

Report for West Dean Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting 2022.

In 2019 West Dean Parish Council along with many other councils around the country declared a climate emergency. Then, in 2020 we agreed a motion to declare a biodiversity emergency. WDPC recognises that action is required by all of us to mitigate the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on our community, our country and the planet. Our Climate Emergency declaration pledges to help move our parish to carbon neutral by 2030 to make our planet safer for ourselves, our children and future generations.

Following on from the declarations, Andy Moore (WDP councillor for Parkend), initiated some public meetings to start thinking about what we can do in our local communities. Alison Bruce and Jackie Dale who were then parishioners joined those early meetings and together, this informal group developed some ideas for local initiatives which would address the emergencies directly while also encouraging engagement with local communities.

These ideas included:

- Village Veg/Community growing
- Community Conversations
- Billboards
- How to get our own house in order, i.e West Dean Centre and any other parish assets
- Local energy, Community Renewable Energy Westdean (CREWD)/Heatpumps
- Increasing biodiversity through reducing the parish grass cutting regime, improving hedgerows, encouraging growing for wildlife
- Streetlights
- Carbon counting
- Library of books
- Keeping our website and social media updated with useful information and advice.

In Bream we made a good start with Village Veg which aims to support people to grow their own food. Raised beds were installed in 3 gardens and support was provided with planning and planting the beds. In Yorkley Community Centre we held our first well attended Community Conversation. Around 80 people came and enjoyed a lively evening of debate and homemade soup and bread.

Then Covid struck and everything was put on hold, we were no longer able to meet face to face and community engagement became difficult.

However, the ideas were kept alive through regular online meetings and as soon as Covid restrictions lifted West Dean Parish Council formed an 'official' constituted Climate and Biodiversity Emergency (CBE) Committee. We're very pleased to have this committee established with terms of reference agreed and a budget!

Our aim for the CBE committee meetings is to keep them as informal as possible, members of the public are very welcome to join in our meetings, contribute ideas and get involved.

So far, we've held four meetings and covered a lot of ground. We've prioritised some ideas into short, medium and long term projects.

Here are some of the quick wins:

- We've discussed ways in which we can share information amongst ourselves and also how we can keep the public better informed and engaged. This is where our updated WDPC website and Facebook page will be useful.
- We're planning on purchasing some relevant books for the library in West Dean Centre so next time you're in the library look out for the Climate and Biodiversity shelf.
- Soon you'll be able to find the carbon footprint figures for West Dean Parish on our website and ideas on how we can all reduce our carbon footprint from the foods we choose to buy to the way we travel.
- The Village Veg project is concentrating its energy and focus on community growing spaces. Yorkley and Parkend are currently holding community meetings and will be establishing growing spaces in their villages.
So, if you have an area in your village that could be developed into a community garden? Let us know, we may be able to support you.

The CBE meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at 7pm, we'd love to see you there because your opinions and ideas matter to us. Keep an eye on the WDPC website for dates and where we're meeting.

Every little thing we do locally can make a difference, we're in this together because the climate and biodiversity emergency affects us all. Please do consider coming along to one of our CBE meetings, you will be very welcome.