



Environment and Climate Change Sub-Group report for High Wycombe Community Board meeting 10th February 2021

Cllr Sarfaraz Raja (Chair) and Cllr Alan Hill (Vice-Chair)

Proposal by Penelope Tollitt, Environment and Climate Change sub-group member

The Environment and Climate Change Sub-Group is proposing an implementation team – WE: Wycombe Environment. The note below sets out how WE might describe itself, with some back-ground information on pages 2 - 4.

WE: Wycombe Environment

Wycombe Environment is responding to the joint climate and wildlife emergencies. It is a group of volunteers who are willing to put in some time each week to help people take practical steps to reduce their carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, to increase opportunities for wildlife, and make other improvements to the environment.

Our purpose

- Cut carbon
- Boost biodiversity
- Enhance the environment

Our ethos

- Politically neutral, a broad church, welcoming everyone interested in our purpose
- Build motivation for action through action, explaining why it is an emergency, because we need to get action on climate, biodiversity and the environment to be 'normal' in society.
- Find practical solutions to problems, to see if we can, rather than think that we can't and not try...
- Persuasion is good, understanding is better, respect is essential, and to take what people do as a gift, not expect or demand, not 'ought' or 'should'
- Professional, not to come across as the 'green volunteers'.

Our status

WE is the implementation team of the High Wycombe Community Board's Environment and Climate Change Sub-Group, so covering the unparished area of High Wycombe

Our way of working

- Organising behind the scenes so that it is as easy as possible for local residents and businesses to make changes, using informal networks
- Progressing projects at the speed of the resources available to the group with priorities chosen based on
 - The commitment of group members to carry out necessary activities.
 - A 'common-sense' appraisal of their effectiveness in cutting carbon &/or boosting biodiversity &/or enhancing the environment, in that priority order
 - A 'common-sense' assessment of whether they fit the 'local' remit and are therefore deliverable by the group
- Working with relevant council services, schools, religious groups and others, town wide, or in specific areas
- Keeping notes of meetings to act as a record of the action taken, which will be available to the public.
- Use virtual meetings to co-ordinate once a week for no longer than 45 mins

Background information

Following discussion at Town Committee on 24th November, there is widespread agreement that helping 'to make things happen' is an important part of addressing the linked climate and biodiversity emergency, and that some group is needed to drive this. This will need to draw on volunteer effort, with the aim of stimulating wider action.

This paper sets out the background to the proposal which is summarised in the one page above.

Who would form this group? What would its 'status' be? Should it be inside the Council or a separate group?

There are already many voluntary groups tackling different aspects of the crises. A new group could be established, but it may lack credibility with the wider public. There is also a strong need for the new group to be a broad church.

The Buckinghamshire Council's motion on climate change [Meeting of Council Weds 15th July 2020 Item 9] identifies that proposals that contribute to net zero include:

- *Encouraging Community Boards to lead in their localities for carbon reduction.*
- *Working with partners and local communities to identify local schemes that can contribute to this ambition.*

Buckinghamshire Council has set up 16 community boards to help the Council respond to local needs by working in partnership with residents, town and parish councils, community groups, police and healthcare organisations.

The proposal therefore is that the existing Environment and Climate Change Sub-Group of the High Wycombe Community Board is the ideal vehicle for this action.

It would comprise those from the formal sub-group – councillors and members of the public – who want to contribute a few hours a week to addressing the ‘emergency’. Further members of the public would also be encouraged to join in order to help provide voluntary capacity, along with the BidCos and businesses, schools and religious groups and others interested in assisting.

As the ‘High Wycombe Community Board’s Environment Sub-Group’ is not a very snappy title, the short form ‘WE’ – Wycombe Environment is proposed.

In terms of resources, the key resource that is needed is time (see below for examples of activities). This would need to be through voluntary effort (not council officers). However, depending on what the activities are, some funding will almost certainly be required.

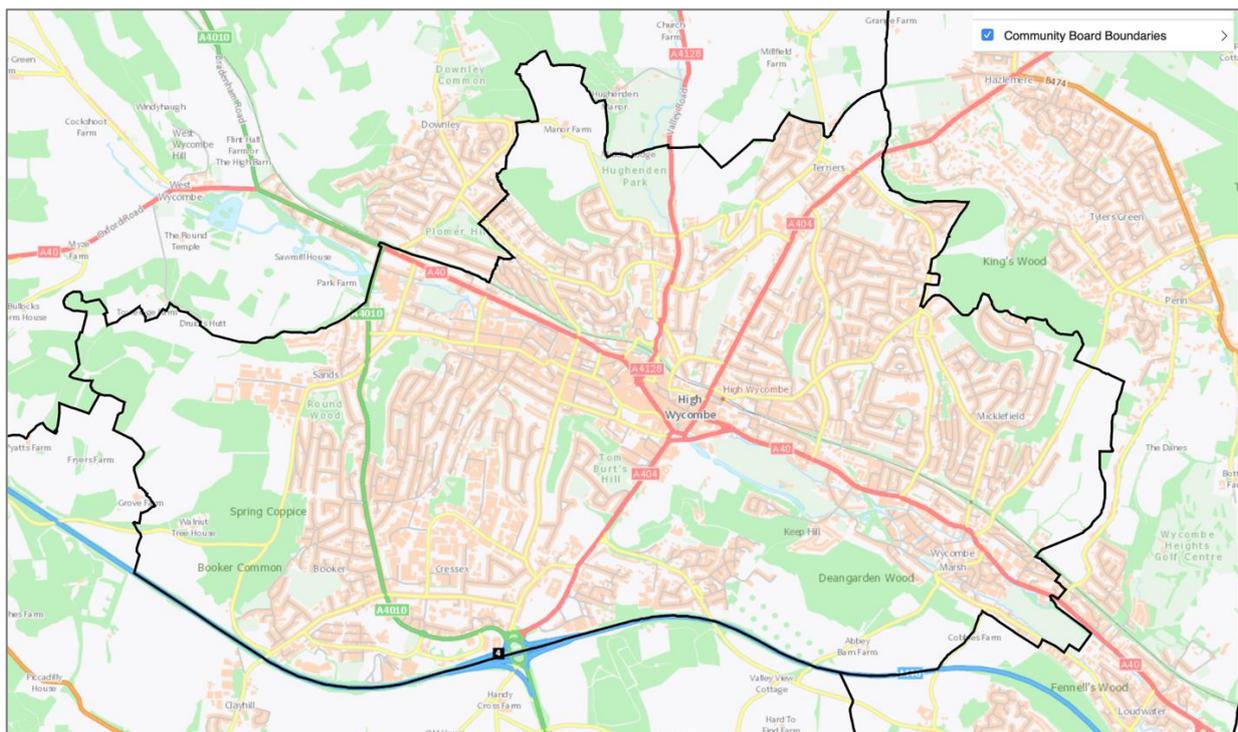
The Community Board has a delegated budget with which to address agreed local priorities and issues. Some of these resources may be able to be made available to the group, following a funding bid.

There is a long list of potential projects. The list below is indicative, and will be kept under review by the group.

- Solar High Wycombe – a company is offering 20% off installation of solar PV prices if they can get a good take up within a local area – they need local help to promote the scheme..
- Helping people understand the alternatives to gas boilers as there will be no installation after 2026.
- Local energy efficiency/retrofitting schemes
- Rewilding – working on changing areas of mown grass to wild flowers, linking to the work of Chiltern Rangers and Local Nature Recovery Networks and Friends of the Earth greenspace mapping
- Encouraging local residents to plant a flower pot or 1m² (or more!) of wild flowers, along a street, to allow bees to more easily travel
- Use the Woodland Trust ‘free tree’ opportunity to get small trees planted in many gardens
- Setting up a ‘tool share’ ‘library of things’ (or more than one) across the town
- Connect with teracycle on collection points for things that are hard to recycle
- Working with the council on waste collection issues in local areas
- Rewilding parts of our parks
- Establishing a network of electric car clubs across the whole town
- Installing electric charging points for taxis in the town centre.
- Working out routes for cycle super-highways (off road at first).
- More allotments and review current allotments – should we reduce them in size?

- Grey water recycling
- Rainwater collection for use in the garden.
- Help to communicate ‘facts’ to counter the ‘myths’ eg “recycling just goes into the general rubbish”
- Run competitions and award prizes
- And when we’ve done that, we can see what else we can do!

A plan showing the area covered by the High Wycombe Community Board is below.



Penelope Tollitt
Environment and Climate Change sub-group member