South Staffordshire Green Conversation, Wednesday 6ᵗʰ December, Bilbrook village hall

Hosted by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

22 attendees

11 organisations represented:

- Support Staffordshire
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
- Staffordshire County Council
- RSPB https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/support-the-rspb/find-a-local-group-near-you?c=Staffordshire&Page=8
- Friends of Bilbrook https://www.friendsofbilbrook.org/
- Friends of Essington https://friendsofessington.co.uk/
- Kinver Climate Action https://kinverclimate.co.uk/
- Forest of Mercia CIC https://www.forestofmercia.com/
- Bilbrook Parish Council https://bilbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk/
- South Staffordshire District Council https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/environment-and-climate/climate-change
- Natural England https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx
- Transforming the Trent Valley https://www.thetrentvalley.org.uk/take-part/community-action/

Funding

- Existing projects/could do for free – create wildflower meadow
- Big grant pot – could create a memorial garden.
- Smaller pots are easier to apply for and generally quicker decisions
- Partnership project – want to engage with Wildlife Trust, RSPB
- Larger members of Green Network can partner with smaller organisations for large projects
- Biodiversity Net Gain – would like to find someone to support with this funding
- Need to fit the criteria, tweak ideas to funding application

Challenges:

- There are few funds for admin staff/project management, many funds only want to pay for capital work.
- Time it takes for writing big applications is hard on volunteers
- Big pots of funding are difficult for smaller orgs to apply for/manage

Funding opportunities

- Trees for Climate https://www.communityforest-trust.org/cft-current-initiatives/trees-for-climate
- Biodiversity Net Gain https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain

- Severn Trent Community Fund https://www.stwater.co.uk/about-us/severn-trent-community-fund/
- Climate Action Fund County Council https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/Climate-change/Climate-Action-Fund.aspx
- Councillor Funding – https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Your-council-and-democracy/Members/County-Councillors-Fund/County-Councillors-Fund-guidance.aspx
- Starbucks Community Garden fund https://hubbub.org.uk/the-nature-hubs-fund
- Tourism Development Grant - https://stokestaffsgrowthhub.co.uk/projects/tourism-development-grants/
- Support Staffordshire funding page https://supportstaffordshire.org.uk/funding/
- Veolia funds available from April https://www.veoliatrust.org/funding/

Resources haves and needs

Have	Need
Support Staffordshire: • Training • Finding funding • Venue links • Skills, knowledge, advice • Information sharing, local and wider VCS networks	• Promotional materials to share
Friends of Essington: • Local knowledge • Manage funds well • Practical skills • Offers to others • Seedling groups – eg pool/footpath, clearance • Litter picking activities	• Guidance from others • Effective communications easy to read
Waste minimisation SCC • Recycling centre, charity collections • Donate IT scheme • Compost for community groups	• Need to spread messaging
Friends of Bilbrook • Links to district council (South Staffs) • Talks and speakers (eg Sustrans) • Local plans (neighbourhood plans) • Skills – knowledge of how local authorities work (eg planning) • Finding and writing funding bids • Local Walks (RSPB rep), and links to other county and volunteer groups • Tools • Indoor and outdoor spaces	• To network again with similar orgs • Links between levels of council • Collaborative voice and approach to councils and other bodies • Funding peer support workshops • More awareness of biodiversity • Recognition for work • Support through all levels of local authority (3 tiers) – support with communication between departments • Part of a bigger network

• 12 years of experience running outdoor projects (Friends of Bilbrook) • Repair café • Offer advice and networks and scything training • Case study • Knowledge and signposting • Events • Contacts • Keele links – training in energy/decarbonisation	• Costs for membership eg Water Action citizen science monitoring • Directory and case studies (with fixed questions) • Back up and support (helps to know that someone has your back) • Want templates of successful bids
• Influence for government and evidence – Natural England, green infrastructure • Network – south staffs council • Environmental education (Hilton Green and Forest of Mercia) • Community volunteer group • Community engagement • Carbon counting and energy efficiency (County Council) • Empowering communities and race relationships – Kinver Climate Action Group • Funding/ resources for renewable energy (SCC) • Science and retrofit knowledge • Spare money	• What actually works? • Space – land for renewables and nature recovery work • Database for groups, funding and opportunities • Solar panels locally, for community • Access to people with land, and who want trees

Green Network ideas

- People/groups come and present good practise and projects
- Focus on 1 topic at a time
- Co-ordination between SBEN and communities and councils (eg carbon trackers)
- Training for communities to learn retrofit qualifications
- Info about recycling and access to tech
- Emails – short and topical
- List of members with websites
- Willingness for collaboration and joint funding
- Want to know how to engage with local landowners – Friends of Bilbrook have run out of room for new projects on land. TTTV have good examples of this.
- Wider links – eg NHS/social housing (own large amounts of land)
- Use existing networks and mailing lists eg Friends of Bilbrook
- Green Network steering group to use contacts to reach senior staff and decision makers
- Encourage Internal communication within organisations to embed sustainability
- NHS voice is missing – there are strong links to health and wellbeing. Green Network to strengthen existing links to health work via Support Staffordshire
- Networking can't just be online – still need paper copies of information eg Bilbrook Buzz

- Need to engage with groups who are not already involved or have an interest
- How to make people feel welcome
- School networks for information sharing
- Language – how can we pitch to people – link to co-benefits to people (not climate)
- Training – around planning regs and law eg RoWs