

<b>Report No. Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Council: Full Council Date of Meeting: 9 August 2023</b>
<b>OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL</b>	
<b>Report Author: Cllr Hannah Williams</b>	<b>Title: Climate &amp; Biodiversity Emergency</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Declaration of a Climate Emergency	
<b>Applicable Strategy:</b> 1. To improve the quality of life for residents and businesses in Oakham Town 2. To preserve and enhance the rural, built, and natural environments of Oakham Town	

Like a greenhouse, our planet is now blanketed by greenhouse gases<sup>1</sup>.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report on the subject of Global Warming of 1.5°C<sup>2</sup>. 2°C warming leads to significantly worse consequences. Every increment of warming leads to a worse scenario and more extreme weather. Globally, with our current actions, we are looking at global warming of 2.7°C.<sup>3</sup>

The scientific consensus is that society must limit global warming to 1.5°C degrees. Scientists agree that:

- Human activity has already caused 1°C of warming to the Earth.
- To limit warming to 1.5°C we need to cut carbon emissions in half by 2030 and near zero by 2050.

Unfortunately global warming doesn't mean endless summer holidays for Britain. It instead means more rain, more storms as well as:

- large scale water and food shortages
- extreme weather events including widespread flooding
- Increased heat related deaths
- biodiversity loss and large scale destruction of the natural world.

We are already seeing food shortages and our energy prices going through the roof.

These are not issues for the future, this is happening here and now. We have seen wildfires in Rutland and **2022 was declared the warmest year ever in the UK by**

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-are-greenhouse-gases#:~:text=Greenhouse%20gases%20\(also%20known%20as,greenhouse%20gases%20in%20the%20atmosph here.](https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-are-greenhouse-gases#:~:text=Greenhouse%20gases%20(also%20known%20as,greenhouse%20gases%20in%20the%20atmosph here.)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://climateactiontracker.org/global/temperatures/>

## the Met Office<sup>4</sup>.

This is a significant threat to the environment, economy, and well-being of Oakham residents. For example, more frequent heatwaves put people at risk, particularly older people.<sup>5</sup>

It also falls the hardest on those who are the least well-off due to increases in fuel, food and insurance. Our residents and small businesses are struggling in this cost of living crisis. Increasing resilience makes sense - the cheapest energy is the energy we don't use.

Urgent action is necessary. We are in a position of responsibility - therefore we should do what we can to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, implement energy efficiency measures and create a more resilient future for us all and for future generations.

Many Councils have committed to be carbon neutral by 2030. The UK government's pledge to reduce the UK's carbon emissions by 100 per cent by 2050.

Oakham is behind the curve - over 95% of the UK population live in an area where a climate emergency has been declared. The largest survey on this found the **majority of people think climate change is an emergency.**"

## Resolution

- (1) Oakham Town Council acknowledges and declares a climate emergency, recognising the urgent need to address climate change and biodiversity loss at the local level.
- (2) "The Council acknowledges the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We recognise the part which we have to play and commit to taking an active role in achieving this, by:
  - Developing a Climate Action Plan for Oakham Town Council
  - Forming an 'Environmental Working Group' or Committee to lead on developing this plan
  - Proactively reducing our greenhouse gas emissions as an organisation, for example by becoming more energy efficient
  - Collaborating with residents, businesses, organisations, and other stakeholders to collectively address the climate & biodiversity

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/press-office/news/weather-and-climate/2023/climate-change-drives-uks-first-year-over-10c#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%202022%20was%20also,2014%20recording%2011%C2%B0C.>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/climate-change-in-the-uk#:~:text=Effects%20of%20climate%20change%20in%20the%20UK,-We've%20talked&text=More%20extreme%20heat%2C%20for%20example,will%20need%20to%20adapt%20to.>

- emergency
- Seeking to improve our community resilience to climate change
- Including climate and biodiversity considerations when Council decisions are made

### **Further Reading**

<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/reports/20-actions-parish-and-town-councils-can-take-climate-and-nature-emergency> Suggestions of potential opportunities with co-benefits

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/climate-change> NALC page on Climate Change

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub/climate-action-place-based-leadership-and-communication> Local Government Association Climate Change Hub

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/climate-change/3341-climate-change-lc-powers-sept-20> Reproduced below:

### **Additional Information on Local Council's powers to address climate change.**

As a contribution to NALC's work on climate change, the following is a brief commentary on the powers which local councils possess to tackle climate change. Its purpose is encourage thinking within our sector: both about what local councils may do to make effective use of existing powers, and also to recommend changes to current laws and policies, for consideration and adoption as NALC policy.

From the list of powers that are available to local councils, in NALC's publication 'The Good Councillors Guide'

**1) Allotments and markets:** [Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, ss 23, 26 and 42] (Food Act 1984, s. 50)

- This allows the promotion of local produce and healthy eating
- This can help to reduce food-miles
- Allotments powers also enable the provision of communal food-growing sites and initiatives, run by associations and co-operatives.

**2) Burials etc:** [Open Spaces Act 1906, ss 9 &10; Local Government Act 197, s.214; Parish Councils & Burial Authorities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970 s.1]

- This can allow practices such as green burials, eco-friendly management etc

**3) Commons, ponds, open spaces, recreation etc** (Open Spaces Act 1906, s.15; Highways Act 1980, ss 47]

- Scope to practise good environmental management, accommodate recycling facilities etc on the council's land
- Scope to plant trees on, and maintain, highway verges

**4) Community centres and other public buildings** (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970, s.19. (Local Government Act 1972, s. 133)

- Scope to embrace/include on-site green energy, energy-conservation, electric car charging-points etc

**5) Community energy** (s20 of the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006):

- Councils can encourage or promote the local production and use of renewable energy, and also energy conservation, subject to the section 137 of the LG Act 1972 annual spending limit
- However, restrictions currently on the ability to 'sell' the energy directly to local consumers.
- Also, the 's 137 expenditure limit' is a severe constraint on making capital investments in energy schemes

**6) Highways and sustainable transport** (Highways Act, ss 43, 50, Parish Councils Act 1957, s.1; Local Government Rating Act, 1997, s.25, 28 & 29; Transport Act, 1985, s.106A)

- Scope to promote rights of way routes, walking and cycling
- Scope to use 'car park' powers, to provide useful facilities such as on-site electric vehicle-charging points
- Scope to make more use of powers to support community bus services, and to run or support car-sharing

**7) Litter and environmental crime** ([Litter Act 1983, ss 5.6, Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, 2005])

- Scope to provide refuse and waste receptacles and publicity, including recycling
- Scope to discourage and prosecute littering and dumping
- Currently there is no specific power to promote or run waste-recycling or resource re-use activities

**8) Neighbourhood planning** [Localism Act, 2011; Neighbourhood Planning Act, 2017 and National Planning Policy Framework,])

- Scope to include environmentally-friendly planning policies re design, routes, landscaping etc
- There is a continuing need to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have 'teeth', and that they can be more than just land-use allocation policies.

**9) Newsletters and websites:** (Local Government Act 1972, s.142)

- Scope to use to promote good environmental practices, resource-sharing etc

**10) Community support and engagement** (Local Government Act 1972 ss. 111, 140 etc)

- Scope to encourage and support volunteers and the wider community with grants, loans, insurance protection, publicity, surveys, good-practice advice etc

**11) Tourism** Local Government Act, 1972, s.144

- Scope to encourage and promote eco-tourism

**12) General powers** (Local Government Act 1972, s 137; Localism Act 2011, ss 1-8; )

- Scope to spend money and/or undertake work on a wide range of beneficial activities which are not prescribed in other legislation
- However, s 137 annual spending level is limited, and the General Power of Competence is exercisable by relatively few councils.

**13) Subsidiary powers** (LG Act 1972 s111):

- A very useful enabling power, for a council to do anything (that are not constrained by other legislation). which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.

**14) Permitted development rights** (Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, part 12):

- Councils may erect and operate, without the need to seek planning permission, a wide variety of small buildings, equipment and other structures on their land, for the purposes of any of their functions or public services. This can include a range of small 'green' developments

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