



## CLIMATE EMERGENCY POLICY

It is now clear that the world has a decreasing window in which 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.

Aston Rowant Parish Council 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 <sup>i</sup> 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 <sup>ii</sup>. 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 <sup>iii</sup>.

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 CO<sub>2</sub>eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible. <sup>iv</sup> 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 <sup>v,vi</sup>. Councils around the world are responding by declaring a 'climate emergency' and committing resources to address this crucial issue. <sup>vii</sup> 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 with the aid of our MP.
- Uphold a plan of action and update regularly on the actions being taken to address this emergency. \*See Page 3.

### Sources

<sup>i</sup> [www.picc.ch](http://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.

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

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

<sup>iv</sup> Fossil CO<sub>2</sub> & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017:

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

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

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

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

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Encourage the formation of Climate Action groups to encourage and support taking local political action, building positive community solutions, and join together to demand national action.

Resources on setting up a group: <https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/resources>

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

The local planning authority needs to hear from those that support the applications. The UK needs to actively increase the amount of renewable energy it generates, but with appropriately sited solar facilities – ie: instead of productive farmland or areas of natural beauty all new housing developments, industrial parks, shopping centres, council-owned buildings and car parking should have solar panels on roofing, or covering open areas.

Bring together groups of people for bulk purchases. The costs of installing solar panels, or other renewable technologies such as heat pumps, should be much lower if done in bulk, street by street, or area by area. We can bring together local homeowners and businesses to develop such a scheme Transition Streets is an example of this approach: <https://www.transitionstreets.org.uk/>

Promote lift-sharing schemes to help local people reduce the carbon pollution from car use, save money and foster new friendships. An analysis has 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.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport/LiftshareScheme.pdf> or <https://liftshare.com/uk>

Encourage parishioners to “Use your voice”. Decisions on infrastructure projects are largely made by local authorities or by national government but too many decisions will increase carbon emissions and or harm nature. “Use your Voice” 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.

Manage land for nature. Parish councils can have responsibility for allotments, bridleways, burial grounds, commons and open spaces, and village greens, all of which can be managed to enhance nature, particularly through changing mowing regimes. Friends of the Earth and Buglife have produced guides 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: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines-hub> and Friends of the Earth is piloting a crowd-funded postcode gardener project to help people green the streets where they live:

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/10x-greener-towns-and-cities>

Increase tree cover. Friends of the Earth is campaigning for the UK to double tree cover. The Forestry Commission have suggested that even urban areas should aim for at least 20% tree cover: [https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/2109/FR\\_FC\\_TreeCanopyData\\_leaflet.pdf](https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/2109/FR_FC_TreeCanopyData_leaflet.pdf).

Parish councils should aim to double tree cover by encouraging and supporting landowners to take part in tree planting. The Woodland Trust, provides excellent guidance on how to increase tree cover <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>.

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 this can also extend to any food provided at events, including providing mainly plant-based food and less, but better, meat and dairy.

Use green transport. Employees and councillors should be encouraged to walk, cycle or use public transport or car-share. Locally, join our MP in promoting and encouraging the extension of Thame-Haddenham Greenway to provide an extensive network of pathways and cycle routes to encourage usage and avoid using the (often) dangerous roads for these activities.

Minimise waste going to landfill or incineration. In council operations, ensure all our waste is recycled or composted, eg: reusable cups, no unnecessary printing or unnecessary purchases.

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

Use our Powers Mindfully. Requiring every decision to be well informed is common sense as well as good practice. This should extend to demanding that the SODC planning authority provides the council with this kind of information when consulting us.

Designate sites within the Neighbourhood Plan for trees, renewable energy and nature restoration. Development of 90% of Neighbourhood Plans is led by parish councils working hand in hand with their communities. The Neighbourhood Planning process offer the community the opportunity to show it means business on protecting and enhancing the environment for future generations.

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 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 and have EV charging points.

Designate safe walking and cycle routes in the Neighbourhood Plan. Identify safe walking and cycling routes and where necessary work in partnership with S.Oxon District and Oxfordshire County councils to deliver them with good quality infrastructure, such as segregated cycleways and cycle-parking, and with the use of E-bikes. See Propensity to Cycle tool, <https://www.pct.bike/>.

**Revised and Adopted at the Parish Council Meeting dated 4/Apr 2026**