

CLIMATE EMERGENCY – WHAT NEXT? SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR COUNCIL

There is no doubt that a climate emergency is taking place. However, at every level in society, there are things that can be done to help limit the damage that is being done and help prepare our communities. This document is intended to help your Council take appropriate action and do its part in addressing the massive environmental challenges facing all of us. In consultation with other groups we propose several actions, in five broad groups (there will be more detail on these later on).

This is not intended to be, nor can it be, an exhaustive list. The possibilities for meaningful action are unlimited and are only bound by our creativity and effort! However, in essence, we are asking you to put carbon reduction, carbon sequestration and the environment at the heart of all policy making, now and in the future. Far from being an attempt to stop your Council from doing things, it is an opportunity for the council to focus on new and exciting policies and actions that may save money (which could be reinvested in offsetting carbon emissions) and will help build a stronger, more resilient community. We need to move quickly on these actions, however. There is much work to do and only 12 years to do it in. Your Council will need to look at removing barriers to positive change, so that we can work as quickly as we can and engage as much of our community as possible in this process. Whilst this process should not rely on volunteer groups but should be initiated by you, financed and supported by yourselves, Cornwall Council, public and possibly private funds, it would be useful to undertake a neighbourhood audit of different groups / organisations within and around your neighbourhood that can work with you on this.

Form a Climate / Environment Action Group

- Form an action group with members from your council, officers, local experts and representatives of local groups, to focus on addressing the environmental crisis, explore ideas & prioritise actions, and feedback to the monthly full council meeting.

Inform and educate

- It is really important to inform our local community of the environmental crisis we are facing in a way that empowers them to take action themselves, come together as a community and support the council in their efforts. Many of the changes we need to bring in have the potential to be transformative for our community. Keep the message positive and empowering. Focus on the benefits this will bring. Aim to get the whole community and all age groups involved.

Short-term actions

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

Longer-term goals

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

WHAT WE CAN DO RIGHT NOW.

In support of the previous broad goals, here are some of the things that your council can do right now:

- Form a **Climate / Environment Action Group** comprising of councillors & officers, local experts and representatives of local groups to focus on addressing the environmental crisis, explore ideas and prioritise actions and feedback to the monthly full council meeting.

This group could put on a family friendly talk and open event to educate and engage the public, welcoming ideas on how to reduce dangerous emissions within the community.
- Commission a neighbourhood & Town Council **carbon energy audit** as soon as possible, so that we have a general baseline to work from and to track and celebrate progress. Charmian Larke (01872 864488 / charmain@atlantic-energy.co.uk) can do this for free under Cornwall New Energy's business assist programme. Local councils are not eligible, so it would need to be arranged through a local CIC or a local business.
- Agree an **annual percentage reduction up to 2030** for area, understanding that it will become progressively more difficult to find ways of making reductions and that we need to plan ahead for this. Net zero carbon by 2025 has been suggested by scientist. Cornwall Council are hoping to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- Switch to a **renewable energy supplier** for all council run buildings / street lighting etc. (CC lead)
- Install **LED / low energy bulbs** in all council run buildings / street lights etc. (CC lead)
- Become a '**dark sky town and village**' and turn off street lights after 12pm and change to LED if not already. (CC lead)
- Organise an **Energy Saving Pop-up Advice Surgery** for the local community. Community Energy Plus (fergus@cep.org.uk 01872 245566 ext 221) a Truro-based charity, have offered to provide this for free. They can also potentially offer low energy light bulbs, draft excluders, insulation, smart meters, heating systems and boilers for those on benefits. Group buying an option for others.
- Actively work to **reduce consumption**, reduce waste and recycle. Use recycled paper and 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

- Use the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) model of working within the community. See www.sharedassets.org.uk for some great examples.
- Create a reliable and regular means for **sharing and exchanging information** with the local community, on how they can take positive action, where they can source environmentally friendly products, join community-led initiatives etc. This could include you council website, social media, regular column in local press, noticeboards, leaflets, town meetings etc.
- Undertake a **neighbourhood audit** of different groups / organisations within the area that can work with the council on this. Reach out to these groups and seek to engage with them. Set up regular communication channels.
- Engage in regular contact with **Cornwall Council** to lobby, find out what they're doing and report back. Make sure everyone is in the loop. Pass on ideas and give feedback.
- Act as a voice for the community to **lobby for action on climate change**, raise the profile and share lessons with higher levels of government. Lobby your MP, and Westminster for all initiatives that will support your area (and Cornwall) to reduce our emissions, now and in the future.

Policy & Planning

- Develop a **Climate / Environment Action Plan**, in consultation with local community/ neighbourhood planners.
- Review currently available standards of high energy efficiency and renewable energy and use these to set minimum requirements when in consultation on all planning applications, e.g. all new homes to be certified to Passivhaus (http://passivhaustrust.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 prevents developers from installing oil or bottle gas heating systems.
- Use revenue received from **Community Infrastructure Levies** (if applicable) to invest in carbon emission reduction.
- Press for **planning policy changes** at the county and national level, to promote zero carbon development.

- Consider what **assets** belong to the council or may become assets of the council under Cornwall's devolution plans. How might longer-term, more ambitious projects be funded?

Energy / Water

- Commission a thermal imaging study to highlight poor **insulation**. Research and promote grant schemes / other funding to enable people in the community to retro-fit their homes with better insulation. Explore the bulk purchase of loft insulation and research schemes available.
- Support or develop local **clean energy projects** and other positive initiatives, particularly community led with funding or council backing. Explore opportunities for funding initiatives and share these with the community. Community Energy Plus in Truro may be able to help as may local renewable energy installers. (Note, grants / subsidies for renewables are due to be improved soon hopefully).
- Install **renewable energy sources** on community buildings including community solar panels, passive solar water heating and possibly wind powered sources.
- Identify and liaise with organisations working with **vulnerable people** in our area, who may be able to help them access support, e.g. grant funding for insulation, renewable energy.
- Install community **electric vehicle charging points** for households that have no off-road parking. Some communities are providing charging points attached to lampposts (which already have an electricity supply – see <https://www.zap-map.com/london-street-lights-converted-to-ev-charge-points-for-trial/> for example).
- Work with South West Water and the Environment Agency to **reduce water use, increase water storage** and take **flood prevention** measures.

Management of parks, green spaces, roadsides and pathways

- Climate Action Plan** should include a plan for the maintenance of all council managed parks, green spaces, roadsides and 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**:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/grow-nature/about/pollinator-action-plan/>

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/grow-nature/funding/>

(Advice and funds available for schemes to increase habitats suitable for pollinators and to increase tree cover etc)

- Stop future hedge clearances.** Cut less grass and verges – re-wild areas instead. **Plant wild flowers and 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 and food – many trees, in public spaces. Make the most of our beautiful walls and plant fruit trees nearby. Make this a community project. Set up a ‘Tree Guardian’ scheme – involve young people in this.
- Encourage **community growing** projects. Education is key. Involve local schools in this, potentially utilising Bosavern Community farm, the PeAT development and the Incredible Edible Todmorden as an example of food planting across the area <https://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>.
- 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.
- Train groundsmen locally in **regenerative gardening** techniques. (CC lead).
- Make **play areas more natural**, needing less maintenance – encourage children to use their imagination instead and allow for non-dangerous risk taking. Children need to learn these skills.
- Explore how any **cemeteries** can be used to enhance biodiversity. Promote **green burials.**

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 and producers to declare a climate emergency and work towards becoming carbon neutral. Develop a local '**kite mark**' or award scheme to reward local businesses / producers who are committed to working on this and celebrate progress.
- Promote and use local businesses that offer **refill** options (*e.g. Stones*).
- Engage with the local landowners and farming community** regarding regenerative farming methods, (eg reduction of chemical use and increase in permaculture) rainwater runoff, ammonia reduction, biodiversity, tree growing and timber production, agroforestry, silviopasture, fruit and nut production, chemical use etc. South West Water / Cornwall Wildlife Trust's 'Upstream Thinking' can help here. Help them too with new rural payment education when released and applications where needed. Encourage organic, seasonal production and urge large land owners such as Bolitho and Falmouth Estate to promote renewable energy use, carbon capture, biodiversity and further insulation of property etc.
- Encourage use of locally grown produce and **actively support local producers** who have adopted organic, regenerative practices.

Tourism / Recreation

- Promote **responsible tourism**. Work with holiday rentals, B&B's and hotels to encourage guests not to leave rubbish in the environment and preferably bring plastic back with them when they go to the beach. Recommend local tourism-related businesses join CoaST (www.coastproject.co.uk), a Cornwall-based social enterprise working to support those involved in responsible tourism. Educate the tourist through such networks about where different recycling can go, why only showering for a few minutes is important, where to buy eco, locally sourced goods, bus info – all important to hit targets.
- Develop a **localised climate specific visitor charter** (<https://www.coastproject.co.uk/search/coastvisitorcharter>) and educate them through maps showing good practice on noticeboards.
- Find ways to reward tourists that arrive by **bus / train / bike**.
- Encourage **cleaning of beauty hot spots and noticeably bad areas** involving the whole community.
- Encourage and promote any PeAT style projects where tourists and others are taught plant growing techniques.
- Ask land owners to put **water bottle refilling station or signs saying water safe to drink in order to reduce the use of plastic bottles**. Do the same in suitable locations yourselves or promote those happy to offer water with signage.

Transport

- Install **bike racks** and display a map with safe walking / cycling routes within the local area. Local cycle hire shops, if there are any, may be able to help with this.
- Promote **public transport**. Encourage and lobby for better bus links to train stations and surrounding area. Establish bus hopper service to the coast, until public transport becomes more affordable. Invest in enhancing community bus services and replace them with electric vehicles when possible.
- Promote **car-sharing, with disclaimer** (e.g. <https://liftshare.com/uk/community/cornwall/> & <https://pastyconnection.com>).
- Encourage electric vehicles** in town centre with charging points in suitable, accessible locations.
- Install community **electric vehicle charging points** for households that have no off-road parking. Some communities are providing charging points attached to lampposts (which already have an electricity supply – see <https://www.zap-map.com/london-street-lights-converted-to-ev-charge-points-for-trial/> for example. Sockets attached to any community solar schemes are sensible if there is parking nearby.

Adaptation

- Read **Adaptation Sub-Committee's UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Evidence Report** which sets out the priority climate change risks and opportunities for the UK:
<https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017/>
- Read the **UK Government's (DEFRA) report on Food Security**:
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmenvfru/243/243.pdf>
- Start thinking about how **fuel and food rationing** may affect our local community (*these are distinct possibilities*). What do we need to start putting in place now? **Support community growing & local producers** engaged in **organic regenerative** agriculture eg developing more wind sheltered allotments. Initiate talks to the wider community on food waste and preservation.
- Support **repair café, GOFA & skills share type** projects. Establish an electrical repair link with local college, potentially within apprentice scheme.

- Support networks** for people coming to an awareness of the climate / environment crisis we are facing.
- Consider implications for activities within the town – **schools, elderly, healthcare** – when adaptation is needed.

All of these actions actively contribute to **good health, good soil, good communities, positive carbon management, good economics**. That is to say, each action can create **multiple benefits**. By doing this your Council would be engaging in the **circular economy** and **doughnut economics**. Read more about this here: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/12/doughnut-growth-economics-book-economic-model>

We would also be setting an extremely good example for others to follow and follow they will.

Thank you.