



CLIMATE EMERGENCY

RESOURCES PACK FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS - OVERVIEW

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Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose

Many District, Town and Parish councils throughout the country have responded to the serious threats due to climate change by declaring a climate and ecological emergency or by actively considering this.

In April 2019 Teignbridge District Council (**TDC**) unanimously declared a climate emergency with a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2025. At the time of writing 19 town and parish councils in the Teignbridge have declared an emergency and a large number of others who have not yet done so are considering it.

We hope that this pack offers resources to help councils and communities who are in either of these situations.

1.2 ACT's role and support available.

Action on Climate in Teignbridge (**ACT**) is a Community Interest Company which has been set up by volunteers to support TDC, town and parish councils and the wider community in Teignbridge in doing everything possible to reduce carbon emissions, protect the environment and achieve carbon neutrality.

On 24 September 2019 the Full Council at Teignbridge agreed to work with [ACT](#) as they develop into the single conduit for community engagement on Climate and Ecological matters.

We have a number of themed topic areas which are responsible for key aspects on how to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies.

These are:

- Built environment & energy
- Ecology
- Food, farming and forestry
- Procurement
- Public engagement
- Transport

We run a range of public events for local communities and councils in which we aim to help those communities to come up with their own responses to the climate and ecological emergency.

If you want us to put on an event for your community or Council, please [contact us](#).

Our experience is that events which involve both your council and the local community are most effective.

Further details and resources can be found on our [website](#).



Section 2. Declaring an Emergency

Some of the first questions asked for councils who have not yet declared are:

- Why is this an emergency?
- What will it mean if I declare one?
- How do I go about declaring one?
- Town and parish council powers are limited, so what difference will it make?

ACT has prepared an explanation of [why we have a Climate Emergency](#). It is important to have a reasonable understanding of this as it will inform your subsequent decisions and how you explain it to others in your community.

Declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency means you as a council will put these at the heart of every decision you make. It is a public declaration of your intention to act. You may also want to encourage other local councils and your District Council to do the same, if they haven't done so already.

Some guidelines on how to prepare the ground for such a declaration, are included below. Putting in the effort early on makes the process easier in the long term. An important part of this process is getting as many people on-board with the idea as possible.

We have provided pointers to what you could do under each of the local council's statutory responsibilities. Your role, however, can be widened to include other organisations and individuals in your community. We have included these suggestions in [What Can Local Councils do](#).

2.1 Guidelines on declaring an emergency

Ideally, make contact with as many people as possible, both within the council and the community. Get them involved and informed well before any meeting at which your Council formally debate/vote on the matter.

Let them know you are considering doing it. Use whatever communication means are available to you; word of mouth; your community Facebook pages; relevant websites; printed community magazines, leaflets or flyers displayed in libraries, primary schools, toddler groups, local shops and elsewhere in your area.

Community groups and organisations that have an interest in looking after our planet can be particularly helpful, groups like: Transition Groups; Climate & Ecology Groups; Wildlife Groups; Youth Clubs; Churches; Gardening Clubs; WI's; Mothers' Union etc. Their representatives and their help will make your job much easier - ask them for help!

Organise a public meeting which will get everyone up to speed with what you as a council intend to do and how you intend to deliver it. Only consider declaring a climate emergency if you have the support of your community.

The ideal format is a well-publicised meeting in your Village/Town Hall. An informal lay-out with tables, paper and pencils is good. Tea and cakes are very helpful and welcoming!

You can ask for ACT members to come and do an interactive presentation at the meeting, we have very good and encouraging feedback from councils who have chosen to do this.

You will also find resources on our website, including [examples](#) of other local council declarations. Talk to those near you if you need help, but make it your council's declaration not a copy of someone else's.



Section 3. Developing an Action Plan

The following describes how to prepare and produce an Action Plan. Even if you decide not to develop one and instead have a series of targets, initiatives and actions you and your community want to undertake, we recommend having a structured approach.

3.1 Involve your community

As in the section above, it is essential to follow the same guidelines on community involvement when preparing your Plan. You can refer to the section [Guidelines on declaring an Emergency](#) for some ideas.

Although this resource pack provides lots of suggested actions for your Plan, there are plenty more from within your own community. Asking them will help you identify what local people are concerned about, it will also make them more likely to be part of the solution.

3.2 How to define actions

There are many things you can do and many good sources of information for everyone. However, to make sure that actions you take are effective, we like to follow three common-sense steps. These guiding principles can be applied equally by organisations and individuals. They are a starting point which can be adapted to your individual circumstances.

Know the problems:

Evidence-based solutions can only be developed if we measure and understand how things work.

- Establish Carbon emissions from all sources, current and historical to determine and understand trends. Compare these to your Carbon Budget to stay well below 2°C.
ACT has provided a [high level breakdown of emissions](#) in your area. We can also help you assess Carbon emissions at a more detailed level using the [TECs Energy Assessment Pack](#) or other similar approaches.
- Analyse the totals to work out what the largest sources of Carbon emissions are. You can do that at all levels, starting with your area but ultimately drilling down to organisation, building and individual level.

Define your actions:

These may seem intuitive but are often not done or forgotten when identifying actions.

- Remaining within our Carbon Budget and protecting our natural environment need to be at the heart of every decision. These are where the emergency is!
- When considering actions in one area we need to be aware of any direct or indirect impacts in other areas. So, we must understand the environmental, economic and social impacts when considering actions to reduce emissions.
- Make sure you start with meaningful actions that you can deliver in a reasonable time. Because there is an emergency, they do need to be ambitious (e.g. 50% reduction in emissions within a year!), but also realistic for you and your community.
- You will also need to bind, motivate, utilise the knowledge and passion in your community. So including actions which are within everyone's abilities is important. Many small steps do make a difference.
- Whatever actions you define, include a clear outcome, a time-frame and a priority. You should also state what resources are needed to deliver them, ideally make sure you can actually find these.



Check actions are working:

As important as the first two steps.

- Measure the actual Carbon emissions and ecological impacts at every level, this must become routine.
- Make adjustments to your actions as soon as you realise that they are not working as expected. Your Action Plan is a live guide, it needs continuous care and attention!
- Share the knowledge and celebrate success.

3.3 Other things to consider

You may want to set up a group to start writing your Action Plan. Ideally the group should be made up of several councillors and a variety of interested community members from local organisations, these could be local people with special knowledge of key subjects and a keen interest.

What you put in your plan will vary with the size and geographic of your Town/Parish/community, your assets including the land and buildings that you own, lease and/or manage.

We can help you prepare and write your Action Plan. There are also some [useful examples](#) of other Plans to look at. Make sure you write your own, one you believe you can deliver. You can always adapt it as you learn more.

Please follow the links below for specific actions you may want to include in your Action Plan:

- [Built environment & energy](#)
- [Ecology, food, farming and forestry](#)
- Procurement (not yet available, please [contact ACT](#))
- [Transport](#)