

Warminster Town Council – Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy

Many town councils up and down the country have declared a 'climate and ecological emergency' and have produced strategy and action plans to reduce carbon emissions to combat climate change and to protect wildlife and habitats at a local level.

Warminster Town Council (WTC) acknowledges the climate and ecological emergency, and we are committed to action. We acknowledge the global biodiversity crisis, described by the UN as the 6th Mass Extinction, and we recognise we all have the responsibility to act now to halt the decline of our wildlife.

As any town council, with limited resources, and without environmental experts within our ranks, we will not boast that we alone can solve every issue. We have asked ourselves, and will continue to ask ourselves, what do the people of Warminster need from their town council in the face of the climate crisis?

At present, our policy, focus and commitment is to encourage, assist and empower our local residents, schools and businesses to take individual and collective responsibility to reduce carbon emissions and create a better and more sustainable environment here in Warminster for both human health and our local wildlife.

We will listen to and support the town in its endeavors and try wherever we can to lead by example in our day to day activities as the town council. We have made a pledge and invite you as residents of Warminster to make your own pledge, so that together we can make a real and measurable difference. We will consider the environmental, social and financial impacts on all our activities.

Our Commitment

As the town council we know that we must lead by example, by looking at our own activities, and we must make changes to our own day to day business to reduce our carbon emissions. And we will record our progress, with a commitment to net zero emissions by 2030.

But we are just a small part of the jigsaw, or course. More important, is that we pledge to look beyond our own activities, and to support, encourage and (where possible) influence other stakeholder groups within the town to combat the climate and ecological emergency. So, as well as our net zero emissions target by 2030, we will implement the following Climate Change Strategy.

Warminster Town Council's Climate Change Strategy

1. To the residents of Warminster.

In coordination with community groups within the town such as Sustainable Warminster, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Incredible Edible Community Garden, we pledge to encourage and assist residents in their attempts to reduce carbon emissions in their day-to-day lives. We will do this by supporting and endorsing a series of initiatives, schemes and groups within the town, all focused to help residents make meaningful changes in their day-to-day activities, and which will - collectively - have a dramatic impact on reducing carbon emissions within the town.

We will facilitate not for profit community groups with environmental initiatives, such as a 'repair shop', sustainability workshops, a 'community fridge' scheme, an allotment/garden surplus scheme to reduce food waste, or a borrowing library for electrical items or seldom used power tools.

For households, we will support schemes to enable more local homeowners generate renewable energy and make our homes more energy efficient.

We will also look to capitalise on the funding and lead from central government in greatly extending and improving the town's cycling path infrastructure - implementing the schemes laid out in the local Neighbourhood Plan (2012) improving signage of existing routes.

We will also look to capitalise on the funding from central government in greatly extending and improving the town's cycling path infrastructure. We will also use other funding approaches such as CATG and the Path Improvement Grant Scheme (PIGS) 3.

We will aim to improve signage on existing cycle routes, implement the schemes laid out in the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan (2015) and develop further cycle tracks including new permissive cycle routes created by discussion with landowners.

We will encourage walking to school, to work, to shops and for leisure by promoting footpaths and pedestrian safety. We will support measures by Wiltshire Council and Operators to improve public transport to reduce car traffic.

We will ask you as residents to take your own Warminster Pledge and councillors will do the same. The town council will use its website and social media to collect pledges, and we will provide information and support to residents to make this a worthwhile and positive experience for us all.

2. To Businesses within Warminster

We will endeavour to work with businesses, both large and small, within Warminster to improve both the carbon footprint of individual businesses, as well as exploring what they can do to assist local residents in being more carbon efficient and environmentally friendly. We will endeavour to attract new businesses which bring environmentally beneficial industry and 'green recovery' to the town.

We will implement a 2021 local 'Green Award' for independent businesses within the town who lead the way in carbon emission reduction.

We have a number of national supermarkets within the town which (together) account for the majority of food and household purchases in the town. We will look to these stores to reduce single use plastic, stock some locally produced food, reduce food waste, support the food bank, provide water filling stations, provide battery and other recycling facilities, and encourage paper bags and reusable string bags. We will also look at potential cross-over schemes between shops and residents/town council such as recycling cardboard or coffee grounds within composting schemes.

We will develop our relationship with the Borehill Biodigester operators, Malaby Biogas, and explore ways of working with them to champion low carbon gas and electricity generation and

fertiliser production from anaerobic digestion. We will encourage business opportunities for collecting domestic and commercial food waste in the Warminster area.

3. To Schools

We acknowledge that there is a great deal of interest and appetite amongst the numerous schools within the Warminster area to encourage children in green initiatives, and to take additional measures within schools to reduce their own waste and carbon footprint.

Warminster Town Council pledges to support joined up initiatives between primary and secondary schools and to direct (wherever possible) grant donations to schools in support of their green agendas. It is acknowledged that reducing food waste within schools and educating children about the serious consequences on the environment caused by food waste, is a major aim. Reducing paper and single use plastics within schools, school travel plans, and energy consumption in school buildings are also major considerations.

We would hope that all our schools will take an active interest in the Warminster Pledge, and that the children will help us develop and evolve the pledge to benefit their futures.

4. In respect of Warminster's green spaces

As an historic rural town, we acknowledge our additional responsibility to oversee the management of our green spaces and wildlife areas – in association with other stakeholders and landowners such as Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, who manage the town's Smallbrook Meadows nature reserve.

With the wonderful Lake Pleasure Grounds and Smallbrook Reserve at the heart of Warminster, and flanked on each side by the Longleat Forest, Copheap, Hensford Marsh, Cotley Hill and Grovelands, we are ideally placed. We must also consider our position amongst the mosaic of habitats in the wider landscape, including the ecologically sensitive areas such as the Wylde Valley (Special Area of Conservation) and Salisbury plain (the biggest expanse of chalk grass land in Europe). Dedicated joined up thinking is required to create and preserve as many wildlife corridors and fully functioning green spaces as is possible within the town. As part of this initiative, the town council will conduct a review of areas of green verge and public land within the town and shall re-evaluate management of these areas in the best interests of wildlife, as well as amenity.

This will include an allocation of protected conservation areas of grasses and wildflowers, which will be left to 're-wild'. This will not only provide ground cover and shelter for birds, insects, reptiles and small mammals, but will also reduce fossil fuel use through mechanical grass cutting. We will also commit to phasing out the use of glyphosate weed killers and reducing use of all other herbicides and pesticides, to assist pollinators and return health to the soil.

We will also identify areas for the planting of trees or shrubs and hedgerows. The town council will work with local residents and interest groups to allocate areas in the town which can be safely replanted, in a way most beneficial to wildlife and carbon sequestration. Where possible the town council will seek guidance from groups such as Wiltshire Wildlife, Sustainable Warminster and Longleat Estate in making such decisions. We will also sign up to the Woodland Trust's *Tree Charter*.

In Smallbrook Nature Reserve and the surrounding land, we pledge to continue the work of local wildlife groups in protecting our native wildlife, trees and plants, including habitat protection for our thriving populations of amphibians, bats, otters and water voles in the Smallbrook area. We will continue to look at schemes to reduce road traffic and the impact of lighting around the most sensitive areas.

We will protect the water quality and habitats of the chalk stream watercourses which rise from Cley Hill and flow through the town, park and nature reserve to form the Were/Swan and Wylde rivers.

5. In respect of our dealings with Wiltshire Council

Warminster Town Council pledges to join with other like-minded neighbouring parish and town councils to keep the climate and ecological emergency agenda in the forefront of all our dealings with Wiltshire Council, and we pledge to report to the people of Warminster on joint actions at county and area board level designed to directly support climate change mitigation.

We acknowledge that the residents of Warminster will be looking to their town council to implement and display demonstrable changes in this regard.

This will include green initiatives and climate sensitive considerations in all local planning discussions at town council level. We will protect our local trees wherever possible as part of our climate pledge and will have our Climate Emergency Strategy at the forefront of our decisions involving any planning applications for tree or hedgerow removal, or reductions. We will report to the residents of Warminster at regular intervals on all such measures taken by them.

It will also involve the inclusion in the next Neighbourhood Plan (or any subsequent forms of public consultation by Government) and Town Plan of explicit environmental considerations, including green spaces, water courses, wildlife corridors, trees and hedgerows as well as renewable energy generation and higher environmental standards for building extensions and new development.

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