

ASHTON HAYES - CARBON NEUTRAL PROJECT LAUNCH - 26TH JANUARY 2006

Summary

The views expressed in this summary have been taken, in the main, from comments made by residents after the launch presentation. In order to get a fuller picture of the general consensus, however, I have included opinions from other members of the community who were not directly approached, but who were bystanders and interjected into my conversations.

A brief survey of residents suggested that any future presentations be more informative by discussing practical ways of how residents can save energy as opposed to just stating energy conservation is required - many people want to do something, but are not sure how to do it. Similarly, those approached felt that more could have been done to make the presentation more dynamic.

The video, provided by Central Government, was well received and appears to have given the project more credibility. It was clear and concise which made it attention grabbing (for all ages) and those interviewed suggested that future presentations should follow a similar format to prevent the key messages being lost.

Equally, residents felt that the Council's involvement was just a forum to voice its environmental agenda on a county-wide basis, rather than how it will be involved specifically in Ashton. In essence, there needs to be greater links between the Council and the Ashton Hayes project.

In terms of the response, many people were impressed with the turn out and almost proud of the village's commitment to making a change. There was a great deal of community spirit and an underlying sense of excitement that this was going to be the first place to go carbon neutral and that Ashton Hayes will set the benchmark that others will follow.

Finally, there were some interesting questions raised on the night which can perhaps be answered in a follow up mailer, pasted to the website or even communicated through a column negotiated with the local press. Additionally, those questioned thought that it is important to maintain momentum between key dates to sustain the interest and dedication of the community.

Summary of Findings

Residents are impressed by:

- The strength of community spirit
- The high level of interest and commitment to change

Going forward, residents' would like:

- More solution orientated presentations on how individuals can make changes
- More dynamic presentations
- Greater clarity of links with Cheshire County Council
- Regular information and involvement

Comments on the night

"I think it was good, but as an individual, you need to know what to do. The presentation helped, but I need to know ways of reducing waste. My daughter has a question: what happens now, will there be any more of these meetings - especially after we have had the survey done by the students?"

Anne Salisbury

"The Council's role as to how it fits in didn't come across clearly. There seems to be lots going on, but it didn't say how that links in with Ashton. It's all about the attitude of mind - changing mindset. Our kids do a lot of the things they have suggested to save energy, so it's not really going to change anything we're doing at home."

Colin Bergstrand

"Nothing new in terms of the presentation apart from the initiatives of Cheshire County Council. So I suppose how do you make it, or as much of it as you can, interesting? It was nice to see faces of the sponsors. There was a mixed audience, so some of the speakers could have had more impact tonight. The video had more impact as it was visual and it was interesting to see that the government had put it together specifically for us.

"In terms of saving energy, I have blinds at home and I'm conscious I need to change to curtains to make a difference. There's not enough being done to inform people. When I was at school, it was all about recycling and 25 years later it's only really being accepted as common practice. To educate the younger generation is the key."

Year five and six teacher of the Primary School

“The Council will learn as much from Ashton as everyone else. We tend to think of reducing waste in terms of money and packaging. Now the mindset is to talk of waste in terms of energy.”

Richard Stradling

“It was informative. A lot of it we know already, but it reaffirms what you should be doing that perhaps you’re not. It was also good to see such community turn out.”

Julie Mercer

“It’s a start. More will come when the baseline is done - we’ll know where we’re starting from and going to which will be interesting. The question is: Ashton is a conservation area. How do we stand with photovoltaic panels and wind turbines if everyone starts getting them? How will the village react to them and how will the Council deal with it?”

Paul Richards

“The Local Authority’s input was wishful thinking and not really action orientated. On a ‘what we need to do’ basis, the presentations were not really very informative at all. As an initiative, it’s really good news and I think this has been reflected by the turn out. There is a ground swell of motivation. The video was really good.”

Julian - village resident