

A strategy for a Greener Amberley

1. Why have a Green Strategy for the Parish?

The scale of the national and international challenge on climate and nature is clear, and well documented. Back home, Amberley parish is estimated to emit on average 25.4 tonnes of carbon per household pa (<https://impact-tool.org.uk/>), among the highest in the district and well above the UK average of 16 tonnes per household- the leading contributor is our oil-fired heating.

Climate change and nature loss are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, and HMG has committed to a UK target of net zero carbon emissions, and to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, by 2050. Local government has been tasked to play its part. Horsham District Council (HDC) has committed to the district becoming carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2050. West Sussex County Council has a statutory responsibility for nature recovery, and Wilder Horsham, a partnership between HDC and the Sussex Wildlife Trust, has been tasked to drive biodiversity in our district.

Amberley Parish Council (APC) has local responsibilities in this field. In June 2023 the new APC set up a working group on climate action and nature recovery, consisting of Councillors and volunteers, to build on existing efforts in the community, advise the APC on a future direction, and help drive this effort.

The following constitutes a draft strategy for the whole parish community, to be led by the APC through a new structure for effective implementation.

2. Vision

A motivated and active community that takes responsibility for its unique environment and its wider impacts, within district, national and international commitments, and is seen to make a positive difference.

3. How will we Achieve our Vision?

Our approach for effective implementation starts from the principle of **collaborating with others**. The issues we face are complex and we will not achieve our vision by working alone – rather, success will require us to work with others, tapping into their knowledge, skills, experience, resources and creativity to achieve the lasting impact we envisage.

- **Partnership Working** – we will partner with specialist knowledge groups from across the public and private sectors, governments, youth groups, civil society organisations.
- **Community Engagement** - in working together, we also aim to ensure those most affected by change feel ownership of the solutions and outcomes and so will themselves seek to influence change for a more sustainable community.

4. Outcomes for 2030

En route to the 2050 Net Zero target, these are the changes that we envisage will take place in Amberley by 2030 through the delivery of this strategy.

1. Low carbon options overtake oil as main heating source, with increased property insulation
2. Electric cars are prevalent, with adequate charging infrastructure
3. Net increase in native tree cover
4. Net Zero Community Centre supporting a vibrant community
5. Recycling, refill and repair become a local cultural norm
6. Wildbrooks transformed to become a wildlife haven throughout the year
7. The Community orchard and allotment are in full use
8. River Arun cleaned, with flood mitigation through nature
9. Most local waste, including food, avoids landfill
10. Wilding of fields within the parish

5. Focus Areas

To enable these outcomes, we have identified four focus areas - some of which are arguably of a higher priority than others, such as heating and transport, but they may also be the most challenging due to factors beyond our control eg the government grant for heat pumps is below cost, and electric cars are currently expensive without subsidy and with a poor local charging infrastructure. In this context equal weighting will be given to each area of focus, but this will be flexible and be influenced by the evolution of government policy, and funding opportunities.

Inevitably there is major overlap and connectivity between these different focus areas, for example the harvesting of rain water by property owners would save energy from pumping less fresh water across communities; and the sustainability of community assets such as the school and shop would reduce car use.

Focus Area 1 - Nature

The focus of the Nature work stream is to protect and enhance biodiversity and mitigate climate change. While biodiversity is relatively strong in parts in the area, nature here is under serious threat from human intervention such as development which obstructs connectivity (roads, housing etc.), farming practices which impact on food sources and shelter, and pollution such as sewage spillage in rivers, fly tipping, and plastic litter. Measures might include connectivity, wilding, and the promotion of key native species.

Focus Area 2 - Buildings and Energy

HDC have identified buildings as the main emitter of greenhouse gases in the district. As Amberley uses predominantly oil-fired heating, it will be among the highest emitters in the Horsham district and certainly well above the national average. A transition to lower carbon heating in our buildings is therefore critical. Heat pumps are the most viable alternative at this time, and a growing but small minority of households have installed them. Insulation is a pre-requisite to such a transition, and matters in its own right. We might explore opportunities for bulk buying, and outside funding, to lower costs. Communal energy generation might be a long-term goal.

Focus Area 3 - Lifestyle

Lifestyle would incorporate transport, the second highest emitter in the district, and particularly high in Amberley. It is perhaps uniquely challenging because it is so subject to external factors, and also influenced by our relative remoteness. Beyond the railway, opportunities to use public transport in the area are constrained. Most of the cars are fuelled by petrol and diesel, and the local transition to electric cars remains minimal- car and electric charger sharing might be worth exploring as at least an interim solution. Air travel is a challenge, with a technology shift in its infancy- again an interim solution may be the purchase of carbon credits from reputable organisations such as the Woodland Trust.

Beyond transport, there is momentum locally behind the creation of a circular economy, from our internal market on gaggle, to the growth of recycling, repair and refill offered by the eco hub.

Focus Area 4 – Adaptation

Adaptation will become increasingly important over time. For example, the energy transition from fossil fuels to electricity will demand a complete overhaul of the power grid to meet heightened electricity demand, during which it will come under unprecedented strain with more frequent power cuts- this will underline the need for new power supplies such as solar panels independent of the grid.

Above all we will need to adapt to increased climate impacts, particularly heat and drought, and flooding. WSCC have the lead in such areas, but there may be ways in which we can have an influence. For example, nature will be expected to perform a role, with increased tree cover to combat heat, and strategically placed vegetation to mitigate flooding in the river vicinity.

Implementation

- **Implementation Structure:** given the breadth and complexity of the challenge, a formal implementation structure will be put in place, to ensure that the programme of work is professionally monitored and managed. This structure is shown at the Appendix.

The APC will provide leadership, by aiming for **Net Zero Carbon for the parish by 2050**, in line with district, county, and national commitments. The APC will incorporate this strategy and its focus areas in its implementation of policy across the board, so that all decisions are seen through a climate and nature lens, in order to facilitate carbon net zero for the parish by 2050. Examples might include the monitoring next year of a 10% net biodiversity gain commitment from property developers; lobbying HDC and SDNPA on more planning flexibility on low carbon technology; guidance on biodiversity to be incorporated in outsourced contracts for verge, hedge and tree maintenance; and, working with others, particularly WSCC, to mitigate future effects of drought and flooding. It is foreseen that the implementation of this strategy will be funded from outside sources, using a volunteer cadre.

- **Partnership Working**

There are some obvious outside partners to work with on this agenda, including HDC and Wilder Horsham (incorporating Sussex Wildlife Trust), WSCC, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Woodland Trust, and Weald to Waves. Tapping into funding streams

available, will be one important area of focus. The working group has already been engaged with these bodies on project work. Landowners such as Nyetimber and the RSPB are also expected to play a pivotal role, and Amberley Castle may have a role too, as will those that adjoin the parish such as Parham and the Norfolk Estate. Communities in the district that are particularly active on this agenda, such as Steyning and Henfield, offer scope for co-operation, as do neighbouring parishes, particularly on nature connectivity. Potential commercial sponsors will be approached across West Sussex.

- **Community Engagement**

Recognising that the outcomes we envisage will only be achieved through the ownership, engagement and commitment of our community, a community engagement framework sits at the heart of our strategy's success.

This will start with the launch of our strategy in the summer of 2024 through a community workshop, where we will create a shared understanding of our priorities and seek feedback and input to the strategy from prospective partners, Amberley interest groups and the wider community.

- ✓ Amberley already has many community groups and forums in place¹ which will form the backbone of our engagement framework. Each group will be invited to set out how their group will contribute to the priorities and these ideas will be incorporated into an overall milestone plan.
- ✓ Storytelling – regular, conversation-based workshops and seminars where the community comes together to share success. The conversations will also help to educate and involve, with the aim of influencing change and so achieving the outcomes we envisage.
- ✓ Regular 'green' column in Wildbrooks, with a focus on personal stories of green success.
- ✓ Programme of visiting speakers
- ✓ New forms of digital engagement
- ✓ Engage youth – local school involvement.
- ✓ Pulse checks (online survey) to monitor community satisfaction with progress and to gather ideas for future work.

Projects ahead, 2024-5

- Implementation of current planting on Amberley Recreation ground, and Millennium Green, together with hedge-laying and coppicing.

¹ Millennium Green Trust, the Eco Hub, SAGE, the Gardens Open, those who maintain the village pond and the wildflower meadow in the church yard, the village bus service

- Hall Raisers to introduce low carbon heating and lighting in refurbished Church Hall.
- Community Centre of Net Zero ambition is agreed and funded.
- Energy saving workshop including benefits and practicalities of heat pump technology, and investigate prospect of bulk discount from heat pump supplier to meet local demand.
- Amberley eco hub to be expanded- community to be consulted on other services.
- Promotion of the harvesting of rain water in properties.
- Engage with WSCC on flooding mitigation through nature (£25 million government funding available).
- Installation of electric charging points in the car park.
- An initiative with the shop, pubs and café to use waste food through the toogoodtogo app.
- Identify and support a red list species native to the area in need of particular action- community to vote on a short list of native species
- Set up a nature corridor project with a landowner in the parish adjoining APC managed land, and with a neighbouring parish (with twinning opportunities).
- Implement projected improvements to the village bus service.
- Amberley Gardens Open to incorporate heightened nature focus, with Weald to Waves participation.
- A community allotment project is launched, and the community orchard is planted.
- Transformation of Wildbrooks begins, to include red list species under threat.
- Set up a “Go Compare” exercise whereby our progress is measured against other communities.
- Wildflower meadow / nature reserve established behind Drewitts Farm.

The completion of these projects will be designed to create positive momentum towards a new programme of activity that will deliver 2030 outcomes (page 2), the next stage to meeting the 2050 Carbon Net Zero target.

APPENDIX

Implementing a strategy for a greener Amberley

