

General Scrutiny Committee

Task and Finish Group

Climate and Ecological Emergency Review



Picture provided by Herefordshire Council Communications Team

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Foreword

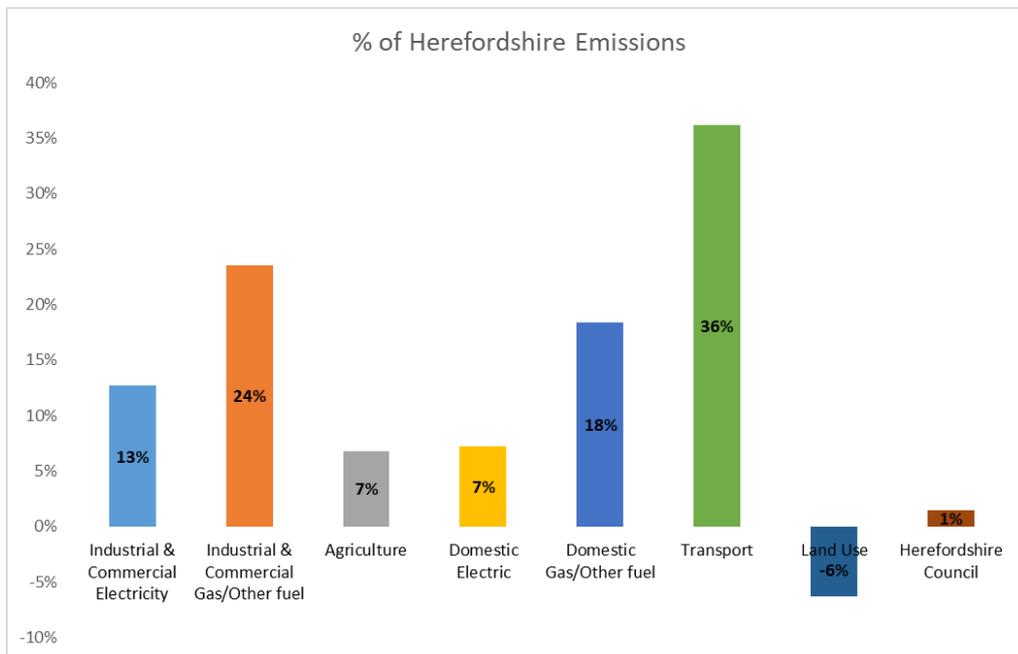
Climate change is a reality now. It has already impacted on many of our residents in terms of the severe flooding experienced across the County. The damage caused to private homes, businesses and infrastructure has been immense and is only a foretaste of worse to come. Although extreme weather events may seem the worst of our worries, we can at least take actions to mitigate them and repair damage caused.

Climate change is also a main driver in the UK's massive loss of biodiversity. Loss of biodiversity is totally irreversible, once species are extinct no amount of money can bring them back. Overriding all of this is the acute need to prevent more erosion to our bank of Natural Capital, to reverse the damage, and not only to enhance it, but build it back up to pre-industrial levels.

The Council has declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and the aim to get to net carbon zero by 2030. But this can only be achieved if very strong measures are embedded in every decision the council makes, in its policies, processes and actions. Moreover, the council needs to consider how it can take the lead in helping our communities and local economy to adapt to climate change and to become more resilient.

These might seem to be very lofty aims. But this Task and Finish Group are aware that in order to meet its declared commitments the council, and the residents of Herefordshire must raise their game.

Through delivering the Terms of Reference set for us by the General Scrutiny Committee, we hope to enable Herefordshire Council to achieve what it needs to do in meeting its climate emergency declaration and setting an example for action across the County.



The chart above shows the breakdown of carbon emissions in Herefordshire in 2018¹. The total emissions in this year in Herefordshire were 1.137 million tonnes of CO₂.

¹ Data from the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The membership of our Group are:

Cllr William Wilding (Chair)

Cllr Toni Fagan

Cllr Jennie Hewitt

Cllr Louis Stark

Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst

Early on in the process the Task and Finish Group ('the Group') identified key subject areas of focus for their work. These areas were communication, Natural Capital, economy and tourism, planning and resilience, transport, community, ecology and agriculture and land use. Both external and internal speakers who are experts in their fields were identified and invited to meetings to present to the Group and discuss these subjects. The recommendations of this report have been categorised under these themes.

The Group would like to acknowledge the work of the waste management strategic review and transport strategy review for Hereford. To avoid duplication of work, recommendations have not been made in these specific areas despite being imperative to meeting the climate and ecological emergency.

The climate and ecological emergency is a very fast moving subject area with huge amounts of work going on across Herefordshire and the country. This report is a snapshot of the work done by the Group in the timeframe available. It is accepted that with such a large subject area, there is constant advancement and therefore some recommendations may already be in progress and some may have been superseded by new initiatives. Where that is the case, it is welcomed and highlights why a permanent Committee is required.

Cllr William Wilding (Chair)

Governance

Much discussion was given to how much needs to be done to respond adequately to the climate and ecological emergency. The invaluable and tireless work of community groups and agencies outside Herefordshire Council was acknowledged.

A key question was raised, what sort of governance structure would be required and how would that structure work alongside countywide and external partners in a truly collaborative way. The Policy Committee, Partnership and Citizens panels should address the climate emergency through the lens of the same 'themes' to ensure synchronicity of work.

Moving forward with the hybrid style of governance, the Group recommend a Committee is formed allowing wider input from Councillors, greater transparency and cross cutting to prevent silo working.

1. Internal Governance;
 - a. The Council should establish a politically proportionate Committee (the Climate and Ecological Emergency Policy Committee) with responsibility for directing the Council's response to the climate and ecological emergency. The Chairperson of that Committee may or may not be a cabinet member depending on the precise arrangements adopted by the council, but the Committee is to have primacy.
 - b. The Committee should take account of the proposed Future Generations Act.
 - c. The Committee should have some form of decision making powers in line with the future hybrid system of governance.
 - d. The Committee should have its own budget that facilitates it to fulfil its remit and initiate projects that will enable the council to make progress required with respect to the climate & ecological emergency.
 - e. The Committee should be the focal point for all council climate change related work.
 - f. The Committee should receive regular reports from bodies charged with directing the countywide response to the climate and ecological emergency. The Committee would not duplicate this work but ensure that the council remained sighted upon it.
 - g. Research should be undertaken and consideration given to models adopted by other authorities reflecting these principles.
2. The existing county wide steering group was set up in 2019 to create the basis of a net zero, nature rich action plan and set up a new Partnership to adopt and drive forward the action plan. The Group recommends the following approach to a Partnership to deliver a countywide response to the climate and ecological emergency;
 - a. A collaborative, open and transparent partnership body needs to be established to deliver the countywide response to the climate and ecological emergency.
 - b. This body should not be led by the council or run by it.
 - c. The Council should be represented on the partnership, should participate in it and make a robust contribution.
 - d. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure regular feedback from the partnership to the Committee.
 - e. Provision should be made for the membership of the partnership to include those who are responsible for the delivery of measures that are likely to be recommended to ensure that they are practical and capable of implementation.
 - f. Provision should be made for the membership of the partnership to include a range of views to promote effective critical friend challenge.

3. On 12 July 2019 a Zero Carbon Citizens Assembly was agreed at full council. The executive response 26 September 2019 offered four options to be detailed in a forthcoming report. The Group recommend that the report should be produced and one of these options taken forward as a priority. This option should be delivered and supported by the council and feed into the Committee and Partnership to inform the work regarding the climate and ecological emergency.

Following this recommendation the report will be split into two sections, the first contains recommendations for the executive to consider to take forward now. The second part includes recommendations that should form a basis for a work plan for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Policy Committee to review and take forward.

Recommendations to the executive

The following recommendations are made by the Task and Finish Group to the executive.

Resources

4. The executive should ensure that all relevant teams are sufficiently resourced to carry out all recommendations that are accepted.
5. A mandatory training element should be added to the Herefordshire Council staff online training service regarding the environment and personal responsibility to ensure all staff are clear on their own professional and personal role in the climate and ecological emergency.

Working with the Local Government Association

6. Whilst discussing the issues around the climate and ecological emergency the Group felt it was important that the executive commit to work with the Local Government Association to;
 - a. Press for a joined-up regulatory and enforcement framework on Natural Capital.
 - b. Support and encourage behaviour change around reducing unnecessary vehicle use and support sustainable transport.
 - c. Ensure there is no gap between the Shared Prosperity Funding² and the existing European Regional Development Fund.
 - d. Address and ecological damage caused by temporary events of off-road motorsports.
 - e. Protect the ecology from site clearance prior to submission of a planning application.

² <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-house-commons-5-september-2019>

Communications

Throughout the work carried out by the Task and Finish Group it has been clear that messaging is crucial, effective communication, both internally and externally, is seen by the Group a key component to the delivery of the net zero carbon targets. It is essential to encouraging behaviour change. The Group recommend the strengthening of communications to highlight messages on the value of the environment, ecology and the county's Natural Capital;

7. An additional, dedicated communications officer in the Communications team is recommended to support environmental communications. Consideration should be given to the website, social media, active and passive promotion and engagement with the public including young people and schools to facilitate behaviour change. The officer should facilitate the following;
 - a. The officer should link with the work of the Partnership to avoid duplication.
 - b. A link to the section on climate and ecological emergency on the council's website should be promoted by a permanent banner at the top of the home page and the website pages relating to the environment should be more interactive to encourage more public involvement.
 - c. The 'Newsroom' should reflect all news relating to the climate and ecological emergency and signpost to other sources of news on the climate and ecological emergency within the County.
 - d. As a way of generating engagement, competitions and awards for innovative approaches to tackle the climate and ecological emergency should be promoted by the council and/or its partners.
 - e. Good farming and land use practice should be actively promoted by the council, supporting existing work by the Wye & Usk foundation and others.

Natural Capital, Economy and Tourism

Herefordshire is a beautiful county with much to offer in terms of economy and tourism. The Group felt it essential to acknowledge the value of the county's Natural Capital and embed its contribution to the social and economic wellbeing of the county. The loss of Natural Capital poses a threat to our progress. The Group met with the Marches LEP and council's Economic Development team discussing sustainable growth, a low carbon economy and a green recovery from Covid-19. The following recommendations are made:

8. Full account should be taken of the concept of Natural Capital making it the driver for all council decisions. The concept of Natural Capital could offer a different economic model with weight given to the environment's contribution to economic development;
 - a. The Cabinet consider designating Natural Capital as a separate and distinct policy area in their portfolio of responsibilities and appoint a lead on it.
 - b. The council should incorporate in tender assessment, criteria to take account of Natural Capital and prioritise support for low impact, sustainable local businesses as part of a progressive procurement policy that takes account of social value.
9. The Group recognises and endorses the focus on broadband infrastructure and recommends that hard to reach areas that are not possible to reach with cable services are provided impartial advice regarding mobile network solutions.
10. The Group recognises the importance of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the role they have to play in making progress with regards to the climate and ecological emergency. The Group recommends;

- a. A Natural Capital partnership with Marches authorities and the LEP should be explored.
- b. The executive should request that the LEP publically commit to support all three authorities to deliver on the net zero carbon targets.
- c. The executive should request the LEP review assessment criteria and consider taking account of Natural Capital. Support for low impact, sustainable local businesses could be prioritised as part of a progressive procurement policy that takes account of social value.
- d. The executive should raise with the LEP the issue of maize used as a feedstock for anaerobic digestion which causes environmental damage and request it reflects on the damage to Natural Capital as well as the road network.

Planning and resilience

Planning and enforcement generated much discussion for members of the Group, particularly in light of the review of the Core Strategy. There are also implications and potential changes to the planning regime as recommended by the Government's white paper³ on planning reform, the Environment Bill⁴ and Paris Agreement⁵.

Sustainability is employed in many areas within planning. The Group was concerned that often it is interpreted wrongly, or loosely employed to 'green' development plans. The Group believe that future use of the word sustainable must be qualified so there is no doubt as to the degree of sustainability and long-term commitment to it that is required.

The Group felt that it was important that Herefordshire's Natural Capital is valued and protected. It was also felt important that the local plan should give greater weight both to the vulnerability of the natural environment and to resilience. The review of the Core Strategy is an opportunity to reassess the policies that form the local plan. In light of the declared climate and ecological emergency, it is vital that emerging policies should have greater focus on climate and biodiversity and these policies be given greater weight. The group also felt that consideration should be given to the relative weight of the NPPF, the Climate Change Act 2008, the Environment Bill and the Paris Agreement in refocusing the Core Strategy.

In support of the generating of these recommendations the Group consulted with the following teams from the council; Planning, Built and Natural Environment and Directorate Services⁶. The Group requests the executive enacts the following recommendations;

11. The Committee be consultees under the Core Strategy review.
12. Biodiversity net-gain should be a consideration in future planning applications through the Core Strategy review.
13. Under the Core Strategy review the development of a new truly sustainable town to meet housing targets should be considered preferable to incremental growth. The town would include biodiversity net-gain, sustainable transport links and local renewable energy generation including a heat network. This should prevent broad countryside loss across the county and protect the historic nature of existing settlements.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2020/30-january-2020-environment-bill-2020-policy-statement>

⁵ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>

⁶ Regarding resilience.

14. The group recognises there is a definition of sustainability in the NPPF; “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. However given the environmental and ecological emergency the group recommends that greater weight is given to “the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” through the Core Strategy review.
15. Good clear environmental policies should be developed, demonstrably supported by the evidence base, containing specific minimum standards that could then be enforced. A Supplementary Planning Document⁷ (SPD) should be produced to address the climate & ecological emergency.
16. Local planning strategy to include nature recovery networks through the Core Strategy review.
17. The existing environmental and forthcoming ecology compliance checklists should sit in the pre validation stage of a planning applications where they will form part of our local list.
18. The executive should ensure that existing provisions and policies on climate change and ecology are given their maximum possible weight in the planning balance and consider whether consolidating these provisions would assist in providing a stronger focus on the issues and weight to be attributed to them.
19. Working in conjunction with the Environment Agency, manure management plans which have been used as mitigation in planning applications should be mapped and cross referenced and existing plans should be reviewed before new plans are issued to ensure land is not under multiple plans which would mean an exceedance would exist. Any exceedances should be reported to the Environment Agency.
20. A greater focus must be given within neighbourhood development plans (NDPs) to low carbon policies and green space and the scope for the neighbourhood planning team to provide greater encouragement to and support for such policies⁸. A guidance note should be produced setting out the council’s expectations for provision of green space. This could include a checklist. The provision of green space as a condition for planning as well as retaining wildlife corridors, preventing the breaking up of wildlife corridors for individual plots and ensuring biodiversity net-gain should be included.
21. Consideration should be given to an SPD for new anaerobic digesters should prioritise feedstock which supports the circular economy and where it can be shown there will be no adverse effects on water quality.
22. With respect to flooding:
 - a. No future development sites should be brought forward in Environment Agency designated flood zones 2 and 3 in order to allow these areas to sequester carbon, improve biodiversity and resilience.
 - b. Actively investigate the causes of pluvial flooding and the discharge of water and sediments onto the public highway and carry out enforcement.
23. Where sites have already been identified for development, the council should be supporting local house builders to build sustainable housing.

⁷ e.g. https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/Sara_Grimes_BANES.pdf

https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/LP20162036/cost_of_carbon_reduction_in_new_buildings_report_publication_version.pdf

⁸ Existing reference material: <https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/reports-and-publications/policy/planning/renewables/neighbourhood-planning-in-a-climate-emergency-feb-2020.pdf>

24. The council assess the potential for using s.106 monies to retrofit existing poorly performing housing stock in the county to improve thermal efficiency (Milton Keynes as an example⁹).

Community

The Group recognises the grassroots activity and concern around the climate and ecological emergency and therefore recommends the council considers the way it can work with and support the community. As the pandemic has demonstrated, the bedrock of resilience is the community and therefore we need to continue to strengthen partnership working.

25. The Group recognises the good work of officers in signposting community groups to grant funding and recommends the council increases resources so it is able to support bids through the application process and proactively drive bids in support of environmental projects with significant positive environmental outcomes.
26. The council should continue to support and promote Keep Herefordshire Warm and provide incentives and support to individuals to make behaviour changes to reduce carbon emissions.

Ecology

The Group recognises that ecology, land use and agriculture are intrinsically linked, as such these recommendations should be considered as a whole.

Discussions held around the ecological emergency and the River Wye SAC, as well more widely, highlighted the need to address the impacts of agriculture on Herefordshire's ecology. Discussion with external consultee's including the Wye & Usk Foundation, Monmouthshire County Council and Butterfly Conservation, highlighted potential opportunities to improve the counties ecology. Discussion with the council's Parks, Planning and Built and Natural Environment teams informed current restraints as well as opportunities for net gain. The Group present the following recommendations:

27. The council should have sufficient expertise and resource to carry out proactive works to protect the natural environment with a focus on wider ecological concerns in addition to responding to planning applications. The council should therefore appoint a dedicated officer to carry out proactive works.
28. To immediately resource an update of the Biological Records, making the data contained therein an up to date and accurate benchmark from which to understand and enhance biodiversity in the County.
29. A soil strategy for the County should be produced as a matter of urgency.
30. Improving biodiversity of verges, hedgerows and trees;
 - a. Review the approach by statutory undertakers to rewilding verges.
 - b. The council should adopt a Hedgerow Manifesto¹⁰ as part of the emerging tree strategy.
 - c. That the business case for another cut and collect machine is developed¹¹.

⁹ S.106 has been a mechanism to offset the carbon impacts of a development (embedded and lifetime) in other authorities (Milton Keynes) and to retrofit other properties.

¹⁰ The Manifesto should outline a clear strategy for the protection and conservation of the counties hedgerows

¹¹ Informed by the meeting with Butterfly Conservation who provided a case study

- d. That training be provided on sustainable verge management as part of a Parish Summit meeting inviting other key stakeholders who look after green open spaces including lengthsman.
 - e. Recognise the importance of effective communication in advance of any changes to explain them fully to the public.
31. The council should, in consultation with Highways England, explore getting local authority verges in Herefordshire registered under Tier 3 for Environmental Land Management Schemes.
32. A strategic approach to biodiversity net-gain should be established, working alongside partners to aggregate biodiversity net-gain across the County and maximise the benefit¹². Carbon sequestration and offsetting should be pursued together with the scope for the County to benefit economically from these actions through the development of a business case. The Council should engage with other landowners highlighting the potential gain to them of tree planting and offer support to owners in growing;
- a. A record should be kept of number of trees planted, for example a running counter on the website since the declaration of the climate and ecological emergency.
 - b. The council should explore options for an open market trading platform for biodiversity and carbon.
 - c. The council should take every opportunity to expedite tree planting on council owned land where appropriate, including closed landfill sites.

Agriculture and Land Use

The Rivers Wye and Lugg are special areas of conservation, protected under European and UK legislation (SSSI, Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, Natura 2000). However the Lugg continues to fail the water quality targets set for phosphates. Prompted by the Dutch Case¹³, Herefordshire Council has applied a moratorium to development in the Lugg catchment until Natural England is satisfied that there will be no adverse impact on the SAC. The estimated cost of this moratorium to developers is approximately £66m¹⁴.

Current data shows that the source apportionment of phosphate is around 70% agriculture/diffuse and 30% housing, point pollution. The proportion is likely to shift further towards agriculture/diffuse. Despite enormous effort to encourage changes in farming practice the River Lugg remains in exceedance for phosphate. The Wye is also suffering from the consequences of nutrient enrichment. The most significant impact of this was the eradication of the keystone species water crowfoot from around 70 miles of river, impacting invertebrate and fish habitat and leading to the almost total absence of viable swan broods.

Climate change will increase the frequency of weather patterns like 2020 – and that the algal bloom will recur unless something is done to change the conditions.

In order to ensure that damaging farming practices are reduced and to avoid disruption to future economic activity, for example the visitor economy we would recommend:

¹² This would link into nature recovery networks

¹³ Case 293/17 court of Justice of the European Union Cooperation Mobilisation for the Environment v Verenigin Leefmilieu (Dutch Nitrogen)

¹⁴ Source: Herefordshire Construction Industry Lobby Group

33. The council should urgently seek counsel advice regarding the implementation of a water protection zone to protect the special area of conservation (SAC) from diffuse agricultural pollution (Wye and tributaries).
34. The council should explore the use of council land for solar farms and where appropriate council car parks linked with EV charging points.

Recommendations for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Policy Committee

Should a Climate and Ecological Emergency Policy Committee not be agreed or established the following recommendations should be made to the executive.

35. The Committee should review all elements of the work so far on the climate and ecological emergency to ensure progress and avoid duplication of work.
 - a. Specifically the Committee should review the SPD¹⁵ and environmental and ecological checklists produced.
 - b. The work of the Committee¹⁶ and others should guide the council's actions to ensure it is moving in the right direction.

Agriculture and land use

The group met with the Wye & Usk Foundation, a part of the meeting included discussion around land use. The Group identified the need for greater emphasis on good agricultural practice. The survival of the rich biodiversity of the River Wye depends upon it.

As a rural county, agriculture and land use should have a prominent position within the council. Much good work has already been achieved and the Group urge the need to build on that with a sense of urgency.

36. There is a need to explore where the council can support the work of the Environment Agency and work more closely together on mutual targets and ambitions regarding enforcement.
37. Good farming and land use practice should be actively promoted by the Committee, supporting existing work by the Wye & Usk foundation and others, with a view to setting up a Herefordshire local seal of quality. The produce should be promoted for example in a food festival, local farm shop or farmers market.

¹⁵ Recommendation [14](#)

¹⁶ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/>

Transport

The group met with both the Cabinet Member for transport and the Head of Transport and Access Services. The following recommendations are made by the Group, informed by these discussion to the Committee to further enhance the role of active travel to reduce the impact of fossil fuel based transport on the County.

38. The council should work with Parish Councils and partners such as Sustrans and the Local Access Forum to map potential cycle and walking route extensions.
39. Strips of land alongside rural roads should be investigated to create cycle ways with a view to purchase or lease the land.
40. 20 mph zones should be implemented across Hereford, the market towns and around schools, countywide.
41. Opportunities to support all schools in developing school travel plans noting the link to changing travel to school behaviour and wider travel behaviour of children and parents should be explored.
42. To address the issues of rural transport the council should pursue funding to support innovative transport schemes within the community sector including demand responsive transport (DRT), car clubs and low traffic neighbourhoods¹⁷.
43. A 'shop drop' scheme should be considered to support car-free city and town centres to enable shoppers to park on the outskirts and have shopping sustainably transported to their car, choose how you move location or bus stop. This should support existing 'first mile last mile' schemes.
44. Demand management should be further implemented, supported by robust communications¹⁸ and used to increase the provision of infrastructure to support active travel e.g.;
 - a. Reduce on street parking and replace with infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians.
 - b. Work place levy operated by the council with funds used to increase uptake of active travel.
 - c. Car parking charges to be based on emissions.

Natural Capital, Economy and Tourism

45. The Group recognises the existing work by officers to support the retrofit of fuel poor households. It recommends an investigation into the potential for a local 'green deal' option potentially through the establishment of a social enterprise to support the retrofit of the largest domestic users of energy in the County.
46. Consideration should be given to use of alternative fuel market¹⁹ for council fleet and contractors when vehicles/contractors are commissioned.
47. The use of hydrogen as an alternative fuel for long range vehicles or HGVs across the County should be explored.
48. A Natural Capital management plan should be drawn up with partners. A baseline should be established and the plan should;
 - a. Ensure that its preservation and restoration are given equal weight to economic growth and development in the allocation of funding (particularly capital) and in the decision making process.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence>

¹⁸ e.g. successfully demonstrate alternative to private car use

¹⁹ such as hydro treated vegetable oil

- b. Be used as a framework for positive and collaborative engagement with key partners to achieve a unified approach to remedy damage done to Natural Capital across the County.
49. A fund to be established to support businesses to contribute to carbon reduction or ecological restoration.

Community

The Group acknowledges and appreciates the strength of existing networks and how much work has been done across the County. It is essential that partnership and collaborative working is embedded in how we move forward to drive behaviour change across the County as we move towards decarbonisation. The Group would like to recognise the excellent work of Talk Community and the opportunity it presents to enhance partnership working across communities.

- 50. The Group would recognise the excellent existing work of Talk Community and recommend it explore support and actively engage with single person households to improve or enhance resilience and prepared for the effects of the climate and ecological emergency.
- 51. Where the council provides schools meals they must be nutritious, locally sourced, low carbon and ethical.
- 52. In terms of community gardens, the potential for using pockets of green space in the more urban areas for orchards/market gardens should be explored. A scheme be developed to facilitate residents in the countryside who cannot manage their gardens to find someone eager to make productive use of that land.

Ecology

- 53. To recognise and properly protect the natural resource in Herefordshire the Committee should:
 - a. Consider the creation of additional areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB).
 - b. Support the Wye Valley (including the Monnow Valley) be a national park (see Glover Review) and explore other areas including the Golden Valley as well as link to the other Marches authorities to establish nature recovery networks.

Concluding statement

Let's us not forget that massive amounts of great work has already been done. Previous administrations, both officers and members from all political groups have achieved much. There are many groups in our communities who have also contributed time, effort and skill. We are standing on the shoulders of giants.

The task is enormous, around 1,700,000 tonnes of CO₂e is produced in Herefordshire each year. We are in constant danger of duplication, trying to solve something that someone else is already delivering, communication, collaboration and transparency are key areas to improve.

In order to meet our declared aims, we have recommended a robust governance structure which includes recommendations to the executive, the new Committee and the Partnership.

We also look forward to the contributions from NMITE to the challenge ahead.

Above all the council, and the residents of Herefordshire must work together and raise their game.

Cllr William Wilding (Chair)



Photograph: Lisa Wise 2018

Acknowledgements and progress

The Group notes that the Countywide Climate & Ecological Emergency Steering Group is working on the following themes: Energy, Transport, Waste, Food, Land Use and Agriculture and Community Engagement.

We look forward to the collaborative countywide Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan for Herefordshire being published in 2021. The Group welcome the speed and determination the County Steering Group has shown to move forward on this and applaud the work done by the Steering Group.

The Task and Finish Group are aware that because these two groups are active simultaneously, there will be some duplication. However the Group are of the opinion that in order to move swiftly it was essential to push ahead with both groups.

The Group were keen to ensure that the emergency of the situation was recognised and made a number of recommendations throughout its process, these are noted below.

- Cabinet member Cllr Ellie Chowns has been given specific responsibility to act as a lead on the climate and ecological emergency.
- The council's decision report template has been amended to include a section on climate and ecological emergency considerations.
- The Group fed into the draft report of the Carbon Management Plan 2020/21-25/26.

In addition the Group notes the success of the council's 'Better Ways of Working' and show support for its long term continuation.

Glossary

Natural capital - Natural capital can be defined as the world's stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things²⁰.

Some Natural Capital assets provide people with free goods and services, often called ecosystem services.

Two of these (clean water and fertile soil) underpin our economy and society, and thus make human life possible.

Natural capital provides people with essential services, like water catchment, erosion control and crop pollination by insects, which in turn ensure the long-term viability of other natural resources²¹.

Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) - SuDS are drainage systems that are considered to be environmentally beneficial, causing minimal or no long-term detrimental damage. They are often regarded as a sequence of management practices, control structures and strategies designed to efficiently and sustainably drain surface water, while minimising pollution and managing the impact on water quality of local water bodies²².

Sustainability – *When 'sustainability' and 'sustainable' are used in this report it they are used in the following context and all recommendations made relating to it should reflect this definition:* Having regard to how natural systems function, remain diverse and produce everything they need for the ecosystem to remain in balance.²³

Consultees

- Cllr Trish Marsh (Herefordshire Council)
- Cllr John Harrington (Herefordshire Council)
- Cllr Ellie Chowns (Herefordshire Council)
- Elizabeth Duberley (Herefordshire Council, Service Manager, Built and Natural Environment)
- Nigel Leaworthy (Monmouthshire County Council, Operations Manager)
- Mark Cleaver (Monmouthshire County Council)
- Gill Hamer (Marches LEP, Chief Executive)
- Tim Yair (on behalf of Marches LEP)
- Roger Allonby (Herefordshire Council, Head of Economic Development)
- Phil Sterling (Butterfly Conservation, Programme Manager)

²⁰

<https://naturalcapitalforum.com/about/#:-:text=Natural%20capital%20can%20be%20defined,which%20make%20human%20life%20possible>.

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_capital

²² <https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/background/sustainable-drainage.html>

²³ <https://www.environmentalscience.org/sustainability>

- Kevin Bishop (Herefordshire Council, Lead Development Manager)
- Spencer Grogan (Herefordshire Council, Parks and Leisure Centre Commissioning Manager)
- Simon Evans (Wye and Usk Foundation, CEO)
- Steve Hodges (Herefordshire Council, Directorate Services Team Leader)
- Steve Burgess (Herefordshire Council, Head of Transport and Access Services)
- Task and Finish Group - Waste Management Strategic Review

Further reading

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Key%20local%20and%20national%20actions%20-%20Dieter%20Helm.pdf>

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/birds-and-wildlife/birds-of-conservation-concern-4--the-population-status-of-birds-in-the-united-kingdom-channel-islands-and-the-isle-of-man.pdf>

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