

## **Climate Emergency papers amended for YPC meeting June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

### **To consider the three separate motions:**

- 1.** Yealmpton Parish Council resolves to declare a Climate, Environment and Biodiversity Emergency.
- 2.** To endorse the Yealmpton Parish Council Environment Policy (Version 1). It further resolves to develop a more detailed 'Environmental Action Plan' for the parish, in consultation with all partners, including environmental experts, other local authorities, businesses and residents, and report this back to council within six months.
- 3.** To call on higher levels of government (Westminster, Devon County Council and South Hams District Council) to implement swift appropriate actions and provide the powers, funding and resources to make carbon neutrality and environmental restoration possible.

### **Background:**

On 22 May 2019, a range of public, private and voluntary organisations from across Devon came together to form the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group, to declare a climate and ecological emergency and to endorse the principles of the Devon Climate Declaration.

On 6 June 2019, South Hams District Council signed the Devon Climate Declaration

On 12 June 2019, Devon County Council signed the Devon Climate Declaration

Between September 2019 and March 2020, our partner parishes of Wembury, Newton and Noss, Brixton and Holbeton declared climate emergencies.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004, emergency has a broad definition:

'... events which threaten serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom or to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom.' The climate emergency falls within the scope of this legislation.

In December 2020, Yealmpton Parish Council formed a sub-committee for the Environment, Yealmpton Environment group (YEG) and one of its ambitions was to take forward all of the above.

We have the opportunity at this meeting to declare a Climate, Environment and Biodiversity Emergency, endorse an Environment Policy for the parish and resolve to create an Environment Action Plan over the next 6 months. This harmonises our position in relation to our partner parishes in the 5 Parish Alliance, and puts the Parish in a strong position to address the impacts that all of these emergencies might bring.

## Yealmpton Parish Council climate change declaration briefing paper

Before the Parish Council are three motions: *“Yealmpton Parish Council resolves to declare a Climate, Environment and Biodiversity Emergency. To endorse the Yealmpton Parish Council Environment Policy (Version 1). It further resolves to develop a more detailed ‘Environmental Action Plan’ for the parish, in consultation with all partners, including environmental experts, other local authorities, businesses and residents, and report this back to council within six months.*

*And lastly, to call on higher levels of government (Westminster, Devon County Council and South Hams District Council) to implement swift appropriate actions and provide the powers, funding and resources to make carbon neutrality and environmental restoration possible.”*

We are elected councillors at a turning point in history. We represent our local area, our communities, our families and friends, at a time when the scientific evidence on climate change has become overwhelming and undeniable. At a time when 11,000 scientists, from 153 nations have declared unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency. When global warming is at a tipping point. When the loss of species is estimated to be 10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. When the tidal-wave of global public opinion on taking environmental action has shifted. When children are speaking out about their fears for the future.

**What is the point of declaring a climate change emergency?** It gives the message that we attach great importance to addressing the problem, and that we need effective action now. Similar declarations have been made by Devon County Council, South Hams District Council, and four nearby Parish Councils, Wembury, Newton and Noss, Brixton and Holbeton. Making the declaration adds to the number of local councils nationally that are doing so.

There are 3 cogent reasons for Yealmpton Parish Council to become proactive in contributing to and encouraging efforts to reduce our carbon footprint, to improve the environment and encourage biodiversity:

1. Early in 2020 the second community owned (YCE, Yealm Community Energy) solar farm at Creacombe started to make electricity, providing a renewable and cheap source of energy contributing to the national grid. The five parishes of Brixton, Holbeton, Newton & Noss, Wembury and Yealmpton have benefited from the annual local dividend, currently £20,000 and rising to £40,000 shared between them. Their intention is to use this to support local carbon reduction and environmental initiatives. We can ensure that our share is used effectively.
2. Following Wembury Parish Council’s declaration one of their parish councillors, Matt Chown, has set up a 5 parishes initiative to support the parish councils in making climate and environmental issues their priority. Their aims are appended: he asks that each parish council approves the overall aims & purpose. This group can help us to learn from others’ initiatives.
3. Most importantly, we can make a difference at a local level. We can facilitate the implementation of regional and national policies. We can also better harness people’s enthusiasm by a ‘bottom up’ approach, supporting and facilitating our parishioners’ ideas.

In the Parishes ahead of Yealmpton, a number of ideas quickly emerged, many of which have been discussed by the Yealmpton Environment Group and together with many more would feature in an Action Plan.

- better construction methods and standards for new houses;
- improving building insulation (private and public);
- solar panels on public buildings;
- substituting low energy bulbs in people’s homes, public buildings and street lights;
- reducing energy use and using green energy sources by the parish council;
- develop lower carbon and more efficient and effective transport arrangements for the parish.

creating local charging points for electric cars;  
planting trees;  
managing and maintaining our gardens, hedgerows and public spaces to encourage biodiversity;  
looking for local food sources where possible;  
educating and enthusing our primary school children;

There is only any point in making a declaration if it is followed by action. What should the parish council consider doing after having made the declaration?

- Publicise our declaration to ensure that we are added to the growing list of local councils who have done likewise.
- Publicise our intention to facilitate change in our community. Arrange a public meeting with one or two speakers, at which we would hope to hear about what parishioners are already doing, what they consider important, and what they would like their parish council to do.
- Review our own parish council practices and consider the parish's priorities
- Continue to contribute to the development of the Yealm Climate Emergency and Environment Action Alliance. This will be a forum of parish council representatives from the 5 parishes, each with a deputy to cover absence.
- Consider having a 'climate emergency' section in all parish council meetings and being required to consider any environmental and climate change implications of all decisions.
- Develop and implement a parish council Environment Action Plan for Yealmpton.

## **Appendix: Yealm Climate Emergency and Environment Action Alliance**

### **Name**

The Yealm Climate Emergency and Environment Action Alliance

### **Members**

The alliance is led by the Parish Councils of Brixton, Holbeton, Newton and Noss, Wembury and Yealmpton.

### **Partners**

TBC (examples include: South Dartmoor Community Energy, Yealm Community Energy, Life on the Yealm, National Trust, Kitley Estate, Prof Depledge etc)

### **Aim**

To positively address the climate emergency by reducing carbon emissions, and to improve the environment and biodiversity in the five parishes of Brixton, Holbeton, Newton and Noss, Wembury and Yealmpton.

### **Values**

We believe that:

- The Climate Emergency should form the basis of every decision we make, and every action we take.
- We should support everyone within our parishes (residents, businesses and organisations) to positively address the Climate Emergency.
- We should collaborate with all available partners (locally, nationally and internationally) to positively address the Climate Emergency.
- Higher levels of government should provide the funding and resources required to positively address the Climate Emergency.
- We should do everything within our power to restore the natural environment and the biodiversity that supports it; providing stability to the ecosystem and maintaining ecological balance.

## **YEALMPTON PARISH COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

This policy has been revised in response to the impacts of advancing global climate change and biodiversity loss.

### **Context**

Yealmpton is a rural parish within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Yealm estuary in the south west corner of the Parish, is both a nationally recognised Site of Special Scientific Interest, a European designated Special Area of Conservation and forms part of the South Devon Heritage Coast.

Tackling climate change in the Parish requires measures to reduce carbon emissions and the Parish carbon footprint.

Addressing biodiversity loss needs measures to protect, conserve and enhance the local environment. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.”

### **Aims**

Yealmpton Parish Council is committed to protecting the environment and the natural heritage of the Parish, and to reducing carbon emissions, whilst recognising the need for sustainable development and the provision of high quality public amenities and services. In conjunction with local businesses, landowners (much of the land is owned by the Kitley estate), community groups, other agencies, the Yealm Climate Emergency and Environment Action Alliance (The Five Parish Alliance), and parishioners, the Parish Council aims for excellence in its management of the local environment.

### **Objectives**

In carrying out its own activities, the Parish Council will strive to:

- reduce where possible the carbon footprint of the parish and associated activities to ensure their impact is kept to a minimum,
- seek to eliminate the unnecessary use of energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
- encourage renewable energy schemes,
- ensure that both existing and proposed new community assets are as energy efficient as possible,
- encourage the protection and enhancement of the unique character, beauty, heritage and biodiversity within the Parish,
- ensure the nature conservation value of the Yealm estuary and surrounding landscape is maintained and enhanced,
- actively promote the environmental values to which the council and its members are committed,
- minimise waste and pollution,
- re-use and recycle where possible
- discourage all forms of littering, particularly dog fouling and single use plastics,
- communicate the importance of walking, cycling and public transport.

## Actions

The Parish Council will, wherever possible, practical and economical:

1. When purchasing services and goods:
  - 1.1. use local suppliers who pay at a minimum the Living Wage,
  - 1.2. favour options which are environmentally friendly and/or Fair Trade,
  - 1.3. favour products which have been manufactured from recycled materials and minimise the use of single use plastic items,
  - 1.4. favour products which can be disposed of in an environmentally sustainable manner.
  
2. When engaging contractors and Councillors to carry out maintenance on Parish owned or rented land:
  - 2.1. minimise the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals,
  - 2.2. undertake their work in a manner that benefits wildlife and the environment,
  - 2.3. favour native, wildflower friendly species, for planting schemes,
  - 2.4. adhere to the Parish Council's Environmental Policy.
  
3. When making decisions, producing policies, and especially when considering planning applications:
  - 3.1. ensure the character and quality of the Yealm estuary and river valley and the Parish's natural beauty and heritage are not compromised by inappropriate development,
  - 3.2. encourage the use of materials and systems which improve the energy efficiency of developments,
  - 3.3. conserve and improve natural habitats, especially trees, woodland, farm land, hedgerows and field borders,
  - 3.4. conserve the natural beauty of the estuary, river corridor and surrounding landscape.
  - 3.5. protect vulnerable and protected species,
  - 3.6. support and encourage actions and initiatives to bring land into proactive conservation management,
  - 3.7. manage its hedgerows as an essential corridor for the movement of wildlife, supporting many animals and plants,
  - 3.8. highlight the importance and value of our local environment and its contribution to our community's quality of life,
  - 3.9. encourage local action including the encouragement of organic farming, in support of the environment,
  - 3.10. increase the number of trees within the village footprint and seek opportunities to increase woodland cover and replace trees lost to disease in the wider Parish.
  - 3.11. minimise the risk of flooding,
  - 3.12. improve the consistency of water quality to maintain a healthy estuarine ecosystem,
  - 3.13. encourage the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources,
  - 3.14. encourage the reduction, reuse and recycling of resources within the Parish,

In support of the above the Parish Council will maintain, enact and improve this Environmental Action Plan.

Date adopted: 2021

Yealmpton Parish Council Minute Reference =

Annually reviewed in May.