

Crowmarsh Parish Council

Sustainability / climate action policy statement

The council has declared a climate and ecological emergency in recognition of the clear evidence that climate and ecological change represent a threat to the life opportunities and well-being of future generations and need to be addressed at all levels of government. The Council recognises that addressing the challenges of climate change will result in many benefits in terms of health, wellbeing, and community resilience and resolves that all our future actions and decisions will take account of the need to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and reach net-zero carbon.

The Council supports the county council

(<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/energy-and-climate-change/what-we-are-doing>) and district council (<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/>) in their commitments to net-zero carbon.

Policy and practice

The parish council's past and present action on sustainability and the climate emergency includes:

- Declaration of a climate and ecological emergency
- Declaring support for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill
- Our recently made Neighbourhood Plan, which promotes biodiversity and heritage, defines green spaces for nature and wellbeing and places limits on new housing development
- Providing safe routes for walking and cycling – minimising car use and promoting healthy exercise – this includes our plans for new pedestrian and cycle crossings and 20mph zones
- Within the nature area of the recreation ground, plant a mix of silver birch willow and black poplar trees; we have a plan to plant more trees around the border, slightly encroaching into the recreation ground but not affecting pitches.
- Engaging with Wallingford and other neighbouring parishes in the OX10 postcode area in the Queen's Green Canopy project to plant native tree species to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 as well as contributing to carbon sequestration and helping nature's recovery by maximising the benefits to wildlife.
- The council has long had a policy of supporting local businesses in order to keep a mixed community with good local services and employment opportunities, minimising travel and supporting community. We have resisted planning applications to convert such uses to residential, not always successfully.

- We seek to influence planning decisions of the district and county councils, who have greater powers to make a difference than we do alone.
- We also undertake to improve the sustainability of major projects proposed in our parish by meeting with the district council, clients and designers. Years ago we supported the BREEAM Excellent Red Kite House for the Environment Agency in our parish and recent examples include the new HQ for CAB International and the proposed new council offices (which are now not to be in Crowmarsh but our advocacy of a BREEAM Excellent has been taken up in the brief for the new offices in Didcot).
- On the pavilion (the only building we own), the council took advantage of the original feed-in tariff to install photovoltaic solar panels in January 2011, using the maximum feasible area on the south-facing roof of the pavilion. This has saved many tons of CO₂ emission and generated 42.93 MWh over that 10-year period.

Strategic priorities

Our strategic priorities include:

- A Toucan pedestrian and cycle crossing of the A4074, to be delivered as part of the Newnham Manor housing development which also provides connectivity in Crowmarsh Gifford, green space and a safe walking/cycling route to school and pre-school
- A Zebra crossing in The Street as part of a safe walking route to school and pre-school
- Electric charging points in the development of any new car parking, such as on the former council offices site (already happening on large employment sites in the parish such as Howbery Park and UKCEH)
- Tree planting on public land and encouraging planting on private land.
- Change of grass-cutting programme across the parish to increase the no-mow areas to create wildflower meadows that encourage pollinators
- Improvements to Watery Lane, a bridleway that links Crowmarsh and Wallingford to the Ridgeway national trail, the new CAB International HQ, new residential areas in Mongewell and on to Cholsey Station
- Significant improvements to the pavilion on the recreation ground to increase the buildings usability, efficiency (see more below). This is where the PC has direct control and can provide well-used facilities that take sustainability and climate change into account.

Buildings and community facilities

Our council's decisions can influence the carbon footprint of buildings in the parish in two ways:

- Response on development through the planning process (large impact, but little influence)
- Management / improvement of our own built assets (less impact but far greater influence)

Works the PC is responsible for will be driven by sustainability and climate change considerations.

The only building that we own is the 30-year-old pavilion on the Crowmarsh Gifford recreation ground, built to standards current at the time to cater for the needs of the community in the 1990s.

We have already improved the adjoining outdoor recreation facilities through dedicated management of the grounds and pitches and our recent successful development of a new playground and outdoor gym. The hard courts now have energy-efficient LED lighting and the nearby nature area is positively managed for biodiversity with the help of volunteers and expert contractors.

The playground project used sustainable timber rather than metal where possible, incorporated grass and permeable matting safety surfaces in preference to solid rubber and allowed for future projections in flood compensation, by taking measures to help ensure new works do not adversely affect the sites water storage capability. The scheme design took particular care to provide equipment usable by children with physical impairments. The playground has reduced travel by providing what families need in the parish rather than going to other playgrounds further afield. Helping towards reducing infections from Covid etc (providing hand sanitizers and using Zoono)

We now aim to make the best use of our existing Pavilion by retaining the well-used facilities and adapting and enhancing un-used parts, minimising the new build to limit the embodied energy, but improving the efficiency of the building's use.

The pavilion project

With the pavilion proposals we are aiming for the best use of our existing building and minimum carbon footprint by adapting rather than rebuilding. We are adding social amenities by reusing space not needed for its original use. There is a priority need for new toilets (accessible to wheelchair users and providing baby change facilities) with direct access from outside to serve the playground and playing field users. A new meeting room and flexible servery (facing both external and internal spaces) will provide further amenity value. The new servery will allow greater use/letting of the hall, as it can be used instead of the existing kitchen by those hiring the football and cricket pitches.

New windows in the existing hall will improve the quality of space and daylight and help make it a more attractive venue.

We aim to provide a social hub area with servery and seating that builds on the back of a successful and popular playground project. This will encourage safe social interaction and wellbeing of users. The new exterior terrace will use permeable paving.

Providing improved and additional facilities will encourage a reduction in the use of cars, as the local community will have less need to travel to facilities further afield.

The new meeting room and servery can help local businesses, the school PTA, the local church, scouts and others by providing an additional affordable facility.

We plan to use a heat recovery system to raise the energy efficiency in the proposed new meeting room and servery, and to improve the ventilation of the two retained changing rooms.