

3rd November 2023 “Our Environment” Meeting notes

N.B. In October we used the meeting to rehearse the “Showcase” activity for the November monthly meeting. This went down very well at the monthly meeting (2nd Nov) and we had good feedback. We decided that from November we’d move on to looking at “Warm homes and energy use”.

November meeting attendees: Lyn, Joan S, Jeff, Joan M, Helen. Apologies from: Tania, Chris. At the start of the meeting we went round the table to get an overview of the condition of our own homes and issues that we personally were interested in.

- Double glazing and loft insulation were standard elements.
 - Modern double glazing has to have trickle vents installed by law – these reduce the sound insulation (and can let rain in depending on the window and wind direction).
- Cavity wall insulation was in some of our properties.
 - someone had been told it was a detractor for selling a house (urban myth?).
 - Pre-1920s houses don’t have cavities and fitting internal/external wall insulation can be expensive/disruptive.
 - Both issues to investigate perhaps.
- All had gas central heating
 - One had ducted air – that used to be common - why is it now out of favour?
- Several of us have solar photo voltaic (SPV) panels with storage batteries.
 - This was seen as a positive investment both environmentally and financially.
- Heat Pumps (air-source or ground-source)
 - No one yet has these. Three of us had/are investigating them.
 - Retrofitting properties seems to be the biggest hurdle – large radiators are needed.
 - There is a lot of conflicting information about them so it would be worth trying to get someone to talk to us about them.
- Electric Vehicles (EVs)
 - Choosing specific EV energy tariffs enables charging when energy is cheaper (overnight).

We decided to focus for the next few months on the following topics – with some volunteers carrying out preliminary research.

- Lyn: Solar panels and battery systems (including heat storage batteries).
- Jeff and Joan S: Infrared heaters.
- Helen: ASHP/GSHPs.

Other topics we could cover over time include:

- How to use our existing heating systems efficiently/effectively (including money-saving smart devices).
- Biomass boilers and wood-burning stoves
- Renewable energy generation
 - wind
 - Archimedes screws
 - wave power
 - biomass boilers, etc.

Helen to look for someone to talk to us on our topics of interest, starting with ASHP installers and Gento housing group (since they build and retrofit properties). Others to follow up on any contacts they find.