

# Climate Emergency:

*What can PCs do?*  
*How can ECDC help?*

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# Who am I?

## **East Cambs DC – Strategic Planning Manager**

- eg East Cambs Planning Policy, Neighbourhood Plans, Environment Strategy
- Overall, I'm the lead officer for coordinating ECDC activities to tackle climate change, as well as help with nature conservation.

## **I do also work elsewhere:**

- Peterborough CC / Fenland DC / Central Lincs

## **And can I please introduce Emma-Jane Danielsson:**

- ECDC's new Climate Change & Natural Environment Officer

# My 20 mins to cover...

- Some East Cambs facts
- What is ECDC doing?
- What can parish/town council do? (this is my main bit)

Overall, my talk focusses on the climate emergency, but clearly there are links to the biodiversity crisis.

# Some East Cambs (as a district) Facts

- Good and Bad News...
- Bad news:
  - One of the highest per capita emitting districts in the country – 14.9 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per person (national average 5.16 tCO<sub>2</sub>): why? – land use (peat)
  - Even excluding land use, we are quite a high emitting district: why? – high car use; energy inefficient homes.
  - 9<sup>th</sup> worst district for tree cover – just 5.3%

# Some East Cambs (as a district) Facts

- Good News:
  - 427,000mwh of renewable energy generated in the district, in 2019: that's the highest of all Cambridgeshire districts, and enough to power well over 100,000 homes.
  - Our recycling rate is the highest in Cambs, and easily in top 10% nationally; with black bag waste also down over 25% in last 10 years.

# But we have to do a lot more, and a lot quicker

- East Cambs and Cambridgeshire one of the highest emitting areas in the country
- Huge growth proposals for the Cambridgeshire area add further pressure on our emissions
- East Cambs is predominantly rural – often relying on cars, oil and inefficient homes
- Our farmland is hugely important for national food supplies – but is a huge emitter of carbon
- We have 6 years left, under business as usual, before we have exhausted all of our ‘allowed’ share of emissions to 2050.
- Business as usual is not an option,

# We all have to do our part...and urgently

We need:

- Efficient homes
  - low carbon travel
  - Businesses to step up
  - Politicians to show true leadership
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- And the transition must be done in a fair and just way: not penalise the most vulnerable

# The need to act is now widely accepted

- By the vast majority of scientist
- By the vast majority of politicians
- By the vast majority of businesses
- By the vast majority of residents
- **By the vast majority of everyone!**

The key question is not whether there is a need to act...but how to act?



# What is ECDC doing

- ECDC declared a climate emergency in October 2019
- Prepared its first ever 'Environment Plan' in June 2020, including a set of top 20 actions – to be annually updated (last one in June 2021)
- Two prong approach:
  - Cut its own net emissions
  - Support and encourage others to cut its net emissions

# ECDC Overall Targets

- **A 20-33% reduction in our net CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by year 2025/26.**
  - reduced energy use in our buildings;
  - efficiency of our existing fleet vehicles;
  - investment in our own renewable energy; and
  - minimising the use of business miles of our staff.

# ECDC Overall Targets

- **A 66-80% reduction in our net CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by year 2030/31.**
  - further investment in our own renewable energy infrastructure;
  - some investment in electric based fleet vehicles; and
  - (potentially) moving off the gas grid to heat our buildings

# ECDC Overall Targets

- **A 100% net reduction (i.e. near or at net zero position) in our CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions by year 2034/35.**
  - moving to a vast majority, if not entirely, electric based vehicle fleet;
  - zero gas use in our buildings; and
  - Further investment in renewable energy infrastructure.
- **A truly 'net zero carbon' organisation (and potentially negative carbon emission organisation) by 2040.**

# ECDC to help others

- working with others
  - Securing funding (eg home retrofit)
  - Offering advice on how residents and business can cut energy use
- 
- And here to help you!

# What can PCs do?

In reverse order:

- Educate
- Set policy / lobby for policy
- Direct Action

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Place - Educate

- PC's can have an education role.
- But unlikely to have a major impact unless you went 'big' on it.
- Access to information is already widespread, for basic climate knowledge (web, newspapers, radio, schools).
- If you wanted to focus your energies on education, you'd need to offer something different to what's already available – but what?
- But no harm having basic reminder tips or links in your newsletter or website or tweets.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place - Set Policy:

- Declare an emergency
- Climate Action Plan
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Lobby for policy



# Policy - Declare a climate emergency

Parliament has. Over 75% of district councils have\*.

It's as simple as agreeing a formal 'yes, we declare there is a climate emergency', and making that public. You could also commit to certain things at the same time, but you don't have to.

Have you?

By declaring, you give a clear signal to your community that you (at the very least) acknowledge the climate is under great and immediate threat.

*\*Peterborough, East Cambs, South Cambs, Cambridge and Cambridgeshire have. Fenland and Huntingdonshire have not.*

# Policy – Parish Climate Action Plan

- In order to coordinate activity, and monitor it, you need a ‘plan’.
- Short and simple; or long and complex: just be realistic.
- Set targets and dates.
- And be accountable for them.
- Targets for yourself? Or targets for the community?

For example...

...example:

[www.burwellparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.burwellparishcouncil.gov.uk) – adopted a ‘Climate Change Action Plan’ in Jan 2021.

Jenny Moss along shortly to give you a brief overview of the Burwell Plan!

# Policy - Neighbourhood Plan

Many of you will have one / preparing one / thought about doing one.

But how many have a genuine meaningful positive climate impact?

Scope is narrower than an 'Action Plan'; but power is much greater.

For example...

# ...for example

- Set policy for energy efficiency rating of new buildings
- Allocate specific sites for renewables (wind; solar)
- 'Presumption in favour' policies for proposals needed for a net zero society (eg small scale micro generation; battery storage; building retrofits)
- Require electric vehicle charging points in all new development
- Require embodied carbon targets to be met

Once set (and agreed at referendum) they legally must be followed.

# Policy - Nominate a champion

Nominating a lead parish councillor as the 'climate champion' can:

- Speed up decision making (trust your champion!)
- Help with communications
- Create a central knowledgeable person (and link to eg district council)
- Monitors actions

# Policy – Lobby others

PCs are listened to!

You have a powerful role in lobbying others to set policy:

- National policy
- County policy – Mayor's plans and policies
- Local district policy – Local Plans, Climate Plans etc

Just be clear and succinct what you want.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Place - Direct Action

- Show leadership, by taking action yourself.
- For all decisions you take, ask '*what are the **climate** implications*' (not just '*what are the **financial** or **political** implications*')
- Set targets for yourself, and report on them



# Direct Action - property

If you own any buildings:

- Is your electricity a renewable tariff? (a powerful message to send)
- Can you make energy efficiency savings?
- Could you install renewables, such as solar panels on the roof?
- How about a heat pump?
- Can you repair rather than replace?

# Direct Action - vehicles

If you own any vehicles (including maintenance vehicles):

- Can they be used less often / more efficiently?
- Can you share them with another parish? (huge embodied carbon savings)
- Can the next one be electric?

# Direct Action - events

If you run any events:

- Can you stipulate attendees or stall holders to do certain things?
- Can you avoid single use activities?
- Can you use your purchasing power to procure lower climate impact providers?

# Direct Action – just ask the question!

Decision takers usually consider:

- Can we afford it / is it good value for money?
- Will it look good / work for what we want?

But fail to ask:

- What is the climate impact of the decision?

For example:

...example: this event today!

When booking this venue, we did consider the climate impact.

- Is the venue accessible by non-car? – ***yes it is (within reason)***
- What are the environment and climate policies of the venue? – ***“ok, but could do better” would be my school report***
- Can we procure a lunch which has a lower carbon impact? (eg less meat; seasonal and local food; tap water; re-useable serving equipment) – ***yes we have***

These should become everyday, simple, necessary questions to ask of yourselves. Use your purchasing power, and make a difference.

# Not mentioned...

Other things I could have talked about that you could do:

- Take on a task which is too difficult for individuals (eg getting a community off oil and on to renewables)
- Set up a car share scheme
- Set up a bulk purchasing club (eg for sustainable food, energy, renewables)
- Dedicate any land you have as a co-farm
- Set up a share and repair community scheme
- Work with your local businesses – get them to ‘own’ your ideas.

## In summary:

1. Declare a climate emergency
2. Decide what policies you want, and a timetable for preparing them
3. Nominate a champion
4. Take direct action, no matter how little, whenever opportunities arise (show leadership)
5. Use your purchasing power (as well as share 'stuff' with others)
6. Ask the question 'what are the climate impacts?'
7. Don't delay ("perfection is the enemy of progress") – just get on with it!

Educating others, communicating your achievements, winning over voters, lobbying those higher up...will all naturally follow.