

A Climate Emergency; A Response by Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council

Introduction

At the Parish Council (the council, PC) meeting of March 2nd, the council agreed to pursue the approach adopted by Overton Parish Council and consider whether we should investigate and possibly initiate a community energy group following their model.

This is a discussion document concerning how we might achieve this, together with a proposal that the Parish Council may wish to consider.

Why should we be involved with action to address the climate emergency?

The effects of climatic change caused by the burning of fossil fuels will continue to affect us for many years, have extensive impact and will be irreversible in the short term. Initially, the South of England will find a warming climate predicted to be like that of present-day Melbourne by 2050.ⁱ Although this doesn't sound alarming, the frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts, heatwaves, extensive fires, possible food shortages, storms and floods yet ironically shortages of water, will result. Coastal regions will suffer from flooding and erosion as sea levels continue to rise. Areas of the globe closer to the equator will be affected more severely with a consequent implication for food imports and the mass migration of people as living conditions become ever harder. The effects of global warming are expected to increase global and intra-national inequality.ⁱⁱ

By the time children currently at junior school are ready to retire (2080), the World and the Parish will be different. We need to know how different, how to start local initiatives to ameliorate and prepare for the worst effects and how to link with county and national initiatives.

The Parish Council does not have the expertise or resources to implement measures in the wider community itself, but it can promote and encourage action within the Parish, tap local expertise in the areas of both technical knowledge about climate change and in raising awareness and persuading residents of the need for action, despite the considerable costs involved. The push towards a carbon free future will be driven nationally and by county and district councils, but the closest contact with residents will be at parish level.

Many councils are becoming involved with community energy groups. This movement has the dual aims of producing lower carbon energy and of ensuring local empowerment and social justice, since the change to greener energy will cost. We need to research this movement but ensure that our actions are backed by evidence rather than popular opinion which may have a limited base in fact.

It is proposed that we initiate a group of residents (The Community Group) to take this work forward. Councillors will be members of this group but leadership and action will come from within the parish rather than be undertaken by the PC itself.

Areas for Development.

Each of these areas requires in-depth research as the issues are complex and obvious solutions may not be the best way forward. A study group for each area will be proposed.

Domestic Insulation. This will probably take advantage of initiatives by HCC and National Government. The benefits for mid and late 20th century housing may be limited as some degree of

insulation was built in during construction. Period properties in the Parish will require specialist and sympathetic knowledge. New builds might be insulated to a far higher standard and the Council will have some influence over this.

Domestic heating. The move away from fossil fuels is taking two routes at present. Domestic gas may be supplemented by hydrogen produced without the production of CO₂. A complete switch to hydrogen requires the installation of new boilers and can only be done for a whole district at once. Heat pumps are a means of heating properties cheaply (after installation costs) which works particularly well where a house is equipped with photovoltaic (PV) cells and battery storage to produce the power for the pump. However, heat pumps are noisy, work best with underfloor heating and may not be suitable for hot water used for washing.

Domestic electricity. Properties can generate electricity using PV cells together with battery storage for excess power. HCC is rolling out a scheme to supply these cheaply at present but not all properties will be suitable. Wind generation is possible in areas of low-density housing.

Transport. The move to electric vehicles continues apace. Councils will need to ensure that sufficient charging points are available and that the electricity supply infrastructure is adequate and developed proactively. It is possible that the manufacture of new electric vehicles (EVs) may produce large amounts of greenhouse gases (especially since many components are made in China). There is a possibility that continuing to use existing internal combustion vehicles may be more effective than buying a new EV, especially if sustainable biofuels are used.

Public transport and commercial vehicle operators may need greater pressure than that of a Parish Council but we can work with others and lobby BDBC and HCC to push for change.

The built environment. The production of cement and concrete causes large amounts of CO₂ to be released into the atmosphere and while alternatives are becoming available, they are expensive. This is again an area where the Council will have influence in the use of materials.

Funding and grants. Change is unlikely to take place unless necessitated (e.g., domestic gas is replaced by hydrogen) due to the costs involved but a wide variety of grants is likely to be available. This requires research.

Greening. We live in a green area, but tree planting and other initiatives to increase vegetation will form part of our net zero strategy.

Steering. A group will be needed to oversee the wider programme. Technology rarely progresses as expected and energy use in 2050 may look quite different to the currently assumed picture. This or a separate group will be needed to track overall progress and new developments as they arise.

Proposed action for the Council.

1. The council will produce an action plan with the aim of engaging residents and investigating involving local expertise.
2. The action plan will be communicated to residents through established routes and social media. Some pump priming through informal contact will almost certainly be required.
3. The action plan will be supported by a public meeting, probably with a suitable motivational speaker.

4. This will ideally result in a local climate change, or community energy group led by members of the community and supported by the council.
5. The council will suggest guidelines and targets to support the work of the groups and support the initiative with offers of speakers and advice from established groups and public bodies. Councillors will most likely be involved with each sub-group that is established.
6. The council will need to address its own energy use. The most urgent will be the Pavilion heating system and insulation and we may need to consider renewable fuel for our machinery. Action in this area is needed both to ameliorate the current costs and as an act of good faith in modelling the critical need for action.

Outcomes for the community group.

Since the Community Group will set its own objectives, these must remain suggestions. The overall outcome will be a carbon free parish, but these are perhaps some milestones.

- a. To investigate means of reducing and eventually eliminating greenhouse-gas emitting sources of energy and to build resilience against global warming.
- b. To ascertain how these might be implemented.
- c. To engage with residents, energy suppliers and public bodies to implement these measures.
- d. To inform residents of progress.

Proposal

“That this council undertakes measures to encourage and create a Community Energy Group formed from and led by residents of the Parish and with the aim of enabling the government’s policy of net zero carbon emissions by 2035.”

References

ⁱ <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/climate-change-in-the-uk>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/20/9808>

Resources

communityenergyengland.org

communityenergysouth.org

hants.gov.uk/climatechange ***This is an important document.***

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/24/heat-could-stay-extra-three-degrees-warming-2080/>

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/discover/why-we-love-community-energy/>

<https://www.scientistswarningeurope.org.uk/>