

Brundall Parish Council

Understanding our Impact on the Environment

The Nation (UK) is embarking on a collective journey to achieve Carbon Net-Zero by 2050. Broadland District Council and its committees are also starting this journey and informing residents on its aspirations. Broadland District Council Environmental Policy States:

“We are ideally placed to lead by example and ensure our own activities and the services we provide protect and enhance the local environment. We will also promote environmental awareness within the community and work with local community groups to achieve environmental change”.

Brundall Parish Council supports national and local Government objectives. As a key focus area, Brundall Parish Council is embarking on its own journey to make positive steps to reduce Brundall's carbon footprint.

The first stage in this process is to internally audit the Parish Council's operations to find ways it causes carbon emissions and explore ways to reduce them.

This document will focus on the findings of Stage 1, broken down into the following areas:

- Energy Usage
- Transport
- Land Management
- Sourcing and Procurement of Service Providers

Energy Usage

Energy usage is an obvious starting point and as a Parish Council, energy usage has the potential to be substantial. Through making some adjustments and forward planning, this is an area the Council can look to improve and consolidate going forward.

- Street Lighting
 - Street lighting accounts for a reported 5% of global carbon emissions. It is estimated that if globally all street lights were switched to LED could save over 1,400 million tonnes of CO₂ (The Climate Group). Brundall Parish Council has already committed to all street lights being low energy LED lights and has recently switched energy suppliers to a 100% renewable tariff. By formally adopting a resolution to always choose a 100% renewable supplier, the council can limit the carbon impact of street lighting.
- Council owned buildings

- With the upcoming development of the Sports Hub, there is a decision to be made around energy usage and the potential to generate electricity. Adopting a policy to use renewable suppliers would mitigate the impact of energy usage on the site. Further improvements could be made if there was a means of energy generation included within the plan.
- Council operated/utilised facilities
 - The Parish Council office and meetings also use energy. The office is open for a short time during the day and during that time computers are used and lighting and heating. Most meetings are now held face to face in either the church rooms or the Memorial Hall. All efforts should be made within these meetings and the office to keep energy usage down. Unnecessary printing of documents should be discouraged alongside ensuring lighting and heating are only used when needed. Zoom meetings are used for some committees. It is estimated that two people on Zoom for one hour emits between 150-1,000 grams of carbon dioxide (Purdue University). To give some context, an estimate from Exeter University reports a small car would produce 170g per mile.

Transport

Carbon dioxide emissions from transportation in the United Kingdom totalled 97.2 million metric tons in 2020. (Statistica) While this was a 20% drop on the previous year this was impacted by the global pandemic. In 2019 transport accounted for 27% of carbon emissions in the UK, of this 91% was road transport. Cars and taxis made up 61% of all road transport emissions. (UK Government)

Brundall Parish Council should encourage councillors, where possible, to walk or cycle to meetings and appointments. Where this is not an option, lift sharing is recommended. Where long journeys are required, consider a digital opportunity to conduct the meeting but remember there is a carbon cost to online meetings.

Land Management

Brundall Parish Council is accountable for maintaining and/or owning several areas of land within the village. Decisions made on how these areas of land are managed also provides opportunities for the council to lower carbon emissions.

There is currently a trial where a reduction in grass cutting areas that are parish owned or leased to promote rewilding in Brundall. This rewilding can help in two ways. Firstly, improved biodiversity can assist in carbon capture. This is reduced upon cutting as the material releases stored carbon back into the atmosphere when rotting. Secondly, by using less carbon in the management of the areas. The current contractors use petrol mowers, by cutting less, emissions are lower.

The council works actively with the Broadland Tree Network to build on recent tree planting in Brundall. This partnership also helps with the management of the trees to

ensure they reach their healthy potential. A tree can absorb approximately 1 tonne of CO₂ in its lifetime (carbonfootprint.com). If a tree dies, then it can release that carbon as it decays or if burnt. Planting trees and ensuring they remain healthy is a key objective of the council and if continued, can help to offset some carbon emissions. It is important to remember that it takes time for a tree to reach maturity. It is estimated a mature tree removes approximately 24kg of CO₂ per year.

One area for discussion is the use of burning on Parish Council land. At the time of writing this report, the Allotments currently allow bonfires. Some treetops are also burnt while the land is managed. Burning vegetation releases the carbon absorbed during its lifetime into the atmosphere as well as other pollutants. Allowing vegetation to decay naturally is recognised to release less carbon than burning.

Sourcing and Procurement

The council, in providing its services, sources and procures both products and services.

By ensuring products used by the council, such as office supplies, are from recycled or sustainable sources will support a reduction in the impact the council and its activities has on the environment.

When looking to procure service providers, quotes are always received by more than one supplier. A decision is made on which supplier to work with. Working with sustainable contractors and service providers is another way to ensure that there is a smaller impact on the environment.

Taking this into consideration when choosing an energy supplier, construction, landscaping and any other supplier could play a big part of the Parish Council's journey to Net-Zero.

Conclusions

Brundall Parish Council has already started to make progress in moving towards a more carbon neutral position. As indicated in this report, measures taken to only allow low energy LED street lighting and renewable energy is a good start. However, there are always ways in which improvements can be made.

This report is the first step towards encouraging the residents of Brundall to make conscious choices to reduce their carbon footprints. By ensuring the council is in a position of carbon neutrality (or on a path to achieve carbon neutrality) puts it in a stronger position to then take forward policies which educate and inform residents.

Below is a summary of the recommendations in this report.

- Resolve to ensure that all utilities contracts that the council enters into comes from renewable sources only. This includes street lighting and any buildings that the council is responsible for.

- Review the possibility to generate energy on Parish Council land. For example The Sports Hub, Land East etc.
- Ensure all lighting and heating is energy efficient and only used when needed.
- Only print what is necessary and target a paperless office, whilst ensuring all possible waste is recycled
- Promote walking and cycling for parish council meetings and appointments, look to lift share when cars are necessary and use online meetings where appropriate.
- Preserve, maintain, and develop existing green spaces as carbon sinks.
- Continue to trial reduced grass cuttings and review if possible to make them permanent.
- Work with contractors to see if there are ways to reduce carbon emissions from land management processes.
- Create a tree planting plan for the village, working alongside the Broadland Tree Network to locate opportunities to plant trees to act as a carbon sink.
- Resolving to include sustainability as a key consideration for suppliers to the Parish Council
- Resolving to adopt relevant policies to support sustainable land management, tree planting/management and rewilding.
- Review the policy on bonfires on parish council land.

Stage 2 of the plan will include but not be limited to:

- Assessing the current status of the air quality around Brundall as well as our carbon footprint plus any other relevant metrics, before measuring and reporting on an ongoing basis.
- Promoting sustainable alternatives for transport through the village
- Promoting sustainability to residents of Brundall
- Sharing and learning best practice from our neighbouring Parish Councils, Broadland District Council, Norfolk County Council and other relevant stakeholder groups.

This will enable us to build on plans to encourage and assist residents to move towards carbon neutrality over time in line with Government targets and deliver a more sustainable village for future generations.