

20 actions parish and town councils can take on the climate and nature emergency

Normandy Parish Council Response

Version 1 - updated January 2020

In this guide, Friends Of The Earth identify actions that Parish and Town Councils can take on climate change and nature. Its purpose is to support those of the 10,000 local councils across England and 750 Community Councils in Wales who want to “do their bit” in addressing the climate and nature emergency.

1. Encourage the formation of Climate Action groups.

Communities across the country are coming together to take climate action in response to the climate and nature emergency. Climate Action groups will encourage and support you to take local political action, build positive community solutions, and join together to demand national action. Parish, town and community councils should encourage and support the formation of these groups. Friends of the Earth will provide resources, training and advice to climate action groups (see takeclimateaction.uk).

NPC response: *This year our government, Surrey CC and GBC have all declared a Climate Emergency. It remains to be seen what actions come from those decisions, but NPC agree that we want to participate in this global campaign to make a difference. According to Friends of the Earth Woking and Guildford are 80% climate-friendly so our local political system is taking this seriously and have made progress already.*

2. Actively support small and large planning applications for new renewable energy in the area.

Planning decisions will be made by the local planning authority, which needs to hear from those that support the applications. The UK needs to increase the amount of renewable energy it generates by around eight-fold.

NPC response: *The Parish Council welcomes all planning applications that have a sustainability improvement at the heart of the proposal and will do their best to make a favourable decision to encourage others to bring others forward. Recent example is a ground-heating application that was enthusiastically passed by a majority of members.*

3. Promote practical action by local people.

People can often be at a loss about what they can practically do to reduce their own carbon footprint or support nature. An impartial local guide that provides information on accredited local businesses can be invaluable and help keep money in the local economy. The guide could include information on local accredited energy assessors and renewable energy installers for solar panels, batteries, EV charging points and heat pumps, eco-friendly retailers, green builders and landscape companies, etc. It can also encourage sustainable transport options.

NPC response: *NPC has already been active - by budgeting in the Precept for our first vehicle electrical charging point in the village after a local resident came forward with that suggestion. Also campaigning to plant new trees around Normandy funded by the Parish again after a letter to the clerk that was agreed in the next full Parish meeting.*

4. Bring together groups of people for bulk purchases.

The costs of installing solar PV, or other renewable technologies such as heat pumps, should be much lower if done in bulk, street by street, or area by area. A Town or Parish Council can bring together local homeowners and businesses to develop such a scheme - it's a widely used model in the Netherlands and places such as Suffolk and Frome in the UK. Bulk purchases of energy audits or energy insulation is also possible. Transition Streets is an example of this approach.

NPC response: *we should look into community schemes like this. Parish Clerk to look into this opportunity?*

5. Develop and promote lift-sharing scheme.

By convening local businesses and car-sharing schemes, such as the social enterprise Liftshare, it's possible to help local people reduce the carbon pollution from car use, save money and foster new friendships. An analysis by Liftshare suggested that 92% of people commuting to work in over 200 locations lived close enough to be able to share a car to work. Lift-sharing may often be a solution for people when public transport, cycling or walking to work isn't. Car-sharing schemes for non-commuting journeys should also be promoted.

NPC response: *this scheme could be promoted by the Council. It was deployed during the recent SWR Train strike in Dec 2019 and could be encouraged to go wider. Ask for a local volunteer to champion this idea using social networks like NextDoor. Parish Clerk to add this to the next agenda to follow up.*

6. Use your voice.

Decisions on infrastructure projects are largely made by local authorities, Local Economic Partnerships, or by national government. But too many of these decisions will increase carbon emissions and / or harm nature. Use your voice when possible to oppose high-carbon developments, promoting sustainable alternatives instead. Press local authorities and MPs to demand national changes to bus services regulations, so all areas can regulate buses as London does, and urban profit-making routes can cross-fund loss making rural routes.

NPC response: *The Council actively supports community schemes like the Community Bus that collects those residents that require transport to key locations like shops. Latest example is the request by the main organiser for funds to replace the gear box costing £4,000.00 that was considered and a sizable donation by the Council who recognize how vital this is for our more vulnerable villagers. Any relevant application that comes before the Council for a decision should be scrutinised to find a more sustainable alternative. The Parish Clerk to remind Councillors of this obligation at the relevant time.*

7. Save energy.

Ensure any Council buildings are as energy efficient as possible and any street lighting uses well-directed LED lighting. Getting an energy audit is the first step. Loans for projects in England that have a payback of less than five years are available through Salix funding. Projects with longer term paybacks should still be carried out.

NPC response: *the Parish Council isn't responsible for the energy used by villagers but will implement an energy audit for those buildings that it is responsible for, like the Parish Office. The Clerk to suggest how this can be looked into.*

8. Produce green energy.

Install renewable energy generation, like heat pumps and solar PV, at Council buildings. Heat pumps benefit from a government grant that will partially cover the cost. Several energy companies provide a smart export tariff, which pays for any electricity generated that isn't used by the building, including offering top prices if the solar PV is used in conjunction with a battery. Funds can also be raised through Salix loans or through crowdfunding. Buildings using renewable energy should also be used as a showcase to help local people see these technologies first-hand, particularly less familiar technologies such as heat pumps. An electronic display showing how much energy has been generated and how much money and CO2 emissions saved is one way of demonstrating the benefits.

NPC response: NPC to ensure energy efficient solutions will be added to any Council project like MFF Phase 2. Consider solar panels etc

9. Reduce pesticide use and other harmful activities.

It's possible to reduce activities that harm wildlife, from using peat-free compost to shunning pesticides and ensuring light pollution is controlled. Glastonbury Town Council has stopped using glyphosate weed killer and instead uses a hot foam system. These steps alone are not enough to protect and restore nature but they're an important first step. To encourage others, promote the actions you're taking. For example, use signage on council-owned land where you use peat-free compost.

NPC response: Parish Clerk to ascertain from all contractors employed to deliver our duties in the village to comply with nature-friendly activity. All agencies to provide a statement to that effect and if they are not currently what steps with timescales they will be.

10. Manage land for nature.

Parish, Town and Community Councils can have responsibility for allotments, bridleways, burial grounds, commons & open spaces and village greens. All of these can be managed to enhance nature, particularly through changing mowing regimes. Friends of the Earth and Buglife have produced a guide to developing an action plan for helping pollinators such as bees. Buglife's B-lines project aims to support the development of a network of wildlife friendly corridors. Friends of the Earth is piloting a crowd-funded postcode gardener project to help people green the streets where they live.

NPC response: The Council work very closely with our local experts in the Friends of Normandy Wildlife. We are lucky to have eminent leaders in this area who we can engage with to investigate improvements in how we can manage the areas of the village we are responsible for – like the Normandy Common. The Parish Clerk to ask for contact representation at FNW to provide ratification of any decision made on the council estate that could impact nature.

11. Increase tree cover.

Friends of the Earth is campaigning for the UK to double tree cover. The Forestry Commission and others have suggested that even urban areas should aim for at least 20% tree cover. Parish, Town and Community Councils should aim to double tree cover and, if necessary, go beyond this to reach the 20% minimum. Much of this will involve encouraging and supporting landowners to take part in tree planting. The Tree Charter, developed by the Woodland Trust, provides excellent guidance on how to increase tree cover. The National Association of Local Councils website provides case studies where it has been used.

NPC response: *The Council has already covered this campaign objective in their October meeting and have agreed where the first trees can be planted in areas owned by us. A note was added to the December edition of our Villager magazine that is delivered to the whole community to ask for private locations to be added to the list. The NPC to agree the number of trees that we can add to achieve the 20% cover.*

12. Buy green.

Buying local can support the local economy and buying green can help protect the planet, rewarding businesses committed to a better future. Buying green electricity helps develop new renewable energy and ensures the council isn't supporting dirty energy financially. Friends of the Earth has identified Ecotricity, Good Energy and Octopus as the greenest energy companies. Buying green can also extend to any food provided at events, including providing mainly plant-based food and less, but better, meat and dairy.

NPC response: *For energy, Parish Clerk to arrange comparison the tariff charged by our current electricity (puns entirely intended!) supplier with those offered by the above three. As to catering, the Parish Council rarely provides catering itself but can put the question to the catering suppliers it appoints.*

13. Use green transport.

Employees and Councillors should be encouraged to walk, cycle or use public transport or car-share. The Council should provide bikes or electric bikes for staff as they carry out any work-related trips. It should also provide zero-interest loans for buying bikes. Where a car or van is needed it should be electric only.

NPC response: *The Parish Council does not have the funds to provide vehicles or interest free loans. If we find ourselves needing to procure a vehicle then zero emission options will be considered.*

14. Minimise waste going to landfill or incineration.

In your own operations, ensure all your waste is recycled or composted, but also consider setting-up community recycling facilities for hard-to-recycle items when the local authority hasn't done so, for example in partnership with Terracycle. Bisleigh Parish Council has set up a community composting scheme. The best approach for waste minimisation is reuse (eg, reusable cups) or avoid unnecessary purchases.

NPC response: *Parish Clerk to examine this question in respect of his office practices. Community wide, the Parish Council can add little to the already extensive range of kerbside collections offered by our Borough Council, other than to use its own communications to remind residents to please make full use of the recycling services available.*

15. Ensure money is invested wisely.

Across the UK, local authorities are investing tens of millions of pounds each into fossil fuel companies, despite having declared a climate emergency. Although Town Council investments will be tiny in comparison, the Council should still ensure any Council funds are invested safely in low-risk sustainable banks or investment funds.

NPC response: *The Parish Council invests through CCLA Investment Management Limited, which is a responsible investor with environmental, social and governance factors being at the forefront of its investment process.* <https://investment2020.org.uk/our-employers/ccla-investment-management-ltd>

16. Use your powers wisely.

Ensure you know the climate change or nature implications of decisions before you make them. It isn't credible to accept the need for rapid action on climate change and nature and then make decisions without knowing whether they'll be harmful or helpful. Requiring every decision to be well informed is common sense as well as good practice. This should extend to demanding that the planning authority provides you with this kind of information when consulting you.

NPC response: *NPC will address the question "what impact could this decision have on climate change and nature?" whenever faced with any decision and planning application, and make a judgment-based benefit versus cost.* **Parish Clerk to add this query to the Planning sheet for the NPC Chair of Planning.**

17. Designate sites within the Neighbourhood Plan for trees, renewable energy and nature restoration.

In practice, the development of 90% of Neighbourhood Plans is led by town and parish councils working hand in hand with their communities. The Neighbourhood Planning process is far from perfect and very time consuming, but it offers the community the opportunity to show it means business on protecting and enhancing the environment for future generations.

NPC response: *The NPC has looked at the possibility of a Neighbourhood Plan but yet to take the next step in implementing one – mainly due to having the commitment of someone locally to champion it.*

18. Use the Neighbourhood Plan to require new homes to be energy efficient, nature friendly, and located close to public transport and amenities.

Given the climate and nature emergency, it's unfortunate that the government doesn't require all new homes to be as sustainable as possible. Neighbourhood Plans will identify sites for future housing and should push for these to be zero-carbon (eg, Passivhaus standard) and nature friendly, even though the local planning authority may seek to override this aim. Homes should also be fitted with renewable energy. Homes need to be located close to amenities and public transport to avoid car dependency.

NPC response: *See above*

19. Designate safe walking and cycle routes in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Identify safe walking and cycling routes and where necessary work in partnership with district and county councils to deliver them. The Propensity to Cycle tool identifies the huge potential for increasing cycling in all areas of the country, particularly with good quality infrastructure, such as segregated cycleways and cycle-parking, and with the use of E-bikes.

NPC response: *See above*

20. Use differential car-parking charges to support low-carbon vehicles.

Any car parks run by the Council should offer low cost or free car-parking to electric vehicles and dedicated spaces with electric charging points.

NPC response: *Normandy PC does not operate any paying car parks. Electric charging points are being introduced but the cost is high, particularly when there is no power in the vicinity.*