

**Date:** 07 October 2021

**Title:** Report Item 9 – Climate and Ecology Bill/Environment Bill/Renewable Energy

**By:** K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

**Purpose:** To provide background information

**Recommendation:**

- a) To consider a request from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Alliance for support for their Private Members' Bill
- b) To support NALC in its proposed amendments to the Environment Bill, and to respond to NALC's consultation document [consultation ends 15 October 2021]
- c) To note and respond to a request from the SDNPA for guidance from parishes on the content they would like to see in a future Community Based Renewable Energy Technical Advice Note [consultation ends 1 November 2021]

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## **Climate and Ecology Bill**

1. All parish and town councils have been approached by an organisation calling itself the Climate and Ecological Emergency Alliance, which is a consortium campaigning to support the Climate and Ecology Bill in its passage through parliament.

2. The Bill was originally presented by Caroline Lucas as a Private Members' Bill but sittings for such bills have been suspended due to pressure on parliamentary time, and very few become law unless they have government support. The Alliance comprises 12 MPs who are co-sponsoring the Bill; 115 further MPs who have declared their support for it; 29 Peers; 103 district or town councils; and 225 organisations. The Alliance wants to build support for the bill, hence its approach to all town and parish councils in the country.

2. The Alliance requests all town and parish councils to do five things:

- Declare an ecological emergency
- Support the Climate and Ecology Bill
- Inform local media of the council's decision
- Write an open letter to the local MP requesting their support
- Notify the Alliance of your support.

3. Here is a link to the Research Briefing on the Bill published by the House of Commons Library: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9135/> Briefly, the Bill aims to set new legally binding environment and climate objectives for the UK and create a Citizens Assembly to support the government in meeting those objectives. The Briefing indicates that the government

does not regard the Bill as necessary or as something it would support. Parliament has already declared a climate emergency, in May 2019, and has set itself legally binding targets. The parish council is invited to consider whether it wishes to take the five actions requested by the CEE Alliance (listed in paragraph 2 above).

## **Environment Bill**

4. The government also has its own Environment Bill, and the CEE Alliance is interested in amending that Bill in order to incorporate at least some features of the Climate and Ecology Bill, as an alternative strategy. The parliamentary Briefing indicates this this too has so far not been successful.

5. It is interesting that against this background the National Association of Local Councils has signed up to the proposition that there is a climate emergency and that therefore as a general principle it will 'support moves and policies which help to mitigate it'. East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council are also supportive of this stance. Accordingly, NALC has been lobbying DEFRA and the government on the Environment Bill, requesting the insertion of two new clauses numbered 101(7) and 101(8) which would ensure that the Bill factors in the need for parish councils to be consulted by responsible authorities when Local Nature Recovery Strategies affecting their areas are being framed. NALC has published its own consultation document **PC6-21 Local Nature Recovery Strategies**, on its proposed amendments to the Environment Bill, and a copy is appended to this report.

6. The parish council is requested to register its support for NALC's proposed amendments to the Environment Bill, and to consider and respond to a number of consultation questions set out in paragraphs 6-14 of NALC's document PC6-21. The deadline is Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

## **Renewable Energy**

7. The South Downs National Park Authority is preparing a Technical Advice Note (TAN) on community-based renewable energy proposals and would welcome the input of parish and town councils. The purpose of the TAN is to help applicants (householders, community organisations or local businesses) to make successful planning applications for micro-generation or community-based renewable energy schemes in the South Downs National Park (SDNP). Once published, the TAN will be a material consideration for development management.

8. The SDNPA would like to hear what guidance and information parishes would like to see in the TAN. Currently it is proposed to include guidance on the following:

- What is micro-generation / community-based renewables?
- Do I need planning permission? Permitted Development Rights, Prior Approval
- Making a pre-app enquiry
- Submitting an application – what to include?
- Principles for considering appropriate location for renewables
- Principles for assessing impact on landscape
- Biodiversity and contributing to net gain
- Guidance on Policy SD51 criteria relating to loss of agricultural land
- Community Infrastructure Levy funding opportunities
- Case studies

9. The parish council is invited to consider whether they think this outline is sufficient or whether additional advice would be welcomed by enquirers in this new subject area. Feedback is requested

by 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, and the intention is to bring the draft TAN to the SDNPA's Planning Committee for preliminary approval in January 2022. The draft would then go out for consultation with parishes.