

Newsletter

March 2021

Introducing the ChalCAN logo



Bees are busy, co-operative, are needed for the human race to thrive and come in many shapes and sizes. We hope this symbol represents some aspects of ChalCAN's work!

Community Survey

A last chance to complete our community survey, which will close at the end of March. Go here <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DVKPCP8> to contribute your views.



Food Waste Action

Food Waste Action week took place in March, so it's a great time to find out how big an impact food waste has on climate change.

- In the UK 4.5 million tons of food and drink are thrown away each year
- The average value of household food wasted per year is £60
- If we stopped wasting food that could have been eaten the benefit to the planet would be equivalent to taking 1 in 4 cars off the road

If you'd like to find out more and have three hours to spare for just three weeks, try the **free on-line course** 'From Waste to Value: How to Tackle Food Waste' offered by [futurelearn.com](https://www.futurelearn.com).



Car Sharing Schemes

Many of our cars stand idle 96% of the time (often more for second cars), and they are costly - on average roughly £125 to £250 per month.

One solution is an Electric Car Club, where you can book a locally parked car via our phones when we want to use it. Each Electric Car Club vehicle has the potential to take up to ten private cars off the road and over its lifetime save up to 160 tonnes of carbon emissions. If this is of interest to you then do complete the Transition Stroud survey bit.ly/Stroudelectric.

An alternative is to rent cars from each other. This is quite common now, facilitated by user-friendly apps from companies that handle the booking, the insurance and the vetting and validation of the owner and driver - HiYaCar <https://www.hiyacar.co.uk/>, GetAround <https://uk.getaround.com/> and Turo <https://turo.com/gb/en> are examples. Importantly, there's no need for any initial commitment of time or money. We could start renting and then dispose of our own cars should we feel confident in the process. It would also help us to judge what the demand might be for a Car Club in Chalford. We're hoping to get one started soon. **More information on request! (see below).**



Plastic and recycling

Way too much plastic ends up in the incinerator, where it dumps more carbon into the atmosphere than coal per unit of electricity generated. In its defence, plastic has probably saved a bit of carbon along the way, in its manufacture and the fuel used to cart its contents around the globe, compared to, say glass. Time to bust the myth that most plastic is 'unrecyclable'.

Plastic is a complex basket of things: more than six polymer types (the number in that little triangle); it can be fabric (net), film (wrapper), soft (squeeze tube) or solid (bottle), and these are often mixed together (toothpaste tube) or layered with other things (soup cartons, crisp bags). All kinds of additives are used to give colour and labels are stuck on. No wonder it's expensive and difficult to separate out to make into new things.

Bottles are the most cost-effective plastic to recycle and can be made back into bottles. Pots, tubs and trays come next. Colours are least valuable. Stroud Council takes all these (even black items, which are recyclable but don't always get extracted by older sorting machines). Just give them a rinse so they don't stink out the recycling factory and pop into your green bin/bag. Lids can stay on. Please don't be put off by recent reports of plastics being incinerated - Stroud District Council are working hard to ensure this doesn't happen. Films and fibres get tangled up, so they should be collected separately. Stretchy carrier bags and fruit nets can be recycled at supermarkets. Then there's stuff Terracycle collect for specialist recycling. The sponsors pay a fortune for 'green PR' and the volunteers who sort it earn a charity donation. Details on our website <https://chalcan.org.uk/plastic-and-general-waste>. It is a bit of a faff, but keeping materials in use, reducing carbon flying out of the incinerator and raising money for local charities make it worth the effort.

Meanwhile all over the world, mixed 'unrecyclable' plastic is being made into construction materials: bricks, roads, posts, planks and panels. As consumers demand it, companies will feel obliged to provide easy recycle packaging - until the long-awaited regulations are finalised to ensure manufacturers pay for their packaging to be responsibly reprocessed.



Biodiversity: ChalCAN Survey response

Thank you to everyone who has completed the ChalCAN Survey. Your views are really important, and there was positive support for promoting biodiversity in the garden, but a number asked for more advice. So, here are some ideas....

LAWNS AND GRASS: A lawn can be a thing of beauty needing much time and effort, or it may be a patch of grass which needs to function in lots of different ways.

Whatever your lawn looks like, why not try:



- A 'No-Mow May' (a national campaign). Don't cut your grass for a month then celebrate all the things you didn't know lived there. When you restart mowing, try setting the blades a bit higher to encourage the flowers and plants
- If your lawn is big enough, leave a corner uncut for the summer. Mark the boundary with a carefully mown edge – to tell the world this patch is managed!
- Cut back hard a patch of grass, remove the cuttings to reduce fertility and expose the soil. Sow wild flowers and grass seeds: annual plants for dramatic effect, perennials to develop as slow burners (lots of guidance on the internet). Watch bees, butterflies and friendly insects appear.

TREES: No room for a tree? No problem, plant shrubs, a mini-hedge, bee-friendly plants

PONDS: Great for wildlife! No space? Try a mini-pond in an old bowl. Enjoy watching the birds bathe.

PEAT-FREE GARDENING: Peat-free compost is a bit more expensive, but the more we use it the quicker prices will drop. Look out for companies selling peat-free garden plants and ask for peat-free products in nurseries. Home-made compost is great - give it a go!

Remember, any small thing you do in your garden helps!



How to be (almost) self-sufficient in vegetables

It's easy to have a glut of vegetables from your plot in the autumn, but veg you buy in winter and spring are expensive and often come with a high carbon footprint. By concentrating on winter crops, a Chalford family have managed to grow nearly all their vegetables on their allotment. In early spring they were harvesting nero cavallo, leeks, sprouts and cabbages, followed by purple sprouting broccoli, and then last year's leaf beet.

Winter crops need to be started early. Sow in seed trays in March, then plant out into good rich soil, with plenty of manure and wood ash when big enough. Apart from leeks, they need to be covered in nets at first, or they'll be trashed by pigeons. Plant at double density, and when they're getting crowded, take out every other plant to eat or to transplant to a spare patch.

Lots of exercise, but it's very cheap!

How can we combat climate change? Discuss!

Would you give up flying or support a carbon tax? Are you worried about the melting of ice caps and rising sea temperatures? Eight members of ChalCAN met on Zoom in February to take part in a notional "Climate Walk" to mull over the challenges and opportunities ahead of us. In groups of four we considered how likely individuals are to take personal action. Could we eat less meat, take fewer flights and reduce car use?

We discussed possible local initiatives, national action, and global action. How much government control would we accept? Could carbon rationing or a carbon tax be organised fairly and how would strict targets for emissions work? Would geoengineering projects save us? Group responses were scored, giving a final figure on which to base predictions of temperature rise, and then the expected impact (scary!).

The "Climate Walk" was developed in 2010 by the New Economics Foundation. Taking between 60 and 90 minutes it's not about pressurising participants to become climate saints! The aim is to have friendly and interesting discussions whilst raising awareness of how our choices at all levels, can make a difference. It certainly made us think....

If you'd like to learn more or discuss running your own "walk" with friends, colleagues, neighbours or family please contact us.



Stop Press: ChalCAN are launching a 'Grow your own campaign'

We'll start with a **POTATO DAY** to be held over Easter when people can pick up one or two seed potatoes to grow at home, along with instructions as to what to do. Check the ChalCAN website <https://chalcan.org.uk/news-and-blog> for when and where.

If you would like to get involved with ChalCAN or help with any of these projects, please contact Penny at info@chalcan.org.uk Tel: **01453 887204**

PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS AND FAMILY

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