

## **Climate Solutions Discussion Group** - report by Kate Bailey (July 2023)

In July we had a most enjoyable meeting at Hazel's house. We agreed to progress Jane's 'Pollinator Park' proposal where, by planting wild flowers, we will make a positive difference to nature recovery for insects and birds. We set up a small steering group to support Climate Action NE, a not-for-profit organisation that works with communities. Possible locations were discussed - the upper boundaries of The Demesnes, the railway path to Lartington, the 'social prescribing' Health Park at Gainsford. Whichever site is chosen, the owner's support, public access and future maintenance will be important issues to resolve.

We recently circulated an email to all Teesdale u3a members with more information about Climate Action NE and Pollinator Parks. Their website includes lists of wildflower species you could plant in your own garden. If any members would like to be involved in our project, or can suggest a local site that might be suitable for a small wildflower meadow, or a community orchard, or a native hedgerow planted for birds -

- please phone Jane 07816 845 557 or Kate 07867 683 195

Our main topic this month was around food systems, climate and health. We listened to a fascinating talk by Henry Dimbleby about his book 'Ravenous' which expands on his recent 'UK National Food Strategy' for the government. He is an engaging speaker and he clearly explained how, post-war, highly efficient ways of producing grain were developed to feed rapidly growing populations of humans and livestock, but with very damaging consequences for the health of soils, ecosystems and water supplies.

Ultra-processed food products are known to encourage over-eating and to be harmful in terms of obesity, diabetes and heart disease but, despite frequent medical and public health warnings, their consumption in the UK continues to grow. Our group had an enthusiastic discussion about how we personally could eat better to improve our own health and that of our families. Suggestions include encouraging children to grow fruit and vegetables and helping them to cook a delicious meal with their own produce; checking ingredients on packets (don't forget your reading glasses!) and avoiding food products that contain chemical additives that you don't use in your own kitchen.

Henry Dimbleby's talk at Oxford Martin School is highly recommended - listen online:

<https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/events/ravenous/>

and also a recent Panorama programme on BBC i-Player:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001mp67/panorama-ultraprocessed-food-a-recipe-for-ill-health>