

CLIMATE CHANGE!

WHAT CAN YOUR COUNCIL DO?

This document is intended to help Town and Parish Councils address the massive environmental challenges facing all of us. This is not an exhaustive list of actions but is intended to help councils put carbon reduction, carbon sequestration and the environment at the heart of all policy and decision making. This climate emergency is providing all of us with an opportunity to look at exciting, new policies and actions that may save money and build stronger, more resilient communities.

THE BIG 5 OBJECTIVES

Declare a Climate Emergency

A hugely powerful statement to make to parishioners showing commitment to support other local councils and adding to the wave of communities demanding that Westminster takes a meaningful lead on addressing climate change.

Form a Climate / Environment Action Group

Form an climate action group including councillors, local experts and representatives of local groups, to focus on addressing the environmental crisis, explore ideas & prioritise actions, and feedback to regular full council meetings.

Inform and educate

It is really important to inform our local community of the environmental crisis we are facing. Many of the changes needed to avoid runaway climate change have the potential to be transformative for our community bringing people together and empowering them to envisage a safer and better future.

Short-term actions

Actions that can be taken almost immediately for little or no cost, and that will have an immediate impact

Longer-term goals

Projects that may take more resources to achieve (primarily time & money) or need planning ahead.

SHORT TERM ACTIONS

- Agree to produce a climate action plan to reduce CO2 emissions. Use a carbon footprinting guide to measure your council's current carbon usage and set annual targets to become carbon neutral by 2030. <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/guides/carbon-footprinting-and-reporting/carbon-footprinting/>
- Switch to a **renewable energy supplier** for all council run buildings / street lighting etc.
- Install **LED / low energy bulbs** in all council run buildings / street lights
- Become a '**dark sky town**' and turn off street lights after 12pm
- Actively work to **reduce consumption**, reduce waste and recycle. Use recycled paper & environmentally friendly cleaning products in all council facilities.
- Commit to using **LOAF ingredients** (Local, Organic, Animal friendly, Fairly traded) at council functions. Make it a policy not to use disposable cups, plates or bottled water.
- When awarding **contracts for goods or services**, recognise potential carbon emissions as another element to be considered alongside price. Source locally wherever possible.

Medium to Longer Term Actions

Communication

- Create reliable and regular communication via a council web site, social media and the local press to **share & exchange information** with your local community, on how they can take positive action, where they can source environmentally friendly products and be involved with assisting their community to reduce its carbon emissions.
- Act as a voice for the community to **lobby for action on climate change**, raise the profile & share lessons with higher levels of government. Lobby your MP, and Westminster for all initiatives that will support your community to reduce carbon emissions.

Policy and Planning

- Develop a ten year **Climate / Environment Action Plan**, in consultation with local community.
- Create and regularly review a legally binding **Neighbourhood Development Plan**.
Consider including policies which promote **high standards of energy efficiency and include renewable energy provision for all homes and businesses** e.g. all new homes to be certified to Passivhaus (http://passivhaus.org.uk/what_is_passivhaus.php) or Net Zero Carbon Building (<https://www.ukgbc.org/ukgbc-work/advancing-net-zero/>) standards.
Include provision for Clean Energy Schemes (wind turbines, solar arrays), and electric car charging points.
Ensure that the neighbourhood plan includes policies to prevent installation of oil or gas heating systems in new homes or businesses as per government strategies.
- Press for **planning policy changes** at the county and national level, to promote zero carbon development.

Energy / Water

- Commission a thermal imaging study to highlight poor **insulation in local homes and businesses**. Research and promote grant schemes / other funding to enable people in the community to retro fit their homes with better insulation.
- Install **renewable energy sources** on community buildings including community solar panels, passive solar water heating.
- Identify and liaise with organisations working with **vulnerable people** in your area, who may be able to help them access support, e.g. grant funding for insulation, renewable energy.
- Work with your unitary or County Council and the Environment Agency to **reduce water use** and take **flood prevention** measures

Management of parks, green spaces, roadsides & pathways

- A Climate Action Plan** should include a plan for the maintenance of all council managed parks, green spaces, roadsides & pathways, and how they can be used for **carbon sequestration, to promote biodiversity, and support local food production**.
- Climate Action Plan** should include a **pollinator action plan**.
- Cut less grass & verges – re-wild areas instead. Plant wild flowers & meadows. This will reduce the need to mow (thereby reducing carbon emissions and cost) and will help support biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and our struggling insect populations.
- Plant trees** for carbon capture & food.
- Use parks and green spaces for **community growing** projects. Education is key. Involve local schools in this.
- Install bird & insect boxes. Another ideal project to involve local schools.
- Stop using weedkillers** and other chemicals in parks, green spaces, roadsides and pathways. Explore natural methods of weed suppression or allow the weeds to thrive and enjoy them – many are beautiful and important food for wildlife. Hot water weed suppression systems could be purchased and shared between councils.
- Employ or train gardeners, linesmen or groundsmen in **regenerative gardening** techniques. Also ensure contractors understand and practice regenerative gardening.
- Make **play areas more natural** needing less maintenance – encourage children to use their imagination instead and allow for risk taking. Children need to learn these skills.
- Consider creating wild life areas in closed cemeteries

Business / local producers

- When awarding **contracts for goods or services**, recognise potential carbon emissions as another element to be considered alongside price. Source locally wherever possible.
- Encourage local businesses & producers to declare a climate emergency and work towards becoming carbon neutral. Develop a council '**kite mark**' or award scheme to reward local businesses / producers who are committed to working on this and celebrate progress.
- Promote local businesses that offer **refill** options and support **repair café & skills share** projects
- Encourage use of locally grown produce and **actively support local producers** who have adopted organic practices.

Tourism / Recreation

- Find ways to reward tourists that arrive by **bus / train / bike**.
- Encourage responsible tourism.
- Install **water bottle refilling stations** in village or town centres.

Transport

- Install **bike racks especially at bus stops** & display a map with safe walking / cycling routes within the local area.
- Promote **public transport**. Encourage and lobby for better and cheaper bus links to train stations and surrounding area.
- Promote **car-sharing**.
- Encourage electric vehicles** in town and village centres with charging points – perhaps free parking for electric cars?
- Install community **electric vehicle charging points** for households that have no off-road parking.

Thank you to the many groups and individuals that have contributed to the ideas in this document especially Transition Helston. Everyone is agreed that making changes to reduce carbon emissions is challenging though the possibilities for meaningful action are unlimited, and only bound by your creativity and effort! We wish you and your council well in taking the first steps to a safer and healthier future for us and especially our children.