

Marlow Town Council acts on long-term environmental challenges

April 2020

Marlow Town Council has pledged to solve the town's air pollution problem and to play an active role in combating climate change in a pair of resolutions adopted recently.

On climate change, the Council resolved to reduce its own operational greenhouse gas emissions to net zero as quickly as possible, and to work with the wider Marlow community to build a broadly supported vision for making Marlow a net zero-carbon town.

On air pollution the Council set itself the goal of eliminating illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide in Marlow town centre by 2025. It also published a Clean Air Plan, including five measures the Council will take to ensure that the goal is met.

Both documents were agreed by Councillors in March as the Coronavirus lock-down was beginning and have now been published on the Marlow Town Council website, www.marlow-tc.gov.uk.

Marlow Town Council Leader Jocelyn Towns welcomed the adoption of the two statements: "All our immediate thoughts are of course focused on combating Covid-19, but I and my fellow town Councillors believe it is also vital to keep in mind the long-term environmental challenges that will return to the fore once the lock-down eases.

"The Council looked widely at what other councils across Britain are doing on climate change and air pollution and sought to identify best practice. Our Council's powers are of course relatively limited compared with those at county level, but we believe that every council tier must play its part and that Marlow can make a difference as a town."

In this spirit, the Council's climate change statement recognises the need for a global transition to net-zero carbon as quickly as possible and notes the UK government's policy of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050.

It goes on to pledge to play its part in achieving this huge change, notably by giving due consideration to climate change in all its decisions, by eliminating its own emissions as quickly as possible, and by working with Marlow residents, businesses and community groups to build a broadly supported vision for making Marlow a net-zero carbon town.

The Clean Air Plan is the Council's most robust response yet to the problem of illegal nitrogen dioxide pollution that plagues Marlow's town centre, mainly caused by road traffic. Marlow is only one of many towns and cities across Britain to face this issue.

The existence of illegal levels of air pollution required Wycombe District Council (now part of the new Buckinghamshire Council) to designate Marlow town centre as an official Air Quality Management Area in 2018.

In the plan the Council resolves to work strenuously across the community to drive technological and behavioural changes that will lead to an elimination of nitrogen dioxide above legal limits by 2025.

The Council's five-point plan for achieving this goal comprises:

- Promoting walking and cycling
- Reducing vehicle journeys in the town centre
- Encouraging eco-driving
- Making the vehicle fleet cleaner
- Improving street ventilation

Steps to encourage eco-driving have already begun, with the Council's new air quality banner now hanging over Spittal Street, asking all drivers who pass beneath it to "reduce speed" and "drive smoothly" based on scientific findings that higher speeds and harder acceleration both increase emissions of nitrogen oxides, the precursor to nitrogen dioxide pollution.