



Lewes Town Council Recognises a Climate Emergency

At its meeting on 11th April 2019 Lewes Town Council agreed to send out a statement recognising that there is a climate emergency and that action is needed at every level of government to limit the effects of climate breakdown. The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius are so severe that preventing this from happening must be one of our community's number one priorities. Declaring an emergency will help to raise the profile of the issue and leverage in the extra support we need to achieve the necessary carbon reductions.

Lewes Mayor (2018/19), Janet Baah, said *"It is now clear that the world has less than 12 years to switch away from fossil fuels to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Reducing energy use and switching to clean energy will also increase energy security, improve air quality, minimise fuel poverty, boost the local economy and provide jobs and training."*

The Town Council is proud of the steps it is already taking that will make a real difference. For instance a major refurbishment of Malling Community Centre will include a ground-source heat pump and an array of solar panels on the roof. These will considerably reduce its carbon footprint and act as an exemplar of what can be achieved, reinforcing the status of Lewes as a leading Transition Town in the UK and around the world. Following the student strikes demanding action on climate change the Mayor convened a meeting with representative families from local schools to look at how we can work together and support their campaigns.

The newly 'made' Lewes Neighbourhood Plan already has very strong policies on protecting and enhancing the natural environment upon which we depend, thus providing a basis upon which we can build. It was supported by some 92% of those who voted in the statutory Referendum so we know there is strong support in our town for further action to be taken.

Deputy Mayor (2018/19), Susan Murray, said *"Janet and I are pleased that council has recommended that the working party set up following our motion to Council about the UN Sustainability Goals should be reconvened by the next administration. It has already set a baseline of work the Town Council is already doing or helping to support and can now look at what is already happening in the wider community. It will be able to convene meetings, make recommendations on next steps for all of the goals, including climate change, and publicise progress."*

As well as increasing temperatures and more extreme weather, human activities are also having a massive impact on nature. The worldwide population of mammals, birds, fish and aquatic creatures, amphibians and reptiles have plunged by almost 60 percent since 1970. Current rates of species extinction are 100- to 1,000-times higher than the 'standard rate' of extinction. There are huge health impacts associated with fossil fuels, for example, air pollution causes 40,000 excess deaths every year in the UK and reduces average life span globally by 2 years.

Councillor Imogen Makepeace, who proposed the motion, said *"I am very pleased that the motion was passed unanimously, it shows that the Council is united on matters of great importance."*

There are many social, environmental and economic benefits in making low carbon living easier and the new norm. Lewes can and will lead the way.