

Energy 361 presentation, 9th November

The theme for the day was the transition to a low carbon future. The COP 26 target is no more than a 1.5 degree C increase in global average temperature compared to pre-industrial levels by the year 2050. To attempt to achieve this goal the UK Government have set a target of net zero carbon (CO₂) emissions by 2050, i.e., from 100% down to 0% in 2050.

To make this more manageable, Energy 361 advocate a target of reducing current carbon emissions by 50% by 2030, and presumably a further 25% by 2040 and to zero by 2050. The logic of this can be seen in charts 1 and 2 attached - continuing 'business as usual' until 2029 and then hoping for a miracle reduction in emissions in 2030 will cause a much larger addition of carbon emissions to the environment than if reductions start immediately.

The Parish Council have an opportunity to set an example by implementing a carbon reduction plan as soon as possible. In practise this means reducing fossil-fuelled energy consumption in the Council's buildings and activities, and in order to do this we need to know what our energy consumption is at present. Energy 361 suggest that 2019 should be used as the base year (that is the 100% figure) because the pandemic meant that 2020 was untypical.

We therefore need to record from the bills paid in 2019 all of the gas, water and electricity meter readings, and the quantity of petrol and diesel purchased. This will provide measurable reduction targets for succeeding years. Going on from this the utility suppliers should be able to provide half-hourly meter readings for examination for peaks in demand, which may indicate areas for investigation for saving energy. In addition, most electrical appliances now have an energy rating ('A' being the most efficient), and priority should be given to 'A' rated appliances in all future purchases.

The Council should whenever possible favour renewable energy sources. I am currently privately investigating the possibility of installing small hydropower at the weir in Brake's Plantation, and should this be viable I will bring it to the council. We also need to come to a decision about installing solar PV panels on council buildings.

I appreciate that these proposals could place additional burdens on the council staff, so I am willing to work with them for one or two days a month to analyse the data involved.

OTHER TOPICS

There was a presentation on Neighbourhood Planning, and Biodiversity and Green Space. It was stressed that the Plan should signpost best practise in the Parish and clearly state policies preferred by the Parish. The speaker from North Devon Biosphere indicated that they can advise on aspects of Neighbourhood Planning, including sampling river water to provide an analysis of water quality.

In the afternoon there was a presentation on community energy projects. These are generally Community Interest Companies operating in larger towns, working with the relevant council. Most seem to be large solar PV schemes, with one wind turbine system also featured.