

Greening the Rissingtons - EcoChurch

The meeting in 1st June went well, with those who came engaging fully with the agenda. Many thanks to you, particularly Andrew Maclean, our district Counsellor, Nikki Ind, the Chair of the Council (from Tetbury East & Rural) and Gray Elkington. It was encouraging to have three Rissington Parishes represented (Great, Upper and Little).

I was able to announce that we are now at or above Bronze status in 4 out of the 5 categories, and a small step away from achieving Bronze in the fifth and final one – so it won't take much extra before we can claim the award. However, it may be some time before we can take that last step.

Andrew Maclean gave a very interesting talk, highlighting the main issues we face ecologically – emphasising (among other things) the state of the housing stock and the problems of improving it to a decent environmental standard; not least due to the CDC Planning Department's apparent unawareness of the need for environmental issues to be part of the planning considerations, and the restrictions on listed buildings, and, indeed, on all buildings in a conservation area. He also highlighted the importance of curbing global warming, especially for our neighbours in less developed countries whose livelihoods – and sometimes very lives – are at serious risk. Andrew also mentioned that the decrease in biodiversity in the UK can be seen all around us and made some simple suggestions as to how we can all help alleviate this. For example, if we work with our neighbours in leaving wild/uncut areas in our gardens, and especially if they can be adjacent, this forms a wildlife corridor which enables small animals and insects to spread and increase. He also highlighted the importance of “hedgehog holes” in fences, and the increasingly well-known grass cutting regime dubbed “No Mow May”. Individual small local steps can increase biodiversity. I mentioned that St John's are putting this into practice as part of our EcoChurch work by having an area of the old church yard protected from cutting until late July. This area will be surveyed annually, and we will report on what species are found (see below).

Gray Elkington (from Little Rissington) then said a bit about the scheme he has set up - #pristineparish – which is only partly about litter-picking – but mainly about what he refers to as ‘parish keeping’. (Think normal housework, compared with which the occasional all-village organised litter-pick is the ‘spring cleaning’ end of the housework.)

There were lots of questions and comments, - far too many for me to remember – ranging from lack of maintenance work on the road gullies and associated drains, to “no-mow May” (and why this is important) via the conflicting advice/regulations given to home owners of listed buildings in Great Rissington who wish to make their homes more sustainable in terms of energy use but were prevented doing so by what were perceived as outdated planning/heritage restrictions and the use of weed killer in Great and Upper Rissington by grass-cutting/maintenance contractors - seen as detrimental to those trying to increase biodiversity by allowing verges etc to grow. People were also concerned that chemicals may be blowing on to gardens, which is undesirable.