

# Discussion Note: Possible objectives for a u3a Climate Change and Environment Group

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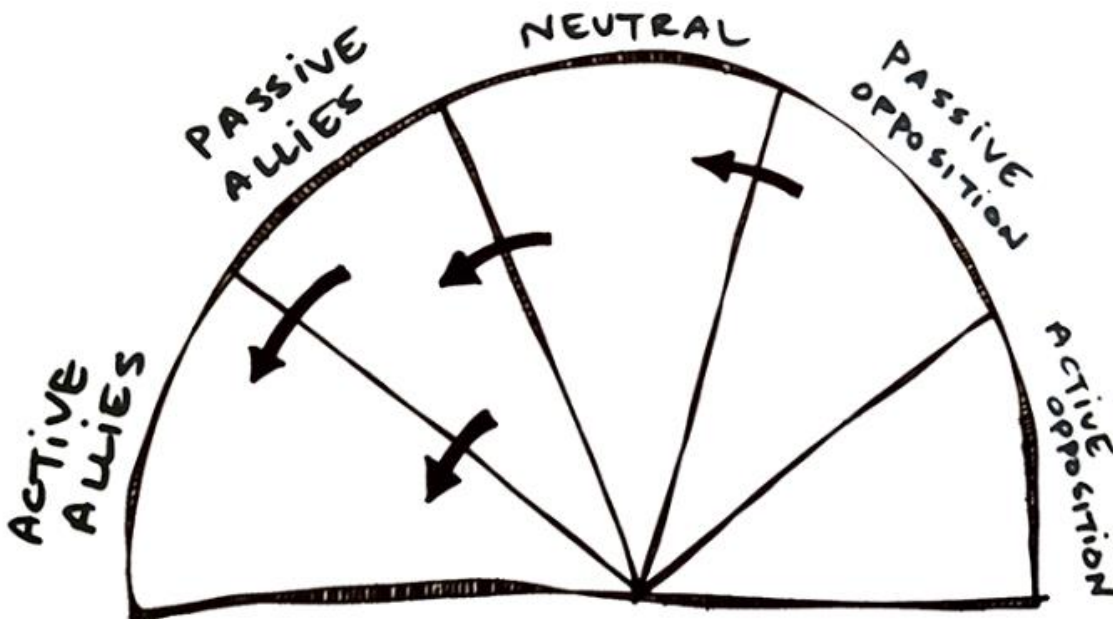
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## Introduction

This note proposes a set of objectives that might be adopted by a newly set up u3a Climate Change and Environment (CCE) Group<sup>1</sup>. It's not intended to be prescriptive or to suggest that such groups should be clones of one another. Objectives will evolve with time, but it's important to have some idea what the group is trying to do. Don't beat yourselves up if you don't meet all your objectives.

## Spectrum of Allies

I find the [Spectrum of Allies](#) model useful here. It places members on a spectrum between "active opposition" and "active allies"<sup>2</sup>. I am assuming (and it is only an assumption) that the people that will be attracted to a new group will be neutral (probably worried neutrals) and passive allies. The aim of the group is to move people anticlockwise on the diagram to become active allies; 'active' not 'activist' note – by active I just mean someone who is doing something to reduce their negative impact on the environment. I am also assuming that allies, passive and active, are more likely to support 'green' measures when the politicians get round to doing something.



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These are modest ambitions. Our main tool for achieving them is information. Members who are concerned or worried neutrals should be able to come to u3a for information that will help them make decisions about their own lifestyles.

CCE groups are probably unique in that they are likely to encounter some opposition (nobody ever opposes Bridge or Jazz Appreciation).

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<sup>1</sup> It may well have a different name. I like the title "Sustainable Living".

<sup>2</sup> See also <https://ensia.com/voices/climate-change-deniers/>: "instead of wasting time trying to convert opponents, we should invest it in motivating passive allies to act".

<sup>3</sup> Diagram from 350.org.

## Startup

There's nothing wrong with just meeting for coffee and a natter, if that's what members want to do. Alternatively groups could be spun off from a specific project (for example, tree planting, a visit to (say) a recycling centre or an anaerobic digester), or from a Study Day.

The person who starts a group may not always be the best person to lead it when it is up and running, so consider having joint leaders.

## Objectives

Suggested objectives for a group are set out below. (Remember, this is for discussion).

1. Seek to educate members of the group, and the wider u3a, about environmental issues.
2. Encourage members to understand their own impact on the environment (using for example the [WWF calculator](#)); share information that allows us to be proactive in reducing it.
3. Ask members to write to the people that invest their money (for example pension funds) and the people that they buy from (for example supermarkets<sup>4</sup>), urging them to make their operations more sustainable<sup>5</sup>.
4. Create a climate (the pun is unavoidable) in which members will support, or at least not oppose, political and social change which addresses the climate emergency.

## Steps towards a Sustainable World

At end of March 2023 Barnet u3a held a Study Day on 'Sustainability', with talks and poster sessions. The text below was produced as a handout for the Study Day and has been emailed to all members of the Barnet u3a. It's a braindump, it works for me, it may not work for you. It is hard to assess what if any effect it had.

*(ends)*

### VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Changes
0.1	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	Draft sent to JW.
1.0	17 <sup>th</sup> August 2023	Minor changes after feedback. Published on website.

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<sup>4</sup> They spend a lot of money trying to find out what we think, so if we tell them they will listen. That doesn't of course mean that they will do what we ask.

<sup>5</sup> The Greenhouse Gas Protocol, a set of widely-used accounting standards for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, categorises emissions into three 'scopes'. Scope 1 covers direct emissions from owned or controlled sources (eg your car). Scope 2 covers indirect emissions from the purchase and use of electricity, heating and cooling. By using the energy, you are indirectly responsible for the release of these GHG emissions. Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions – essentially things that you buy or sell. Although these are corporate accounting standards the basic idea translates quite well to individual footprint calculations I think. Many organisations find that their footprint is dominated by Scope 3; the way that they manage it down is to lean on their suppliers, demanding that they produce (for example) a plan for reaching Net Zero.

# Steps towards a sustainable world

**Tell** your politicians, national and local, what changes you want to see; **write** to the companies and supermarkets that you buy from. **Find out** how your **pensions** and savings are invested; make changes if you are not happy. Work out **your carbon footprint** – use for example [WWF's footprint calculator](#); it will ask how much you fly and drive, what you eat, how much you spend. **Buy carefully**; buy second-hand; buy from charity shops and refill shops. **Donate** to charity shops. **Fly** as infrequently as you can. If you **drive** [check your tyre pressures, take off the roof rack if you're not using it](#). When you buy a new car think about its emissions. **Car share**. **Look up** the carbon footprint of things - Mike Berners-Lee's [How Bad Are Bananas](#) is a good place to start (spoiler alert: bananas are OK). If you like gadgets buy a power meter and a thermal leak detector; get the [NationalGridESO app](#) and use power when it is greenest. **In the house** turn the thermostat to the left; fix drafts; fit a chimney balloon. Read your meters. Help wildlife by leaving part of the **garden** untidy, with a heap of leaves or sticks, and a bug hotel; **grow food**, even if it's just some rhubarb in a corner; compost; tell your garden centre that you don't buy peat. [Foods that are good for you are good for the environment](#), so cut down on beef and lamb, eat [local seasonal food](#), don't buy air freighted fruit and veg. **Try** non-meat alternatives – look at [best vegan burgers](#) and [best vegan sausages](#). Your body won't miss the saturated fat. **Plant a tree** to celebrate the birth of a child or to remember a lost friend or relative: the [Woodland Trust](#) and the [National Trust](#) will plant trees for you for not much money. **Buy a goat** [Oxfam](#) will sell you a one and deliver it to somebody who needs it more than you do. **Repair** things instead of throwing them away use Repair Cafés. **Cycle. Recycle**, especially aluminium. Use both sides of a piece of paper. Whatever you choose to do, please **do** something.

V1.4 © Barnet u3a Climate Change and Environment Group 2023. To contact the group go to <https://u3asites.org.uk/code/u3asite.php?site=1096&page=111837>. Other carbon footprint calculators are available. Other charities are out there. We know that there are newspapers other than The Guardian, but most of them are behind paywalls so we haven't linked to them.