Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability News

Sadly as I write this article the pandemic continues to rage across the world causing many deaths and much suffering to individuals and economies. We have had a brief respite in the UK over the last two months, but infection rates are rising again across Europe. The management and eventual destruction of the virus understandably requires a vast amount of political attention and this means we have to lobby for environment changes with more vigour!

PAWS continues to work with the Parish Council over issues of increased tree planting in the area, increasing the number of cycle racks in the villages and working to create a climate action plan which will enable Pangbourne to become a carbon neutral environment. So whilst we are unable to run our usual programme of events we do plan to carry on meetings virtually where possible. Jackie Hoskins, our Chair has worked with Jo Smith our Secretary to propose that for the October meeting we ask our speaker to present virtually and for November we are hoping that people will be able to view our chosen film and come together via zoom for discussion. Please check on our website and Facebook for information about these events.

However, we are hoping to have our ten year celebration on September 20th outdoors at the Whitchurch maze. This is the date of our apple pressing day and we are seeking advice as to how this might still go ahead safely and observing social distancing. This will be a picnic event and we really hope this can take place. Look on our website and Facebook page and look out for posters.

We will definitely have our planning meeting on January 14th 2021 hopefully meeting in Pangbourne Village Hall otherwise via zoom.

One thing lockdown enabled me to do was to get to grips with some reading and I know many others have enjoyed having more time to look at podcasts, TED talks, books etc. There is a wealth of information about living well in our environment and why it is essential we put our relationship with the natural world at the top of our priorities.

I returned to *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl at the beginning of lockdown. In this book Frankl describes his experience of life in four Nazi concentration camps where he laboured between 1942 and 1945. His parents, brother and pregnant wife perished. A psychiatrist, his observations of other inmates and his own experiences led him to argue ‘that we cannot avoid suffering but we can choose how to cope with it, finding meaning in it, and move forward with renewed purpose’. He contends that our primary drive in life is the discovery and pursuit of what we find personally meaningful.

It seems to me that this is very pertinent to how we cope with the ‘not knowing’ element of our experience of Covid-19. It is extremely frustrating not to be able to plan for the immediate future, but it does give us an opportunity to explore what matters to us and help us to know where to direct our energies.

In respect of our environment and the difficulties facing us in making the changes necessary to prevent the worst outcomes of climate change I think it is useful to understand how and why we have arrived at our present environment crisis and recommend two books by Naomi Klein: ‘*This Changes Everything*’ and ‘*No is not enough’* which is described by Emma Thompson as ‘An absolute must-read this book is inspiring and energy-giving. Like a little sun’.

The recently published ‘ *The Future We Choose surviving the Climate Crisis*’ by Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac is reviewed by Mark Ruffalo as ‘ inspirational, compassionate and clear. The time to read this is now’. This book is a passionate call to arms from the former UN Executive Secretary for Climate Change and the Senior Political Strategist for the Paris Agreement. Practical, optimistic and empowering, this book is a book for every generation, for all of us who feel powerless in the face of the climate crisis.

One of the most disturbing facts of the Covid-19 pandemic is how deeply we are divided as a nation and a world. The immense inequality of life experience is very relevant to the damage caused by climate change. The most disadvantaged, the poorest people suffer the worst effects of climate change by virtue of where and how they live in the same way that they are suffering during the pandemic. The Sunday Times best seller, ‘*Utopia for Realists, and how we can get there*’ by Rutger Bergman offers a way in which society can be constructed with visionary ideas that are implementable. Jeanette Winterson describes it as ‘a practical set of ideas for how the next generation can do better’.

And lastly! A book I have related to during lockdown as I have tended my allotment and garden is *The Well Gardened Mind* by Sue Stuart-Smith, a psychotherapist. Edmund De Waal describes it as ‘A compelling and deeply moving account of how profoundly our well-being can be affected through contact with gardening and the natural world’, and Isabella Tree writes: ‘ Riveting, inspiring and often very moving…A lively, compassionate exhortation for us all to get our hands back in the soil!’

Many of us have enjoyed the beautiful weather of this spring and summer and have had time to listen to the birds, spent more time outside noticing our fantastic environment, recognising how much better we feel from being in nature, but we also recognise we are in the middle of a battle to protect our natural world. Join us in PAWS to do what we can locally, and join up to Greenpeace, WWF, Friends of the Earth, Woodland Trust, BBOWT, 38 degrees to lobby and many other groups to support others working so hard to care for our source of life.

Heather Thorne

# Visit our website www.pawsg.com

# and join our Facebook group: PAWS (Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability)