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Dear Store Manager,

How green are our local supermarkets?

I am writing from the award winning, community-led charity, Low Carbon West Oxford (LCWO) which was set up after the summer floods of 2007 to help combat climate change by reducing our community's carbon footprint (www.lowcarbonwestoxford.org.uk).

In the light of the recent International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change, which gives us 12 years to prevent dangerous climate change, we are writing to our local supermarkets to ask what progress you have made, and what your future plans are, to help reduce carbon emissions and environmental harm.

Local supermarkets make up a significant proportion of our community's carbon footprint and have the power to drive significant and positive change among residents and consumers. In 2015 we invited the Co-op, Tesco Express, Aldi's, Waitrose, Sainsburys and M & S to a local event: 'How Green is your supermarket?', to explain their policies to us and what actions you are taking to help reduce your contribution to climate change.

We were pleased to hear from the Co-op, Waitrose and Sainsburys that they take this issue seriously. We were disappointed that no-one from Tesco Express, Aldi or M&S was able to join us.

Local residents made a number of suggestions and requests relating to energy use, renewable energy, sourcing, green food choices, packaging, fair tax, local leadership and legislation (see the meeting note below for further details).

This agenda is really important to many of your customers living in West Oxford. We are especially interested in knowing at this time:

- a. What you are doing to help reduce meat consumption in the light of the IPCC's recommendation that we significantly reduce or eliminate meat from our diets. Recent research, including from the University of Oxford, shows that how meat is presented, displayed and positioned, as well as smaller portion sizes, can help reduce consumption.

https://theconversation.com/five-ways-to-encourage-people-to-reduce-their-meat-intake-without-them-even-realising-105762?fbclid=IwAR13T8hHSVFXFP6i1vVHL-TzY_RpyMG6XbR_Zxjj37MbYMlec-0QlrFeyBo

<https://www.phc.ox.ac.uk/news/reimagining-point-of-purchase-may-reduce-the-demand-for-meat>

There is also a growing body of evidence about the health benefits of reduced meat consumption.

- b. What progress you are making in reducing plastic waste? The positive example of Britain's first plastic-free supermarket zones opening in North London, outlined here, shows that going plastic free is possible: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/11/07/britains-first-plastic-free-supermarket-zones-open/>. You might consider, for example, becoming a location for refillable washing products, which would be both profitable in itself and a way of drawing customers into the store.

We would also like to take this opportunity to let you know that next year we hope to develop a public ranking of local supermarkets' performance on a number of key indicators relating to your carbon emissions and environmental impact. We will be approaching you to discuss the indicators with us in Spring 2019.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Mayne
Committee member
Low Carbon West Oxford

Note from LCWO's 2015 local panel discussion: How green is your supermarket

Low Carbon West Oxford recently held an open meeting called 'How Green is your Supermarket' to find out what our local supermarkets are doing to reduce their carbon emissions and help residents make greener food choices.

All 6 local supermarkets were invited: the Coop, Tesco Express, Aldi's, Waitrose, Sainsburys and M&S. Waitrose and Sainsbury's attended and the Coop sent apologies and a copy of their environmental report.

Sainsbury's explained that it made commercial sense to reduce energy use and that they had reduced their overall carbon emissions by 16.9% between 2011-2014 despite a growth in shop area and sales. They'd done this by using solar PV and designing their buildings to be energy efficient for example by using the cold air from fridges to also cool buildings. They achieved zero waste to landfill in 2011/12 (with one store completely powered by food waste) and reduced their own brand packaging by 14.4% between 2011 and 2014.

Waitrose told us its local store has a BREEAM assessment of "Outstanding" for the building including all LED lighting and 100% green electricity and solar PVs on the roof. By the end of March 2016 they aim to have halved packaging and increased the amount that can be recycled. They offset home deliveries by planting trees with the Woodland Trust. Since 2013 they have sent no food waste to landfill.

There was a lively discussion with local residents. Residents' additional suggestions included, among other things:

- *Sourcing* – source goods not just from the UK but locally; put a symbol on air freighted goods (M & S do this); put carbon labels on goods; and do more to influence their suppliers.
- *Green food choices* – promote veggie 'dine in for two' deals and do price promotions on fresh fruit and vegetables.
- *Packaging* –there is still far too much packaging. Customers should be allowed to bring refills and leave packaging at the supermarket
- *Fair tax* – Get a 'fair tax label' (The Coop has one). Big companies gain unfair competitive advantage if they avoid tax which can put local shops out of business.
- *Local leadership* –join Low Carbon Oxford and share learning with other local organizations.
- *Legislation* – support green legislation to legally oblige all supermarkets to reduce food.