

WHAT NEXT?

SUGGESTIONS FOR HELSTON TOWN COUNCIL

There is no doubt that a climate emergency is taking place. However, at every level in society, there are things that can be done to help limit the damage that is being done and help prepare our communities. This document is intended to help Helston Town Council (HTC) take appropriate action and do its part in addressing the massive environmental challenges facing all of us. In consultation with other groups and organisations, Transition Helston & District propose several actions, in five broad groups (there will be more detail on these later on).

This is not intended to be, nor cannot be, an exhaustive list. The possibilities for meaningful action are unlimited, and are only bound by our creativity and effort! But in essence, we are asking you to put carbon reduction, carbon sequestration and the environment at the heart of all policy making, now and in the future. Far from being an attempt to stop Helston Town Council from doing things, it is an opportunity for the council to focus on new and exciting policies and actions that may save money (which could be reinvested in offsetting carbon emissions) and will help build a stronger, more resilient community here in Helston. We need to move quickly on these actions, however. There is much work to do, and only 12 years to do it in. Helston Town Council will need to look at removing barriers to positive change, so that we can work as quickly as we can, and engage as many of our community as possible in this process. Whilst this process should not rely on volunteer groups, but should be a HTC initiative, financed and supported by HTC councillors and staff, it would be useful to undertake a neighbourhood audit of different groups / organisations within & around Helston Town that can work with the council on this.

Declare a Climate Emergency

- A hugely powerful statement to make to the people of Helston, but just as importantly, it shows clear support for Cornwall Council and adds to the wave of councils & communities demanding that Westminster takes a meaningful lead on addressing climate change.

Form a Climate / Environment Action Group

- Form an action group with HTC councillors & officers, local experts and representatives of local groups, to focus on addressing the environmental crisis, explore ideas & prioritise actions, and feedback to the monthly full council meeting.

Inform and educate

- It is really important to inform our local community of the environmental crisis we are facing in a way that empowers them to take action themselves, come together as a community, and support the council in their efforts. Many of the changes we need to bring in have the potential to be transformative for our community. Keep the message positive and empowering. Focus on the benefits this will bring. Aim to get the whole community and all age groups involved.

Short-term actions

- Actions that can be taken almost immediately for little or no cost, and that will have an immediate impact

Longer-term goals

- Projects that may take more resources to achieve (*primarily time & money*) or need planning ahead.

WHAT WE CAN DO **RIGHT NOW**.

In support of the previous broad goals, here are some of the things that HTC can do right now:

- Declare a **Climate Emergency**. Inform Cornwall Council through our Cornwall Councillors and lobby for the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible. This will support Cornwall Council with their requests to Westminster.
- Form a **Climate / Environment Action Group** comprising HTC councillors & officers, local experts and representatives of local groups to focus on addressing the environmental crisis, explore ideas & prioritise actions, and feedback to the monthly full council meeting.
- Lead by example:** individually and as a council adopt the Climate Vision **Ten Pledges**:
 - I pledge to ring my electricity supplier over the next 24 hours and see if I can switch to green energy (if not, I will find one!)
 - I pledge to buy local seasonal produce as much as possible, starting with at least 2 meals a week
 - I pledge to educate myself about the science and impacts of climate change
 - I pledge to contact my MP and my friends to make these pledges too
 - I pledge to walk, cycle, use public transport or register with <https://liftshare.com/uk/community/cornwall> to travel to work or regular journey at least once a week.
 - I pledge to work out my own carbon footprint using one of the many easy to use carbon calculators e.g., <https://footprint.world.org.uk>
 - I pledge to do a 'home energy check' to find out how I can save energy in my home. (<https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk> (If you don't have internet, ask the Energy Saving Trust on 0800 512 012)
 - I pledge to turn my thermostat down or use a thermometer to reach the lowest comfortable temperature, typically between 18-21°C & think about putting on a jumper instead.
 - I pledge to reduce my holiday air miles by 50%
 - I pledge to research 'driving in a greener way' by researching online or by ringing up a driving instructor and booking a lesson to learn eco-drive ideas.
- Promote the Climate Vision **Ten Pledges**, using existing channels of information, and showing a personal lead (e.g. *interview in local press, article on HTC website, etc.*) <http://climatevision.co.uk/top-ten-pledges>

- Commission a neighbourhood & Town Council **carbon audit** as soon as possible, so we have a baseline to work from and to track & celebrate progress. Charmian Larke (01872 864488) can do this for free under Cornwall New Energy's business assist programme. Local councils are not eligible, so it would need to be arranged through Helston CIC or a local business.
- Agree an **annual percentage reduction up to 2030**, understanding that it will become progressively more difficult to find ways of making reductions, and that we need to plan ahead for this.
- Switch to a **renewable energy supplier** for all council run buildings / street lighting etc.
- Install **LED / low energy bulbs** in all council run buildings / street lights
- Organise an **Energy Saving Pop-up Advice Surgery** for the local community. Community Energy Plus, a Truro-based charity, have offered to provide this for free. Contact fergus@cep.org.uk or 01872 245566 ext 221)
- Actively work to **reduce consumption**, reduce waste and recycle. Use recycled paper & environmentally friendly cleaning products in all council facilities.
- Commit to using **LOAF ingredients** (*Local, Organic, Animal friendly, Fairly traded*) at council functions. Make it a policy not to use disposable cups, plates or bottled water.
- When awarding **contracts for goods or services**, recognise potential carbon emissions as another element to be considered alongside price. Source locally wherever possible.
- Find out where council funds are invested and start process of **divesting from fossil fuels**. Lobby Cornwall Council to do the same. <https://gofossilfree.org/uk/fuellingthefire/>

Medium to Longer Term Actions.

Communication

- Use the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) model of working within the community. See www.sharedassets.org.uk for some great examples.
- Create a reliable and regular means for **sharing & exchanging information** with the Helston community, on how they can take positive action, where they can source environmentally friendly products, join community-led initiatives etc. This could include the HTC website, social media, regular column in local press, noticeboards, leaflets, town meetings etc.

- Undertake a **neighbourhood audit** of different groups / organisations within & around Helston Town that can work with the council on this. Reach out to these groups and seek to engage them. Set up regular communication channels.
- Regular contact with **Cornwall Council** to lobby, find out what they're doing and report back. Make sure everyone is in the loop. Encourage them to be brave!
- Act as a voice for the community to **lobby for action on climate change**, raise the profile & share lessons with higher levels of government. Lobby our MP, and Westminster for all initiatives that will support Helston (and Cornwall) to reduce our emissions, now and in the future.

Policy & Planning

- Develop a **Climate / Environment Action Plan**, in consultation with local community.
- Lobby Cornwall Council to amend its **Local Plan** (due for review in 2021) to include:
 - Policies which promote high standards of energy efficiency and include renewable energy for all homes and businesses, e.g. all new homes to be certified to Passivhaus (<http://passivhaustrust.org.uk>) or Net Zero Carbon Building (<https://www.ukgbc.org/ukgbc-work/advancing-net-zero/>) standards
 - Provision for Clean Energy Schemes (incl. solar arrays) and electric car charging points.
 - Policies to prevent developers from installing oil or bottle gas heating systems.
 - Light pollution policy to enable towns & parishes to turn off street lights after 12pm and to facilitate progress towards achieving International Dark Sky status (if appropriate).
- Lobby Westminster for **planning policy changes** at the national level, to promote zero carbon development, including all of the points above.
- Use revenue received from **Community Infrastructure Levies** (if applicable) to invest in carbon emission reduction
- Consider what **assets** belong to the council or may become assets of the council under Cornwall's devolution plans. How might longer-term, more ambitious projects be funded?
- Consider using empty shops in Helston as places for the community to come together. See what happened when Barking & Dagenham did this: (www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/24/neighbourhood-project-barking-dagenham)
- Ensure climate change is considered when writing Helston's **Emergency Plan**

Energy / Water

- Commission a thermal imaging study to highlight poor **insulation**. Research and promote grant schemes / other funding to enable people in the community to retro-fit their homes with better insulation. Bulk purchase of loft insulation.
- Support or develop local **clean energy projects** and other positive initiatives, particularly community led with funding or council backing. Explore opportunities for funding initiatives and share these with the community.
- Install **renewable energy sources** on community buildings including community solar panels, passive solar water heating.
- Identify and liaise with organisations working with **vulnerable people** in our area, who may be able to help them access support, e.g. grant funding for insulation, renewable energy.
- Install community **electric vehicle charging points** for households that have no off-road parking. Some communities are providing charging points attached to lampposts (which already have an electricity supply – see <https://www.zap-map.com/london-street-lights-converted-to-ev-charge-points-for-trial/> for example.
- Work with South West Water and the Environment Agency to **reduce water use** and take **flood prevention** measures

Management of parks, green spaces, roadsides & pathways

- Climate Action Plan** should include a plan for the maintenance of all council managed parks, green spaces, roadsides & pathways, and how they can be used for **carbon sequestration, to promote biodiversity, and support local food production**.
- Climate Action Plan** should include a **pollinator action plan**:
<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/grow-nature/about/pollinator-action-plan/>
- Stop future hedge clearances**. Cut less grass & verges – re-wild areas instead. **Plant wild flowers & meadows**. This will reduce the need to mow (thereby reducing carbon emissions and cost) and will help support biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and our struggling insect populations.
- Plant trees** for carbon capture & food – many trees, in public spaces. Make the most of the beautiful walls we have here in Helston to plant fruit trees. Make this a community project. Set up a 'Tree Guardian' scheme – involve young people in this.

- Use parks and green spaces for **community growing** projects. Education is key. Involve local schools in this. Use **Incredible Edible Todmorden** as an example of food planting across the town: <https://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>
- Work with local **Britain in Bloom** to encourage them to plant bee friendly plants & flowers.
- Install **bird & insect boxes**. Another ideal project to involve local schools.
- Stop using weedkillers** and other chemicals in parks, green spaces, roadsides and pathways. Explore natural methods of weed suppression or allow the weeds to thrive and enjoy them – many are beautiful and important food for wildlife.
- Train groundsmen employed by HTC in **regenerative gardening** techniques.
- Make **play areas more natural** needing less maintenance – encourage children to use their imagination instead and allow for risk taking. Children need to learn these skills.
- Explore how Helston **cemetery** can be used to enhance biodiversity. Promote **green burials**.

Business / local producers

- When awarding **contracts for goods or services**, recognise potential carbon emissions as another element to be considered alongside price. Source locally wherever possible.
- Encourage local businesses & producers to themselves declare a climate emergency and work towards becoming carbon neutral. Develop a Helston '**kite mark**' or award scheme to reward local businesses / producers who are committed to working on this and celebrate progress.
- Promote local businesses that offer **refill** options (*e.g. Gillian's Larder, Natural Store*).
- Engage with the local farming community** regarding regenerative farming methods, rainwater runoff, chemical use etc. South West Water / Cornwall Wildlife Trust's 'Upstream Thinking' can help here. Encourage organic, seasonal production.
- Encourage use of locally grown produce and **actively support local producers** who have adopted organic, regenerative practices.

Tourism / Recreation

- Promote **responsible tourism**. Work with holiday rentals, B&B's and hotels to encourage guests not to leave trash in the environment, and preferably bring plastic back with them when they go to the beach. Recommend local tourism-related businesses join CoaST (www.coastproject.co.uk), a Cornwall-based social enterprise working to support those involved in responsible tourism.
- Develop a **Helston climate specific visitor charter** (<https://www.coastproject.co.uk/search/coastvisitorcharter>)
- Find ways to reward tourists that arrive by **bus / train / bike**.
- Co-ordination of **beach cleaning**, involving the whole community. *Clean Ocean Sailing* in Gweek will take fishing / plastic waste from beach cleans and recycle it to make kayaks.
- Ask *National Trust* to put **water bottle refilling stations** outside Penrose Stables and on coast path. HTC to do the same in town and encourage surrounding villages to do the same.

Transport

- Install **bike racks** & display a map with safe walking / cycling routes within the local area (already available for National Trust Penrose)
- Promote **public transport**. Encourage and lobby for better bus links to train stations and surrounding area. Establish bus hopper service to the coast, until public transport becomes more affordable.
- Promote **car-sharing**, e.g. <https://liftshare.com/uk/community/cornwall> and <https://pastyconnection.com/>
- Encourage electric vehicles** in town centre with charging points – perhaps free parking for electric cars?
- Install community **electric vehicle charging points** for households that have no off-road parking. Some communities are providing charging points attached to lampposts (which already have an electricity supply – see <https://www.zap-map.com/london-street-lights-converted-to-ev-charge-points-for-trial/> for example.

Adaptation

- Read **Adaptation Sub-Committee's UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Evidence Report** which sets out the priority climate change risks and opportunities for the UK:
<https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017/>
- Read the **UK Government (DEFRA)'s report on Food Security**:
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmenvfru/243/243.pdf>
- Start thinking about how **fuel and food rationing** may affect our local community (*these are distinct possibilities*). What do we need to start putting in place now? **Support community growing & local producers** engaged in **organic regenerative** agriculture.
- Support **repair café & skills share** projects
- Support networks** for people coming to an awareness of the climate / environment crisis we are facing.
- Consider implications for activities within the town – **schools, elderly, healthcare** – when adaptation is needed
- Work with South West Water and the Environment Agency to **reduce water use** and take **flood prevention** measures

All of these actions actively contribute to **good health, good soil, good communities, positive carbon management, good economics**. That is to say, each action can create **multiple benefits**. By doing this Helston Town Council would be engaging in the **circular economy** and **doughnut economics**. Read more about this here: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/12/doughnut-growth-economics-book-economic-model>

Please add to this list!