Local Climate Change Action Plan – Reducing Meriden and Millisons Wood Carbon Footprint

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Background

1. Below, we set out each of the main causes of greenhouse gas emissions in Meriden, and how we as a Parish council can – both as an organisation ourselves, and through influencing, supporting and educating others – work to reduce these emissions.
2. Across all of these sectors, one of the most powerful levers for change that we have is our provision of information, guidance, support and advocacy to residents and businesses in the village, through our public meetings and events, newsletter, social media and Parish Council website, and through our interactions with higher authorities.

Consumption Of Goods & Services

3. The biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions incurred by Meriden residents is the consumption of goods and services.
   3.1. This refers to emissions resulting from the purchase of all household goods (not food) including (but not limited to) homeware, toiletries, medicines, furnishings, electronic goods, appliances, garden equipment and supplies and large items such as cars, and the use of services such as the maintenance and repair of home, vehicles and other equipment, banking and insurance, medical services, treatments, education costs, communications (e.g. TV, internet and phone contracts), and other fees and subscriptions, as well as other leisure, entertainment, sporting or social activities.
4. These indirect and embedded carbon emissions are some of the most challenging to tackle, and we will not be able to change most of them, but there are nevertheless steps that all of us can take to make progress in this area, and these are set out below.
5. The Parish Council will:
   5.1. Review our Financial Regulations and Standing Orders to ensure that the tender process captures and rewards where suppliers and contractors are reducing their embedded carbon emissions wherever possible.
   5.2. Commit to procuring lower-carbon or carbon neutral goods and services where available and feasible to do so, by capturing this information in contract tenders.
   5.3. Commit to going peat-free in all of our planters and borders, as soon as possible and well before the end of 2024.
   5.4. Encourage and support residents to try and lower the carbon footprint from their consumption of goods and services, for example by considering second-hand purchasing, purchasing from ethical, sustainable and lower-carbon/carbon neutral suppliers where practical, and/or using carbon neutral delivery options where possible.

Housing: Buildings and Energy Usage

6. The next biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Meriden is energy consumption with homes, including burning of fuels for heating and hot water, and using electricity.
7. The Parish council will always use a 100% renewable energy supplier for electricity (to the Sports Pavilion).
8. The Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Act 2006 gave Parish and Town Councils specific powers in relation to local energy saving measures, which will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.
9. The Parish Council will:
    - 9.1. Encourage and provide guidance to residents and local businesses to improve the efficiency and reduce the impact of their energy use (including through increasing insulation, reducing the reliance on fossil fuels for heating, and lowering the temperature on their thermostats where possible), and to adopt smart metering technology at the earliest opportunity.
    - 9.2. Consider energy efficiency during our appraisal of planning applications:
        - 9.2.1. We will endeavour to ensure all new builds in the parish are built to high environmental and energy efficient standards (insulation, draught-proofing, efficient heating/cooling systems, etc.), and will support development proposals relating to the production of renewable and low carbon energy, provided such measures are in-keeping with the character of the Parish (in accordance with our Neighbourhood Development Plan, policy NE6.1).
        - 9.2.2. We will promote the same standards to be applied to existing housing where possible.
        - 9.2.3. In accordance with our Neighbourhood Development Plan, policy NE6.3, we will support proposals for new dwellings that incorporate facilities to enable the charging of electric vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.
    - 9.3. Make residents aware of government grants / initiatives to phase out fossil fuels in domestic use, and replace it with clean fuel sources (e.g. heat pumps).
        - 9.3.1. The government is offering grants for improved window glazing, home insulation, and heat pumps, and plan to phase out gas boilers from 2025.
        - 9.3.2. There is also an initiative to introduce hydrogen into gas to reduce nitrogen oxide and reduce pollutants, as well as initiatives to install home charging points for electric / plug-in hybrid vehicles. Meriden Parish Council will share such information through its networks, public meetings, website and social media feeds.

Travel

10. The burning of petrol and diesel in our vehicles is another key contributor to our carbon footprint. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuel-powered transport is therefore essential if we are to lower our carbon footprint.
11. Meriden Parish Council recognise the need for an accessible, reliable and fit-for-purpose public transport system and the provision of safe cycle routes and walkways.
12. To reduce pollution from conventional cars, we also need to promote electric vehicles and alternative methods of transport, look to install communal electric car charging points and explore options for car sharing schemes.
13. The Parish Council will:
    - 13.1. Promote active travel (i.e. walking, cycling), use of public transport, and, if car-use is unavoidable, car-sharing wherever possible – both for the council's attendance at meetings and events, and more widely for all residents of the Parish.
    - 13.2. Ensure footpaths and walkways in the Parish are safe and accessible for pedestrians.
    - 13.3. Advocate for provision of safe, joined-up cycle paths.
    - 13.4. Work with SMBC, WMCA and TfWM and others to increase/improve the provision of quality reliable public transport options.
    - 13.5. Explore options for installation of electric vehicle charging points, and encourage local businesses to do the same.
    - 13.6. Support and advocate for the growth of local businesses in the village to reduce the necessity of travelling by car. To do this we will:
        - 13.6.1. Support and promote local business where possible, opting for suppliers to be local to keep road vehicle journeys to a minimum.
        - 13.6.2. Support and welcome provision for young people to work locally after education is complete.
        - 13.6.3. Support the establishment of new local business wherever possible.
        - 13.6.4. Promote local food and farming businesses through the creation of a Farmers Market (see below).

Agriculture & Food

14. Meriden Parish is a rich area for agriculture. We are surrounded by farming businesses that have survived over generations. It is important to all of us that our farming community is valued, appreciated, and respected.
15. Everything we buy has a carbon footprint, including food – greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental harms are generated during the growing, harvesting, transport, manufacturing, packaging, retail, and preparation/cooking of food.

16. Approximately one third of all food produced is then wasted, which means that the environmental and climate change impact incurred by its production was for no reason. Therefore, it is essential that we help residents and local businesses to reduce their food wastage, as well as considering the impacts on the environment of the food they are buying throughout the supply chain.
17. The Parish Council will:
    17.1. Promote locally grown produce and local restaurants to reduce the import of food, and vehicle usage.
    17.2. Establish a local farmers market for local businesses to sell their products and for residents to connect and shop locally, reducing food mileage and carbon footprint.
    17.3. Promote food choices that have a lower carbon footprint and food mileage, e.g. Seasonal fresh produce, less processed food.
    17.4. Work with local businesses and charities, including foodbanks, to explore options for food redistribution to minimise food waste while promoting social good.
    17.5. Keep the allotments thriving for residents to produce healthy fresh food locally, including by reducing allotment plot sizes to increase the number of households that will benefit from the allotment site.
    17.6. Create a thriving community market for allotment holders to sell excess produce to reduce wood waste.
    17.7. Create a community fruit tree area within the allotment site to serve the community.

Waste

18. While waste contributes less than 1% of our Parish's total greenhouse gas emissions, it is nevertheless essential that we reduce the amount of plastic and other rubbish being sent to landfill, for a host of environmental reasons, and that we continue to address littering and fly-tipping which negatively affect our community.
19. With the proximity of the Bickenhill Household Recycling Centre, and the provision of kerbside recycling for garden waste, paper, card, plastic, metal and glass by SMBC, we are already well set-up in Meriden to deal with our waste responsibly. There is always more that can be done to reduce our waste further, in particular to prevent waste being generated in the first place.
20. The Parish Council will:
    20.1. Provide information and guidance to residents to support waste reduction and recycling.
    20.2. Promote the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle of goods, materials and equipment.
    20.3. Lobby SMBC to introduce a swap shop at Bickenhill Household Recycling Centre.
    20.4. Set up a directory of recycling facilities in Meriden and Millisons Wood.

20.5. Install a water fountain station within Meriden sports park to minimize the use of plastic bottles.
20.6. Work with local community and businesses to set up and promote re-use and recycling facilities within the parish.
20.7. Continue to work with local authorities to prevent and prosecute fly-tipping and littering.

Biodiversity

21. As well as reducing carbon emissions, another key way to address climate change and its effects is to restore and enhance nature and biodiversity, including through tree-planting and providing habitats and food for wildlife.
22. A healthy natural ecosystem can help capture carbon from the air, as well as increasing the resilience of our community to the effects of climate change, such as by reducing flooding, providing cooling effects during hot weather, and supporting our local food system.
23. We have a large number of green spaces within our purview which we can use to support biodiversity. We have several planters situated around the village, making the environment pleasing and attractive, and which can be used to grow plants that support wildlife.
24. The Parish Council will:
    24.1. Ensure our planters and borders are planted with sustainably and locally sourced plants that are good for wildlife and, where possible are long-lived shrubs or perennials (rather than short-lived bedding) which will reduce the amount of times per year they will need replacing (as the commercial growing of bedding plants uses a lot of resources and has a high carbon footprint).
    24.2. Seek to minimise or entirely stop the use of chemical pesticides on our green spaces (and encourage businesses and residents to do the same), exploring options for alternative pest control options, such as companion planting.
    24.3. Seek to use (and promote the use of) locally produced green waste compost to provide soil nutrients in our planters, borders, allotments, etc. and reduce the reliance on artificial fertilisers – artificial fertilisers produce significant greenhouse gas emissions in their production and do not promote soil health, which is essential for a fully functioning ecosystem.
    24.4. Ensure the mowing frequency and timing of Parish Council managed grass areas is in line with guidelines for local councils, which are: 1) avoiding mowing of some designated green spaces in May where possible to ensure an abundant supply of wildflowers for pollinators; and 2) reducing the mowing frequency of some designated wildflower/grassland areas to as little as once per year if practical (to be done in August/September) – neither of these measures would apply to The Green, which requires mowing ahead of the Annual Cyclist Memorial day in May, or the Sports field, which is in regular use throughout the

summer. We will work with SMBC to co-ordinate the management of Meriden Parish Council and SMBC-managed green spaces within the village.

24.5. Work with community groups and other organisations to set up tree-planting projects within the Parish, using a variety of location-appropriate native broadleaf and/or fruit trees, and ensuring that long-term care of the saplings is also maintained.

24.6. Embed a consideration of biodiversity loss/gain and other environmental impacts in our assessment of planning and development applications, in accordance with our Neighbourhood Development Plan policy NE2.1 which states that: Development should protect and enhance the natural environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity in the following ways:

- Existing ecological networks should be retained wherever possible;
- Create new ecological habitats and networks;
- Boundaries and barriers should be made permeable, for example through the use of fence panels with 13x13cm hedgehog holes at the base; and
- Connectivity and shelter for ground-dwelling wildlife should be encouraged through the planting and maintenance of features such as native species hedgerows and grassy margins

Adapting to Climate Change

25. Climate change is already having an impact on people, globally, nationally and locally. In Meriden, we experienced extreme heat during Summer 2022, along with much of the country, and we are seeing an increased frequency of extreme rainfall events leading to flooding in the village.
26. Volatile gas prices globally and the cost of living crisis have compounded the negative effects of extreme weather, with many struggling to adequately heat their homes in winter. We have already set up a Warm Hub for residents in the Sports Pavilion to help with this challenge.
27. New buildings and the destruction of local green spaces for infrastructure development can reduce our resilience and increase the risk of flooding. As a Parish council, we commit to doing all that is in our power to support the long-term resilience of our parish to these many interconnected challenges, and to work with others to ensure we have suitable emergency plans for extreme events, such as flooding, power cuts, heatwaves and drought.
28. The Parish Council will:
    28.1. Lobby for all new housing to include planned rainwater harvesting. This will take water out of the drain system and also save it for food growing in drought seasons.
    28.2. Encourage residents to use porous materials for any new driveways to ensure maximum drainage for rainwater.

28.3. Discourage the use of hard landscaping in new developments which can increase flooding risks.