**The Didcot Powerhouse Fund**

**Fuelling Better Futures**

Rachel Starer

Didcot has been my home-town for 26 years, during which I served as a GP at Didcot Health Centre and I have now retired.  My two daughters went to school in Didcot, and until recently, I was a trustee at SOFEA, a local charity.

Over the past 30 years, the town has virtually doubled in size, but the character of the place and its people remain staunchly the same. The Didcot families for whom I have cared have remained in the neighbourhood over many generations.

My experiences living and working here have shown me that the people of Didcot are proud of their town and are wonderfully creative in developing new strategies to help themselves and their community. Sustainable Didcot, the Warrior Gardeners, who have created community gardens on waste land, the Community Choir, that is open to anyone who wants to sing, the formation of a self-help group of parents of children with autism, are a few examples of organisations set up by and for the local community. All are run on a shoestring.  Through my experience as a doctor, I have realised that such initiatives reduce reliance on medical services by providing other avenues for people to find solutions to loneliness and isolation whilst greatly enhancing our town.

Didcot is situated within some of the loveliest, most accessible countryside in Oxfordshire, by foot and car. Yet, when accompanying my children’s primary school classes on visits to Wittenham Clumps, I was amazed and dismayed to realise that a number of children had never visited the countryside, seen cows and sheep before or experienced the joys of a picnic.

We have so much within, and on the doorstep of, our town and so much potential that can be realised with the willing participation and enthusiasm of the local people.  With support, we can enhance the lives and experiences of our community.

As for me—my retirement plans include continued mentoring and teaching at the Medical School of Oxford University , continuing my role as trustee to Sobell House Hospice and providing my expertise to Asylum Welcome in the development of material to enable the local Afghan asylum seekers to access and make appropriate use of NHS services.

I hope to find time to pursue my passions for supporting the environment, pursuing interests in mycology (study of fungi), gardening, classical music, reading, sewing, walking our dog and engaging with my wonderful family.