

## A vision for Charlton Kings

### Life on Earth

The nature of life on Earth has always been determined by climate. 4.6 billion years ago (Before Present - BP), there was no climate and no life. The earliest evidence of life is from 3.5b years BP and it took another 2.4 billion years for multicellular life to evolve. By 530m years BP the first animals with true backbones had evolved although plants didn't appear for another 65 million years. 400 million years BP insects emerged, but 150million years later the greatest mass extinction in Earth's history wiped out most life forms. Despite this setback, or probably because of it, by 200m years ago mammals had evolved, followed by birds at 150m years and flowering plants at 130m years BP. Another mass extinction took place at 65m years BP and yet another in the Palaeocene at 55m years BP.

The original ancestors of humans emerged 6 million years ago, and there has not been another mass extinction event since that time, potentially until now.

If you were to count off one million years, at one year each second, it would take you 12 days. That's how long a million years is. A Climate Emergency is when you can visualise the disruption of human civilisation in less than a few centuries, or fewer than 5 minutes counting the years...one...two...three...

### Life in Charlton Kings

Charlton Kings Parish Council is not going to secure the future of life on Earth on its own. What it can do, and we believe should do, is to take a lead in our local community, as part of Cheltenham, as part of the UK, as part of all nations, to try to minimise the effects of what is now not a prediction, but a forecast.

We are already experiencing very real impacts of a changing climate. Perhaps the most apparent is the increased number of times we have severe rainfall events that lead to disruption and flooding. 2007 was the worst, but here have been several high intensity rainfall events in Cheltenham since, and future flooding from the upper reaches of River Chelt in Charlton Kings is inevitable, unless targeted action is taken.

The ageing UK population is very vulnerable to extreme heatwaves, because it also has high levels of heart and kidney disease. Although Charlton Kings' residents tend to be healthier than the national average, we also tend to be older and thus, in an urban environment, we will be increasingly at risk of incurring 'excess deaths' compared to what might be otherwise expected.

**Our approach to future-proofing our environment must look at how we can make our own contributions. Every action we take must be a realistic response to our knowledge of a warming climate and prioritised to reduce or promote the reduction of carbon emissions and the worst forecast levels of climate change.**

### **We will:**

- Establish an Environment Working Party that will help us to develop our programmes of action and keep this action plan under review. It will be led by a Councillor and co-opt the pool of talents in our community to help us to develop challenging, but achievable outcomes.

### **Charlton Kings Parish Council's own contributions to reducing greenhouse gases**

Unless we take positive action in respect of our own carbon footprint, we have no moral authority to encourage others to do so. It is argued that there is a moral principle that drives the need to take action to avoid danger to human civilisations and the mass extinction of fellow life forms.

#### **We will:**

- Undertake an energy audit of everything we do and address the outcomes.
- Ensure that our new buildings are carbon neutral or positive.
- Retrofit existing buildings with energy positive technology. This may be by replacing our gas heating system, installing solar panels or other methods that our expert group identifies.
- Set a target for zero waste from our operations.
- Take our energy supplies from a 100% renewable energy supplier and seek to achieve economies of scale by partnering with other councils.
- Work with partners to provide support infrastructure for electric transport options, e.g. public high-speed electric charging points at key locations.
- Research the creation of ground source heat pumps and associated infrastructure and identify possible local applications.
- Identify opportunities for the creation of other sustainable energy sources.

### **The Parish Council's outreach programme will advise and support our residents**

This Parish Council has developed good channels of communication with our 12,500 residents, although there is room for improvement.

#### **We will:**

- Energise the debate, by calling public meetings and discussions.
- Promote the retrofitting of insulation/replacement of gas boilers/etc. in order to increase the energy efficiency of homes and public/commercial buildings.
- Support and encourage our children rather than resist ideas that we are uncomfortable with, because they will become the most important drivers of change. There is a widespread knowledge about climate change, but little recognition that seriously addressing it will involve truly painful life choices for everyone if we are to succeed.

### **The Parish Council's contribution to Cheltenham Borough Council's programme to be carbon neutral by 2030 "Carbon Neutral Cheltenham – Stewardship through leadership".**

Cheltenham Borough Council has taken a positive lead in committing not just to making its own operations carbon neutral within 10 years, but all of Cheltenham's. CBC's own carbon emissions are less than 1% of the Cheltenham total, but like us, they must secure the moral authority to promote this target by putting their own house in order. Charlton Kings residents represent about 10% of the population of Cheltenham, so our contribution to achieving the target is significant. We will work collaboratively with councillors and officers to ensure that we are making our contribution in the most effective and transparent way. We can already identify specific areas where we would wish to work together.

#### **We will support:**

- Making public transport more affordable and frequent, and ensuring that routes meet needs, e.g. direct routes to the hospital and station.
- The vision of all public service vehicles being electric.
- Promotion of car-pooling.
- The establishment of more and safer dedicated cycle lanes.

- Significantly reducing vehicle journeys by promoting walking/cycling/school 'walking buses/home working/flexitime/etc.

**Managing our natural and built environments in the knowledge of our understanding of the effects of climate change.**

We know that globally, without doing anything more, average temperatures will rise by at least 1.5°. This has huge implications for all natural environments as our habitats of woodland, grassland and freshwaters will increasingly resemble those of southern Europe, with animal and plant species migrating northwards to escape intolerable temperatures and climatic effects, leaving ecological niches that will be filled by more southern species of agreeable plants and animals but also pests and diseases. We need, as far as we are able, to 'climate proof' our habitats to face these certain changes. Living conditions in our built-up areas will also change, with significantly increased high temperature events, low humidities, and disruptive climate emergencies such as flooding and droughts.

**We will:**

- Work with the owners of our most precious wildlife sites, i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Key Wildlife Sites, nature reserves, and green spaces, to manage damaging changes and help adaptation to new conditions.
- Talk to owners of poorer grades of agricultural land and available public land, about the potential for large scale tree planting.
- Work with experts in the field, e.g. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the University of Gloucestershire, to research key issues such as water flows, soil deterioration, wildlife corridors, etc. and, with partners, implement restorative management.
- Create a group of 'Local Champions' who will take this work forward and promote educational outreach to schools and communities of interest, e.g. education, faith, sport, social.
- Examine the potential to expand the role that our allotments play in the sustainable growing of local food, by auditing other potentially available land.
- With our partners in the Environment Agency and Borough Council, seek to prioritise local flood protection and catchment flood management, by adopting a holistic natural flood management vision for Cheltenham and Charlton Kings. This would demonstrate 'betterment' in all new development, and a commitment to long-term maintenance by adopting national legislation and policy guidelines in all strategic planning documents.
- Phrase our comments on planning application consultations in the context of all these considerations.

These ideas will require the greatest changes in the Parish Council's way of doing its business that it will have had to consider in the 25 years of its existence, and it will require not just a change in mind-set but also a reconsideration of what constitutes 'Best Value' in the spending of public money.

CKPC

Approved by Council Minute 143/19/20 (Full Council meeting 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019)