WinACC
Think globally, start locally

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Parish and Town Councils: acting on climate change

Introduction

1. These are ideas about what parish councils are doing and could do to contribute to reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse" gases which cause global heating and climate change. The paper is based on ideas from workshops of parish councils in Winchester District.
2. Parish councillors are community leaders. Local people respect what they say. Many of the ideas below will demonstrate that the parish council thinks that it is important to act on climate change – putting it in the newsletter, taking it to a parish meeting, reducing the parish council's own footprint.

How a parish can set an example

3. Pledge to cut the parish council carbon footprint to demonstrate and publicise the parish's commitment to action on climate change.
4. Put climate change onto the agenda of a parish council meeting.
5. Discuss climate change at the parish annual meeting.
6. Agree to draw up a plan of what the parish council will do; to make this plan part of the parish's annual (business)plan for the coming year, and to monitor and review progress against the plan at least twice a year.
7. Ask for advice on energy management and carbon reduction from WinACC.

How individual parish councillors can help

8. Individual parish councillors have authority in their community. Each of them, individually, can make a big difference by telling people that climate change is real, and telling them what they have done themselves to cut their own carbon footprint. WinACC can help with information

Information and education

9. Use parish communications – newsletters, notice boards, emails, posters, website - to spread the message that climate change is everyone's responsibility, with tips about how we can cut our carbon emissions. WinACC can send draft articles for parish newsletters to incorporate or customise.

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Patrons: Professor Joy Carter (University of Winchester) and Tim Jackson (Sparsholt College)
On Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

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Getting local people involved

10. Involve local people in encouraging and advocating best practice. Support your local group if there is one; work with WinACC or the Greening Campaign to set up a local group if there isn't.
11. Talk to businesses in your parish about how they can save money and cut their carbon reductions by auditing their energy use and planning how to manage it more efficiently. Business help from the Sustainable Business Network and Winchester Sustainable Businesses.

Planning

12. Include climate change as one of the opportunities and threats listed in the parish plan, and identify what needs to be done. Does it increase the chances of flooding? Is there a local site for a renewable energy scheme that would benefit the community?
13. Influence what is done by Winchester City Council. Use the parish statutory role in consultation and advice, helping to set the agenda for planning issues.
14. Put climate change on the checklist of issues to consider when asked to comment on applications for planning permission. Will the proposed change of use or development contribute to climate change? Is new housing well insulated, with low energy consumption? Will residents be able to shop locally? Is there public transport nearby?

Cutting the parish council's own carbon footprint

15. Use "Low Carbon Water" at parish meetings – from the tap, not a bottle. If you serve food, make it mostly or entirely meat-free.
16. Change to LED low energy light bulbs in the parish hall and other buildings.
17. Buy parish energy from a sustainable supplier of green electricity energy i.e. Good Energy; Green Energy; or Ecotricity 100% scheme.
18. Identify the parish council's own energy use, auditing all the parish's buildings and land-holdings. Identify how to make savings. In some cases this will make immediate savings, e.g. switching off lights. In other cases, an investment now will deliver savings longer term, e.g. solar panels to heat water. You might be able to share the cost and the returns with nearby buildings such as schools.
19. Agree an environmental procurement policy, so that the parish buys from local firms which source their food or materials locally, and pay attention to sustainability in their own materials and production methods.

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20. Reduce the level of street lighting in the area – directly, if parish council lighting; indirectly, by influencing HCC.

Cutting energy use

21. Make any new parish building meet highest energy-saving standards. And encourage others locally – for example, the village hall committee – to do the same when they invest in new buildings or renovations.
22. Encourage local people to use low-energy light bulbs, increase their home insulation etc.
23. Invite WinACC to bring its energy-saving road show to your event, and/or give a public talk about what you can do to your home to reduce energy consumption. Parish council endorsement will encourage people to come.
24. Set up a community renewable energy scheme – for example, solar panels on the community hall roof. WinACC can point in the direction of help and advice.

Cutting energy used in producing and transporting food

25. Encourage people to grow their own fruit and vegetables – for example, have a meal at community events with food which people grew in the parish.
26. Promote local shopping.
27. Organise a landshare scheme – people with large gardens they can't manage share with other local people who use them for vegetables
28. Let local people grow food on unused bits of parish land that aren't used for amenity (e.g. verges).
29. Ensure allotments are used – if necessary, pairing up with a neighbouring parish. When they are, create more allotments.

Cutting energy used in travel

30. Promote low speed in the village – smart driving uses less petrol.
31. Promote local shopping.
32. Check your schools have an up-to-date Safer Route to School / school travel plan which encourages people to walk or cycle to school.
33. Encourage lift-sharing / car-sharing; set up a parish council-sponsored initiative e.g. using parish newsletters.

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34. Provide cycle racks.
35. Improve walkways
36. Set up the parish's own community transport e.g. a mini-bus to the post office and shops, so that people travel together instead of each on their own car. This is a service to those without transport as well as a carbon-saver.

Overall

37. Use the power of wellbeing to make change happen.
38. Find out who has already done things you are thinking about, by asking WinACC.

Parish Councils are invited to use WinACC to share good practice.

30 November 2020