

Paper for Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council Meeting September 2023

Subject: Biodiversity and Climate Change – Pathway to Net Zero

Progress Review – following discussion of PC environment subgroup

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.

In March 2021 Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council (BMPC) approved a pathway to Net Zero Plan, recognising that BMPC cannot act alone on this very complex agenda, but would work in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council and others. This paper is the second brief progress review with suggestions for next steps.

BMPC continues to make progress over the past year on managing BMAT land for nature recovery:

- Hedgerow planted at Furfield
- Further successful tree growth at Salts Wood
- Volunteer work parties at Firmins Field, Salts Wood, Stream Shore, Walk Meadow and clearing footpaths.
- Tree planting at Lyewood and Firmins Field
- Firmins Field and Walk Meadow registered as Queen's Canopy

In June 2022 BMPC received a grant obtained with the aid of Kent Wildlife Trust towards a 30-year Biodiversity Net Gain project at Lyewood and another site to be determined, together comprising 20 acres dedicated to nature recovery. Species rich grassland, woodland, hedgerows, ponds with community access via paths will be created. Despite delays in site handover work has commenced at Lyewood and a contractor has been engaged.

The following items relate to progress using the framework adopted by Maidstone Borough Council in its Net Zero 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. EV charging points planned for remodelled Village Hall. This has been delayed as a result of the negative experience in another parish. Agreed to undertake further research in order to minimise potential abuse. Agreed only 2 charging points needed. Consider solar shading too.
There are also 4 EV charging points at the Cock Inn, free to customers
2. Create more walking and cycling routes as per Landscape Plan and BMAT plans. New footpath opened at Lyewood. E-bike hire scheme discussed – best taken forward at MBC level
3. Encourage via awareness raising use of car sharing schemes, home working and public transport or voluntary shared travel schemes (post lockdown) No Progress
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. No progress but CJ to discuss with new head teacher (also litter issues)

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. Village Hall redevelopment is nearly complete. Solar PV panels, battery storage and new air to air heat pumps installed. Improved roof insulation and cavity wall insulation. Community café now open.

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.

The following wording is used to comment on all new developments:

GREEN ISSUES

Paragraph to be included in planning application responses for all new build properties / developments and all major extensions

If MBC are minded to approve the application the Parish Council would ask that conditions are included to cover :

- Provision of renewable energy sources such as air / ground source heat pumps or photo voltaics
 - Provision of EV charging points
 - Exclusively native planting within any landscape plan
 - Provision of swift and bee bricks, bat and bird boxes
 - Wildlife friendly boundaries
 - Encourage high levels of thermal insulation and airtightness
 - Permeable parking and footway surfaces
 - Avoidance of light pollution as much as possible in external lighting design
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. Residents have been signposted to MBC Eco hub which provides free advice and a travelling version of this may come to our Village Hall. Suggestions include promoting smart meters, adapting shower heads, providing advice on energy efficiency suitable for all homes, encouraging more LED use. It was agreed to use the work done in the village hall to engage and inspire more residents to help them reduce bills and lower their energy carbon footprint.

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 – **No progress**
2. Encourage solar panels on new and existing buildings, particularly ones used by the whole community. **See above re comments on planning applications and solar PV panels now on village hall – information shared on the reduced heating costs**
3. Encourage use of heat pumps, solar thermal and wind/hydro power where suitable. **See above re comments on planning applications and the example of heat pumps in village hall**

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
No Progress
2. Encourage community engagement with litter management and create wider awareness of the harms of food waste and plastic pollution **Litter picking has been active for many years in the parish with several regular groups and annual blitzes. The most recent community pick was notable for there being far less rubbish around. There is one area near the school which remains a challenge. It was decided to research the best way to approach local residents in Church Street and engage the school proactively.**
3. Support schemes for the provision a community left over food scheme **No progress. We do have a sustainability focussed local farm shop that might want to engage with this.**
4. Support schemes that use dog mess for energy generation **No Progress**
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 **Uncertain if this has progressed**
6. **Enhance and develop clothing bank and clothing swop opportunities.**

7. Consider a drinks container return scheme – following recent government consultation on this announced one will commence in 2025
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deposit-return-scheme-for-drinks-containers-moves-a-step-closer>

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. [See above re comments on planning applications](#)
2. Support natural climate solutions via BMAT developments, strategic tree planting to reduce flood risk and reduce drought/heatwave impacts [In progress. Discussed encouraging more water butts, drought friendly planting and improving soil quality to mitigate both drought and flood issues- farmer cluster](#)
3. Train community volunteers to mitigate climate shocks and provide emergency support to residents [No progress](#)
4. Support MBC with their engagement with the farming community to employ sustainable agricultural methods preventing soil erosion and depletion and improving flood resilience [Some discussions informally.](#)
5. [Flood prevention and management plan for the Quarries - developed](#)

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. [Good progress](#)
2. Support BMAT to engage residents in this work through the friends of BMAT and use it as a learning opportunity [Good progress](#)
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. *Some progress via newsletter and clear guidance written for contractors*

5. Require all developments to deliver at least 20% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with planning policy and KCC requirements *MBC position on this is still not clear on their website.*
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. *1100 trees planted last winter, unfortunately due to dry conditions in the spring around 30% have died*

Making our estate carbon neutral

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

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 *Paper use has declined a bit. Paper reuse scheme proposed for children to use – discuss with school*
3. Support the village hall and recreation ground committee with their ambition for a zero-carbon new development for the Village Hall visible exemplar. *Good progress*

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 *Minimal progress but resolved to improve this*

2. Ensure visibility of actions to address these issues- eg EV charging points, recycling bins, solar panels and rewilding areas demonstrate clearly our commitment
Village hall has solar PV and will have EV charge points . BMAT is committed to Nature Recovery
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.
No progress other than one meeting
4. Create a Climate Council – This idea has had poor take-up - we may need to identify local “champions” to develop momentum as in Bearsted Climate Action Network

9 Decision making process and governance

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

It is essential that BMPC works with MBC and others with 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. Some progress
2. Work with MBC and KCC to encourage a system wide approach. Some progress
3. Communicate clearly with residents and other agencies that BMPC takes this issue seriously and will support residents and businesses who commit to achieving net zero. Some Progress

There is now a group of parish councillors, the Parish Council Environment Network representing various local parishes (Sutton Valence, Boughton Monchelsea, Chart Sutton, East Sutton, Hunton and Coxheath) who are meeting to consider joint actions. They are supporting the development of a Scenic Green Way, a walk linking nature hotspots starting in West Malling and ending in Lenham. This has received support from KCC and Active Kent.

Some suggestions from the environment sub-group for BMPC to consider to move this agenda forward:

1. Meet with local farmers and landowners on the nature recovery agenda to increase connectivity of habitat and spread understanding of the good work BMAT is doing. It was decided to progress this with help from local farmer, James Smith.
2. Hold a session for residents in the Village Hall to provide advice and encouragement on energy efficiency.
3. Have a “green” section in the newsletter offering advice and tips
4. Proactively engage residents to create leadership for projects and ensure responsibility for local litter and other waste issues
5. Support efforts to create the Scenic Green Way and promote this as a health benefit and opportunity for nature connection.

The Parish Council is asked to agree the suggestions and indicate priorities for action

Councillor Caroline Jessel
Climate Change and Biodiversity Lead