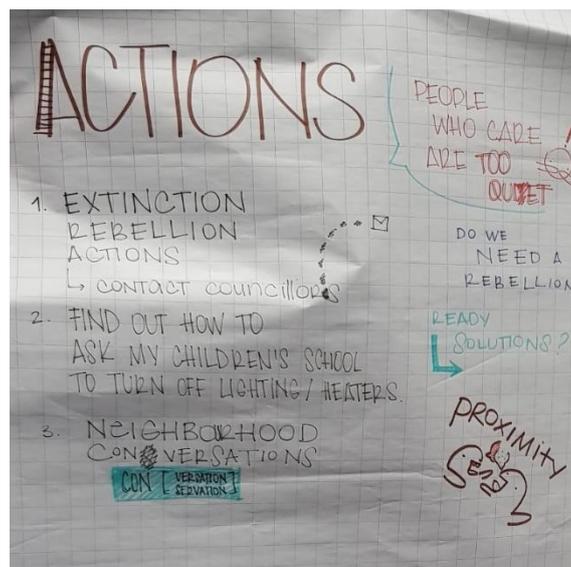
⁶ **Climate Outreach** - <https://climateoutreach.org/> - “Our mission is to ensure climate change and its impacts are understood, accepted and acted upon across the breadth of society, creating a truly sustainable future.”

- **Use local media** (such as it it!) and social media.
- **Write/email ward councillors and our MPs** on a range of environmental issues – maybe a theme a month (e.g. trees, biodiversity, Heathrow, AQ and traffic, supporting local cycle paths...) with some ideas, reminders of how to contact them in **K E News**. If 1 in 10 of our readers wrote, in their own words, that would make quite an impact.
- **Green network mapping** – TTK hopes to organise a follow-up meeting for some community network mapping, which would become a useful on-line resource – see <https://www.networkedcity.london/networks/index> and keep an eye on our Facebook pages and K E News.
- Use the **shared Google calendar** set up by Jean - to add and share events and to avoid clashes, duplication, gaps⁷...

WHAT NEXT?

Some further questions and requests:

- **When** shall we gather again? Midsummer? Annually in January?
- **Who** is going to lead on or organise some of the above proposed actions?
- Please subscribe to **Kingston Environment News** <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=4da1f647e24d941f61f13281c&id=c8806ad842> to keep up with local events – and send the editors your news.
- **Carry on talking** to each other!



DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Coming soon to our borough:

- **Sun 3 February, Kingston Clean Air Now (CAN) 1st meeting** at KEC at 3.00pm
- **Sat 23 February: TTK's "Show the Love" stall**, 11.00-4.00, Clarence Street, focusing on food – [contact Marilyn](https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love/) if you'd like to help or contribute leaflets etc. part of The Climate Coalition's "Show the Love" campaign, 4 - 24 Feb - <https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love/>
- **Sat 23 March: SWC launch mosaic** at Old Malden
- **6 June: Anti Arms Trade Day of Action – dead people flash-mob etc** in New Malden
- **Sun 4 August: Ride London** via Kingston – street closures, opps for community stalls
- **? 1st Sunday in September, Kingston Carnival and GreenZone**

Marilyn Mason, February 2019

With thanks to Tariq Shabeer for photos

⁷ "Special Events" calendar

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar?cid=czFpYWxyN3U3N2c1Mzg0cWp1MjluODBqNThAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXluZ29vZ2x1LmNvbQ> –contact [Jean](#) or [Marilyn](#) for permission to add events.-