

Sustainable living – lessons from lockdown.

On 13th July 2020 the Our Planet Our Future team at Sustainable St Albans held its first online event. This document sets out the ideas that were discussed at the event, the pledges that were made and also links to various resources that were discussed at the meeting or that Sustainable St Albans has put together or is aware of.

Four breakout groups discussed the changes that the attendees have made in the following four areas 1) at home, 2) in our working lives, 3) in our leisure activities and 4) in our community interactions. The discussion from the events is summarised below.

The Annex then provides further resources and also the poll results from the event.

Topic 1: Changes made at home during lockdown

Gardening/growing

- Growing more at home - maybe 50% more, the therapeutic side of gardening has been particularly beneficial. It is hoped that gardening more will continue in the future.

Food and Shopping

- As not going out very much, shopping habits have changed for example, making the most of what has been in the back of cupboards - sell by dates proven wrong!
- Using leftovers, avoiding foodware where possible.
- Attitudes to food have changed, initially some people have stockpiled, when something has been found it was purchased. This reduced once stocks were back to normal
- Some people have tried new things because they have been available
- People have been eating out less which may make for a healthier diet and have more time for cooking from scratch thereby avoiding heavily processed food.
- Getting veg boxes from local growers, Smallford Farm Shop in St Albans, Carpenters Nursery in Sandridge and Sparshotts in Bricket Wood have been doing great deliveries this is really helpful for people shielding.
- There has been some online success with supermarket shopping and avoiding multiple trips to the supermarket. However as online shopping increased and due to Covid 19, there is no way of reusing bags so more plastic bags are used.
- Increased use of independent shops and deliveries where possible, many 'corner' shops have been lifelines for shopping.
- More checking of cupboards before shopping.
- Some items have only been available from Amazon, although there are concerns that delivery drivers and vans are inefficient.
- Shampoo bar purchased rather than liquid - started before lockdown ... still going now! No plastic bottles.

- Bar of hand soap rather than liquid - not necessarily a conscious decision... more aware of hands being clean with a bar.
- Some people are planning on obtaining refills when able to go to market etc again.
- Make your own birthday cards. Relations have loved receiving hand drawn or hand made cards (saves on plastic too as too many cards still come in plastic wrappers)

Energy use

- There is an increase in working from home/ children at home, if it's got chilly - heating has gone on, tried to layer initially.
- Solar heating benefits - been very helpful. Long sunny spell has provided hot water for a household of 4 people - very pleased. Boiler goes off.
- Paper use - reams of paper in use due to whole schooling. Challenged school about this issue

What changes we will see after lockdown- will people go back to past habits.

- consensus, sadly combination of habit and lack of education will lead to many past behaviours returning

PLEDGES

- try to refill/ use bars rather than liquid soaps
- Plan to use refills when able to go out and get them again
- Continue to reduce food waste
- Work from home more to reduce car waste
- To continue to grow food at home
- To continue to use our local growers for veg box - Smallford, Carpenters & Sparshotts have been doing great deliveries for people shielding.
- Continue making cards

Topic 2: Changes to the way we work

Travelling

- Using the car so much less.
- Fewer flights to go to conferences

Home / virtual working

***Benefits to companies / our work**

- More virtual meetings instead of visiting people physically. Employees and companies have been forced to use the technology, so barriers are less, more people have experience of software such as Zoom so more willing to make use of it.
- Companies and individuals now know that this works - so some of this will continue post covid. It saves companies both money and time

- End up with a mixed economy of face-to-face and online meeting?
- Maybe end up with local co-working spaces, so some face to face interactions, rather than travelling into London?

***Benefits to workers' / their wellbeing**

- Less (eg single use plastic waste) from instant lunches from cafes. Healthier eating as more time to make lunch at home.
- Chances to take courses and webinars, and meet people abroad. There are opportunities to join conferences and seminars that would not have been able to attend in normal times because would not have had time/budget to travel.
- We are not so exhausted because we are not commuting or spending lots of time travelling.
- Working from home has generally slowed people down. Frees up time for people to do more home cooking, mending, making and repairing things.

***Negatives**

- In retail environmental impact is worse; lots of single use plastics, wipes, gloves

PLEDGES

- To try and find time to make lunch at home; take a lunchbox.
- If beyond a certain distance, then meet online rather than driving for a meeting.
- Negotiate working from home

Topic 3: Changes to leisure activities

Outdoor activities

- Most people have done more walking and / or cycling.
- People used cycling when it was both exercise and had a purpose - eg to do shopping.
- Many people have spent more time walking in parks and green spaces
- Many people notice wildlife more, especially the sound of birds when there was little traffic noise.
- The improved quality of the air was noticeable.
- More walking and cycling until DIY projects and other things got in the way.
- Expanded the groups we can participate in because of not having to travel

Some things that made walking, cycling, exercising harder than it could have been were:

- Sometimes too many people are exercising on narrow paths etc.
- Drivers going too fast makes cycling difficult

One attendee asked for a list of coffee places to visit when cycling - see the Annex

Online activities

- Online means you see more people but lose something but also gain because of the lack of travel.
- Realisation that after meeting local people virtually that this can be done with friends anywhere, this has meant some wonderful evenings of catching up and playing games with friends who live in other countries.
- Also being able to have a 'virtual cuppa or drink' for an hour or two with friends that live two to three hours away so don't necessarily need to travel in London or drive to catch up with friends and relations. More classes e.g pilates, swimming, choir

Additional communications got in the way to some extent

- Plays and operas available online (unusually). The screening of major theatre and other productions has made these accessible to a much wider audience - maybe more people have been introduced to great theatre? It has also meant that anyone can access these theatre productions - this has made them accessible to people who would not have been able to visit for reasons of location, disability, caring responsibilities, cost etc.
- Many cultural organisations have opened their doors virtually.

Topic 4: Changes to our community interactions

Local mutual aid

- New mutual aid support groups have been set up. Eg in Harpenden the Council set up Harpenden Cares which provides support to anyone in the town & has street co-ordinators in all bar a small number of streets.
- Local neighbourhood support group to support people who are isolating or shielding.
- Writing letters to local care homes.

Local street groups have been

- Sharing of eg spare veg, sweetpea plants with neighbours
- Adding goods for people to shopping orders
- Collective ordering from the milkman
- Organising weekly food bank collections
- Collecting prescriptions

Generally we've all had lots more discussion with neighbours - virtually, via whatsapp ...
Zoom socials with cuppa or drinks, particularly including people who are living on their own.
Zoom has enabled people to be involved and feel safe whilst interacting.

Other volunteering

- Joining the national covid volunteer schemes. A furloughed attendee joined the National Community volunteering group.

- Volunteer APP was very easy to use & that made it very easy for people to help. We've adapted the way we volunteer, an attendee who volunteers with AgeUK had been visiting a deaf lady before Covid, she adapted to writing letters to her.

Community activities to support NHS & make masks

- Many people have been making face masks for people on their street & selling for charity
- Schools have been making 3d printed masks for local care homes, GP surgeries and hospital
- Individuals with 3d printers have been doing the same - setting up crowd funders to buy equipment etc
- Sewing groups etc have been making scrubs, mask clips, masks etc

Local businesses & community groups - people have joined groups for pub quizzes - Farmers' Boy; attended virtual church services.

Attendees noted that community groups have gained more members and more people have been involved in the virtual meeting, it removes many barriers involved in attending physical meetings.

New initiatives attendees had going involved with

- Non profit - Plastic Patrol - founded by Lizzie Carr - about litter picking. Do any activity - eg paddleboarding - & pick up litter whilst doing the activity

As a group we were inspired by the creativity that had been shown during lockdown.

Also it is clear how fast people / companies / schools /government can make changes if they have to!

- Schools have been re-invented twice in a very short timeframe - such changes would previously have taken weeks or months.
- We need to apply this same motivation and speed into changes to address climate change.

Annex: Resources and further information

Not an exhaustive list - but lots of links for further information for you to explore!

We also have lots of information on the Sustainable St Albans website, we organise events, publish blogs of topics, and much more. To join our mailing list or volunteer with Sustainable St Albans register here: <https://sustainablestalbans.org/contact/>

Topics:

1. Sustainability at home
2. Sustainability in our working lives
3. Sustainability in our leisure, health and wellbeing
4. Community interactions & volunteering
5. Lobbying in the district and more widely
6. Books, films and courses
7. Local cafes to visit when cycling
8. Poll results from 13th July 2020 event

1. Sustainability at home

a) Food & growing

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/local-groups/>

<http://www.foodsmilesstalbans.org.uk/p/st-albans-one-plant-promise.html>

<http://www.foodsmilesstalbans.org.uk/p/local-food-map.html>

www.meatfreemondays.com

www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

www.vegetarianliving.co.uk

www.toogoodtogo.co.uk

[Harpenden allotments](#)

[St Albans allotments](#)

Blog on starting out growing:

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/2020/06/28/how-i-started-growing-my-own-firsttimeveggardener/>

b) Consumption

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/slow-sustainable-fashion/>

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/get-started/our-planet-events/fixing-stuff/>

www.ethicalconsumer.org

www.toogoodtogo.co.uk

www.buymeonce.com

www.thegoodshoppingguide.com

www.loveyourclothes.org

c) Fixing stuff

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/2020/06/18/dare-to-repair-5-benefits-of-fixing-your-stuff/>

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/get-started/our-planet-events/fixing-stuff/>

d) Reducing plastic use:

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/2020/07/01/how-to-go-plastic-free-part-1-plastic-free-kitchen/>

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/2020/07/08/how-to-go-plastic-free-part-2-bathroom/>

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/2020/07/15/how-to-go-plastic-free-part-3-food-shopping/>

<https://www.plasticfreeharpden.org.uk>

<https://plasticfreestalbans.org.uk>

<https://plasticpatrol.co.uk>

Single Use Plastics - let's talk. **Open Meeting at 30th July 7.30pm.** More info and registration here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sustainable-st-albans-july-o...>

- <https://mailchi.mp/4ea5f0569a.../single-use-plastics-lets-talk>

e) Energy use at home, utilities and services

Changes that could be made:

- Switch energy supplier – Bulb, Octopus, Good Energy, Ecotricity, Pure Energy, Green Energy etc
- Reducing water usage, adding water butts
- Change bank – Triodos
- Ethical investments – no fossil fuels, good employment practices
- Choosing Ecosia as your search engine (they plant trees as you search)

www.ethicalconsumer.org

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

www.waterwise.org.uk

www.goodwithmoney.com

www.greenenergyuk.com/

f) Insulating your home

Borrow one of our thermal imaging camera to check out where heat is leaking from your house;

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/thermal-imaging/>

Find out about the government's new green energy grants:

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/2020/07/08/the-governments-green-recovery-package-what-does-it-contain/>

2. Sustainability in our working lives

www.thecarbontrust.com - for businesses that want to function more sustainably

www.thegreenoffice.co.uk - for green stationery and office supplies

www.wantdontwant.com - site helps you buy and sell used office equipment

www.iiee.uk.com - environment accreditation scheme designed to help organisations save money, reduce their impact on the environment, and get promoted for their green credentials

3. Sustainability in our leisure, health and wellbeing

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk>

[Local cycling group](#)

[Cycling UK;](#)

[Sustrans.](#)

[Harpenden allotments](#)

[St Albans allotments](#)

For a list of local cafes to visit on a cycling ride see list below.

4. Community interactions & volunteering

[Harpenden's coronavirus support group](#) - contact if you need support or to volunteer

[Food Banks in the district](#) - find out how you can support local food banks

[Volunteering in Harpenden](#) - find out about volunteering opportunities in Harpenden

[Volunteering in St Albans District](#) - find out about volunteering opportunities across the district

<https://www.owl.co.uk> - join neighbourhood watch

<https://sustainablestalbens.org/playingout/> - find out about setting up Playing Out on your street

<https://sustainablestalbens.org/get-started/schools/> - Sustainability in schools:

5. Lobbying in the district and more widely

Join our mailing list, volunteer with Sustainable St Albans, come to events, tell your friends!

<https://sustainablestalbens.org/contact/>

District & county level:

St Albans District Council has declared a climate emergency

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/climate-change>.

Read our blog to find out what has happened in the year since the emergency was declared:

<https://sustainablestalbens.org/2020/07/10/progress-on-st-albans-district-council-climate-crisis-declaration-one-year-on/>

Sign up to receive information from the council and get involved:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/getting-involved>

write to your district council about progress on the Net Zero Action plan and to tell them how important this is: <https://stalbens.moderngov.co.uk/mgFindMember.aspx>

The district council has been looking at 20 mile per hour speed limits. **Write** to your County councillor if you would like to support this.

Constituency level:

Local Electricity Bill is working through parliament - write to Bim Afolami or Daisy Cooper (or your local MP) asking them to continue supporting the Bill in its passage through parliament. The Bill's lead sponsor Peter Aldous MP gave a rousing ten-minute speech in the House of Commons on the Bill. This speech went unopposed and the Bill's reintroduction was passed without the need for a vote. Here's a video of the highlights from Peter's speech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waNfiKSqDzQ>

The bill is sponsored by a group of cross party MPs and now has the support of 187 MPs. The large numbers of new MPs over the last month is encouraging progress, but for the Bill to be made law, support is needed from around 400 supportive MPs. Find out more here:

<https://powerforpeople.org.uk/about/>

Additionally write to your MP about how important achieving net zero by 2030 is.

6. Books, films and courses

Films to watch: <https://sustainablestalbans.org/film-inspiration/>

Books to read: <https://sustainablestalbans.org/book-inspiration/>

If you are looking to develop your knowledge of climate change in particular, here are a few suggestions for free courses:

<https://sustainablestalbans.org/2020/06/09/learning-in-lockdown-free-online-sustainability-courses/>

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/nature-environment>

<https://www.edx.org/course/climate-change-the-science-and-global-impact>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/search?q=climate>

7. Local cafes to visit when cycling

The list below was taken from a post on All thing St Albans facebook group - thank you to Geoff Vickers who gave permission for Sustainable St Albans to copy.

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/842183279156508?view=permalink&id=4071338139574323>

The Hub Redbourn High Street

Well known haven of cyclists riding to and from the Chilterns. Small garden at the rear and limited tables inside. Coffee to die for. (Takeaway only at the moment until 2pm.). Owner (ex British professional cyclist) has a cycling repair shop a few doors up the high street.

Emily's Cafe, Whitwell

Oasis of a pit stop for cyclists and on the route of the annual Rotary Charity Cycle Ride. Tucked in a farm just off the high street in the village tables in a courtyard and inside. Love their toasted sandwiches and giant tea cakes.

La Musette, Aldbury

Opened about 18 months ago also in a farmyard just outside the village just past the church and on the road to Tring Station. Run by a knowledgeable team. Cycling aficionados will appreciate all the memorabilia. Plenty of seating inside - limited seating outside. Good hot and cold food selection.

Harpers Good Food Deli, Pepperstock, Slip End

3 miles north of Harpenden on the way to Markyate. Great food especially the sausage rolls and cakes. Plenty of outside seating.

Charlie's Pop-Up Cycling Cafe, Gaddesden Row.

Brand new to the scene this week. Just beyond the village on the way to Jockey End and top of Pedley Hill. Beautiful large garden seating, lovely coffee and snacks.

Heartwood Tea Rooms, Sandridge High Street.

Seating at rear and some at front. Popular stopping off point for cycling to Wheathampstead and Nomansland Common

Spokes Cycles CC Cafe, Ridge Farm, Rabley Heath, Codicote

Highly recommended cafe for cyclists to the East of St Albans - not been here personally (but will do!). No inside seating at the moment but offering a "drive-thru" service of coffee and cakes with an outside seating area.

Brownlow Cafe, Ringshall, Ashridge Estate

Very popular cafe in the Ashridge National Trust Estate right by the Monument in Ringshall. Can get very busy but if you are prepared to queue a short while the food is of very good quality and there is ample outside seating. Closed Mondays.

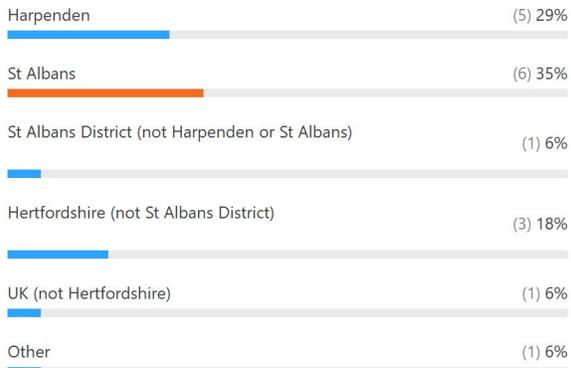
View Cafe, Dunstable Downs. Off the B4541

Modern National Trust Centre at the top of Dunstable Downs overlooking the Gliding Club below. Spectacular views northwards across the Bedfordshire plain. Just reopened for indoor seating but outside there are many tables and benches.. Worth the climb up to enjoy the views alone as well as the very good facilities.

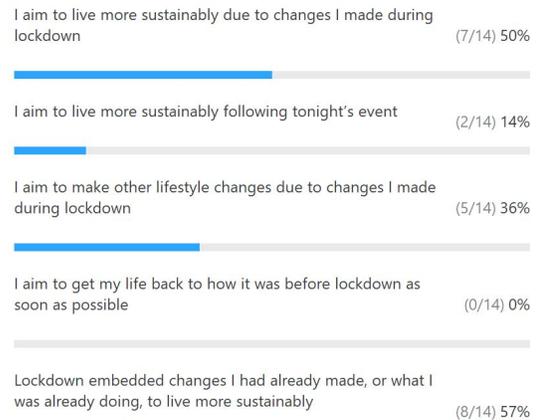
Ride St Albans in Chiswell Green will soon have a coffee wagon on the forecourt selling coffee and cakes

8. Poll results from 13th July 2020 event

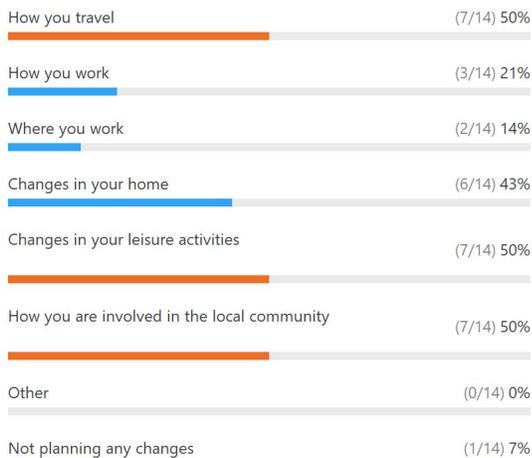
1. Where do you live?



1. Which of these statements best describes you? (Multiple choice)



2. Are you planning to make any changes to your life in the new normal. If so, in which areas? Click all that apply (Multiple choice)



Polling 2: Life during lockdown

▼ Edit

Polling is closed

16 voted

1. Which of these describe your life during lockdown, I have (as many as apply to you) (Multiple choice)

