



Ross-on-Wye Town Council

Sustainability Policy

1. GENERAL

Ross-on-Wye Town Council has pledged to take steps in all its activities to behave responsibly towards the environment and declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Council recognises that the quality of the local environment is a vital ingredient in contributing to the quality of life for residents and visitors to the town. It also recognises that by improving the local environment this will make a contribution towards improved health, better social cohesion, economic prosperity and a diverse and rich natural environment.

The Council will work with and support the aims of the Climate Change & Eco Emergency Working Group to develop policies and an action plan.

2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The main pieces of relevant legislation are:

The Water Act 2003.

This Act places a duty on all public bodies to take into account, where relevant, the desirability of conserving water supplied or to be supplied to Council premises.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006. This Act gives specific powers to town and parish councils to tackle climate change. The Act places an obligation on town and parish councils to improve their energy efficiency.

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. This Act extends the statutory offence of dropping litter and enables town and parish councils to authorise officers to serve fixed penalty notices for the litter offence under section 88 of the 1990 Environmental Protection Act; gives town and parish councils the power to issue fixed penalty notices for graffiti and fly-posting offences; and allows town and parish councils to create offences relating to the control of dogs and replaces the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996.

Duty of Care (Waste). The Duty of Care covers any business that produces or disposes of waste and requires the business to ensure that any waste produced is handled safely and in accordance with the law.

The Environment Act 2021 – which aims to improve air and water quality, protect wildlife, increase recycling, and reduce plastic waste.

Water Framework Directive. The purpose of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is to establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, estuaries, coastal waters, and groundwater. The River Wye is covered by this directive, which requires all WFD water bodies to reach ‘good ecological status’ by 2027.

3. SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

Ross-on-Wye Town Council is committed to action in the following, specific areas:

Water

Water will be used efficiently for Council activities and on Council premises.

In the Council's parks and green spaces planting schemes and technology that minimise the need for watering will be used, e.g., planting drought-resistant species and using mulches and water gel crystals.

The Council is committed to the conservation and habitat of the River Wye that runs through Ross-on-Wye, recognising this as an important role in the wildlife. It will be an active partner along with the Wye Valley AONB and other stakeholders.

The Council's Planning Sub-Committee will consider issues of water use, water run-off and water pollution when making recommendations on planning applications. The Council will support the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)¹ in new developments and redevelopments to reduce flooding risks, manage stormwater, minimise diffuse pollution from surface water runoff and help maintain groundwater levels.

Development

The Council has worked with the community to produce the Ross Neighbourhood Development Plan, and the policies for sustainable planning that it contains. We commit to promoting the Plan as a blueprint for future development, upholding, as far as we are able, the policies within it and updating it regularly.

The Council's Planning Sub-Committee will consider NDP policies, sustainability, environmental impact, and biodiversity when commenting on planning applications and also when developing or redeveloping any of its own buildings. The Council will lead on consultations relating to the Local Planning Authority's Local Plans.

The Council will lobby on the need for developing sustainable drainage in Ross-on-Wye, necessitated by the town's topography and urban development, in order to mitigate flooding.

The Council will also press for the use of planning obligations (section 106 agreements) to promote sustainable development and mitigate environmental impacts resulting from developments.

Climate Change and Energy Conservation

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and is committed to reducing its carbon footprint. It believes that by aligning itself with 'green' technologies it can promote sustainable energy use in the community.

The Council will monitor its energy use and improve upon energy efficiency within its buildings by adopting energy-saving measures, e.g., purchasing electrical equipment with good energy ratings.

The Council will increase awareness of energy efficiency amongst employees and encourage energy-conserving behaviour, e.g., switching off lights that aren't needed and switching off equipment rather than using standby.

The Council has an active policy of using sustainable supplies of energy to power its premises and will promote the purchase and installation of renewable technologies such as P.V. panels at appropriate sites.

Waste

The Council will minimise its waste production wherever possible, by reducing, repairing, and reusing resources, and by recycling the waste its activities produce, where facilities exist. Rubbish will be disposed of safely, following the correct procedures, and only licensed contractors will be used to deal with hazardous wastes.

It will support and promote schemes to cut the amount of household waste generated and ending in landfill and will encourage households to recycle and compost.

The Council will incorporate the possibility of pollution in its risk assessment procedure and will use this system to minimise the risks and implement mitigation strategies.

Urban Environment

The Town Council will work both directly, and with town partners, to support and where appropriate undertake specific highways works that contribute to the improvement of the town environment. These include maintaining public footpaths and rights of ways, litter collections, graffiti removal and emptying dog and waste bins.

The Council will work with relevant partners on the issue of town centre regeneration by supporting initiatives to improve the economic prosperity of the town.

The Council recognises the importance of trees and biodiversity within the urban environment. It will protect all trees on its land, and work with others to establish and protect wildlife corridors.

Transport

The Council will continue to encourage sustainable transport systems, promoting public transport and non-polluting modes of transport within the town, such as cycling and walking. The Council will support the Walkers Are Welcome project as part of this.

As a medium-term goal, the Council will investigate sustainable, minimally polluting forms of fuel for its vehicles.

Biodiversity and Green Spaces

The council in 2019 resolved to: review its policies and operations to ensure maximum protection for and promotion of wildlife and biodiversity; and establish a working group of councillors and community representatives, including young people, to develop an action plan for a zero-carbon and wildlife-rich Ross-on-Wye.

The Council will, wherever possible, consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity in all its activities, but particularly with regard to land management. The Council will seek to manage green spaces in a manner that promotes and protects biodiversity, wildlife corridors and trees. This includes the management of invasive plants on its land and using planting schemes that exclude species known to be invasive in the Heart of England.

The Council is committed to ensure any use of pesticides is done in an environmentally responsible manner and to identify and promote environmentally friendly alternatives, including, where appropriate, schemes to allow vegetation on path edges to grow wild.

The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance the quality of Ross-on-Wye's natural environment and open spaces and to make open spaces accessible wherever possible.

The Council will support campaigns to limit emissions of pollutants to the River Wye along its entire length. We will manage the riverbanks that we own to mitigate pollution and promote habitats as far as is possible.

Sustainable Procurement

Council procurement is continually assessed for sustainability implications, with the intention of purchasing renewable/recycled, environmentally low-impact and recyclable materials, so long as the requirements for best value and quality are met.

Where possible, the Town Council will use local suppliers to encourage economic growth within the town. Where supplies are bought in, Fairtrade will be supported and encouraged as part of its commitment to the town in its aspirations to renew its Fairtrade status.

It will not support the use of Single Use Plastic items.

It will support and promote Markets selling local goods and produce, recognising that sourcing materials goods, services are produced locally, where feasible, will reduce carbon emissions resulting from transporting produce.

Awareness, Lobbying & Partnerships

The Council will promote awareness of, and information on, environmental issues within the community. It will act as a voice for local environmental concerns to those agencies given statutory powers to tackle problems.

The Council will continue to engage in partnership working with the local community, organisations, and other tiers of local government in partnerships on conservation projects.

The Council will also support other groups involved in environmental work in the town.

4. SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

The services being delivered by the Town Council will not be detrimental to the quality of life for people living, working, and visiting the town.

The Town Council will monitor and report to Herefordshire Council poor workmanship on the roads to help prevent accidents.

The Town Council will encourage road safety initiatives, particularly those aimed at reducing speeding by motorists.

It will support Herefordshire Council's attempts to tackle rogue traders to protect the elderly and vulnerable.

5. SURROUNDINGS

Ross Town Council will endeavour to conserve and protect the town's outstanding natural and historic environment.

It will encourage Herefordshire Council to keep sustainable development at the heart of the Council's Land Use Planning.

Reviewed by Full Council October 2023