



CLIMATE EMERGENCY

RESOURCES PACK FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS – FOOD, FARMING, FORESTRY AND ECOLOGY

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Contents:

SECTION 1.	INTRODUCTION.....	2
SECTION 2.	WHAT DOES FOOD, FARMING, FORESTRY AND ECOLOGY COVER?	2
SECTION 3.	WHAT YOU CAN DO?	2
3.1	Food.....	2
3.2	Farming.....	3
3.3	Forestry.....	3
3.4	Ecology.....	3



Section 1. Introduction

This document forms part of the ACT Town and Parish Resource Pack. Please refer to the Overview document of the resource pack.

The document aims to explain to councils what they can do address the themed area for Food, Farming, Forestry and Ecology.

The following is a summary of how ACT can support you. It may be that you have declared a Climate Emergency, or you just want some guidance on what you can do to help reduce Carbon emissions in your 'patch'.

Section 2. What does Food, Farming, Forestry and Ecology cover?

Food – Local production and distribution of food, vegetable plots, allotments, community gardens, community supported agriculture (CSA), veg box schemes. Reduction of food waste.

Farming –All types of farming, land and soil management and renewable energy schemes combined with farming.

Forestry – Planting and management of trees in open areas and public open spaces (POS), hedgerows, ancient woodlands, plantations and large forests.

Ecology - All wildlife and habitats in Teignbridge, including urban areas and Dartmoor.

Section 3. What you can do?

We have highlighted areas and types of actions that can be undertaken under each of the headings. It is a good idea to start with something you feel able to tackle quickly, but one which also brings 'measurable' wins. This not only helps you to work effectively with embedding an effective process, but more importantly, motivates you and others to do more.

The ACT Food, Farming, Forestry and Ecology group can help you with information, guidance and signposting, once you've chosen your first initiative. Just contact us.

As a general approach:

1. Identify someone or a group to be a focal point on all matters related to the topics below. They can act as a single point of contact to signpost and share information within your community.
2. Using the general range of ideas, identify specific projects which are within your capability, ideally ones with the greatest impact for least effort/cost.
3. A collection of these initiatives can form the basis for a Carbon Reduction Plan with information and statistics on how greenhouse gas emissions can be mitigated.

3.1 Food

The production and distribution of food close to consumers is desirable, to minimise environmentally damaging food miles, increase freshness and healthiness of food, and increase people's connection with food production. Organic methods of growing are particularly beneficial for the environment and for consumers' well-being. Fruit, vegetable and salad production are well suited to smaller-scale (<5ha) production close to the point of consumption, as larger quantities can be produced in smaller areas than are needed for meat or cereal crops, and with minimal processing. Suggested actions:



- Encourage and facilitate community food growing projects, including community allotments, orchards and Community Supported Agriculture holdings.
- Through the planning process, require new developments to provide allotments and community growing spaces.
- Facilitate the provision of more allotments and community growing spaces to serve the existing population. Consider approaching landowners to lend/lease land for allotments.
- Consider proposals to facilitate the distribution and sale of locally grown food, for example veg boxes, markets, flexible shop sharing, mobile shops and community food shops.
- Set up a community fridge scheme to reduce food waste.

3.2 Farming

Farmland has the potential to sequester large amounts of carbon. This depends on how the farmland is used and there are numerous factors involved including the choice of crops and animals, ploughing and manuring regimes, the balance between woodland, hedges, pasture and crop land will all have an impact on how much carbon is absorbed or released. Suggested actions:

- Identify a local farmer or farmers group that would be keen to engage local farms in a dialogue about climate change and farming methods that can reduce greenhouse gases.
- The group could share information and resources on renewable energy schemes for farms and measures for wildlife friendly farming such as leaving wildlife strips at the edge of fields, allowing hedgerows to grow more, tree planting, reducing the use of pesticides, recycling farm plastics (n.b. this is already a legal necessity), ponds and watercourses, pasture management, wildflower meadows etc.
- Support proposals to develop or expand woodland enterprises, such as the production of young trees, fruit, timber, firewood, local sawmills, woodland crafts and agroforestry ventures.

3.3 Forestry

Increasing tree cover will help tackle climate change through CO₂ reduction and improved air-quality. It can also benefit people's mental well-being, and provide food, timber and fuel. The Forestry Commission and others have suggested that even urban areas should aim for at least 20% tree cover.

Suggested actions:

- Require tree planting through the planning process
- Insist on tree replacement and follow up with the local Tree Warden.
- Encourage and facilitate proposals for tree planting on suitable parish / town land and private land.
- Designate sites in the Neighbourhood Plan for trees and nature restoration.
- Encourage and facilitate community tree projects such as tree nurseries, community orchards and community wood fuel production.
- Establish a community woodland and encourage 'forest school days' for primary pupils to get out of the classroom and reconnect with nature. This could also be a resource for 'green prescriptions'.
- Look at the Tree Charter developed by the Woodland Trust in partnership with NALC which provides guidance on how to increase tree cover and provides some case studies.

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/treecharter>

3.4 Ecology

Parish and town councils have statutory responsibilities for the following areas, all of which provide opportunities for the protection and enhancement of local ecology:

- burial grounds, cemeteries
- churchyards

<https://actionclimateteignbridge.org/>

ACTION on Climate in Teignbridge is a CIC registered in England, number 12278894.
Its registered office is 71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2H 9JQ.



- bus shelters
- drainage of ditches and ponds
- footpaths and rights of way
- community owned land
- litter (bins and opportunities to promote recycling)
- recreation grounds and open spaces

Suggested actions for these areas of responsibility:

- Undertake biodiversity surveys involving schools, churches and interested groups.
- Reduce mowing – leave wildflower and wildlife strips / edges. Allow verges to seed by having just two cuts very early and late in summer, and planting or seeding only native wildflowers.
- Only use pesticides if there is no other option and use peat free compost – monitor contractors to ensure compliance.
- Ensure hedge cutting is sensitive to ecology and wildlife (and never between 1st March and 1st August except for Road Safety reasons).
- Reduce light pollution from street lighting.
- Use (strong) flat roofed bus shelters to grow insect friendly plants.
- Use signage on council owned land to promote what you are doing and to encourage others to do likewise.
- Set up a Parish Wildlife Warden Scheme to keep an eye on local habitats and encourage connectivity and wildlife-friendly gardening.
- Promote the reporting of wildlife sightings to the relevant authority and/ or using specialist free apps. Also promote annual wildlife surveys such as the Big Butterfly count <https://www.bigbutterflycount.org>.

Other actions to protect local ecology:

- Use planning powers to:
 - ensure that new developments provide on-site wildlife areas such as, ponds, wildlife meadows, orchards and allotments.
 - Require hedges to be planted instead of walls and fences.
 - Tighten requirements for grey-water reuse and water butts.
 - Use legal and planning mechanisms such as Section 106 agreements, Community Infrastructure Levy and other mechanisms to fund climate actions and nature restoration projects.
- Ensure that Neighbourhood Development Plans include allocations for creating public wildlife areas.
- Ban the use of single-use plastic in council offices and premises at council run events.
- Use the event licencing process to require events held in the area to be single-use plastic free
- Consider the ecological and carbon footprint of regular events such as carnivals and fairs. Take action to reduce or eliminate the use of single use plastics at these events. Consider transport arrangements, energy use and recycling facilities for these events.
- Establish a plastic free community group for your community such as the scheme championed by Surfers Against Sewage <https://www.sas.org.uk/plastic-free-communities/>
- Undertake regular parish litter picks – involve scouts / school groups and other community groups and make it a fun event.