



MEETING PAPER

Subject: **Earth Protector Town**

Meeting: **Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee**

Date: **17 October 2022**

Officer: **Shona Bendix**

NOT CONFIDENTIAL

Introduction

This Council was among the first councils to declare a climate emergency and recognise the escalating ecological catastrophe on earth. Since then it has been looking for practical ways to play its part in addressing these problems through carefully managing its own assets and activities. This is a pragmatic approach. However, there are also opportunities to extend the reach of this Council's relatively small voice and resource, by working with others and contributing to efforts to address bigger issues, such as ecocide, which run counter to local positive actions. Ecocide is a suitably hard-hitting term owing to the dire consequences for living beings. In simple descriptive terms it is the senseless killing of one's home; in more detailed terms it is 'unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.'ⁱ

One symbolic and practical step the Council can take which reinforces its environmental commitment, is to declare Lowestoft an Earth Protector Town.ⁱⁱ Earth Protector Communities is a global movement in which towns, businesses, educational establishments and other organisations work together to protect the land, wildlife, air, soil, and water, and also endorse the Stop Ecocide campaign.ⁱⁱⁱ The latter campaign attempts to address the lack of consequence for those who perpetuate significant harm to the planet. It recognises that changes to international laws could stop further devastation.

Details

The global collaborative movement which is Earth Protector Communities^{iv} is focused on the transition from the current structures and systems to a way of living together in harmony with the earth's ecosystems. Without this, local efforts have a valuable but limited impact. As part of this movement, councils can declare themselves Earth Protector Towns, joining Stroud, Penzance, Glastonbury, Helston and Woodbridge Town Councils. This means the Council will:

1. Collaborate and cooperate with communities and organisations to protect land, wildlife, air, soil and water,
2. Publicly support the Stop Ecocide campaign which supports the legal and diplomatic work to make Ecocide and international crime www.stopecocide.earth/endorse-the-campaign
3. Help change the way we:

- a. Live (from food to transport)
 - b. Power our lives (e.g. green energy)
 - c. Work (e.g. green economy, bioregional economy, localisation)
 - d. Think of ourselves in relation to the Earth (e.g. education, awareness raising, health & well-being)
 - e. Approach the future (e.g. regenerative development approach, and building community and capacity)
4. Declare itself an Earth Protector Town (see below)

The Declaration

In declaring Lowestoft an Earth Protector Town, the Council undertakes to collaborate and cooperate with communities, local government bodies, businesses and other organisations to protect land, wildlife, air, soil and water. The Council considers the repercussions of its decisions and rigorous care is observed to avoid environmental harm in the exercise of its functions.

To protect the Earth, this Council will:

Endorse, support and, through the publication of this declaration, raise awareness of the Earth Protector movement which campaigns to amend the Rome statute and declare ecocide* a crime at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Protect the community as best it can from environmental damage.

Produce a strategy for the Council's operations, including a date, to achieve a carbon zero future.

Work with the community to guide action on becoming a carbon neutral town and programme awareness raising about climate change into our community work.

Promote the movement from sustainable to regenerative living wherever possible across the town, including for households.

Campaign with and support the community to achieve single use Plastic Free Community status.

Work with the community to minimise the Town's environmental impact and create a strategy to protect, enhance and connect ecosystems/habitats/species in and around our town.

Raise awareness of climate and ecological emergencies through education, promotion of events and providing appropriate information.

Pledge that any future investment decisions consider the environmental practices of the institutions involved, as well as existing legal requirements on public investments.

Assure transparent and regular reporting of the implementation of the above pledges (including where possible a shared database of participating stakeholders' specific goals and progress achieved in attaining them).

In declaring itself an Earth Protector Town, (name of town) is publicly supporting the campaign to amend the Rome statute and declare Ecocide a crime at the ICC.

*ECOCIDE is serious loss, damage or destruction of ecosystems, and includes climate and cultural damage.

Recommendations/Decision

That the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee recommend to Council that it:

1. Declares Lowestoft an Earth Protector Town and progress the matters contained in and incidental to the declaration, including signing the petition to make ecocide an international crime^v
2. Writes to the local MP seeking their support for the 1. above.
3. Publicises its declaration and other matters in 1. above.

ⁱ Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide, June 2021

<https://www.ecodelaw.com/independent-expert-drafting-panel/>

ⁱⁱ www.earthprotectorcommunities.net

ⁱⁱⁱ www.stopecocide.earth

^{iv} <https://earthprotectorcommunities.net/>

^v <https://www.stopecocide.earth/become>