Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies: *what can PCs do?*

Richard Kay

Helen Dye

Climate Emergency

Richard Kay

Who am I?

Peterborough CC – Head of Sustainable Growth Strategy

(eg Planning Policy, Neighbourhood Plans, Council's Tree Stock)

East Cambs DC – Strategic Planning Manager

(eg Planning Policy, Neighbourhood Plans, Environment Strategy)

Fenland DC / Central Lincs – Strategic Planning Advisor

(i.e. high level advice on planning policy)

Cambs wide: Minerals and Waste Plan; LNP; Planning Policy Forum.

Try to remember this code…

Bulb.me/richardk4405

What can PCs do?

In reverse order:

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

3rd 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.

2nd 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 – adopted a ‘Climate Change Action Plan’ in Jan 2021.

Includes a mix of short, medium and long term commitments.

Mix of direct action (eg net zero owned buildings by 2030), and encouraging/lobbying others.

Just 9 pages…but gives a framework to work to. And build up.

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
- Regional policy (Ox-Cam Arc consultation out now!)
- County policy – Mayor’s plans and policies
- Local district policy – Local Plans, Climate Plans etc

Just be clear and succinct what you want.

1st 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** 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, did the decision makers consider the climate impact? Did they ask:

- Is the venue accessible by non-car?
- What are the environment and climate policies of the venue?
- Does the lunch procured have a lower carbon impact? (eg less meat; seasonal and local food; tap water; re-useable serving equipment)

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.

But if…

- You only do one thing this year (either as an individual or your PC)
- You only have 15 minutes to do something

Then…

Sign up to a renewable energy tariff

Code:

www.bulb.me/richardk4405

(other energy providers are available! Eg ecotricity, octopus)

Pledge:

For everyone who signs up using the above code, I pledge to donate each £50 received to Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust (50%) and Woodland Trust (50%)

www.bulb.me/richardk4405

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.