

Subject: Biodiversity and Climate Change

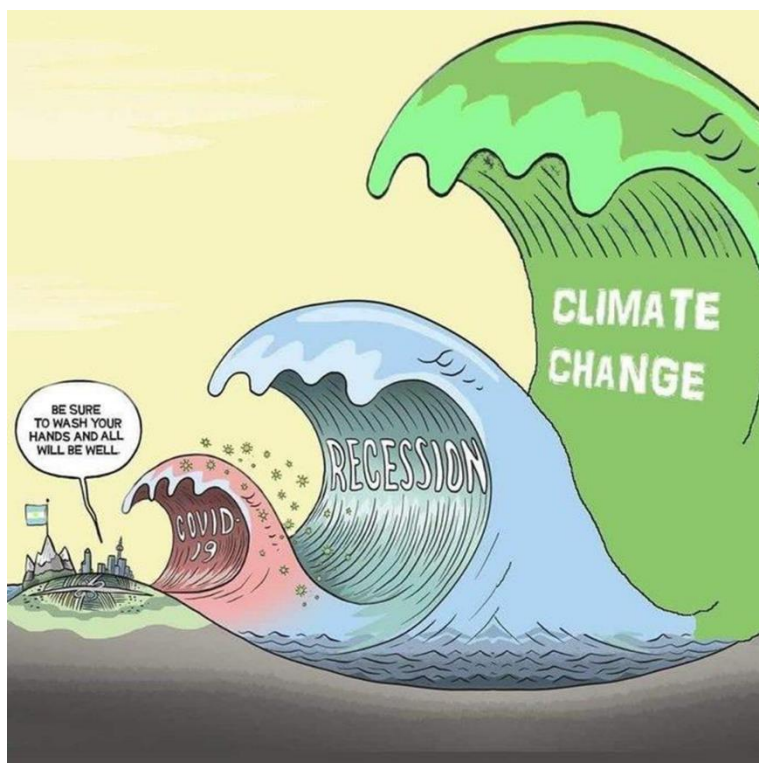
What can the Parish Council do to assist in the wider MBC ambition to achieve Net Zero by 2030?

On 19th September 2019

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council :

- (1) Declared its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies;
- (2) Supported Maidstone Borough Council in its ambition for the whole of the Borough of Maidstone to be carbon neutral with a target date of 2030
- (3) In addition, the Parish Council will support Boughton Monchelsea Amenity Trust (BMAT) in its current plans to re-wild and carry out tree planting on its existing land, to enhance species, habitats and the ecosystems where practical and appropriate, this would including any land acquired by the trust in the future.

Despite the focus in 2020 being on Covid19 the climate and ecological emergencies remain urgent and important as illustrated in this cartoon:



Boughton Monchelsea PC has made good progress over the past year on managing BMAT land for nature, including rewilding and tree planting as well as continuing and extending its volunteer work on litter and other local environmental issues. A number of local volunteers

have been recruited and are enthusiastic to do more. The Parish landscape plan has ambitious ideas to replant hedgerows, create walking and cycling routes and generally improve the area visually and as much valued heritage and countryside. The Neighbourhood Development Plan is nearing adoption and refers to sustainable and resilient communities but is not geared towards the Net Zero target. This paper makes some suggestions which if agreed could be worked into a plan taking us to 2030, in line with the MBC and KCC environment goals. Many desirable actions will be beyond the scope of the PC to implement so the paper focusses on areas we can address under existing regulations. The format follows the layout of the MBC Biodiversity and Climate Action Plan.

1 Transport

Aim: To support the shift from cars to active and mass transport and enable the transformation from fossil fuels to no tailpipe emissions.

Transport creates the largest amount of emissions in the borough. It has a negative impact on air quality and health. The residents' survey showed support for investing in active travel and providing more charging points for electric vehicles.

1. Support schemes that would provide EV charging points for public use at suitable locations in the parish.
2. Create more walking and cycling routes as per Landscape Plan and BMAT plans
3. Encourage via awareness raising use of car sharing schemes, home working and public transport or voluntary shared travel schemes (post lockdown)
4. Support schools to discourage car use for short journeys, develop walk to school groups and avoid parking and engine idling near the school grounds.

2 Buildings

Aim: To support the change from heating and cooling buildings using fossil fuels to low carbon technology and reducing energy needs by increasing energy efficiency.

29% of emissions in the borough come from homes. Poorly insulated homes cost more to run and contribute to fuel poverty. The technology is available to make the changes needed. A move from fossil fuels will reduce emissions from non-domestic buildings and greater energy efficiency could reduce costs.

Suggested actions

1. Where we have some direct influence over a building design eg Village Hall aim to create carbon neutral heating using renewables wherever possible and avoiding locking in fossil fuel dependence.
2. Indirect influence via our planning committee: suggest active comments on all planning applications, particularly for new buildings, which encourage heat pumps, solar PV and solar thermal as well as ensuring insulation and double glazing are fully compliant with building regulations.
3. Promote access to schemes to residents, landlords and housing associations, for retrofitting insulation to existing homes including ECO3, LA Flex and the Green Homes Grant Scheme. This could take the form of newsletter articles, resident information meetings and signposting via website.

3 Generating renewable energy

Aim: To take every opportunity to generate renewable energy across the Borough

We need to generate more electricity to support the move from fossil fuels. There are opportunities for retrofitting equipment to existing homes and businesses and requiring renewable energy generation on new developments.

1. Look for opportunities to join community energy schemes
2. Encourage solar panels on new and existing buildings, particularly ones used by the whole community.
3. Encourage use of heat pumps, solar thermal and wind/hydro power where suitable

4 Reducing waste and energy

Aim: To reduce the amount of domestic waste created, increase the proportion re-used, recycled and composted to at least 60% by 2030 and reduce the carbon emitted from processing waste.

Waste can be re-used as valuable resources and reduce energy consumed in producing new goods. Organic waste must be managed as can release greenhouse gases as it decomposes

1. Support MBC in providing clearly labelled recycling bins around the village

2. Encourage community engagement with litter management and create wider awareness of the harms of food waste and plastic pollution
3. Support schemes for the provision a community left over food scheme
4. Support schemes that use dog mess for energy generation
5. Encourage more composting of garden waste by supporting BMAT and the allotment association schemes on BMAT land to generate compost as a shared community asset

5 Adapting to climate change

Aim: To build resilient landscapes, communities and services.

We will experience hotter, drier, summers; warmer, wetter, winters and more storms. We must adapt to more frequent severe weather ensuring our landscapes and communities thrive and services are provided.

1. Ensure sustainable drainage schemes on all new housing through the planning committee.
2. Support natural climate solutions via BMAT developments, strategic tree planting to reduce flood risk and reduce drought/heatwave impacts
3. Train community volunteers to mitigate climate shocks and provide emergency support to residents
4. Support MBC with their engagement with the farming community to employ sustainable agricultural methods preventing soil erosion and depletion and improving flood resilience

6 Enhance and increase biodiversity

Aim: To use every opportunity to protect, enhance and increase biodiversity in the borough.

People experience better health when they spend time in nature. Biodiversity provides ecosystem services including clean water, clean air, rainwater absorption and flood mitigation.

1. Continue to support BMAT to develop and manage their land with biodiversity improvement in mind
2. Support BMAT to engage residents in this work through the friends of BMAT and use it as a learning opportunity
3. Register as part of the National Nature Recovery Network (done)

4. Influence via communications and education local landowners and residents to manage gardens, land, shared spaces with minimum harmful impacts eg use of pesticides, herbicides, cutting and mowing regimes planting of suitable species to create wildlife friendly habitats.
5. Require all developments to deliver at least 20% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with planning policy and KCC requirements
6. Support BMAT to continue tree planting and allowing natural tree regeneration to help achieve the goal in Kent of 1,500,000 new trees in the county.

Making our estate carbon neutral

Aim: We will reduce emissions from our estate to as close to carbon neutral as possible by 2030

We emit 480 tCO₂e from council owned vehicles and 679 tCO₂e from electricity and gas in our buildings and indirectly emit 3,030 tCO₂e from services outsourced.

1. The Parish Council has minimal estate and no vehicles so we can skip this one for now!
2. Consider reduction of paper use and a mix of virtual working /face to face as part of a long term strategy to reduce emissions
3. Support the village hall and recreation ground committee with their ambition for a zero-carbon new development for the Village Hall

8 Implement a communications strategy

Aim: To enable residents, businesses and partner organisations to make informed decisions on climate change and biodiversity and access any funding available

The Council will encourage and support residents and businesses to address climate change and biodiversity with us.

1. Have regular pieces in the newsletter about the benefits to residents of becoming zero carbon and improving biodiversity
2. Ensure visibility of actions to address these issues- eg EV charging points, recycling bins, solar panels and rewilding areas demonstrate clearly our commitment

3. Encourage local businesses to provide locally grown produce and support initiatives for local shopping/ producing. This can be achieved via engagement, education and communication, involving volunteers, schools and local businesses.

9 Decision making process and governance

Aim: To ensure that climate change and biodiversity are part of all decisions made

It is essential that the council works as one organisation to the shared goals of addressing biodiversity loss and climate change.

1. Consider environmental impacts as part of all our discussions and particularly in planning considerations
2. Work with MBC and KCC to encourage a system wide approach
3. Communicate clearly with residents and other agencies that the PC takes this issue seriously and will support residents and businesses who commit to achieving net zero.

If this paper is agreed as a basis for the pathway to Net Zero by 2030 the next stage could involve creation of a subgroup to work with Maidstone Borough Council on a detailed action plan.