

Paper for WMPC Full Council asking the Council to declare a Climate Emergency in 2022 and acknowledge the accompanying Ecological Crisis.

The climate is the long-term pattern of day-to-day weather. Our food and water supplies depend on stable seasonal patterns of temperature, rain, and wind in the UK and elsewhere. In the last 100 years, the earth's average temperature has increased faster than previously seen – this is known as global warming.

Evidence shows that human activity and especially the use of fuels such as petrol, diesel, gas, and coal is highly likely to be the main cause of global warming. When these fuels are burned, they release greenhouse gases, which trap heat in the earth's atmosphere, causing the air and seas to heat up which changes the climate. The greenhouse gases produced when we burn these fuels contain a lot of carbon and so the term 'carbon emissions' is often used.

Current levels of greenhouse gases are higher than they have been over the last 800,000 years and they are rising rapidly.

The United Nations (UN) released a [report](#) in October 2018 on the impacts of global warming and warned that we may have just twelve years left from 2018 to limit a climate crisis. An increase of global warming at current rates will significantly increase the risk of drought, floods, extreme heat, and climate-related poverty for millions of people across the world.

The pressures of climate change, intensive agriculture, unsustainable use of resources and continuous development are causing an ecological emergency. The result is that our local wildlife is declining at an alarming rate. Many of the important habitats and designated sites are failing. In the UK, more than one in ten species are threatened with extinction.

Climate change is already affecting Kent and Medway. Therefore, understanding the potential future impacts of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers is crucial for future prosperity, environmental quality, and health and well-being of communities. The impacts of climate change are likely to be felt acutely in Kent with its long, strategically important coastline, large number of properties at risk of flooding and warm summers compared with the rest of the United Kingdom. It is essential that the impacts of climate change be considered alongside other drivers of change including economic fluctuations, population growth and demographic shifts.

The UK government declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Kent County Council recognised the Environment and Climate Emergency in May 2019 and set a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050 for Kent and Medway, and an accelerated target to achieve net zero emissions for its own estate and activities by 2030. *[It is difficult to stop all carbon emitting activities. Achieving 'net zero carbon' (or being 'carbon neutral') aims to 'balance' emissions by cutting them where possible, and introducing measures to prevent those emissions that we cannot avoid from entering the atmosphere. This is known as 'offsetting' emissions.]*

Action at local level is essential to meeting the UK's legally binding climate target to reach Net Zero by 2050. More than half of the emissions cuts needed rely on people and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions – decisions that are made at a local and individual level.

We propose that WMPC should declare a Climate and Environment Emergency in line with the UK government's declaration, and alongside Kent County Council and around 300 other councils in the UK. By declaring an emergency the Parish Council acknowledge the urgent need to act on the causes and impacts of climate change and commit to

- Establishing a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency Action Group, involving Councillors, residents, young citizens, climate science and solutions experts, businesses, local land owners and others relevant parties, to help shape and promote the district's zero-carbon strategy.
- Mapping the Parish Council's carbon footprint and the carbon footprint of West Malling using the tool developed by KALC.
- Working towards making WMPC activities net-zero carbon by 2030. Working with KCC, the UK government and other partners to achieve net zero carbon emissions in West Malling by 2050.
- Achieving 100% clean energy use across our full range of functions as soon as possible.
- Embedding climate emergency considerations in all work areas, decision-making processes, policies and strategies.
- Reviewing the Local Plan / Neighbourhood Plan to ensure it is "green to the core" & ensures that the ecological emergency and nature recovery are strategic priorities.

The 'Wish list' proposed by the Planning Committee is intended to provide guidance for Section 106 agreements, highlighting actions that can mitigate the harm of developments. This 'wishlist' shares many of the aims of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency Action Group i.e. reducing carbon emissions and promoting biodiversity. The particular areas of overlap are:

- Public Open Space
- Affordable and sustainable housing
- Highways
- Town Centre Improvements

Open Spaces

- The Parish Council is interested in securing control of discrete areas of greenfield land, accessible from the town centre, which can be protected, and in some cases improved through rewilding or by other means, for the enjoyment of local residents.
- The Parish Council values our trees and woodland and wants to be part of national efforts to plant 11m trees by 2022 (HM Government) and 50m by 2025 (Woodland Trust). We welcome opportunities for tree planting, both as part of efforts to create new, mixed woodland and to add trees to street scenes.
- Hedgerows are one of the best means of CO2 reabsorption and are a distinctive part of our rural, English heritage. The Parish Council welcomes opportunities to add or replant hedgerow as part of new developments or developmental improvements.

Sustainable Housing

- The Parish Council is keen to ensure that development is designed with the climate crisis in mind, ensuring that new proposals for significant development always include a comprehensive combination of high-grade insulation, energy saving measures and renewable energy technologies. These features should be included as standard in new developments, including and most importantly in developments designed to be affordable.
- The Parish Council acknowledges the problems of insulating older buildings, especially the difficulties of making lasting changes to listed buildings, and will actively seek to engage with public bodies e.g. English Heritage to help local residents reduce their carbon footprint and heating bills

Highways

- The Parish Council is keen to explore the provision of shuttle buses, which could easily ferry shoppers and others in and out of the town from locations and car parks on its outskirts.
- The Parish Council welcomes the proposed 20mph speed limit throughout West Malling.
- The Parish Council would welcome the inclusion of speed mitigation measures on problem roads. This could include village entrance and exit average speed cameras, chicanes and road narrowing among other proposals.
- The Parish Council would welcome opportunities to install pedestrian crossing points in key locations and to ensure dropped kerb provision so

that our town is accessible for those with limited mobility or with prams/young children.

- The Parish Council is clear that all new developments should be equipped with adequate electric vehicle charging points for both private and public use.
- The Parish Council will seek to install electric vehicle charging points on Parish Council land.
- The Parish Council encourages the use of footpaths and seeks to improve and support the creation on new ones. We wish to ensure that all nearby parishes, schools, transport hubs to be accessible by safe footpaths.

Town Centre Improvements

The Parish Council would welcome opportunities to install planters and other means of bringing flowers, shrubs and other greenery into the town centre.