

Climate Solutions Discussion Group - report by Kate Bailey

We all enjoyed a very interesting meeting, thanks mostly to our Geology Group contributor Martyn. We talked about global oceanic currents and atmospheric winds around the polar regions that have an impact on the UK climate. The changes of direction of the Polar Vortex, the 'cold-snap' fluctuations in the Jet Stream, the slowing of the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic, and the strengthening of the El Niño north-bound warm currents from the Pacific all affect our weather. Meteorologists predict longer, wetter and more dreary winters for our region, with the potential for unhealthy 'ozone spikes' at ground level.

We're all aware that ozone gas (composed of 3 molecules of oxygen) occurs naturally in the upper atmosphere, where it forms a protective layer that shields us from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. Ground level ozone is "created by chemical reactions when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, refineries, chemical plants and other sources chemically react in the presence of sunlight"(www.epa.gov/). Ozone is heavier than oxygen and is harmful to health for humans, vegetation and ecosystems. Even relatively low levels can have noticeable health effects as ozone irritates the airways and can cause asthma and lung disease, particularly in younger and older people.

Moving on from the negative impacts of climate change, we talked about the potential for us to support a wildflower and pollinators project in Teesdale, and the plan to visit flowering meadows near Ravenstonedale that will be at their best in June and July. We also discussed different ways of rewilding parts of our garden lawns and our successes and disappointments.

Thinking of climate solutions as always, Hazel led our discussion of readily available domestic products that are less harmful to the planet and reduce plastic waste. Products worth trying include Naked Sprout toilet paper (bulk buys online or from Ocado), Cheeky Panda paper and tissue products, baby wipes etc (online), Splosh cleaning products, with refills that are ordered online and diluted at home, Stardrops white vinegar spray that cleans everything, and Ecover eco-products. Suppliers include the shop 'The Orchard' opposite the Co-op in Barnard Castle that sells refillable bottles and refills.

And ending on a cheering theme, Annie talked about the 20-year global study that has demonstrated the positive difference that conservation projects make to wildlife, and the significant benefits provided by long-term funding for nature recovery and rewilding.

Image: Borders Forest trust at Carrifran

