

## Climate Change – Time for a Better Environment



Had it not been for this terrible pandemic, which has dominated the news for the past year, probably the biggest topic would have been the environment. A massive conference scheduled to take place in Glasgow last year, now rescheduled for later in 2021, was set to make huge steps in countering global warming. But this is not just an issue that can be left to world leaders to resolve. In fact, not just the UK government has formulated a plan to achieve ‘carbon neutrality’ (not to release more climate warming gases than we absorb) by 2050, so too has Kent County Council. And even closer to home, so too has Tonbridge and Malling County Council (by 2030).

But it cannot stop there. Ultimately, tackling climate change is everyone’s responsibility. If we want to leave a planet that our children and grandchildren can enjoy then we all need to play our part, including the people of East Peckham. Our village does not need to be reminded of the negative effects of climate change. A Met Office study has shown that an extended period of extreme winter rainfall in the UK, similar to that seen in winter 2013/14, is now about seven times more likely due to human-induced climate change. And despite the skill and bravery in times of need by those involved in the flood defences around the village, it cannot always prevent the devastation to certain parts of East Peckham when the floods are unstoppable.

So, what do we do? While East Peckham Parish Council has always strived to maintain and improve the local environment, there has not been a formal environmental plan before. It is our intention to rectify that now. Our first step has to been to declare a climate emergency, recognising the problem and our responsibility to do something about it. Next we will do a carbon audit of Parish Council activities and use that to create a plan to achieve carbon neutral by 2030.

But there is more that can be done, particularly if the community works together on this including:

- Creating a task force to establish a green agenda that includes developing a resilience policy and engaging in flood defence measures
- Developing a tree maintenance programme
- Develop and promote green transport plans including safe routes to school
- Provide access to Electric Vehicle charging points
- Ensure the Jubilee Hall is as energy efficient as possible
- Use green energy sources and environmentally friendly products
- Plan for a green community in a Neighbourhood Development plan
- Limit the use of plastics, especially single use plastics within the council
- Reduce waste and recycle as much as possible
- Protect important open spaces and carbon sinks and consider creating a community orchard and / or wildflower meadow and more allotments
- Maximise the use of open spaces to provide recreational opportunities.

We will be conducting an online survey (look out for it on the Facebook page) that will determine what the priorities are for the people in the village. At the same time, we are looking to get a task force together to formulate our Environment and Neighbourhood Development plans. Anyone in the village is invited to take part – there is no need for prior experience or planning knowledge, all that is needed is to have ideas on how to make East

Peckham an even lovelier place! If you are interested in taking part in these task forces, or just have observations about how the environment could be improved in East Peckham, please send an email to [tim.fryer@eastpeckham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.fryer@eastpeckham-pc.gov.uk). We look forward to hearing from you.

Hopefully, together, we can use these new projects to preserve all the good things in our village, improve where we can, and ensure we are sustainable for the future.

