

Newsletter

July 2023

Climate Crisis: From Inaction to Action?

In 2019 the climate crisis hit the headlines following the devastating 2018 IPCC report; Greta Thunberg started her climate strikes and Extinction Rebellion's demonstrations attracted thousands. Days later the UK parliament declared a climate emergency, implicitly recognising the validity of the protests.

At the same time, local authorities – including Stroud District Council – were also declaring climate emergencies and committing themselves to local action. Chalford became one of the first parish councils to declare a climate emergency and pledged 'to do everything within its powers to make Chalford Parish Community carbon neutral by 2030'. A small group was set up that became ChalCAN.

The remit of ChalCAN is for local practical action: raising local awareness, facilitating small reductions in emissions across the parish, and making noticeable improvements to biodiversity. However, we quickly realised we had no hope of making the parish anywhere near carbon neutral. While the UK as a whole can become net zero (and enjoy cheaper fuel bills as a result) it requires government commitment to make it happen.

So in this edition of our newsletter, we focus on some of the action groups pressing for changes in policy and practice on carbon emissions/climate change. Some local residents explain what they are doing and why (but note these are not necessarily endorsed by ChalCAN itself). We hope you might take the opportunity to read about the different groups and also take action in a way that you think might be most effective.



Supporting UK Action Groups: Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (Hilary)

*I am a regular supporter of **Greenpeace**, which for many years has been at the forefront of national campaigns to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment. You can donate regularly or one-off specific projects, join their mailing lists to keep informed, sign their petitions and/or help with fund raising.*

Greenpeace works both in the UK and internationally and their current campaigns include

- *A demand that fossil fuel companies stop their involvement in new fossil fuel projects and repair and pay for the damage they have caused.*
- *Reversing the UK government's ban on onshore wind farms*
- *A ban on private jets*
- *A ban on proposed deep-sea mining*
- *Pressure on the UK government to help secure a Global Plastics Treaty*
- *Policies to reduce consumption of meat and dairy produce, support to farmers to produce food more sustainably, and a ban on the import of animal feed that is driving deforestation.*

There's a Stroud Greenpeace group that you can contact at stroudglosgreenpeace@gmail.com.

***Friends of the Earth** have a similar range of projects and often focus specifically on enhancing and protecting environmental biodiversity.*

Non-violent civil disobedience: Just Stop Oil (Andy)

Just Stop Oil (JSO) has made the headlines recently. Their most high-profile tactic is interrupting big sporting events. They also stage slow marches in London, carrying banners along main roads, until the police decide they are causing “more than minimal disruption”, and move the protesters off the road under threat of arrest.

Of course, groups have campaigned to stop global warming for decades. The tactic of non-violent civil disobedience used by JSO, Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain came from groups such as the civil rights movement and the suffragettes. Some object to the disruption, but it’s undeniable that they attract a lot of publicity and keep the climate issue ‘live’.

But what is JSO’s message? Their demand is that the government must not licence any new oil and gas developments. With the proper investments, the UK can become fully carbon neutral, but right now more than three quarters of our energy comes from greenhouse-gas-producing fossil fuels. That needs to fall to near zero as soon as renewables are in place. Opening more oil wells would mean the UK will fail to play its part in reining in catastrophic climate change.

Despite the bad press, JSO is getting their message out. No other methods seem to have an impact. Obviously, the disruption is annoying to those affected - but when you compare that with the annoyance of having your subsistence farm turn to desert, or losing everything in a catastrophic flood, it’s not that intolerable.

I have been on some slow marches with JSO and was struck by how organised it is. After a day of training, you feel ready to step out onto the road with your trusted group. Abuse from drivers is expected, but I was surprised by the level of support: groups clapping as we passed, cars tooting and giving a thumbs up, and shouts of support. If a fraction of our passive supporters joined us on the streets, the government would have to listen.

Lord Deben – chair of the Climate Change Committee – said recently that the government “should learn” from JSO. Climate activists will never be popular; we will not be able to stop the world heating up to dangerous levels, but we might make a difference and we will be able to look our children in the eye and say that we tried.



Writing to key individual and organisations (Peter)

I make a point of writing emails and submitting questions to relevant groups; it keeps the issue of climate change and sustainability active. MPs of all political persuasions do take notice of their mailboxes, and if you ask them to raise a concern with a minister, they are obliged to act. You might ask our local MP **Siobhan Baillie** to question whether government action to cut carbon emissions is adequate. Be as specific as possible. **The WWF have a good briefing sheet.**

I have also regularly sent in written questions to **Gloucestershire County Council** to press for action on highways, transport (buses, cycling etc), and the answers are published. Our GCC Councillor, Chloe Turner reports that these questions are taken seriously and can impact on policy and practice. You can also question **Stroud District Council** about matters such as housing and recycling.

Legal Action (Marianne)



One way I try to influence policy and practice to promote climate friendly action is by supporting legal remedies. Several organisations are pursuing these cases, including:

The Good Law Project (GLP), who together with **Friends of the Earth** (FoE) and **ClientEarth**

(CE) are challenging the government's net zero plans. Last year the High Court ruled that the Government's strategy didn't meet their obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008. The Government was compelled to publish a new strategy, but the GLP, FoE and CE consider this also breaches the Act and are again taking the Government to court. If you'd like to help hold the government to account, you can donate at <https://tinyurl.com/3dp38nte>.

Another organisation pursuing legal remedies that I support is '**Stop Ecocide**', who work with a growing global network across all sectors, towards making ecocide an international crime. 'Ecocide' means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts. This would put Ecocide on a par with existing crimes against humanity recognised by the International Criminal Court. Recently the European Parliament officially declared its support to include ecocide crimes into the EU's Directive on protection of the environment, and a number of countries are also taking steps at national level (e.g. France, Venezuela, Brazil, Spain). The business sector recognises that these steps are 'a game-changer', meaning companies need to protect their long-term interests and profitability by ensuring their actions do not harm the environment – of great significance for the oil companies for example.

Some other things you consider:

Action at your Workplace

*If you're in employment, ask questions at your workplace about their policy and practice re carbon emissions – even better discuss with colleagues and jointly make suggestions; there are some great resources at **Work for Climate**. For schools and colleges there are lots of ideas on the **Friends of the Earth** site and at the **British Council**, and there is a national project **Sustainability and Environmental Education** based in Stroud*

Consumer Power

Use your consumer power to question major firms (especially any supermarkets, energy suppliers, delivery firms for which you are a customer) about their carbon emission reduction record and plans, supply chains, delivery and packaging.

Don't forget – we're all part of the problem – let's all be part of the solution!



If you would like to get involved with ChalCAN or be put in touch with one of the action groups (Biodiversity, Food & Waste, Energy or Transport) please contact info@chalcan.org.uk
Do browse our website chalcan.org.uk, follow us on Facebook and/or Instagram @chalford.can

PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS & FAMILY