

u3a Name	Ruthin and District
Group Title	Sustainable Living
Group Formed	2019
Leader Name(s)	Nick and Carol Ward
Contact Details	<u>nick.ward1@outlook.com</u>
Website	<u>https://u3asites.org.uk/ruthin/page/99743</u>

Format

In October 2019, two members of the Ruthin U3A called a meeting of others interested in forming a new group, under the heading 'Sustainable Living'. This title was deliberately broad, but also pertinent to individuals and their lifestyle choices. The idea for the group is to inspire members (and maybe through them, their friends and families) and explore the information and tools needed to 'make a difference'.

A list of possible topics was tabled at the initial meeting and those present were asked to indicate their top three priorities for the group to cover. This provided an excellent guide for the group leaders to plan a programme of events for the next 12 months. It was agreed to hold monthly meetings; the most mutually suitable day of the month was selected by looking at when other existing U3A group meetings were held. It was also agreed that the meetings would actually comprise site visits during the summer months.

The idea at that stage was to have a mixture of speakers, films, discussions and sharing of members' knowledge. It was also hoped that some members would volunteer to research a particular topic and then report back to the group. As it has turned out, experience over the next couple of years (hampered by the pandemic) has been that many members are quite passive, being pleased to turn up monthly for an interesting meeting but not being keen on a more active role.

As the pandemic receded, face to face meetings re-started and the agenda for meetings included a 'news' section, where each member present has an opportunity to inform others about things going on, locally or otherwise. This has been successful in encouraging more participation. The group has also held a couple of sessions with members taking on the task of reporting back from an on-line climate change conference held annually in Wales. Another interesting meeting consisted of holding a 'mini-CoP', where willing members gave a presentation on the climate change policies of a contrasting selection of countries. And two very popular films nights have been co-organised, for the public, with the local Friends of the Earth group

The majority of meetings have involved an invited speaker. In general it was found that academics are often very happy to offer a presentation and are usually good at leading a discussion. During the pandemic, meetings were at first cancelled and some momentum was maintained through a monthly news email; and then the benefit of virtual meetings was

discovered, whereby speakers from further afield were willing to address the group. But face-to-face meetings are undoubtedly more popular with members.

Site visits during the summer months have been very popular.

Topics covered by indoor meetings have included:

- Plastics – an attempt to discover some truths / the challenge of single-use plastics.
- Red meat – greener than you think?
- How your food choices impact on the environment.
- Zero Carbon Britain (long-running project by the Centre for Alternative Technology).
- Discussion about options for Wales' Green Recovery.
- Decreasing the environmental impact of 'stuff'.
- Community-owned renewable energy projects in north Wales.
- Energy efficiency in the home and what advice / support is available.
- One Planet Living strategies and how you can reduce your ecological footprint.
- Water efficiency, including behaviours and technical fixes.
- The Crazy Irrational Consumer (or why you don't know why you buy).
- What are the UN COPs, how they work and what they can achieve?
- Climate change: do our individual actions matter?
- Soil health – why should we care?
- Climate Change, CoP26 and what can be done.
- The future of farming in Wales.
- The 'circular economy'.
- Influencing public policy on climate change.