

'What Way Now' for Salisbury Transition City?

What we know about STC

Salisbury Transition City (STC) is a Community Interest Company set up in 2015 in response to the national Transition City movement; founded to help local communities cope with climate change and the 'transition' away from fossil and finite energy sources.

STC was intended to provide: "a hub and focus for all local organisations concerned with environmental, global warming and future lifestyle issues to enable our community to work towards a more sustainable future". STC has had 4 main areas of activity, some of which have been wildly successful and others which may have not lived up to their full potential:

1. Advice

STC utilises its experienced members to advise both the public and small community ventures on sustainability issues.

2. Self-contained project groups;

- Waste and recycling
- Energy (now Salisbury community energy)
- Hearts and minds,
- Local economy,
- Environment,
- Food,
- Transport
- Water

3. Lobbying

Since its inception STC has undertaken a lobbying and active role in liaising and consulting with Local Government and the planning process (that in the longer run can make crucial differences to the 'sustainable landscape' of South Wiltshire), meeting regularly with the local MP, Salisbury City and Wiltshire Council officers and counsellors.

4. Annual Sustainability Event

Intended to provide a showcase for local green and sustainable initiatives and start-ups to connect with the Salisbury audience. Unfortunately, this event is on hold this year.

Background

When STC started in 2015 its founder members were largely from a local political councillor or business background. The original organisation was highly structured and generated the central organization, around which sat self-contained project groups; for example the waste and recycling group worked with BID to secure a company to collect and recycle business waste, produced an alternative recycling leaflet and worked with Wiltshire Council to seek ways to make Salisbury plastic free.

In recent years a number of the original STC members have inevitably moved on and some of the project groups have folded or lost focus. In 2019, STC discontinued all remaining project groups, instead deciding to nominate a single project for the year that all members would jointly participate in (i.e. Transport, recycling, air purity etc.). However, this approach has failed to find its feet and build on the good start that STC made in its early years.

There is currently a feeling that STC needs an injection of new members, with new purpose and a new direction, rather than continuing with a mandate that in light of the extraordinary developments over the last 2 years, no longer seems entirely fit for purpose.

What does all this mean for Salisbury and STC?

The trouble with responding to interwoven strands of our modern societal crises is that we believe change can only happen by acting globally in a globalized world. A seemingly impossible task for an individual (well, until Greta came along). We have learnt that the impact an individual can make, acting alone, is tiny, a drop in the ocean. This disenfranchises people and makes them feel powerless to effect change. Local politicians and local authorities appear hard to approach and unable to act – and most seem to think that change is impossible, certainly at a local level.

There have been many calls following the COVID-19 lockdown to ‘build back better’ and finally enact a ‘Green New Deal’. What does this mean? As with the declaration of a Climate Emergency, these fine words are not yet backed up with concrete policy proposals that have the backing and understanding of the public.

STC needs to fundamentally change the discourse and show people that when we act together at a local level, we can affect impressive far reaching change. And now is a time when we might both be believed and convince people to try. Local voluntary groups and initiatives have been formed to respond to COVID within our communities, from community care groups, to gardening or plant share groups, and we may be able to utilize these groups to help communities adapt and build resilience to the climate and ecological crisis. We need to capitalize on the dawning realization that mental health and wellbeing may be more important than economic wealth, and that both are improved when we work as a community and spend time in nature.

Certainly, we believe that there has never been a time like the present for relaunching Salisbury Transition City to the residents of Salisbury. It is our sincere wish that STC should be available to everybody; responsive to the most vulnerable; and inclusive of everybody no matter what their beliefs or background. A group that believes in Salisbury and its residents and a cleaner, greener future – and crucially, that we have a plan to get there.

Immediate Considerations

The remaining Core Group members of STC have reached out to enlist a new set of people keen to continue building a sustainable future for Salisbury. At present, and in light of the cancellation of the Sustainability Fair and the restrictions on meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to meet you in person and set out our agenda. We have tried to briefly set out our initial proposals below, to start work on immediately; however, this is expected to be a very iterative process, dependent on feedback and input from existing members as well as the public.

Immediate Proposals for Action

Public consultation

Carry out an interactive face to face (possibly virtual faces) consultation with all sections of society in Salisbury to understand their concerns and to listen to their ideas. Test out our assumptions, gauge the potential vehicles for community activism.

Eco Hub

We are developing a plan for a Salisbury Eco Hub. Initially to be set up as an online service which can link sustainably minded shoppers with local green alternatives as well as provide community discussion space, facilitate online workshops and create original content to promote sustainable practice in everyday life. The long term vision is to develop this online space into a physical community space, meeting venue, ethical retail outlet and location for STC offices within the City Centre, it is expected that this can be run independently if successful (possibly in a similar fashion to the launching of Salisbury Community Energy after its initiation by STC). It will include:

- Community start-up and small business advice service and desk/computer/internet space
- Organic, vegan Café and social space
- Repair café (incorporating lessons in DIY repair jobs)
- One stop shop for networking and independent advice on low energy green homes/lifestyles
- Room Hire (Groups, Businesses, Individuals Running Events)
- Share Shop /Library of Things
- Shop Sub-Letting to Eco businesses

We will start with costing up a business plan, develop a test site and contact potential stakeholders who would benefit from their business being listed on the virtual hub. This will be followed by identifying potential venues and talking to City Authorities to see how a physical hub can be viable and add value to the city centre. The Eco Hub would provide an extraordinary opportunity to come face to face with Salisbury residents and develop those crucial community links.

Sustainable Salisbury Festival.

Liaise with Salisbury City Council regarding dates when it might be possible to (safely) celebrate our city and all things sustainable and to relaunch STC. We would like to do this in conjunction with Salisbury Council, BID, Wiltshire Creative and Salisbury Cathedral (which was the first 'Green Diocese' under the Arocha churches initiative and our Bishop is a member of the Environment Committee in Government). We would like to have some more concrete proposals at this stage on which to get further feedback from the public.

Networking

We would like to join with the newly formed Wiltshire Climate Alliance and create strong bonds with local environmental groups of all types, so that we can ensure that we speak with one voice to County and City Authorities, Government bodies and National Institutions and Companies on the Climate and Ecological Crisis and that we don't subvert or contradict each other's efforts. We cannot achieve much alone but when we work alongside each other, learning from each other and playing to our individual focus and strengths, we can achieve

change at County as well as City level.

Sarah Prinsloo – Proposed Chairperson

Sarah has worked in East Africa for 25 years, protecting ecosystems inside and outside national parks, working with surrounding communities, government and industry. She has some experience with a variety of community-based organisations and small businesses as trustee or board member and is keen to learn if this is of any relevance whatsoever back in a Salisbury context. Sarah is passionate to ensure that any ventures (or adventures) she is involved in are aimed at those in the community most in need of support.

Proposed Treasurer - Christian Lange

Christian retired from Wiltshire Police in 2016 having completed 25 years service. His last posting was as Area Inspector in charge of policing in the Amesbury Community Area. Christian is now one of two Directors running 'All The Kit limited' a relatively small but successful sound, lighting and events company which he set up several years ago and caters for festivals and large parties. Whilst Christian has not held the position of treasurer before he has experience of running the finances of his company.

Bradley Thompson – Proposed Secretary

Bradley is a Customer Experience Executive for a large pension platform and is responsible for designing, implementing and overseeing their vulnerable customer programme, working alongside charities and regulators to safeguard and support those who may be living with vulnerabilities. Bradley is an avid believer in social justice and doing the right thing simply because it is the right thing to do. He has previous experience in sales, management and worked as a specialist investment technician vetting various investment vehicles for signs of fraud and financial crime. Bradley has a keen interest in graphic design and has a degree in media production.

Proposed Data Controller - Benji Goehl

With a commitment to co-operative principles and a background in mechanical engineering, Benji Goehl formed the solar energy company *Sarum Solar* in 2004, where he gained experience in sales, marketing and financial management. Benji's main employment is a directorship in a property management company, and he was until recently Operations Director for the social enterprise Co-cars, looking after a fleet of hire-by-the-hour cars across the South West. Last year he initiated Salisbury Repair Cafe. If he's not tinkering in his workshop you can usually find him at his allotment.

Suzanne Ruggi

Suzanne Ruggi has a media background, formerly working for the BBC and more recently for Insight Iraq. She has been helping with communications for Extinction Rebellion-Salisbury. She is studying a short course in Public Relations having completed courses in Web editing and Social Media Marketing. She loves dragging her children out for walks.

Eva McHugh

Eva has been actively involved with Extinction Rebellion Salisbury for the last year and has been a key member in setting up the newly formed Wiltshire Climate Alliance. Having spent time as an environmental activist, she has had the opportunity to meet local likeminded individuals and has been drawn to the great sense of community she has found all around Salisbury, but has also been sobered up to the limitations of protest alone. Thus, being part of a movement looking to provide the solution feels like an obvious next step.