

A Climate Change Action Plan for Colerne Parish

Introduction.

This action plan has emerged from the Parish Council's need to respond to Wiltshire Council's Climate Strategy (1), and the policies included within the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan 2022-36 (2) that incorporates all the latest government policies relating to Climate Change at the time of being made in March 2022.

1. Already agreed by Colerne PC -

- i) Aim to reduce energy consumption in the parish with targets to be agreed
- ii) Generate energy from renewable sources in the parish with targets to be agreed
- iii) Improve recycling opportunities and facilities in the parish
- iv) Attempt to reduce reliance on cars in the parish and promote more environmental forms of transport
- v) Provide an environmental check on parish council policies and practices
Protect and conserve the natural environment.

2. Policies enshrined in the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan -Section4.

4.15 Biodiversity, the protection of green spaces and the development of nature corridors are not a luxury for the future, but an essential and fundamental building block to mitigate impact of climate change [NE2].

4.16. The Plan contends that high standards of building process and a carbon-neutral living environment have to be established for all new building locally, and encourages older properties to be retrofitted to reduce fuel usage and costs, and improve the quality of life for all [BE5].

4.17. Prior to the impact of Covid-19, 60% of all working age residents in this parish were commuting by car to work out of the area. Recognising that any built development will promote increased car usage, this Plan supports mea-

asures that seek a reduction in car commuting by support for homeworking and the creation of improved infrastructure for walking and cycling. The Plan has been written with the assumption that there will be no major improvements to highways in the parish, and that, where appropriate, development proposals must demonstrate how they will address the limitations of transport infrastructure.

A more distant goal (Section 6) is the establishment of a local carbon-neutral community transport scheme that is flexible and frequent enough to be used by all sections of our local community.

4.18. New housing or employment developments must be designed to mitigate demand on energy production. The community has strongly supported the creation of a “community energy scheme”, discussed further in SE1-3. It is also essential that future developments include, appropriate to the site, the highest possible quality and quantity of ‘green’ features -- trees, shrubs, grassland, hedgerows, and verges -- with a presumption not just in favour of preservation of existing such features but also an overall ‘net gain’ (as proposed in the Environment Bill of 2019).

4.19. Particular Policies in the Plan that aim at climate change mitigation are: Sustainable design and construction [BE5]; Walking and Cycling [CHWB3]; Renewable energy[SE1]; car charging [SE2]. Landscape and Natural Environment [NE1:]Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity:[NE2:]

3.How can Colerne improve its carbon footprint?

Climate change is affected by everything we do.

Colerne Parish Council is seeking to become net-zero by 2030, in line with the current Wiltshire Council guidance. This will not be easy to calculate and quantify but establishing the principle is the first step.

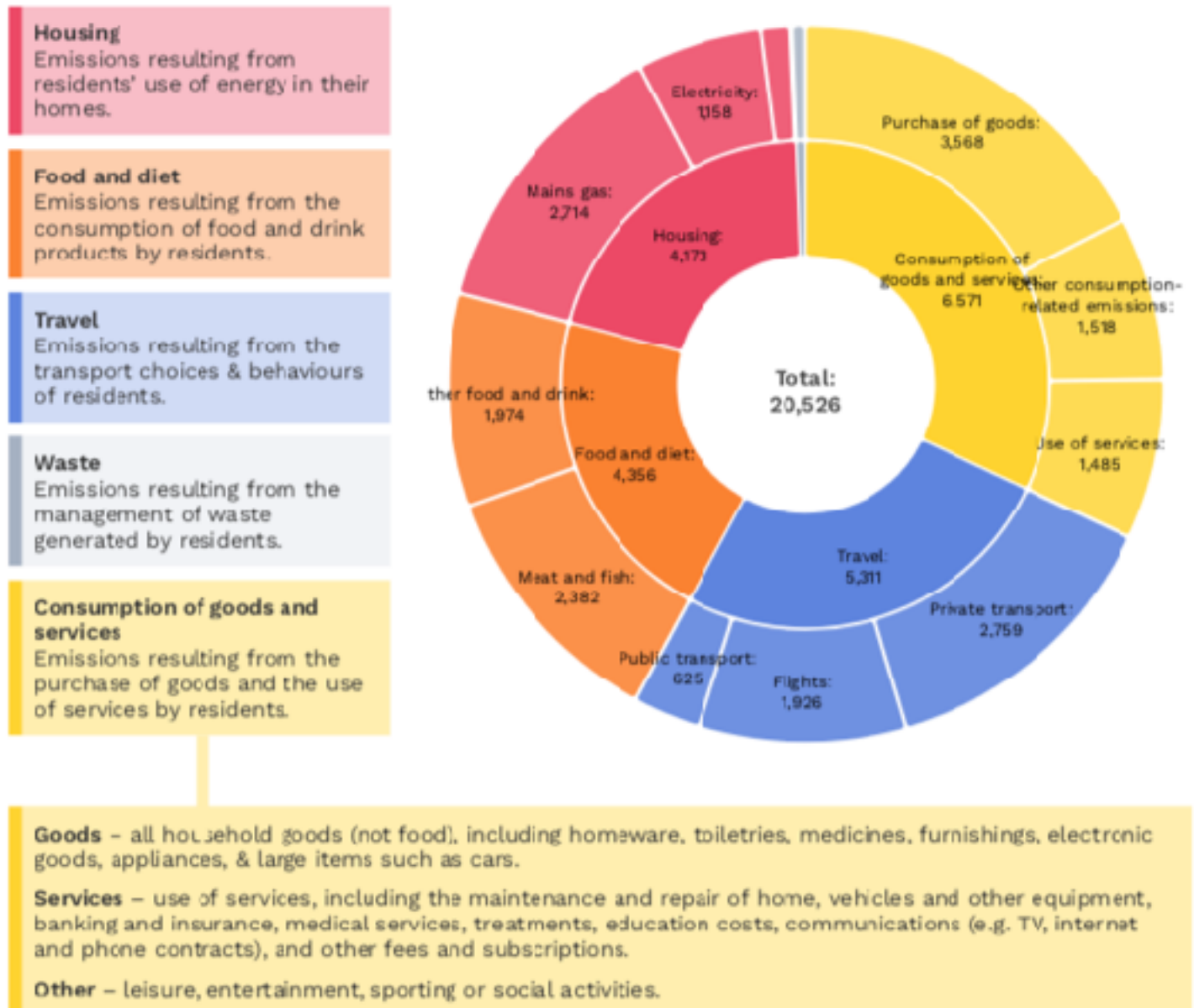
Colerne PC cannot achieve this alone. Collaboration with residents, businesses and neighbouring parish councils is essential, but there are some measures we can take immediately in our own activities that will both have some limited effect and set an example allowing Colerne PC to take an active role in encouraging and enabling others to act.

Our Community’s Consumption Footprint

The following data is from the Community Carbon Calculator, a tool kit established by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (3)

Your whole footprint

This figure shows the annual carbon emissions (measured in tonnes CO₂e²) emitted as a result of the different activities that residents within your parish's boundary engage in – from heating to eating.



A breakdown of the numbers

The table below shows your area's consumption footprint – total estimated emissions and per-household averages – so that you can see a breakdown of the numbers.

² CO₂e stands for "carbon dioxide equivalent" and is a standard unit of measurement in carbon accounting. It expresses the impact of a number of different gases collectively as a common unit.

4. How does knowing our carbon footprint help us tackle climate change?

Footprint information can guide us to where we should target our efforts to reduce emissions and have the greatest impact. To help us think about what to do next with our footprint information, in each section of this report there are change targets for reaching net zero, and some trigger questions to help us think about possible areas for action.

Note that these footprints are intended to raise awareness and improve understanding of the types of activities which contribute to emissions in any given area in order to stimulate individual and collective action.

Policies should start with the way the council operates!

Over the next 12 months Colerne PC will assess the impact of PC activities, and look for and implement ways to reduce harmful effects, including carbon emissions:

Energy used by the Old School - broken down into Flats, Playgroup ,Council Offices, public areas.

Energy used by the Pavillion

Energy used in maintaining recreation areas

Energy used in the work of the Village Ranger

Review heating systems in the pavillion and the Old School and plan towards renewables

Develop a procurement strategy that places a high score on bids providing a positive climate change response.

Policy: The Climate Policy is to stand paramount above all other policies(with the exception of Health & Safety), and all other policies and motions of the Council must comply with it.

Policy: Colerne PC will take all practicable measures to aid nature recovery and reduce energy use and carbon emissions in its own activities, including travel to meetings, lighting and heating of council offices and facilities such as pavilions, and maintenance of buildings and land for which the Council is responsible.

Policy: Colerne PC will develop a procurement strategy that recognises and rewards Climate Change responses from potential bidders.

RECOMMENDATION: ColernePC will ensure that all appropriate Parish assets are assessed and a review undertaken of the most cost effective way of upgrading their energy efficiency and accessing green energy.

5. Travel and Transport.

The Neighbourhood Plan community survey gave some insight into the travelling by car by parishioners. 60% of all working age residents were out commuting by car for work.

Through the covid restrictions, the movement of residents for food and essentials shopping has reduced, but the level of supermarket deliveries has increased sizably.

The potential addition of a railway station at Corsham will not significantly affect local car use as currently the level of public bus service is so limited. Already people out commute to Chippenham to access the rail network for London, Swindon, Bath and Bristol.

All the sport and recreation services in the village involve a considerable number of car journeys by individual families.

Events at the Village Hall result in car journeys from Thickwood and North Colerne as well as from The Firs estate.

School drop off times are again incurring a sizable number of vehicles from around the parish now that parents are required to return to work buildings for at least some sessions per week.

The recommendations of the NP now need to be fully assessed and costed :-

- i) increasing and improving cycle and footpath [CHWB3]
- ii) the recommendation for a community shuttle bus to provide frequent and regular access to other transport connections. [section6]

6. The Built environment.

As a consultee on planning applications, Colerne Council now requires plans to comply fully with the Neighbourhood Plan. Within the NP are policies relating to energy generation and useage, biodiversity.

Policy: As consultee on planning applications, Colerne PC will make Climate Change Mitigation and Nature Recovery primary considerations in all its responses.

7. Energy generation, storage and distribution.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies relating to energy.

Policy SE1 reflects the support already demonstrated in the community survey for a community energy scheme. At such time as suitable land /building tops become available, the council should facilitate feasibility studies to address the possiblitiy of some kind of community energy production that will directly benefit the community.

Policy: The Council will seek to increase renewable energy generation on its buildings and land, and where reasonable support such projects by other organisations within the Parish.

8. Green and circular economy.

Positive, “offsetting” measures :-

i) Allotments, local food production and increasing Biodiversity.

The NP Section 6 lists the need to provide more allotment facilities for any new builds and for the benefit of North Colerne community, in particular.

There are further policies relating to increasing biodiversity [NE2]

The PC currently has a waiting list of 30 for allotments and newly available allotments have been halved, where possible, in order to support more families.

There are possible pieces of land, some in Green Belt that could be acquired for community food growing. Since the covid crisis there are a growing number of young families seeking to become involved in food growing. The majority of homes within the village do not have large outdoor spaces sufficient to allow food growing.

Recommendations-

- That the Council, in conjunction with other local groups, actively explores opportunities for creating community food production areas as part of health and well being as well as cultivation of food. That some consultation be undertaken with the community concerning the possibility of a shared Community Forest Garden in addition to further allotments, which would provide an educational resource, allow a greater number of families to become engaged with growing and increase the biodiversity of the growing environment.
- Set up a new grants scheme to encourage and address climate change innovations.

(could we follow the Box PC e.g. of appointing a climate change assistant to the clerk to follow up on applications and concerns relating to this theme?)

9. Natural environment, land use and farming.

In consultation with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, an eco-audit of land already managed by the PC and 'local green spaces' will initiate proposals for increasing the biodiversity of the parish.

The following strategies will be developed over the coming year:

i) Tree strategy:

-include assessment of impact of Ash die-back within the Parish and plans to mitigate ecological impact.

-planting more trees in appropriate areas in conjunction with the Cotswold Conservation Board.[where to plant (and not plant) trees to ensure most benefit to wildlife].

-establish time scale for target planting.

ii) Verge and field cutting: ensure this is in line with best practice for environmental benefit. The PC to renegotiate the contract for grass cutting within the parish where possible.

iii) Hedges - Encourage local residents to plant hedges for land boundaries rather than fences, as recommended in the NP Design Statement

Hedges are an attractive feature of our Area of Outstanding Beauty, but also provide an important habitat for a wide range of species, offering food, shel-

ter, protection from predators, wintering and nesting sites, and act as transit corridors.

The PC will endeavour to encourage greater growth in hedgerows where there is no negative impact on health and safety, particularly with respect to highways. It is recommended, that unless for urgent health and safety reasons, hedge cutting will not be conducted between April and August.

Policy: Reduce or eliminate use of plastic in Colerne PC activities and events including the use of plastic tree protectors for saplings.

10. Engaging with the wider community:

Colerne PC has set up a Climate strategy and biodiversity Working Group . This group incorporates non councillors from other interest groups and local people with relevant expertise and skills. Together, this group will engage with residents, businesses and other services and groups to help achieve a goal of net-zero for the Parish as a whole.

The Aims will include:-

Increased local food production and reliance on local producers.

Reduced energy use by businesses, including agriculture.

Increased environmentally positive farming and land management.

Increased insulation of homes and support for parishioners in converting to green energy.

Increased awareness of the role individual residents can have in enhancing biodiversity and nature recovery: e.g. helping hedgehog initiatives.

ADAPTATION

These aims will need to be made into action plans by Colerne PC in consultation with residents, businesses, farmers, etc. The role of Colerne PC will primarily be one of enabling and encouraging, bringing people together and facilitating change with some direct action. We may be able to promote and encourage community projects as suggested in the Neighbourhood Plan. e.g. community energy schemes, car-sharing, and so on.

This part of the plan is not yet an action plan and will be developed for future versions.

References:

REF 1: Wiltshire-Climate-Strategy-Discussion-Document-Summary-May 2021.

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/6553/Climate-Strategy-Discussion-Document-Summary-May-2021/pdf/Wiltshire-Climate-Strategy-Discussion-Document-Summary-May2021.pdf?m=637559903494830000>

REF2: Colerne Neighbourhood Plan

<https://www.colerne-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>

Accepted by Parish Council June 2022