
Briefing Note

Tackling climate change in Menheniot

1.0 Background

1.1 This briefing note supplements the progress report previously circulated on the recent policy commitment consultation. Councillors will be asked to accept the findings of this report, its recommendations and to establish a new task and finish working group that will be known as Menheniot Green.

1.2 Councillors are reminded that there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for the council to make a response to the climate emergency called by Cornwall Council. However, this council has already declared an emergency and facilitated two action groups.

2.0 Survey & Conclusions

2.1 A consultation on the proposed policy commitment was conducted in the parish from 4 June to 4 July 2021. The survey was promoted on the council's parish noticeboards, website, Facebook and Twitter pages, as well as a mailout to members of the Climate Change Groups. Eight replies were received, and the results are attached in Appendix 1. Although the number of responses received was low, there is overall clear support for the proposals and for personal actions that can mitigate the impact of climate change.

2.2 Overall, respondents support the council's leadership and will make changes to their own behaviour; they want the council to use its leadership role to influence other people to make changes; there is no consensus opinion on how the council might support environmental projects financially; planning, and the council's role in planning decisions, is not completely clear.

2.3 Within the responses to the survey, the Clerk also received 24 comments about the policies and general comments about the council's approach to climate-related matters. All responses have been noted and replied to in Appendix 1,

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 The principal recommendation is for the parish council to set up a new working group to deliver on its policy commitments and respond positively to concerns expressed in the survey.

Title

The working group will be known as Menheniot Green

Aim

The group is set up to mitigate the effects of climate change and improve the environment in the parish. It will do this by carrying out tasks and other project work. It will achieve this by working with its diverse communities, stakeholders and other supportive people.

Membership

Menheniot Green has no general membership scheme. Residents do not 'join' but are encouraged to 'join-in' with practical help and support

Management

Management of the group will be the responsibility of the Chair, whose function will be served by two people – one parish councillor and one resident. The parish councillor will

deliver progress reports to the parish council at their public meeting. Meetings of the group and its volunteers will take place on an 'as required' basis without formal notice.

Administration

The group will be administered by the parish clerk with a limit of 30 minutes per week (2 hours per month)

3.0 Progress to date

3.1 At their public meeting on 15 April 2021, councillors agreed to support the funding of a newsletter. This has now been produced and is being distributed across the parish.

3.2 Progress against the policy commitments is listed in Appendix 2. Outstanding items and recommendations will be submitted to councillors in autumn 2021.

Author: John Hesketh Parish Clerk

Date: 5 July 2021

Menheniot Parish Council Climate Change Policy Survey

Q1 Leadership: the council owns very little land and buildings in the parish, but it can make sure that what it does own is managed to mitigate the effects of climate change. It can lead by example to reduce waste, recycle more and do the right thing. How far do you agree with this statement?

I will follow the council's example to make positive changes to my own personal behaviour to reduce the impact of climate change.

Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
100%		0%		0%

Q2 Influencing: the council works with a wide range of volunteering and special interest groups across the parish. It might be able to persuade them to make their own plans to tackle climate change (for example by giving them grants) or persuading them join in with Menheniot Green. Do you agree with this statement?

I would support the council if it were to use its influence to persuade other organisations to take action on climate change.

Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
100%		0%		0%

Q3 Funding: the council already runs two schemes to give grants and donations to organised groups. This money comes from both the precept (local council tax) that you pay every month and the council's reserves.

I would like to see the council setting up a separate fund to support groups who want to carry out environmental projects.

Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
75%		0%		25%

Q4 Planning: new planning laws will soon be coming in that will require Cornwall Council to take climate change into account when making its decisions. The parish council wants to encourage more residents and businesses to understand and comment on planning applications that will impact on climate change.

I want to learn more about the way that planning is regulated to take account of climate change and be able to comment of planning applications.

Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
88%		0%		13%

Comments from Climate Change Survey

Item	Comment	Response
	General comments about the parish council	
1	I do not believe it is appropriate to ask people to print a form as part of your survey	The parish council always gives residents options when choosing how to respond to surveys and questionnaires. In this case, most people who replied copied and pasted their feedback into an email rather than print out the survey form.
2	This is a very underwhelming/bureaucratic response to the climate emergency which I doubt will have much tangible impact on climate change.	All current and former members of the Climate Change Working/Action Groups were asked to create the policies that the parish council would support. These commitments are the results of their comments and reflect their immediate concerns. If adopted by the parish council, they will form the first part of its response to the challenge of climate change, and residents will be entitled to hold council and councillors to account for any failure to comply with these policies.
3	It is particularly disappointing that rather than use an electronic survey you provide a PDF to be printed before being filled in. Your response to the climate emergency has its own carbon footprint! For this reason, I have not printed your form, but provide my response 100% electronically.	See Response #1
4	I also suggest that rather than ask people to search the parish's website for the correct page (which people are reporting to be an issue), you add the URL to your communication to make it more accessible.	The council has not received any reports from people unable to access the Climate Change webpage. The relevant page on the council's website can be located by searching online for 'Menheniot Climate Change'
6	There are tools such as survey monkey which can be used online.	The free Survey Monkey software does not permit the type of response required by the survey. The cost of subscribing to the basic version of Survey Monkey is £384 ¹ , and we did not consider the cost to be proportionate to the benefits of

1

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/welcome/sem/?program=7013A000000mweBQAQ&utm_bu=CR&utm_campaign=7170000059189382&utm_adgroup=58700005405718106&utm_content=43700049188975193&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=adwords&utm_term=p49188975193&utm_kxconfid=s4bvpi0ju&language=&test=&gclid=Cj0KCQjw5uWGBhCTARIsAL70sLI8JBA7JTAjk-S4ku6d_OOxzhGrhWcJiWNNM3ZxA-oUJkprfRZe7_UaAjVBEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds

		sending out a single email to a limited number of residents.
Leadership		
7	I recycle, up cycle, have solar panels, try to reduce my carbon footprint, shop local (sustainably) and know where my food comes from. I am not vegan as I strongly believe that the way forward is to support local farmers who farm sustainably. If I could afford an electric car then I would have one.	Councillors will be considering adopting a voluntary pledge that could include all of these great examples!
8	The council should consider its impact on the environment with every action it takes and decision it makes; the survey form approach suggests you are not doing this.	Commitment 1 (Leadership) will ensure that the council follows best practice in all aspects of its work. The 4g of CO ₂ ² generated by the email that included the survey is more than covered by the savings in CO ₂ absorption that arise from the flower beds on the village green ³ .
9	I will follow the council's example to make positive changes to my own personal behaviour to reduce the impact of climate change.	Thank you and we plan to create a set of climate change pledges that everyone can sign up to.
10	I would support the council if it were to use its influence to persuade other organisations to take action on climate change.	Our survey shows that 100% of the people responding would support the council in trying to influence other organisations, and this will be the basis for setting up Menheniot Green as a project group.
Finance		
11	I agree but there could be areas that you can change and do with little effort or expense, but if there are areas that demand high financial input to meet these changes I would tend to hold back on these investments and await further central funding	The parish council adopted the General Power of Competence at its annual meeting in May 2021 and now has the option of creating joint enterprises with groups who are located outside of its boundary. This might be helpful if there are projects which require substantial funding and where the costs, risks and benefits can be shared.
12	I would say that we a central point of a register for all organisation, so as to link them up together to work together to reduce carbon and share ideas, but I do not think we should use a lot of funds, only small grants £100 as we have demands on fund's and this is not ever lasting.	Council proposes to set up a new working group to be called Menheniot Green that will lead on project work within the parish. All grants and donations that the parish council offers are regularly undersubscribed, so there is capacity in the existing system to encourage more applicants for a wider range of projects.

² www.bbc.com/future/article/20200305-why-your-internet-habits-are-not-as-clean-as-you-think

³ www.farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk/resources/articles/growing-food-absorbing-carbon

13	I feel that any organisation should apply in the same way as another organisation as this I feel is not an exceptional situation, I feel that organisations could us it in the wrong way if we do not have a strict criterion for allocating fund's and at this current time, we have that in place, I would be reluctant to change the current system. Any organisation must be local and not national.	The council already has two funding streams in place that have clear terms and conditions. Spending of any council funding is subject to those terms and is monitored. Any funding provided by the council can only be used to benefit residents in the parish and not national organisations.
14	It seems to me that the council would probably have to increase the precept in order to provide a separate fund for climate change projects.	The level of funding that might be needed will be dependent on the scale and scope of projects that the council might wish to support. The council has received several windfall payments during the past 12 months (approximately £11,000) that have not been designated to any projects, and councillors may wish to use some or all of these funds. In a situation where such funding is already available and with the current level of reserves, it is unlikely that councillors would approve an increase in the precept.
15	As you state in the document, council funds are finite and will inevitably reduce as time goes by. We are regularly asked for grants by several local organisations and usually treat these applications favourably, as we should do, but additional demands on a reducing reserve fund could possibly at some time in the future mean that we might have to reduce or refuse some grants. I am all for supporting climate change but not at the expense of other worthy causes in the parish.	See Response 13 above. All applications for council grants and donations are judged on the merit of the benefit they produce and the capability of the applicant to deliver those benefits. The same criteria would apply to any other applications. This is a matter of law ⁴ The proposal to establish a new working group (that may eventually become an independent volunteering group) means that it could apply for funding in its own right.
16	A separate fund would be the right way to move forward, maybe with some initial start-up help from our reserves and a modest increase in the precept.	See Responses 13 & 14 above.
17	I would like to see the council setting up a separate fund to support groups who want to carry out environmental projects.	See Response 13 above.

⁴ Localism Act 2011 s137

18	I feel that all projects should be considered on their merits and sustainability should be considered when granting funding. I am against ring-fencing per-se as I feel that this can lead to funds being used “for the sake of it”. By all means say that environmental projects may be given priority when criteria are full-filled but don’t ring-fence a pot that must be used for this.	See Response 15 above.
19	I think local groups already consider sustainability when making plans and it is already a requirement when applying for most grant, so it makes sense to include that in any applications made to the council.	The parish council is in process of developing a tool for assessing the viability of green projects that might require additional funding. Any changes in the terms and conditions that apply to its grants and donations policy would need to be made after due consultation.
Planning		
20	I feel the planning system with renewables is a farse at the moment, as any applicant is not forced to put carbon reduction in energy systems in on and above the basic building regulations, when they say it is uneconomic I have for years said that any applications should have a mandatory energy system i.e solar p.v, solar thermal, ground sauce heat pumps, air sauce heat pump and a key one that should be insisted on is grey water or rain water harvesting, I feel the planning laws at this current time pays lip service to these request as the big house builder seem to have huge influence in implicating any of these energy measure. I think it should be compulsory to have at least one of the above in any application no matter what the application is.	Government is currently consulting on new building standards and planning law that may include these topics. The parish council acts as a consultee in planning applications and has no power to impose conditions on any planning development. Policy #4 commits the council to responding to all planning applications within its boundary and to taking part in any consultations that may impact on planning law and regulations.
21	As you know there is an increase in retrospective applications that can bypass the planning controls and that I feel a harder approach has to be taken against retrospective applications	This is not a matter related to climate change and the council’s proposed policies. Retrospective applications by their nature have not bypassed the planning process. These applications are assessed and commented on in the same way as new planning applications. This means that the same criteria are used to measure their compliance with the Cornwall Local Plan, and any new (or emerging) Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is a matter of planning law and regulation, and the

		parish council - if it chooses to comment - must comply with them.
22	<p>The council already has guidelines about planning and how to mitigate climate change when considering planning permission. Therefore the Council hopefully does this on my behalf.</p> <p>If I am planning something for myself I would naturally look up the regulations. I am not interested on an individual basis in other peoples plans that do not directly affect me. If they do directly affect me I know how to comment.</p> <p>I know that people will say that everything affects me but I draw the line here and trust the council to award planning permission using the guidelines in a professional manner.</p>	Thank you and Response #20 sets out the council's commitment to making a response to all planning applications.
23	I want to learn more about the way that planning is regulated to take account of climate change and be able to comment of planning applications.	The council will be producing a guide to explain how it assesses planning applications. Residents are encouraged to comment on all planning applications before a response is agreed by the council. Please visit the 'Meetings' section of our website to view the agenda for public meetings where planning applications are discussed.
General comments on climate change		
24	I had disagreed with the situation where Menheniot had a climate emergency, but I will and always have been climate aware, sadly central government in the past had destroyed the momentum around 2010 -2015,	<p>Please see Response #2.</p> <p>All parish councillors have agreed to work to a Code of Conduct that places Leadership as one of its key principles. Responding to the current and future impact of climate change is one aspect of the council's work that requires a visionary response, and not just a day-by-day reaction to the growing problems of water shortages and flooding.</p>

Appendix 2

Progress to date against policy commitments

Policy 1 Leadership The council will demonstrate leadership across the parish by working to best practice in all aspects of the management of its estate and assets.	
Item	Action
All administrative functions will be reviewed and amended to reduce carbon emissions and recycle where possible.	Any office printing is in draft mode. Published documents minimise the use of colour Both sides of paper are used to eliminate wastepaper. Toner cartridges are recycled back to supplier.
The parish council is digital by default.	All council documents published on its website. Councillors and residents encouraged to view reports online. Reports for council meetings are linked to the website so reducing the need to send large (and CO2 producing) attachments. Printed paper only used when requested by a councillor or resident. No paper agendas or minutes supplied at public meetings. The parish council uses a projector to illustrate its agenda (for example with planning applications)
Use of water across council properties is managed by mechanical means to minimise waste.	Water supply at the public toilets on East Road (cistern miser), and the allotments on East Road (float valves) are controlled.
Electricity can be sourced from a renewable tariff.	Council has received a quotation for renewable tariff for toilets and public lighting.
Lanterns in council managed light fittings (car park at Bowling Green) can be upgraded to be energy efficient and are already regularly maintained.	Low energy lightbulbs used in public toilets. Lamps are subject to annual inspection and council has received a quotation for energy-efficient replacements.
The council will consult on alternative methods to manage weeds and ground management as part of its biannual contractor review.	Menheniot Green will be asked to lead on a parish-wide consultation to recommend a specification for the ground maintenance contract due for renewal from April 2022.
Council can adopt a voluntary pledge to reduce individual carbon emissions and promote actions across the parish.	Council may ask Menheniot Green to recommend a public and personal pledge that councillors and residents will be asked to adopt voluntarily.
Council will recognise and reward individual people or voluntary groups who are making significant contributions to	Councillors will be asked to consider recognition for outstanding contributions to public efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change.

mitigating the impact of climate change.	
--	--

Policy 2 Influencing

Where the council has no direct control over issues that may impact on climate change, it will use its best endeavours to influence other parish stakeholders.

Item	Action
Council can review its grants and donation policy so as to encourage the adoption of climate friendly practices among applicants.	Recommendations in preparation following feedback from public consultation.
Council can review the tenancy agreement of its allotment holders in order to enable them to sell surplus produce at local markets, so reducing food miles and encouraging local production.	Recommendations in preparation following feedback from public consultation and advice from the National Allotments Society.
Council can work with stakeholders (for example, local school, playgroup, church, parish hall, Old School Trust, farming community) to encourage a joined-up approach to issues that impact the whole of the parish.	Council is recommended to support the establishment of Menheniot Green as a task and finish working group.

Policy 3 Resources

The parish council can establish an annual budget for projects that can mitigate the impact of climate change and support movement towards a zero-carbon environment.

The funding could be drawn from reserves and determined in November as part of the council's annual financial review.

Item	Action
The council already has a working system for receiving and assessing applications for grants and donation. Using this as a template, the council could quickly set up an equivalent system for climate change projects. Consultation will be needed to agree criteria for awards.	Recommendations in preparation following feedback from public consultation. Councillors will be given the option of extending the use of current grants and donations and/or setting up new funding streams.
The council's reserves are finite and so there will need to be a limit to the annual budget. If the climate change fund mirrors the existing funds, then there is scope for quick decisions on low value donations, and sufficient separate funding for larger	Recommendations in preparation following feedback from public consultation. This will take account of the scope for using unallocated reserves as well as windfall grants that the council has received.

projects that may need substantial financial support.	
---	--

Policy 4 Planning

The council will discharge its duties as a consultee in the planning process to comply with all aspects of the Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2030 and its subsequent iterations.

It will apply all policies contained in the Menheniot Neighbourhood Development Plan that relate to climate change.

It will incorporate new policies arising from the Cornwall Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (DPD), and other documents as they are adopted.

Councillors are reminded that under the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act, the council has a right to be notified of all planning applications made within its boundaries. There is no legal duty or legal responsibility to respond to any planning consultation.

Item	Action
The current system of receiving planning applications, producing a Weekly Planning Report, inviting applicants to attend the public meeting and publishing maps and drawings exceeds the statutory minimum requirements for a consultee.	Councillors will be asked to affirm their commitment to respond to all planning applications notified within its boundary.
The system of Planning Index, created by the parish council, will continue to evolve to include new policies contained in the NDP.	The council's commitment to tackling climate change is included in the Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be published for referendum in the summer/autumn of 2021. If adopted, this planning conditions will be included as material considerations when the parish council and Cornwall Council planning officers make their decisions. Both councils are publicly accountable for implementing policies that are agreed in referendum.
Parish council will continue to act as an active consultee in the production of new policies, and their application within the parish.	The council will maintain its long established links with the Cornwall Planning Partnership, and actively engage with new policy proposals either alone or in partnership with Menheniot Green.