**Guidance: Climate Change, the potential environmental impact of your project or service, and how you might address**

**Introduction**

At the encouragement of the local community and in line with actions taken by other public bodies, Chichester District Council (CDC) declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019. The Council has set itself targets for its own operational emissions, but a wider [action plan](https://www.chichester.gov.uk/climatechange#declaration) for how it can help tackle the emergency through its decisions and actions has subsequently been developed.

When considering the Council’s Priorities and Principles for Grant Funding, it was felt that those seeking funding from the Council should be expected to demonstrate a similar commitment to ensure that environmental impacts of the proposed project or service are avoided or recognised and mitigated.

This document has been written as an aid to considering what environmental impacts your proposal has, and how those might be avoided or compensated for through other activity.

**A refresher on climate change**

Climate change is a complex scientific subject, and our understanding is evolving all the time. If you want a bite-sized refresher, see this [BBC video](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24021772).

As the video explains, greenhouse gases cause global warming which in turn causes other aspects of the climate to change. A major source of greenhouse gas is energy use. Almost everything we do involves energy consumption, so climate change can be factored into almost every decision.

Just as money comes in different currencies, greenhouse gases are counted in different ways because sometimes it is too difficult to standardise or convert to one “currency”. We don’t expect you to calculate your carbon footprint but want to help you understand the different factors. So, here is a quick explanation of these different “currencies”.

When a fossil fuel is burnt, it mainly produces carbon dioxide. Other greenhouse gases are emitted and while they are in much smaller quantities, they are more powerful that carbon dioxide, so we must account for them. You may see in reports, or the specifications of equipment or other purchases, that the total global warming effect has been given; other greenhouses are given an “equivalent”, so for example a tonne of nitrous oxide has the equivalent global warming potential of 265 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Trees and other plants take in carbon dioxide in order to grow, but it does not stay as carbon dioxide within the plant. It is converted to other carbon-based chemicals. When the plant dies and rots, the carbon is released as a greenhouse gas. Similarly, there are rocks and dissolved minerals that contain carbon and are crucial to our understanding of climate change.

**How to factor climate change mitigation into your project, service or organisation**

What follows is a series of questions to help you spot when you can assist with considering climate change in your work. It will be easier to make a bigger impact, if you start thinking about climate change at the earliest stage.

***Does my decision/policy/project involve…***

***…transportation?***

The first question is what transportation is currently involved in your operation. People have become used to not travelling so much for work since Covid-19, but goods are still travelling long distances. Can local goods be sourced instead?

Secondly, if you are using vehicles, are you replacing cars and vans with electric vehicles? A business case should look at all costs over the period you intend to use the vehicle, including fuel and servicing, not just initial purchase or lease costs.

Thirdly, if the new project is going to lead to travel by staff/volunteers/customers/clients, can this be by cycling, walking or electric vehicles? Are you close to public transport links (or moving closer to those?) Do you have policies in place for staff or volunteers to incentivise? If your project is going to lead to new travel patterns for your team, has this been discussed. They may not have been right for staff/volunteers when they joined, but they may be right now.

***…use of resources – anything from furniture to food, water to wheelie bins?***

The first question to ask is whether something is really needed? Could we use or adapt something that we already have? If we do need to buy something, is it possible to buy second-hand? If we cannot do that, then go for the option made from recycled material. That gives value to the material in the Council’s recycling collections and helps to create new markets for recycling.

Water is a special resource. It can be in short supply in the South-east of England due to the high density of population and changing patterns of rainfall. If you are refurbishing a building or building a new one, choose water efficient equipment.

***…land?***

If you are responsible for land or buildings, there may be the opportunity to generate electricity and heat renewably and there are loans and grants to help. This may mean solar thermal or solar electric (PV) arrays, wind turbines, or less common forms of generation. This should lead to reduced energy bills. Please consider even small PV panels – the Council’s parking machines are powered by PVs for example.

Where heat is being generated renewably, you may be able to access financial help from the government. There is also the possibility to store electricity in batteries, then you can be using your own “free” electricity when you’re not generating (e.g. in the evening). Alternatively, if you are generating more electricity than you use, you could receive an income for supplying the national grid with your surplus.

Finally, please consider planting wherever possible on the land that you are responsible for. All plants act as stores of carbon, but they vary in the length of that storage, hence the focus on trees that live for many years. If a tree is not suitable, what about a hedge which also acts as a carbon store?

***…energy (electricity, fuel) being used in a building?***

Invariably the answer will be yes. So, if you are buying goods or services, ask about energy efficiency and options to reduce energy use e.g., automatic on/off switching for lighting. There may be other sources of funding (loans or grants) that can help with any extra costs. If you are going to be using more electricity, then it’s often worth considering (for your long-term sustainability) where is that electricity coming from – can you secure a greener tariff, or look at generating your own?

We are used to electricity powering lighting, computers, etc., but increasingly we will be using electricity as a heating source as more electricity is generated by wind or solar power. The government is promoting heat pumps that operate using electricity. These collect heat from the ground or air outside a building using a liquid. This is compressed to raise the temperature of the liquid. The heat is then transferred to the building’s heating and hot water system. Although electricity is used to collect the heat, the heat pump is super-efficient, so you get out three or four times the amount of energy you use in electricity. There are also other electric based heat sources.

***…using third parties?***

If you are developing something new, then it may be that you are already using someone else to advise you – this might be a professional (e.g. an architect or a contractor) or someone in your business or organisation with some relevant knowledge. We are encouraging you to ask them to consider “greener” options – if you haven’t specified this, they might have assumed you’re not interested in those options. This might be how something is designed, delivered, or the choice of materials or equipment. They can certainly help with some of the more complicated considerations, for example if a piece of equipment is more expensive up front but will save you in energy usage over its lifetime.

**What if we can’t make any changes?**

The Council’s new funding principle is *“How have you designed the project to minimise its climate impact?”* and the Grants and Concessions Panel will now be looking for projects to demonstrate this has been considered. However, in making a funding application there may be other considerations that have encouraged you to make your application around something very specific (e.g. the purchase of new equipment) and you conclude that this is essential despite its climate impact. In those instances, we would encourage applicants to present evidence of other activity within your organisation which could be suggested to mitigate the climate impacts of what is proposed. Maybe there are other recent planned improvements in your organisation that you could highlight that would compensate, you are introducing new Environmental Policies, or you are participating in an offsetting scheme e.g. tree planting.

The Council is confident that any application should be able to answer this question, so we would strongly discourage any suggestion that this does not apply to your project. However, the Grants and Concessions Panel have a good understanding of the capacities of small to medium businesses, charities and other community groups, and the expectations here will be on a par with the scale of your organisation and the size of the proposed project – the consideration is minimising your impact rather than tackling the global issue.

**What to do next**

As stated elsewhere on our Grants pages on the Council’s website, it is essential that you discuss your proposal with the relevant Funding Adviser before submitting your application. If you have particular concerns about your ability to meet this principle, then that may form part of your conversation. The Funding Advisers are not specialists in reducing climate impact, so if you are unsure of how you might adapt your project then there are some other potential sources of advice or guidance:

**Weblinks**

A report from the National Lottery on climate change action by community groups:

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/insights/community-action-for-the-environment>

Some guidance aimed at Parish and Town councils:

[Guidance for Parish Councils](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/218799/tackling-climate-change.pdf)

Energy saving advice for small to medium organisations:

<https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/steps-to-energy-saving-tools-for-smes>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sme-guide-to-energy-efficiency>

<https://zerocarbonbusiness.uk/>

Guide that signposts onto funding sources for energy

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-businesses/find-business-energy-efficiency-grants-and-schemes>

Transport – advice on going electric

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/transport/advice-to-smes/>

Renewable energy options

<https://www.cse.org.uk/local-energy>

Carbon calculator for products and supply chains specifically for construction sector – useful if you are planning building work

<https://www.supplychainschool.co.uk/topics/sustainability/energy-and-carbon/>