

u3a Name	<b>Grange over Sands</b>
Group Title	Environmental Awareness
Group Formed	2016
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#### Format

Our group has been holding regular monthly meetings since January 2016. We have nearly 30 members on our books, though actual attendance at meetings is normally in the range 12-16. The idea of starting the group came from a number of us attending the Cumbria U3A Network's First Energy Conference held at the Rheged Centre in October 2015. Our aim was (and is) to inform members about all aspects of the environment, not just climate change. We are not a campaigning group.

The format of our meetings has not changed significantly since we started. Members take it in turns to research a topic and make a 45-60 minute presentation to the rest of the group, allowing 30-45 minutes for discussion. Over the years we've covered a wide range of topics, including:

- wind energy
- press coverage of environmental issues
- sustainable manufacturing
- fashion and the environment
- vegetarianism
- sustainable forms of burial
- light pollution
- carbon capture and storage

We vary this format from time to time with general discussions (such as the impact of COP26) and short presentations on a linked theme (such as tourism). We've also organized a number of visits to local sites of environmental interest, such as the nuclear power station at Heysham and Shanks' recycling centre at Barrow.

What has worked well? The format of getting members to research a topic in depth has meant that we have all learned a lot about a wide range of environmental issues, some of which we weren't even aware of (how many people know about the problems caused by sand mining, for example?). We've always had a good balance of opinions within the group (not everyone is a tree-hugger), which has led to some lively and stimulating discussions. External visits have also been a valuable part of our programme, allowing us to learn at first-hand what is happening locally.

What hasn't worked so well? Not everyone has the talent or inclination to research a topic and make an interesting and informative presentation about it. This has meant that the burden of making presentations has fallen on a relatively small number of members. The

group hasn't been very successful over the last few years in getting new members able and willing to make presentations, meaning that fatigue is beginning to set in among our regular presenters. And it's proved far more difficult than we'd expected to get local firms to allow us to visit them. Insurance and sometimes security issues seem to be the main problem.

Overall, I feel that our group has been very successful in meeting its aims over the years. Whether we can continue to maintain momentum as our membership ages remains to be seen. Unfortunately, few of our recently-joined members seem to be any younger than those we have already!