

# Building a Greener Village

John Mercer  
Chair of Eco-Hub  
July 14th 2015

Gamlingay

Possibly the Greenest  
Village in the UK



# Gamlingay

- **Where?**
  - Western Edge of Cambridgeshire bordering Bedfordshire
- **Size?**
  - Approx 4000 citizens in 1600 homes
- **History**
  - Karl Marx thought it was just the sort of hovel where the workers revolution will begin. “A deadly lassitude, a hopeless surrendering to filth, reigns in Gamlingay.”
- **Today – The greenest village in the country.**
  - We have an Eco-Hub, a community Turbine, extended allotments, extensive PV usage and power generation
- **Control of our own local resources**
  - Ultimately, each village is only a parliamentary statistic
- **Tomorrow**
  - - Re-learning our relationship to the natural world and the rural landscape
  - How did we ever forget to bake, grow, fix and swap things?

# Why Build an Eco-hub ?

- **Aims and Outcomes:**
  - There was no Village community centre – it had closed down
  - A new Centre had to be:
    - Self sufficient for power,
    - Open all the time
    - Open to all
    - Multi use.
    - Part of a programme of Engaging and educating a community
  - Outcomes for the local people
- **Find the heroes!**
  - Most villagers are neither for nor against – they simply don't know enough to form an opinion – needs leadership
  - Politician have not changed much in 30 years of Climate threats – and they never will – it's up to us.
  - Its important not to let the press form public opinion – fomenting conflict even when there is none.

-

# Gamlingay Eco-Hub

- Fund Raising – many sources
- Section 106 money
- Committed Councilors,
- Committed Green activists
- A source of funding to be tapped
- Making full use of the space – PC, Library, Nursery, fitness, arts, dance etc....
- Now building phase 2 extension to accommodate more business use.
- The New Eco-Hub generates £5K a year in surplus power
- It running at 60% occupancy and is self funding
- Makes all its own heat, electricity, hot water and is warm, light and pleasant to be in.
- Investment cost in technology £150K
- Payback – 8 years.

Always Open – Come and drop in



# Managing the Eco-Hub - Issues

- It's not easy being green
- Strong Strategy and mission
- Access for all through varied rates
- Fiscal prudence
- Links to hinterland
- Users:
  - Sports and fitness
  - Arts
  - Political
  - Health
  - Businesses
- Break- even aims
- Maintenance requires a careful plan
- Sinking fund keeps it going at £21K p.a.
- Phase 2 to accommodate growth
- And offer alternative spaces
- Trustees and volunteers
- Charity Status

Always Open – Come and drop in

# Gamlingay Community Turbine

- Funded by local villagers and businesses
  - Offsets 300 tons of carbon each year
  - Generates 16% of Gamlingay's needs
  - Generates £6K for the community every year for twenty years
- 
- **Outcomes:**
  - Sunshine Pre-school - Project to build bird feeders and teach the children about wildlife
  - First School Association -Project to tidy the front of school play area with better storage facilities
  - Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust - Maintain Gamlingay Wood and regenerating Sugley Wood
  - Gamlingay Allotments - Project to extend their Community Orchard
  - Hatley St George Church - Project to install a composting toilet
  - Sir John Jacob Almshouses - Project to upgrade the heating systems and install Photovoltaic panels
  - Forward Gamlingay! -To help continue their Bike Bank scheme for another year



# What Next?

- Transition towns – relearning the skills we need
- Permaculture – growing locally reducing carbon miles
- Infrastructure for more local working with better internet and warm spaces (Hub Phase 2)
- **Questions?**