

Minutes from first meeting of Corner Green sustainability sub-committee

Date: 20 October 2022

Present:

- Fiona Colbeck
- Jill Cochrane
- Mac Cochrane
- Rose Abdollahzadeh
- Tristan West

Absent:

- Nik Thuesen

1. Areas of discussion/ developing a future agenda

Committee members proposed areas of focus for the sub-committee's future agenda:

1.1 Localized renewable energy generation

1.1.1 Solar energy:

Enquiries by MC & JC approx. three years ago found that CG houses need four solar panels which requires roof reinforcement, and installation of new pipes and boiler system. Deemed to be uneconomical at the time, but potential for reviewing as technology improves.

1.1.2 ground source heat pump technology:

Research by FC indicates that ground source heat pumps require multiple bore holes per household and there is an ongoing noise issue. FC will have a survey carried out, but currently the scale of the project looks unfeasible.

1.1.3 renewable sources for communal energy needs:

Committee members discussed the potential to focus on smaller-scale local energy production for communal energy use including:

- Garage electricity supply and security lighting
- Communal path lighting

In particular it was noted that the garage roofs could offer space for solar panels which could generate small amounts of electricity.

RA fed back to the group advice from sustainability expert Jonathan Smales: the national grid will transition to renewable energy within the next ten years, and for houses in urban settings and connected to the grid (such as CG) it will become inefficient to generate renewable energy locally. However, regular visual evidence of renewable energy generation has beneficial impacts on individuals' overall sustainability habits and increases their feeling of connection to the natural world.

This indicates that there would be merit in focusing on transitioning to renewable sources for communal energy needs.

1.2 Electric vehicle charging points

Creating points for electric car charging is an issue that will need to be addressed in the near term, as electric cars become the norm. It was acknowledged that this would be a contentious issue for residents, as it requires a rationalizing / organization of parking space which is currently unallocated and without any restrictions on numbers of cars per household.

The main CG road is being re-laid in circa 2024/25 and it would make sense to lay electricity cables and charging points at this time.

In addition to street-side charging points, RA asked if charging points connected to each garage would be an option to explore, but the spacing could be too tight.

Both TW and RA expressed an interest in car hire club options (such as Zip car); this type of provision could negate the need for residents to have second cars, or even a car at all, considering future trends in e-bikes, e-scooters and smaller mobility options.

1.3 Biodiversity, gardening and communal green space

Committee members expressed an interest in the remit of the committee going beyond carbon reduction, to include supporting biodiversity and supporting nature with our communal green areas.

Proposed ideas included:

- Introducing a water butt by the bottom garages which could be used to water communal planting;
- reinstating the old compost heap for garden waste;
- ask Seasons to employ more eco-friendly approaches (eg. leaf blowing and edge cutting) or find an alternative garden maintenance contractor
- consult CG resident Juliet Cairns on expertise re gardening for biodiversity
- allow lawns to grow in areas which are not used for sitting/ playing.

FC highlighted that her membership of the gardening committee allowed for a good cross-over point and communication channel between the two committees.

1.4 Light pollution

JM and FC suggested the committee address the path lighting as it is both intrusive and inefficient. Ideas included swapping over to energy-efficient light bulbs; reinstating original 'mushroom' downlights; and making the lights motion-sensored.

1.5 Food and deliveries

FC also raised the issue of the number of deliveries to CG, and the associated carbon output. The committee's remit could also include looking into better coordinated food deliveries and shared suppliers (e.g. Oddbox) to make deliveries more efficient.

2. Purpose and aims of the sub-committee

The inaugural committee members agreed that the purpose of the committee is to work towards a set of concrete proposals and recommendations to take to the whole of CGRS for wider discussion and approval. The committee may be directly responsible for then implementing or project managing some of the agreed proposals, but some others may fall to other sub-committees or the Directors.

Ideally, we will develop an action plan that is a mix of both major projects with long lead times and detailed costings, and others which are cost-neutral and/or 'quick wins'.

TW proposed we think about the sub-committee's aims as primarily future-proofing Corner Green to make it fit for purpose for generations living here in circa 50 years' time.

3. Overcoming potential barriers to change

Committee members agreed that the sub-committee should seek to work in partnership with other local Span resident societies; for example, the Keep residents' association is already installing electric car charging points and will be a good source of information.

Members discussed seeking inputs from a range of experts, and enlisting the advice of estate agents to understand how some of our proposals could potential impact house valuations.

Members also agreed that a short survey to the other CG residents would help us understand the appetite for change and the prioritization of our agenda.

Action points in advance of next meeting:

- RA to propose date of next meeting in early December
- RA to propose summary text of purpose and focus of committee, to be discussed at next meeting

Proposed agenda for December meeting:

1. Review minutes from previous meeting
2. Discuss and finalise draft text on remit and aims of committee
3. Share any reflections, research or interesting updates related to the committee's work
4. Go through each area of minutes and allocate follow up tasks
5. Agree date for next meeting