

## Newsletter

January 2021



### Keeping warm:- helpful energy advice

With so many of us now staying at home, we may become more aware of high energy bills and/or draughts. Last year ChalCAN arranged for energy advice specialists to provide consultations on home energy efficiency. Will Swait has a 3-bed stone cottage; one end dates from 1750, with single glazed mullion windows, and it was extended in 1900, and modernised in 1980.

Dave Judd, surveyed the property and gave recommendations on how and what could best be done to improve energy efficiency. Will had long debated the huge cost to install double glazing, but Dave said the cost of the windows would not be recouped in reduced bills, but that comfort in the living room involving only 3 windows could be improved. He recommended accessing 2 small lofts with limited insulation, to improve this to 300mm as a priority. The biggest surprise was that Dave pointed out that the north wall of the house, (extended in the 80s) was potentially a poorly built cavity wall and would benefit from (breathable) insulation. Will says:

*“Dave’s knowledge and the information he passed on was invaluable and has given us a much clearer plan on how to proceed. Many thanks to Dave Judd for his time on the visit and follow up advice, well worth the fee charged”.*

However, Will and family were hoping to benefit from the Government Green Homes Grant. But when he looked for quotes from builders who were ‘TrustMark’ certified (a requirement of the grant) their preferred company said that the upfront costs of certification by a third-party organisation (part of the government rules) were prohibitive. This mirrors the findings of a survey by the Government Environmental Audit Committee, which showed that nearly three-quarters found it difficult to find a registered TrustMark contractor for the Green Homes Grant. So Will and family are just going ahead with the essential work but cannot afford to do more at this stage. Will says: *“this is a real shame; so much needs to be done across the UK to retrofit energy efficiency to existing properties but this bureaucratic scheme will do little to help”.*

For more information go to the ChalCAN webpage on home insulation.

**Don’t forget go to [www.chalcan.org.uk](http://www.chalcan.org.uk) for lots of useful information...**

## Time to be hopeful for changes in food and farming?



*Sophie Carabine, Chalford resident working at the Royal Agricultural University writes.*

Lots of people have strong views about farming and rightly so. Good, healthy affordable diets for everyone has to be a local and global aim; sadly, we are far from that. I work in agriculture and the list of what needs to change across the food industry is extensive: food waste, farming's contribution to climate change, how we value animals and how food production can be part of nature's recovery (regenerative farming).

But I'm hopeful, because the spotlight is turning to food and farming and the debate is everywhere across the industry and the public. There are reasons to believe things will change in line with moving to net zero, thanks to both new farmers and those who want to change after decades working their land hard.

Soil is firmly coming up the agenda. Everyone is talking about how to look after it, with many solutions going back to ancient wisdoms: resting the soil, growing things in certain orders, and never letting the soil run off, taking nutrients and organic matter with it, ruining water courses. (Can we do this and still feed people affordably? Who pays more?). Animals are pretty central in the debate too, which is positive whatever our personal diets. Many regenerative farmers, aiming to actively improve nature (not just reduce damage), believe that sheep and cattle are key to soil fertility and health. Changes of animal diet can reduce methane, a big win. On animal welfare, again, the debate is live: for example around dairy cows and the pluses and minuses of indoor and outdoor environments. (Instinctively we think being outside must be better, but inside they 'milk themselves', robotically, when they want). Whatever your view, it is vital that these debates are happening and not just in the organic sector. Away from traditional meat and dairy, alternative proteins are getting prominence. Even if cricket or algae burgers are unlikely to make their way anytime soon to Chalford's shop, this is important, potentially making fish feed, for example, more sustainable. And for vegans and flexitarians, more pulses are being grown in the UK, which is brilliant.

Finally, accelerated by Covid, many are asking if shorter, less complex food chains are better (the answer: sometimes!). Can supermarkets and food suppliers together move to greater sustainability, across the piece? Let's hope that food and farming are under the spotlight and part of the solution at the global climate conference COP 26 in Glasgow this year.

## Countryfile's 'Plant Britain' project



BBC TV favourite, Countryfile, has launched an ambitious two-year challenge 'Plant Britain' to get everyone in the nation planting. Worth a watch on i-player, this inspiring episode encourages the planting of trees from a woodland scale to individual tree planting in our gardens, explaining

the science behind carbon storage and the difference it would make to climate change. Every tree planted will make a difference, so Countryfile is asking anyone planting a tree to log in to their website to add to the total being clocked up by the nation.

Locally, the recently-launched Gloucestershire Tree Strategy is building momentum to increase tree coverage. The Strategy was set up by Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, with 35 organisations from across the county working together to embed nature's value in local decisions for the benefit of the environment, people and the economy. ChalCAN's Biodiversity Action are playing their part in identifying and mapping areas within the parish for tree and shrub planting, and sites where biodiversity can be increased. The aim is to be part of a national map of joined-up corridors for wildlife. This can be achieved by encouraging landowners and the Parish Council to assess their green space assets, and by each one of us by considering what we can do in our own gardens. There is plenty of information out there about what to plant and where, but advice and links can also be accessed on the relevant page of the ChalCAN website.

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## Road safety

*ChalCAN Transport Action are hoping to discuss road safety issues with the Parish Council in the near future. In the meantime, a supporter has suggested that 'Perhaps the best thing to do when walking on our local roads where there's no pavement is to acknowledge the driver by making eye contact and giving a slight wave of the hand. If they are driving considerably this is a thanks and acknowledgement. If they are driving too fast it can be a slight rebuke. Either way it encourages drivers to recognise pedestrians as people rather than obstacles. It might be hard on a busy road, but this is just where you most want drivers to take care. Perhaps in time it will change attitudes to speed and make walking on roads less of a risk and more of a pleasure.'*

## Stop Ecocide...

Whilst ChalCAN is mostly focussed on reducing our carbon footprint and supporting the environment locally, we need to keep abreast of national and international issues. One of these is Ecocide: the mass damage and destruction of ecosystems taking place globally. Currently such serious harm to nature (e.g. wholesale destruction of the rainforest, large scale pollution by oil companies, contamination of water sources by industry and deep-sea bottom trawling) is legally permitted in most of the world, despite the massive damage caused.

One organisation, Stop Ecocide, is working to make such destruction an international crime through an amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to make it the fifth crime against humanity. Top lawyers are involved, and several governments (including the Dutch, Spanish, Belgian and Swedish) are supporting the amendment or introducing national legislation. The campaign has roots in Stroud; founded by Polly Higgins, Jojo Mehta now plays a leading role. To support this movement you can sign the global petition and also become an Earth Protector by making a donation. Find out more at [stopecocide.earth](http://stopecocide.earth).



This year's Potato Days are planned (subject to lockdown rules) for  
**Saturday February 6th 8.30am to 2pm at Stroud's Farmer's Market**  
**Sunday February 7th 11am to 3pm at Trinity Rooms, Stroud**

[www.downtoearthstroud.co.uk](http://www.downtoearthstroud.co.uk)

*In view of the lockdown, Stroud Community Seed Bank will distribute seeds from 6 local venues including [Chalford Village Shop](#). Seeds free, but donations are requested to help fund this venture.*

## Work with Transition Stroud

TS has two part time paid Communications vacancies: Newsletter Editor and Social Media coordinator (these could be combined). Deadline for both applications is 24th January 2021. Details on the [TS site](#).

If you would like to get involved with ChalCAN or help with any of these projects, please contact Penny at [info@chalCAN.org.uk](mailto:info@chalCAN.org.uk).  
**Please pass this on to friends, neighbours and family.**

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