

Case Study

Climate action at community level

Background

Climate change is already having an effect on agriculture, water resources, biodiversity and communities in the National Park.

The area is experiencing more unpredictable weather events causing drought, soil erosion and flooding.

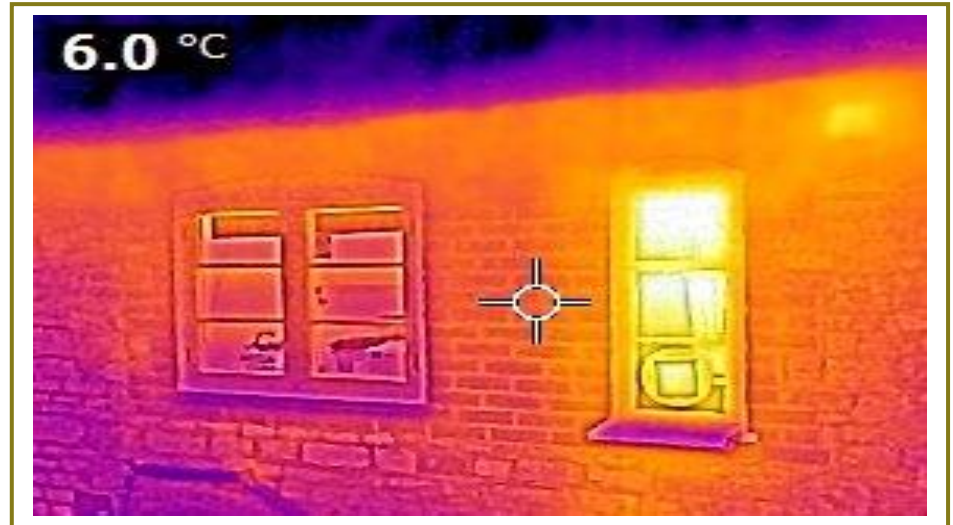
This is changing the landscapes as habitats come under pressure and agricultural systems and infrastructure struggle to adapt.

The National Park Authority adopted a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in 2020, committing to becoming a 'Net-Zero' organisation by 2030 and to making the National Park 'Net-Zero with Nature' by 2040.

Achieving these ambitious goals will require a wide range of initiatives, from large programmes to small-scale community projects.

There are over 170 parish councils across the National Park and a multitude of community based groups. This represents a huge resource in terms of people, time and potential funding to deliver local climate change actions.

Buriton, in East Hampshire, is one community which has taken the issue very seriously with a number of initiatives and activities showing the potential for promising results.



The project

Buriton Parish Council commenced a series of initiatives to address climate change and to improve conditions for wildlife in 2019. Although the Council owns few assets and is a relatively low contributor to greenhouse gases, it was determined to lead by example. It also resolved to use its limited powers and its influence to encourage activities being taken by others in the parish to move towards carbon neutrality and to improve biodiversity and climate change resilience.

In recent years the Parish Council has:

- Adopted a Climate & Nature Charter to guide actions
- Commissioned an energy audit and action plan for the village hall
- Changed energy suppliers with improved low-carbon credentials
- Updated the Village Design Statement with guidance on sustainable construction, renewable energy features and energy efficiency measures
- Pressed for high standards in a development of new homes including Passive House provision, solar pv panels, air source heat pumps etc
- Established a safe walking / cycling route to/from Petersfield with a road closure to through traffic
- Provided cycle parking facilities at the village hall and recreation ground
- Pressed to retain bus services amongst county council cuts elsewhere
- Planted scores of trees including a new copse on the recreation ground
- Encouraged the formation of a local climate action group to develop community solutions and to help others with advice about actions to reduce their carbon footprints and support nature
- Bought a Thermal Imaging Camera for use in homes in the parish.

“Communities can play a big role in tackling climate change – even small steps can make a big difference”

The outcome

Within months the community’s Thermal Imaging Camera had been used across a wide cross-section of homes, helping to identify a range of options / actions.

The campaign also includes regular events and engagement opportunities to promote greater awareness and understanding about household energy efficiency, climate action and sustainable living: encouraging changes in behaviour to help the environment.

A new annual ‘B-earth Day’ event has been created with activities, talks, stalls and demonstrations for families highlighting climate and nature issues.

A number of ‘Pathfinder’ homes have been identified where steps have already been taken, including: sheep’s wool and spacetherm insulation; double / triple glazing; solar thermal and PV; replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps; a ground source heat pump; rainwater harvesting for toilet flushing; wormeries and ‘hot bin’ composting devices; LED lighting schemes; and EV charging points.

Pathfinder findings have been published in the Parish Magazine and on the community website – encouraging discussions with other residents.

The Parish Council has also created new wildlife habitats and planted trees to help biodiversity and nature recovery with benefits for people and the climate.

New double-glazed windows and doors have been installed at the village hall with next steps likely to include solar panels, battery storage, infra-red heating to replace gas and EV charging points.

Buriton Parish Council is using CIL receipts from local developments and other sources of funding to improve its own environmental performance and to contribute to wider parish CO2 reductions.

The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP)

2020-25 sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 10 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

This project successfully contributes to PMP Outcomes 2 and 8:

communities using resources more wisely and increasing resilience to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The future

The community in Buriton intends to continue with its Thermal Imaging project, its Pathfinder programme, its range of awareness-raising events and its focus on nature so as to leave the environment in a better state for those who follow.

The Parish Council will continue to comment on all planning applications (seeking energy efficiency, biodiversity net gain and ecosystem services benefits) and will press for highways, walking and cycling strategies to encourage more walking and cycling and the retention of bus services.

It is felt that, over time, these activities will bring more people together with a shared purpose and increase actions that support delivery of wider climate change targets.

Buriton Parish Council can be contacted via:

buritonparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk

For further information about Climate Change actions at the South Downs National Park, please contact: chris.fairbrother@southdowns.gov.uk

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