



# Parish Council Climate Change Toolkit



This toolkit presents a mix of ideas and suggestions on what your town or parish council can do to engage communities with the issue of climate change and how to move towards a sustainable future.



# Climate change: what parish councils can do

## Overview

This toolkit presents a mix of ideas and suggestions on what your town or parish council can do to engage communities with the issue of climate change and how to move towards a sustainable future.

South Lakeland District Council has developed this toolkit in collaboration with partners including: Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT), Future Fixers, Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS), Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) and Cumbria CVS.

As part of the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership, South Lakeland District Council are working towards making Cumbria the first net-zero carbon county in the UK by 2037. South Lakeland's Climate Action team are specifically interested in how we can support and work collaboratively with parish and town councils towards the goal of carbon neutrality by 2037 for our communities.

Cumbria is already feeling the effects of climate change through increased flooding events, longer and hotter dry spells and storm events such as Storm Arwen in 2021. Our communities are particularly vulnerable to climate change due to local geography, lower incomes and rural isolation. Nonetheless, our communities are also extremely proud of where we live and have a high degree of interest in supporting the local area and reducing their environmental impact. We also know there are many people in local communities who are ready and willing to volunteer to support and improve their local area.

There are also many co-benefits to addressing climate change. Not only can we improve local air quality and the health of nature, but we can also introduce employment opportunities and reduce social inequalities. Improved energy efficiency in homes can reduce energy bills and active travel can reduce the strain on the NHS by addressing obesity amongst adults and children.

The following information can be used to guide your town or parish council to help your community work towards a more sustainable future.



## Introduction

Local people across South Lakeland are becoming more engaged and concerned about climate change and what they can do to help tackle it. We are experiencing warmer, drier summers and wetter winters with severe storms and flooding, such as those caused by Storm Arwen in 2021 and Storm Desmond in 2015. These posed serious environmental risks to our local towns and parishes, and the importance of responding to climate change was highlighted through the Kendal Citizens' Jury. Participants emphasised how much they care about where they live and gave a detailed response on what councils can do to minimise the risks to local people, businesses and livelihoods.

Many communities have declared a 'Climate Emergency' yet are struggling to know what to do next to tackle the often frightening issue of climate change.

## What your council can do

### Biodiversity and food

1. Review the green spaces that you maintain and see if there are any opportunities to introduce new biodiversity measures such as planting trees, wildflower meadows or installing bird boxes (see South Lakeland's Biodiversity Community Toolkit for advice <https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/media/8012/biodiversity-community-toolkit.pdf>).  
The [Woodland Trust](#) are donating trees to communities to help reach the UK's 2050 carbon net-zero target.
2. Consider limiting verge cutting to allow wildflowers to flourish and support pollinators and other wildlife; [Rusland Horizons Trust](#) have a number of projects underway that you can get inspiration from. Support is also available from organisations such as [Cumbria Wildlife Trust](#) and the [Woodland Trust](#).
3. Encourage and fund '[Cumbria in Bloom](#)' initiatives that aim to inspire people to work together in their own area and keep it litter free.
4. Organise a litter pick as a simple engagement activity within the community. [South Lakeland District Council](#) can lend litter-picking equipment including sticks, high visibility vests and specific blue litter pick bin bags. We can also arrange collection of them once full.
5. Encourage residents to rent an allotment space, which are available across South Lakeland: [Allotments](#). This can encourage people to reduce food waste and food miles. CAfS have more information on how to reduce your environmental impact through food consumption habits.



## Transport

1. Review any car parking spaces that you look after and consider whether there are opportunities for electric vehicle charge points. The [Energy Saving Trust](#) have support available on this if you wish to bid for funding in the ORCS or LEVI funds. If you have the funds available, the [government](#) also has an approved supplier list for their various schemes. If you are interested in hosting an Electric Vehicle Charging point at a site you own or lease contact [Climate.Action@southlakeland.gov.uk](mailto:Climate.Action@southlakeland.gov.uk) and SLDC can consider the site in potential funding applications as a member of the Cumbria EV infrastructure group, led by OnePublic Estate.
2. Speak to local [councillors](#) and [Cumbria County Council](#) on whether additional bike racks can be provided or whether any improvements could be made to walking and cycling routes to encourage active travel.
3. Consider starting a car share scheme to reduce the number of cars on the road and the associated emissions.

### Sustainable Staveley (SENS)

Formed in 2007, SENS promote action on sustainability in Staveley by looking at ways to reduce home energy use, explore the potential for hydro-electric schemes, promote cycling and walking and raise awareness of and take action on climate change.



Recent campaigns include Staveley Futures – a series of short films to get residents talking about Staveley’s future and resilience – and the Clean River Kent campaign which aims to tackle the poor water quality of the River Kent.

Connect via the website [www.sustainablestaveley.org.uk](http://www.sustainablestaveley.org.uk) and sign up to the mailing list for meetings at [senstaveley@gmail.com](mailto:senstaveley@gmail.com)

## Energy

1. Consider a source of community renewable energy. SLDC and CALC are supporting the New Electricity Bill to enable electricity generators to become local electricity suppliers. Whilst the Bill is relevant to everyone, it is of particular interest to rural communities as they have a great range of natural resources to harness including: wind for small scale turbines, becks that never dry-up to turn bore screws, gallons of livestock slurry for anaerobic digesters and land owners willing to explore solar farming as a diversification option. If your council is approached regarding a community energy scheme or project, SLDC will be able to assist you in evaluating the proposal.
2. Investigate possibilities for better insulation, flood protection and backup renewable electricity and heat supply in your community buildings. This can provide power and heat during extreme weather conditions as a refuge for those in need.

## Sustainable Duddon, Greening Levens, Arnside Parish Council and Kendal Town Council

These communities are following Ambleside's Action for a Future's example to roll out the Solar Made Easy project. They are working with CAFS to support residents to get solar PV panels installed on their homes and are looking for bigger sites that might be suitable for a community-own solar PV installation.

To find out more, visit

<https://cafs.org.uk/solar-made-easy/>



### Education and awareness

1. Consider whether your local councillors and clerks would benefit from [carbon literacy training](#), which increases your knowledge about solutions to the climate emergency and empowers you to take action. For a small fee, CAFS can run informative and interactive sessions in your communities.
2. Participate in phase 1 of the [Greening Campaign](#). This toolkit engages local people around taking action on climate change in an accessible and enjoyable way. South Lakeland District Council can support and fund you with this programme, which several other parish councils in South Lakeland have run, such as the [Cartmel Peninsula Greening campaign](#).
3. Ensure that parish and town council meeting agendas have a dedicated slot that encourages councils to think about the community and the environment that their parishioners live in. Ensure the focus is on positive action such as enhancing the local area and green spaces rather than focusing on what we need to stop doing.
4. When reviewing planning applications, consider the impact each development will have on the environment. Where possible, advocate for low carbon developments and a source of renewable energy generation. Remember your Neighbourhood Plan provides a legally robust opportunity for communities to produce positive and ambitious sustainable energy plans.



5. Support a local sustainability or resilience group or help interested individuals who come forward to form a working group or sub-committee of the council, possibly using village halls. This support could be in the form of:
  - a. Reviewing your parish or town council community grant fund criteria to ensure that local projects can benefit from grant funding, such as those promoting biodiversity, energy efficiency, waste reduction and enhancing resilience.
  - b. Promoting the group's activities via a parish newsletter or website.
  - c. Allowing the free use of meeting spaces and making better use of village halls and community centres. You can reduce social isolation by including older residents in reproducing how their community spaces were once used, such as by having coffee mornings, afternoon teas and swap shops. Involve the youngest members of these communities by having playgroups and mini discos so that each community has a vibrant centre of activity whilst making use of these valuable community assets.
  - d. Have a visible council presence at relevant activities and public meetings, using the opportunity to 'recruit' vacant council positions and to encourage 'environmentally-minded' people to contribute to local decision making.
6. Encourage the climate change conversation in your area by reflecting on the community response to recent adverse weather incidents such as Storm Arwen or local flooding episodes. See what worked well and what needs changing to reduce disruption and hardship if this happened again.

### **Peninsula Environmental Action Together (PEAT)**

PEAT is a sustainability group encompassing the nine parish areas on the Cartmel Peninsula. PEAT raise local awareness on climate change, tapping into local knowledge and skills to address key issues through simple actions.

Current campaigns include the Greening Campaign, which asks residents to sign-up to five carbon saving actions for one year, such as replacing light bulbs with LEDs or reducing showering time. The 'Seedlings' project encourages residents to trial growing their own food by providing an organic seed sharing service. The project brings together small groups of local residents to sow, grow and share seedlings.

Contact via the website [www.PEATsouthlakes.blogspot.com](http://www.PEATsouthlakes.blogspot.com) or email [peatmessages@gmail.com](mailto:peatmessages@gmail.com)



## How to get involved

1. Engage with organisations like CALC and ACT to find out more about what action you can take and learn from, and share experiences with other parish councils.
2. Learn about what support [Cumbria Action for Sustainability](#) (CAfS) can offer people to reduce their home energy consumption and their environmental impact, plus the support they can offer businesses. Share that information with people in your parish on your website and notice boards. You can also:
  - a. Sign up to CAfS newsletter to stay up to date and encourage others as well.
  - b. Signpost people to [CAfS website](#) for advice about carbon reduction and post a list of simple tips on the parish council website.
  - c. Calculate your carbon footprint. To calculate the Town Council's own carbon footprint (from energy use in buildings, travel etc.) you can use the business carbon calculator on the CAfS website: [How to use the CAfS carbon calculators - CAfS](#). For your area's carbon footprint, click on the link below and type in your town to generate a report [Impact | Community carbon calculator](#) (impact-tool.org.uk).
3. Find out who your local climate or greening champions are (councillors, members of the public and local groups) and find out what is happening in your own area. Harness their collective ideas and enthusiasm by building a network to share ideas and experience. This can be as simple as setting up an email or social media group to support communication or even inviting the local champions to parish meetings and local events.

## When to get involved

If you would like to liaise with other local councils who are already engaging in activities around climate change, or you wish to learn more, please contact SLDC's Climate Action team at [Climate.Action@southlakeland.gov.uk](mailto:Climate.Action@southlakeland.gov.uk). You may also choose to contact CALC at [office@calc.org.uk](mailto:office@calc.org.uk).

Once you have read the toolkit and potentially liaised with the Climate Action team and CALC, you may wish to commit to several actions. Please list your next steps here on what you are going to do to help tackle climate change in your parish.

<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
---

## Questionnaire

Many parish and town councils have already secured community volunteers to work on a variety of projects in their local area. One way of doing this is through an online survey to generate interest in schemes you may wish to run and to gain an idea on the skill set you already have available to you. Below are some sample questions that you can use.

### Are you concerned about climate change?

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not particularly concerned
- Not at all concerned

### Do you think nature is being protected and enhanced in your parish/town?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

### Which of these areas of environmental impact do you think is most important to address in your town/parish?

- Decrease in biodiversity and nature
- Energy (use of gas, oil and electricity)
- Transport (diesel and petrol vehicle emissions)
- Consumption and waste (amount of waste and lack of recycling)

### Would you like your town/parish council to do more to reduce the parish/town's environmental impact?

- Yes
- No
- They're already doing enough
- Not sure

If so please write any suggestions on what you would like to see from your town/parish council in relation to this:

.....
.....
.....

### Would you be willing to participate in activities/events in your town/parish about environment/climate change/biodiversity? If so, please provide a name and contact detail.

- Yes
- No

### What are your particular interests or types of activities that you would like to get involved in?

.....
.....
.....