

**AGM 2025 Meeting Minutes: Congleton Sustainability Group**

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025    **Time:** 6:30 pm **Location:** Congleton Town Hall

**In attendance:** Heather Seddon (Chair), Cathy Dean, Patti Pinto, Kay Wesley, Linda Aston, Peter Aston, Ruth Benson, Heather Pearce, Jackie Kay, Suzy Firkin.

**Apologies:** Peter Hall, Peter Ranson, Linda Aston, John Sherwood, Margaret Gartside.

**Next AGM: June 2026**

1.	<p><b><u>Welcome</u></b></p> <p>Heather welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes were accepted from 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>
2.	<p><b><u>Annual Report – Acting Treasurer</u></b></p> <p>Many thanks to Linda for sending in the yearly accounts prior to the meeting, which have been audited.</p> <p><a href="#">View the accounts up to April 2025.</a></p> <p>The Current and Deposit accounts hold funds for various groups. It receives and pays out grants for projects in Congleton for groups that do not have their own accounts.</p> <p>A grant of £100 was successful from the Margaret Williamson fund to help pay for the small expenses to run the CSG accounts. It pays for my printing costs, Gift for the Auditor (Heather Davis) and small grants which do not fall into any of the grants held by different groups. e.g seeds. We also earn interest on the deposit account. NB interest rates have dropped, plus the balance has also dropped.</p> <p>The main grants are slowly being spent. The OSM grant is awaiting the new piece of Land on Canal Street to gain planning permission.</p> <p>The Tree planting grant has signs to be made in the pipeline.</p> <p>The Repair Cafe has relocated to the Masonic Hall and is looking for a volunteer to oversee the account and to distribute the proceeds decided by its members.</p> <p>The Healthy Neighbourhood Grant is due to be received from Cheshire East for a buddy and befriending project.</p>
3.	<p><b><u>Chairs Report</u></b></p> <p>It has been another successful year for Congleton Sustainability Group.</p> <p>First, I would like to thank Linda Aston for her continued support as our treasurer. Another year has gone by, and Linda has diligently produced monthly summaries of expenditure and income and has also arranged the annual end-of-year audit of our books.</p> <p>I would also like to thank Cathy Dean, the Congleton Partnership Officer, who produces Agendas and Minutes – this support has been invaluable to the group in keeping things running smoothly.</p>

Linda and Cathy played a pivotal role this year in facilitating the sale of the Vale Allotment site; their unwavering support was essential to bringing the project to completion.

As CSG is an umbrella group, bringing other environmental groups together in the town, we have many successes to report on, and here are a few:

### **Congleton Hydro and Solar**

The brilliant team behind Archie the hydro-electric generator at Havannah Weir has received planning approval for a second hydro-electric scheme at Congleton Park, which is great news. This will be a perfect location for members of the public to see the archimedian screw in action. Two other locations are also being scoped out – at the Washford Mill and Eaton Bank weirs.

The team's solar initiative saw Astbury Golf Club benefit from the installation of solar panels last year which are performing as expected, and two further Congleton sites have benefitted in 2025: Havannah Primary School and the Daneside Theatre.

Congratulations to all the volunteers for their hard work and perseverance, especially in getting the planning application for the Congleton Park hydro-scheme over the line and for their sheer ambition to create local sustainable energy.

### **Trees for Congleton**

This year the fantastic Trees for Congleton team completed their target of planting over 30,000 trees and woody shrubs in and around Congleton. Launched in November 2019, the project has been a labour of love to make our town greener and more biodiverse. Hundreds of fruit trees will also provide free fruit in the future too.

Thanks must go to everyone involved, in particular Ruth Benson, who has coordinated literally hundreds of volunteers, including school children, community groups, businesses, farmers and local residents – and also Patti Pinto, Glen Williams and Margaret Gartside who have been the core volunteers putting in hundreds of hours of volunteering. Their achievement was so amazing that the team even won a BBC 'Make a Difference' Award in the Environment category.

The team will continue to perform maintenance on the trees and hedgerows already planted, to establish them in their first few years. Once established, the area is formally handed over to Congleton Town Council for future maintenance. So please do continue to help out with the volunteering sessions.

### **Vale Allotment Site**

This year marked the successful completion of another long-term project: the transfer of the Vale Allotment site to the Vale Allotment Association, securing its future as allotments in perpetuity. I would like to thank Guy Benson of the Vale Allotments and Gardening Association, whose invaluable contribution helped bring this project to fruition.

### **Congleton Food4Free Group**

The fairground carpark space, the Bee Garden in Congleton Park, and the War Memorial Hospital garden all continue to be maintained to provide fruit and herbs for free. Again, thank you to all the volunteers involved, and to Patti Pinto, who coordinates activities.

### **Congleton Repair Café**

The Repair Café team have had another successful year with their monthly Repair Café events on the last Saturday of the month. The group has a new venue at Congleton's Masonic Hall on Mill Street.

### **Other Environmental Successes**

#### **Congleton Climate Action Group**

Thanks go to Jackie Kay from the Congleton Climate Action Group (CCAG) who regularly attends CSG meetings to keep us informed of their activities. The group has had a very successful year. Congleton Sustainable Travel has done some excellent work in removing barriers for cyclists and other wheeled travelers on the Biddulph Valley Way.

#### **Congleton Town Council and Congleton Museum**

The 2024 and 2025 Green Fayres were both a big success. Stalls from local environmental groups were busy talking to residents and the Repair Cafe and a clothes swap event took place inside the town hall. The 'bee people' and 'hedge people' also brought a lot of fun to the events!

The town Council also manages the biodiversity project which is developing to improve the town's wildlife.

The Congleton Museum's iNaturalist scheme has been a massive success. In just 4 days in April this year, 28 observers made over 1,500 observations of plant species in and around Congleton, confirming 267 species. The observations have continued and over 400 species have since been confirmed.

Many thanks to everyone who has supported the various environmental initiatives over the last year. CSG is an important part of maintaining and developing the town's environmental credentials.

It has been an honour and a pleasure to be the Chair of Congleton Sustainability Group over the last few years. I leave you in the capable hands of our new Chair, Heather Pearce, who will be a great ambassador for the sustainability cause.

Many thanks for your support over the years.

Kind regards,

Heather Seddon

#### **Actions from group discussion –**

1. Update Trees For Congleton website with the latest numbers, circulate of end-of-project report. Renew the domain name.

	<p>2. Massive backlog in registering TPO's. Organise a social media campaign on looking after trees #loveyourtrees, a potential project in succession trees. Suzy to contact Emma Hood. Arboricultural Officer at Cheshire East.</p> <p>3. Eco schools – St Mary's is now qualified for its 9<sup>th</sup> Green Flag. At one time, all primary schools were involved in the Eco Schools project. Contact all primary schools; most now have a forest school teacher or sustainability lead.</p>								
<p>4.</p>	<p><b><u>Election of Officers</u></b></p> <table data-bbox="164 582 798 750"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th><u>Elected</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><u>Chair</u></td> <td>Heather Pearce</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Treasurer</u></td> <td>Linda Aston</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Secretary</u></td> <td>Cathy Dean (Partnership Officer)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The group expressed their thanks to Heather Seddon for all her work chairing the group since 2022, in particular, getting the sale/purchase of Vale Allotments completed.</p>		<u>Elected</u>	<u>Chair</u>	Heather Pearce	<u>Treasurer</u>	Linda Aston	<u>Secretary</u>	Cathy Dean (Partnership Officer)
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	<p><b><u>End of Meeting. 7:30 pm</u></b></p> <p>The next AGM 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026.</p> <p>The next ordinary meeting will be on February 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026.</p>								