

## Declaring an Ecological Emergency

**Motion put forward to FPC for resolution at the 9th November 2020 Parish Council Meeting by Tania Pascoe and Ben Walters**

We would like to put a motion forward for Freshford Parish Council to declare an Ecological Emergency.

Wording for approval:

The Council has declared an Ecological Emergency in response to the escalating threat to wildlife and ecosystems. The declaration recognises the essential role nature plays in society and the economy and provides a statement of intent to protect our wildlife and habitats, enabling residents to benefit from a green, nature rich environment.

In declaring an Ecological Emergency, the Council has made a number of commitments, including:

- resisting the destruction of habitats through planning policy and development management
- identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration
- collaborating with the community to improve ecological literacy and encourage greater biodiversity, tree-planting and management
- working with partners locally and regionally to drive coordinated leadership and collaborative action

## Background

This declaration would complement the Climate Emergency Declaration through an understanding that biodiversity is in a state of dangerous decline and this will be further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. In addition approximately 1/3 of net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions can come from nature based solutions (e.g. healthy soils, tree planting and habitat restoration).

The two issues are interlinked and any interventions, mitigations and solutions to both crisis will overlap.

## Law & policy

1. B&NES unanimously declared an Ecological Emergency in July 2020
2. Government policy <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-biodiversity-and-ecosystems/2010-to-2015-government-policy-biodiversity-and-ecosystems> states:

### Your duty to have regard for conserving biodiversity

You should be able to show your duty to have regard for conserving biodiversity if you have identified ways to integrate biodiversity when you:

- develop policies and strategies and put them into practice
- manage the planning system

- manage:
    - your land and buildings
    - woodlands and nature reserves
    - gardens, parks and public open space
    - community amenities eg sports grounds and cemeteries
    - waste and pollution
    - energy and water
    - wood and plant products
    - develop infrastructure ie roads, buildings or flood defences
    - make decisions about procurement
    - implement economic, environmental and social programmes
3. Legally councils must:  
 “have regard to the protection of biodiversity in carrying out their functions...”  
[Good Councillor’s guide 2018, p18](#)

**What is an Ecological Emergency? And how is it different from a Climate Emergency?**

The Climate Emergency recognises the need to take urgent action to reduce and reverse the levels of carbon and greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere from human activity. This is causing global temperatures to soar and increased extreme weather events such as flooding, droughts and storms. The UK government became the first major economy to set a legally binding target of [net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050](#). B&NES has set a target of [2030](#).

Both The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UK Government Climate Change Committee agree that while reducing carbon is a top priority, also increasing natural capacity to absorb carbon is equally essential.

The Ecological Emergency responds to the manmade destruction of our natural environment and ecosystems and to the negative effects of climate change on these essential ecosystem services (clean water, clean air, food, flood protection and wellbeing). The survival of our society and economy depends on healthy natural systems.

Urbanisation, intensive farming, pollution, loss of habitat, use of pesticides (even in home gardens), road traffic, loss of hedges and trees – all these factors and more are driving the decline. There is scientific agreement that urgent and unprecedented conservation action is needed to make the transformational changes required.

**What does this mean for Freshford?**

There is already a will from the community to repair / enhance the nature and wildlife of our Parish. This can be seen in the Tynning Proposal, Woodland Trust tree planting in neighbouring Westwood and work on Ash dieback (an issue exasperated by the effects of climate change) to name a few.

Small but important steps such as researched grass mowing regimes, tree and bulb planting will help us support a more resilient environment. This declaration will also support and guide our planning and wider decision making, ensuring they are future proof and adequately responsive to the challenge.