

# PLANET SUTHERLAND

## The Beginnings



I can't quite recall the date we started. I guess it's when I went along to an Ardgay Community Council meeting to express my concern about the climate crisis. With their support and that of a few friends, we had our first

Carbon Café. It was all very informal, just chatting about our concerns. Further meetings and discussions developed the name and with huge thanks to our very own graphic artist, we developed this great logo.

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### Carbon Cafes:

Weds 12<sup>th</sup> Feb, 7.30pm.  
Lairg Community Centre.

Sat 29<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2pm,  
Invercassley Store & Tearoom,  
Rosehall

### Film & Discussion Evening:

Weds 11<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm,  
Bonar Bridge Hall  
A Simpler Way - Crisis as Opportunity

*Helping Everyone Do More  
To Help The Planet*

## What we've achieved so far...

Put simply, the goal of Planet Sutherland is to help everyone do more to help the planet.

In the space of 6 months, we now run Carbon Cafés in several locations and are expecting this to spread further this year. These are informal gatherings where we can share ideas and concerns and perhaps develop project ideas. The Cafés now run in Ardgay, Lairg, Rosehall and Golspie.

We are also running various community and business projects. So far, these include: apple trees, farm plastic, recycling, food co-ops, growing, film & discussion evenings and a business survey & talk. New ideas come up all the time.

We've also been spreading the word far and wide, building relations and partnerships with various organisations.

## Apple Tree Project

We were very grateful to receive some money from the Ardgay & District Community Council via the Beinn nan Oighrean Windfarm Community Benefit Fund for our wee apple tree project.

We initially had thought about a community orchard, but then considered that *baby steps* would be good to start with, and so, decided to simply plant trees in private gardens.

Essentially it's still an orchard - just distributed throughout the community.

Sixteen trees were purchased from The Appletreeman in Perthshire, and weather permitting, these will have been planted in February.

We have still to discuss where we go next with our community orchard. We may look at other types of fruit or nut trees or perhaps repeat the project in other areas. There's certainly plenty of interest in Creich, Lairg and beyond.

Much is being discussed about Growing, in general, and we'll be working with other community groups to help deliver the best ideas for the area.



*Some lovely Beauty of Bath Apples.*

## Growing More

A number of growing initiatives are on the go from a Highland Council Grow Your Own project to the Peas Please project helping us to eat more veg.

We also have a wee team working on restoring the Lairg Primary School Polytunnel and are investigating many different growing opportunities in the area. (Not forgetting - the great work that the Growing Group are doing with Gledfield School.)

## Recycling improvements



*We all love crisps!*

Small changes help.

Crisp packets are now collected at The Hub in Bonar and at Gledfield and Lairg Primaries (pupils only of course), at the VGES office in Golspie and another private location.

We also collect soft plastics (e.g. bread bags and outer wrappers) at the Carbon Cafes for onward recycling.

Dental products are also collected for onward recycling the Carbon Cafes.

## Farm Plastic Recycling

A major project that we've been working on over the last few months has been about looking for solutions regarding the Farm & Croft Plastic Recycling issue.

At the beginning of last year, burning of plastic waste on farms was prohibited, but with no alternative solution being put in place.

There are a handful of recycling companies that take the waste and either send it on for recycling or process the plastic and convert it into useful items such as pig arcs.

However, at present, all of the companies are a significant distance from any area of Sutherland, and of course, very distant from the more remote villages.

To progress with this issue, we have been speaking with many people, including farmers, crofters, councilors, SEPA, MSP's and the Scottish Crofters Federation. There is, at present, no workable solution.

Our study concluded that the best option would be to create some new payment system and utilise the existing local recycling centres. Not surprisingly, this isn't straightforward to implement would need support from the Highland Council and SEPA.



However, we are also in the process of building a project proposal to broaden the scope of our thinking. Interface is a company that brings business and academia together and they may well be able to help create innovative solutions to this problem.

We are therefore working with Interface and the Scottish Crofters Federation to hopefully take this project forward and find a cost effective and efficient solution.

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## Business Survey & Resource Efficiency Talk

Taking time out of working "in the business" to change procedures and habits is hard.

What's really exciting though, is that making changes that benefit the climate crisis can also improve business profits! Both expert help and grants are available.

The first step is understanding. Our short, two minute survey will help us to determine the problems we're all having and also to find out the best time and place to hold workshops.

Next, we'll organise talks from Resource Efficient Scotland (and others) and individual assessments can also be arranged.

Eco Business Survey  
Save The Planet  
& Save Money!

The survey can be completed at [www.planetsutherland.com](http://www.planetsutherland.com).

The talk will be done either end Feb / start March.



## Film & Discussion Evenings

We're now planning our third Film & Discussion Evening. The first showed *The Race is On* by Paul Maple, exposing the truth behind what we're being told. After the film we had a great time chatting live with Paul.

The next was *What a Way To Go, Life at the End of the Empire*. Lots of different opinions and debate followed over a wee cuppa.

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## Planet Sutherland – Take One Step

We made a movie!

We all know how hard it is to bring a group of people together and to all pull together in the same direction.

Well, it's fair to say we've had some, let's say, heated discussions, at our cafes.

There are so many different issues to consider, it's hardly surprising that we're going to have strongly held passionate views on one topic of another.

It's also difficult to perhaps convey the reason Planet Sutherland exists.

Our aim is to make a start at some projects without being hampered by those areas where difficulties may exist. It's about finding topics that we can all get behind and making a start there.

We are all on our own journeys of discovery and many of us will change our opinions from day to day and as we learn more about the difficulties we face.

Our video: Planet Sutherland – Take One Step, aims to convey the ethos of the group and to help us all - take that one step.



**Take One Step**

*The movie explains what this climate crisis is and helps us to figure out how to take that first step.*

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## What's Next

Well, truly, who knows where this journey will take us. There are certainly many exciting ideas arising. We're also working closely with The Lairg Learning Centre and The Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust, and are really looking forward to ideas and opportunities arising from members and from new partnerships.

Why not come along to a Carbon Café, the Eco Business Talk, or our Film & Discussion evenings and share your thoughts and ideas. All welcome.

Please also feel free to get in touch at any time by phone or email with new project ideas or for a chat.

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