

Environment & Green Issues Portfolio Holder Update Report

Full Council, 18th May 2021

Strategic Projects

The Council has appointed a Climate Change Project Officer, Chloë Fiddy, who has been in post since April 19th.

This means that the **Action Plan** can be progressed with priorities set for workstreams and best use of funding. Work is under way to review the actions Uttlesford must take to meet its zero carbon commitments.

Projects will initially focus attention on the highest emitting sectors of the economy – transport and energy, as well as ensuring that there are robust plans in place to repair biodiversity losses and conserve water. The Climate Change Committee's (CCC) most recent report the Sixth Carbon Budget has been adopted by government and provides valuable guidance to local authorities.

Few actions can be carried out without the support and collaboration of other authorities, central government, local residents and local businesses. The Council will be engaging directly with residents on specific projects to identify baselines, attitudes and barriers, as well as to ask for specific highly localised input on topics such as biodiversity.

Very broadly, in terms of transport, the Council will be supporting the national transition to low carbon vehicles. Recognising that notwithstanding the future transition to low emission vehicles, we still need to reduce our reliance on vehicles and replace small journeys with active travel or e-assisted travel, the Council will be working towards facilitating active travel as a realistic option for our residents and workers.

In terms of energy, while scientific debate is still ongoing over the precise methods of heating our homes in the future, what is certain is that many homes will need to be made more energy efficient to enable future technologies, and the Council will be focusing on facilitating this. Our district will be ready for new technology adoption.

In general terms we all need to recycle more and use our products for longer. The Council will have a part to play in this and options are being explored.

While the 'Balanced' pathway is the most likely scenario put forward by the CCC, there are some very exciting scenarios explored in the 'Innovation' pathway, and the Council will be exploring options for Uttlesford to be at the forefront of green innovation, especially where this will be of benefit to our local economy and employment.

Biodiversity is not specifically addressed as part of the CCC's remit, but logically it must be addressed as part of the climate strategy. Plans are being put together for

an approach including both a top-down study and a bottom-up citizen science project which makes the most of our huge knowledge base here in the district. Layered together, these approaches will enable the Council to identify opportunities and areas for improvement. Conservation of water sits within this project.

The Local Plan team continues to research best practice as well as opportunities for the district to raise the bar on climate matters.

Planning Officers are now using the recently agreed Interim Climate Change Planning Policies to make sure new developments coming forward take on board as many sustainable initiatives as possible before applications are submitted.