

On Wednesday 1st November, the Staffordshire Green Network – a collective of environmental and infrastructure organisations, including VAST, Support Staffordshire, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, and more – hosted a **Green Conversation** at the Bridge Centre.

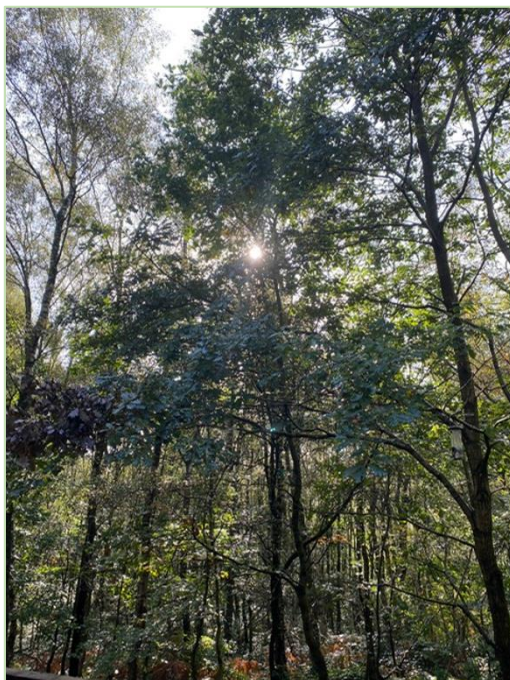
This networking event was for voluntary and community groups in Staffordshire interested in 'green' issues - whether they were already a 'green' organisation or looking to take their first steps into sustainability. The purpose of the event was to facilitate discussions around:

- What attendees would like from a "green network"
- How the VCSE sector can become more sustainable
- Support and resources already available
- Examples of organisations already taking action towards sustainability

Paula Rowcliffe from Birches Head Get Growing – an organisation based at the Bridge Centre, whose work focusses on the idea of “kindness as currency” – presented attendees with some facts and figures to consider regarding the carbon footprint of both their work and their personal life, using the example of the **carbon cost of a flight** – flying from Manchester to Mallorca has the same carbon footprint as boiling the kettle for 2647476 cups of coffee!

Interested in checking your carbon footprint? Try the WWF's carbon footprint calculator here: [WWF Footprint Calculator](#)

Paula also discussed how her love for nature drives her to be more sustainable, sharing a poem inspired by an autumnal walk:



Autumn Of Love

Cradled gently on a swinging crib
Gazing in to wooded bliss
I feel the autumn sun wash down
And land a filtered kiss.

The ferny floor invites you in
Through sycamore and birch
And takes away all trace of frown
The answer to your search.

For in that canopy of leaf
The sound of rook and dove
Within that softly swaying breeze
Our autumn of love.

Paula Rowcliffe

Some fantastic and in-depth discussions were had around each theme throughout the day, but some reoccurring points for each topic included:

Green Network:

- The need to include people with different levels of knowledge and different opinions
- The need to connect in with local government and businesses
- Organisations are keen to be involved in a network, to discuss ideas, increase local connections, and have access to expertise.
- The need for online connection alongside the network – via a Facebook group/Whatsapp chat etc.
- The need for **visible impact** – groups want to see some real action as a result of the network, not just a discussion space.

Funding:

- Groups found that there was a significant amount of action they can already take for free/with their existing funding – including swapping resources/skills/ideas with other organisations, using second hand and refurbished technology (or donating old tech of their own), addressing staff training and knowledge, and making small changes in the work they're already doing.
- With small pots of funding, groups would like to invest in staff and volunteer training, build partnership projects, and focus on sharing skills and knowledge.
- With larger pots of funding, groups would love to see more community green spaces/growing spaces, offer environmental consultancy services, and support both their own organisation and partners to reduce their carbon emissions.

Resources:

For the resource discussion, we focused on what attendees already **have**, and what they'd **want/need** to become more sustainable:

What they have:

- A variety of expertise across the network
- Good relationships with other groups, businesses and council
- Training available to other organisations
- Access to donated goods and services (e.g through Totally Stoked)
- Access to community spaces, including community gardens and kitchens
- Support from local infrastructure organisations

What they want/need:

- Increased communication between organisations
- More concrete processes to share resources
- Increased shared access to community spaces
- Clearer guidelines/more shared information on topics like insurance, land ownership etc.
- A "green directory" – a place to view all local environmental projects and services.

Want to have your say? Share your responses to the Green Conversation themes on our Jamboard here: <https://jamboard.google.com/d/1Vz-8vpFzuFyee1SqHsP7B5BI9Lom24ZRd1fVvWZdSc/edit?usp=sharing>

Or attend one of the upcoming Green Conversation events:

Lichfield Green Conversation, Wednesday 29th November:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lichfield-green-conversation-tickets-740766511577?aff=oddtcreator>

South Staffs Green Conversation, Wednesday 6th December:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-staffs-green-conversations-at-bilbrook-village-hall-wolverhampton-tickets-755306400777?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Staffordshire Green Conversation (online), Wednesday 13th December:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/staffordshire-green-conversation-online-tickets-759684395477?aff=oddtcreator>