

advice on ‘quick and cheap wins’ to affordably reduce energy use in their homes. The impact was felt quickly, with the village’s overall carbon emissions dropping by 20 per cent within the first 12 months. However, emission reductions then plateaued over the next two years. To maintain progress, the village needed to produce its own renewable energy.

The opportunity came in 2010 with a £400,000 government grant. A community energy company was established to take the plan to the next level. Solar panels were installed on the roof of the primary school, where lessons were already involving pupils in the project, and on a newly built low-carbon sports centre. Organisers said, “Working with the village primary school was ideal as young people can be inspired to make a difference. They have ‘pester power’ over parents and relatives and, of course, they represent the future.”

There was also help from local academics, as a resident of Ashton Hayes and professor of sustainability at the University of Chester, Alexander helped guide the project. The university has incorporated the scheme into its masters courses and monitored results closely, lending residents’ efforts credibility and accountability. Data and findings have also been published online for others to learn from. While Alexander believes the journey has been just as important as the end goal, he says the ‘big vision’ of carbon neutrality is what has inspired so many. This ambition is now firmly embedded in the official Neighbourhood Plan, and the group’s sights are now set on raising enough money to turn the village inn – currently earmarked to be developed as housing – into a shared, low, carbon community asset.

Despite the attention the village has received, those leading the low carbon charge are modest about their success. “There are hundreds of groups across the UK doing similar things,” says Alexander. It may be easier in geographically defined communities, but suburbs of towns and cities have local identities and a sense of community, so there’s no reason why they can’t do the same thing. Individuals and households can achieve a lot but working together provides a real sense of collective action. The whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

31. Choose the best title or heading for the passage.
 - A. Villagers Pull Together for Future
 - B. Village Needs Help for Fund-raising
 - C. Villagers Stop Using Electricity
 - D. Villagers Go Carbon Free by 2020

32. What has been the key to change in the village?
 - A. Money saving
 - B. Local support
 - C. Investment
 - D. Lots of visitors

33. How did the community begin with the plan?
 - A. By making little changes
 - B. By attending lectures
 - C. By investing money
 - D. By big building projects

34. What does Alexander think made it easier for this group?
 - A. Getting lots of money from the government
 - B. Being in the primary school
 - C. Having plenty of university support
 - D. Being in a village

35. What does ‘irked’ mean in second paragraph?
 - A. Pacified
 - B. Overjoyed
 - C. Frustrated
 - D. Removed