

The Hanleys Environmental Group

(previously called Hanleys Carbon Neutral)

Background

The group was formed in November 2019 with a declaration by the Parish Council to work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2025 at a public meeting to launch the initiative.

Five teams were formed:

1. Energy
2. Trees
3. Hanley Habitats
4. Transport
5. Procurement

The main achievements by each team are summarised below:

1. Energy Team

A grant of £25,000 awarded by the Rural Energy Community Fund (RCEF) and used to complete:

- A Baseline Survey: This determined that the average carbon output per household in the Hanleys was 5.85 tonnes year, equating to 2.54 tonnes per year per person. This is almost 70% higher than the average of 1.5 tonnes per year.
- A feasibility study of renewable energy generation in the Parish. Most technologies were discounted on technical viability or being precluded by current regulations/legislation. A key issue was lack of capacity on the national grid locally. The only viable options would be:
 - o Roof top solar (commercial and domestic)
 - o Potential ground mounted solar (if the national grid is upgraded or battery costs reduced)

Conclusion: The Parish does not have the natural resources nor the technical infrastructure to implement renewable energy schemes that will significantly offset its carbon emissions.

- o Significant reductions in carbon emissions will only be possible through a large proportion of parishioners investing in low carbon heating systems and switching to 100% renewable electricity providers.
- o Without a more concerted approach involving significant external funding or emerging technologies, significant reductions/offsets of energy-related carbon emissions are unlikely to be achieved to meet the Parish Council's commitment of working towards carbon neutrality by 2025.

As a result, the focus will be on encouraging behaviour change and incremental reductions in carbon use through the initiatives of the Hanleys Environmental Group.

All the detailed reports are available on the village website.

2. Tree / Hedge Planting

Thanks to a local commercial landscaping business, the Group has been given free trees (whips) that would otherwise be wasted.

To date, 13,478 tree/hedging whips have been given to local householders and landowners on the basis that they are planted and left to grow for as many years as possible to maximise capture carbon. Some of these have been planted by volunteers.

In addition to this figure, 1,260 saplings have been supplied by local residents and planted by volunteers.

Specific plantings by volunteers in our Parish include:

2020: 420 planted by volunteers at The Grange

2021: 340 planted by volunteers at Orchard House & Blackmore House

2022: 500 planted by volunteers at Perivale Cottage & Orchard Cottage

(+ 660 planted by volunteers at Quakers Farm & Thistle Close, but not supplied)

2023: 0

2024: 600 planted by volunteers at Hanley Castle High School (funded by our budget and the School)

So, that is **14,738** in total, at the time of writing (June 2024), 5025 in the Parish and 9,713 outside the Parish. **2,520** of these have been planted by volunteers. Obviously, they will not all survive but hopefully many are still green.

Recently a successful grant application was made to Severn Trent, securing 2,420 trees and hedging for 6 local residents. Together with all the supporting equipment and accessories this application totals £3,895.50. It is thanks to Charlotte Vincent from 'Treescapes' that this grant was successful. Charlotte surveyed the land and advised on planting for four of the grant recipients and completed the extensive application process.

In Total, by end of November 2024, **17,158** saplings will have been planted.

Preservation of Existing Trees:

- i) The Lime Tree @ Cross Hands, probably planted in 1863, has been given some help, namely:
 - Ivy cut back (July 23)
 - Highways have cut away dead branches (16th Oct 23)
- ii) Nuttery, Hanley Castle; permission has been given for the nuttery to be coppiced. Once session was held in 2022. Hopefully more will follow.

3. Hanley Habitats

Verges

In October 2019 Hanley Castle Parish Council commissioned a Biodiversity Enhancement Assessment across a range of sites within the Parish. This report, by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, recommended a variety of relatively simple changes to enhance biodiversity in the Parish, which included encouraging meadow grassland, better hedgerow management, and tree planting. The Hanley Habitats scheme was set up in response.

Hanley Habitats has focused on encouraging perennial flowering grassland to develop in areas with low soil fertility, simply by adjusting when and how the areas are mown. Several trial areas are roped off annually and wildflower surveys regularly undertaken. In depleted sites over 1,000 native plug plants were planted in October 2020 and since then yellow rattle seed has been spread as needed to reduce grass vigour.

It takes time for wildflower habitat to establish, and unpredictable weather conditions (such as excessive wet or dry conditions) affect what grows well from one year to the next, so we must adapt management methods and timings in response. Several residents have also joined in and are roping off verges outside their houses.

The site running near the Pump house has over 50 different species of wildflowers and the Community Orchard has over 40 species.

Toads

The Toads on Roads group was formed in early 2024 following registration of the road crossing site (number 1024) on the Froglife website. Editorial was published and publicity materials printed and distributed to raise understanding and awareness. Around 20 volunteers patrolled in pairs on suitable dark, mild, wet evenings between January and April on a section of Gilbert's End to reduce amphibious casualties.

Green Infrastructure areas on all 'new' housing developments

The Enforcement Officer from MHDC visited the Parish in 23/24. Unfortunately, most of the Green Infrastructure areas were non-compliant with their planning submissions, but no action could be taken as the time period for enforcement had elapsed. One site was within the time period - Chapmans Orchard. This was replanted in March 24 by the Housing Development Contractors. So, one success.

4. Transport

This topic has proved difficult for the Group, with public transport being a issue the Council has revisited many times. The current Worcestershire On Demand (WOD) scheme is proving successful.

Several bike racks have been installed (free, from a local grant).

e-bike Test before you Invest Scheme: Started in 2022 with one bike (gifted by local resident). A second bike has just been purchased.

A number of people have used the first bike; we will be undertaking increased advertising and monitoring take-up of both e-bike

5. Procurement of sustainable household products

The Café Market have funded and run a plastic free product stall since 2020. Products are sold at cost with the objective of encouraging people to try sustainable products. Some of these products have become more readily available, while others can still only be purchased online. Since February 2024, washing up liquid refills are also sold at the market.

Recycling (not exactly procurement, but you could say dealing with the consequences of poor/restricted procurement):

A company called Terracycle accepts some waste that is not taken by kerb side recycling. We have sent 4 categories of such waste to Terracycle for recycling:

- Several thousands of crisp packets were recycled until the scheme was ceased by Walkers
- cheese & bread packaging, blister packs are still being collected and despatched.

6. Other

- Establishing a group discount scheme with Sutton Seeds
- Water Quality Sampling of two streams within the Parish. The kits being provided by Earthwatch Europe and the results shared on their website. We hope to expand this in September.

7. Liaison with Other Local Environmental Groups

- Information sharing has been undertaken with several local groups: Castlemorton Environmental Action Team, Colwall Greener, Powick PACE, Welland Biodiversity Officer.
- Joint Projects have been undertaken with Castlemorton Environmental Action Team (Severn Trent Grant, Distribution of Trees, Sale of Plastic Free Products)

Communication and Engagement

- Public Events have included
 - o A launch meeting
 - o An update meeting
 - o A workshop on Composting (run by a Master Composter)
 - o A Bat Walk
- Free give aways: A hot composter, plastic free cleaning products by MACK
- Numerous Article in the Parish Link
- Overview and Update on the Village Website
- Emails to subscribers (115)
- Hanleys' Carbon Neutral Facebook Page (147 Followers)
- Notices on the Parish Noticeboards.

Summary

We are not going to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2025. Thanks to the Parish Council's Declaration some significant progress has been made. As knowledge and technology develops we hope to react accordingly and continue to reduce our negative impact on the environment.