



CLIMATE EMERGENCY POLICY

It is now clear that the world has less time than predicted to switch away from fossil fuels to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Reducing energy use and switching to clean energy will also increase energy security, improve air quality, minimise fuel poverty, boost the local economy and provide jobs and training.

It is proposed that Aston Rowant Parish Council declares a climate emergency and commits to going carbon neutral by 2030. This will help to raise the profile of this vital issue and secure external support and funding.

Overall Context

The International Panel on Climate Change ⁱ published a new report in October 2019 which concluded that we have less than 12 years to act to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The report describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise in global temperatures is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. It told us that limiting global warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities.

As well as increasing temperatures and more extreme weather, human activities are also having a massive impact on nature. The worldwide population of mammals, birds, fish and aquatic creatures, amphibians and reptiles have plunged by almost 60 percent, since 1970. Current rates of species extinction are 100- to 1,000-times higher than the 'standard rate' of extinction ⁱⁱ. There are also huge health impacts associated with fossil fuels, for example, air pollution causes 40,000 excess deaths every year in the UK and reduces average life span globally by 2 years ⁱⁱⁱ.

To reduce the chance of runaway global warming and limit the effects of climate breakdown, it is imperative that, as a species, we reduce our CO₂eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible. ^{iv} Individuals cannot be expected to make this reduction on their own. Society needs to change its laws, taxation, infrastructure etc., to make low carbon living easier and the new norm. The good news is there are many social, environmental and economic benefits in doing so.

What We Need to Do

The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit before 2050 ^{v,vi}. Councils around the world are responding by declaring a 'climate emergency' and committing resources to address this crucial issue. ^{vii} Declaring an emergency will help to raise the profile of the issue and leverage in the extra support we need to achieve the necessary carbon reductions.

To achieve these ambitious but vital targets will require a huge change in our infrastructure, it will need lots of investment and support from national government. However, it is achievable and will not only reduce climate risk but will increase energy security, improve air quality, minimise fuel poverty, boost the local economy and provide jobs and training. For example:

- Insulating houses: heating demands and costs can be reduced by 40% through increasing energy efficiency in homes.
- Going electric: shifting from diesel and petrol vehicles to electric reduces the energy needed for transport as electric vehicles are five times more efficient on average. This also helps to improve air quality.
- To become zero carbon in domestic electricity would only require a mix from wind turbines; links to solar farms or more roof based solar; and/or hydro schemes in rivers.

We need to develop a workable plan on key actions such as:

- Working with Renewable Energy companies and sustainability groups to maximise uptake in the area.
- Working with SODC's planning team to maximise energy efficiency and renewable generation in new developments.
- Working with land agents to identify opportunities for wind, hydro and solar energy.
- Promoting insulation offers and charge points for electric vehicles.
- Working with schools, businesses and other organisations to reduce their energy costs and carbon emissions.
- Developing a climate emergency plan to enable communities to become more resilient in the face of more extreme weather such as flooding and heat.

Recommendations

- Declare a 'Climate Emergency'
- Pledge to make Aston Rowant Parish carbon neutral by a specified date
- Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make that target possible
- Develop a detailed plan of action and report back to council with an update on the actions being taken to address this emergency.

Sources

ⁱ www.picc.ch The leading international body for the assessment of climate change. Set up by the UN and World Meteorological Society with 195 countries as members.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/30/humanity-wiped-out-animals-since-1970-major-report-finds>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/20/air-pollution-cuts-global-average-lifespan-by-nearly-two-years-study>

^{iv} Fossil CO₂ & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017:

<http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc>

^v World Resources Institute: <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/8-things-you-need-know-about-ipcc-15-c-report>

^{vi} The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

^{vii} <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/6/13/berkeley-unanimously-declares-climate-emergency> , and the C40 cities: <https://www.c40.org/other/deadline-2020>