

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Claire Goldfinch, Policy and Communications Intern at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), offers advice on tackling climate change

Today, the topic of climate change is inescapable. Everywhere you turn there is something new being discussed or prominent people, such as, Greta Thunberg, the famous ecowarrior teenager, highlighting the collective action necessary to tackle climate change. This has filtered to a local level, as many local (parish and town) councils have taken action and declared a climate emergency.

As a response to this, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) declared a climate emergency and hosted a climate change panel at its Annual Conference held on 28 and 29 October 2019 in Milton Keynes. The panel discussed ways that local councils can become more climate-conscious, by promoting green travel; using community green energy schemes, and, sharing examples of good practice.

## NALC TACKLES CLIMATE CHANGE

In addition to declaring a climate emergency, NALC will tackle climate change by:

- Committing to stopping the use of single-use plastics in its offices
- Encouraging members to carry refillable bottles and reusable cups to conferences
- Travelling by public transport (where possible)
- Encouraging councils to plant trees
- Highlighting good practise examples.

Moreover, NALC supports eco-friendly communities through its alliance with The Woodland Trust and its Tree Charter project. The Tree Charter comprises of 10 principles and is aimed at producing climate-conscious 'Charter Branches'. Currently, over 300 local councils have signed up to the Tree Charter and are making a real difference in their communities.

On 30 November 2019, NALC will be celebrating Tree Charter Day which aims to get 1m people involved in tree planting and increase tree cover in England. Alongside The Woodland Trust, NALC encouraged Charter Branches to host tree planting events by supplying them with free trees and Tree Charter toolkits. (See more: [www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/treecharter](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/treecharter))

## LOCAL COUNCIL ACTIONS TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2018, Frome Town Council in Somerset declared a climate emergency and committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The 17 councillors unanimously agreed to sign the Covenant of Mayors to track progress and link with others who are also cutting emissions. The council have shared its 'Climate Emergency Paper' and a 'Zero Carbon toolkit' online so that other councils may follow their lead. Additionally, the council introduced a solar funding project that helps residents install solar panels at a discounted rate. Frome's progressive outlook is educating residents to become more climate-conscious and is helping to challenge climate change locally.

Likewise, Penrith Town Council in Cumbria is a key member of the stakeholder group, Plastic Clever Penrith. They provide initiatives and advice to residents and businesses regarding the plastic waste reduction. Their vision is to have every business in Penrith sign up to a voluntary plastic-clever scheme which includes:

- Biodegradable alternatives to plastic bags and an incentive for customers to use their own
- To replace plastic cups and straws with biodegradable alternatives
- To replace plastic packaging with biodegradable alternatives
- To ensure that town events include plastic-free guidelines.

## TEN TIPS TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE:

1. Declare a climate emergency
2. Sign up to the Tree Charter
3. Develop and promote green transport
4. Ensure that all council buildings are as energy-efficient as possible
5. Increase tree cover
6. Plan for a green community in a neighbourhood plan
7. Limit the use of single-use plastics
8. Recycle as much as possible
9. Create a task force to establish a green agenda
10. Consider a community orchard in your community.

NALC believes that collectively, across 10,000 local councils in England, climate change can be tackled locally. NALC is proud that many local councils are declaring a climate emergency and are working to help others do the same.