

Councillor Claire Malcomson Environment

Since declaring a Climate Emergency, The Mole Valley Administration wants to assure you we still have the same ambitions for doing as much as we can to mitigate climate change in the District. We have continued to work behind the scenes, despite the terrible interruption and expense caused by the Corona Virus crisis.

The list of achievements since the declaration is extensive. The Refill Scheme has been rolled out, with two water stations being fitted in our towns. A new post, Climate Change and Environment Manager has been created and the Sustainable Officers' contract extended. The Carbon Trust has calculated MVDCs carbon footprint and those of our contractors. Electric vehicle charging points have been installed. Our Environment Forum has been established; Mole Valley has worked across the county with other councils; we are changing our energy supplier to a new green specification and The wildflower campaign was set up to help with biodiversity - you can share your photos on Instagram #molevalleyrewilds.

In the Draft Local Plan we have introduced more green initiatives. Encouraging Fabric First style buildings; enhancing biodiversity; and making sure carbon emissions are reduced by a minimum of 20% (up from 10%) below the Target Emissions Rate set out in Building Regs.

Cabinet members have been tasked to look at ways their teams can work towards saving the environment. I've had meetings with The Environmental Health Team, to look at trying to clean up our air. Work has been done with The Sustainable Economy Team to get the cashless car parking suppliers to offer ways of encouraging cleaner vehicles in our area. (This will go out to tender later this year, green incentives are at the top of the list, alongside value for money when deciding which company to use).

Unfortunately, the renovation programme for our car parks has been delayed due to the virus, but this won't prevent 10 EV points being put into The Ashted Peace Memorial Hall Car Park, and around 20 more were intended to go into the next 2 car parks that were due to be renovated this spring and summer. We hope to re-initiate the programme as soon as finances allow. Our first 2 EV points were installed in the Swan Centre last summer.

We've managed to persuade Surrey County Council to change their mowing regime along the A24 to help wildflowers to grow, encouraging pollinators. I'd like to thank residents for their support. Indeed, some have adopted parts of the verges on other roads and are maintaining them, allowing flowers to grow.

We've also reduced the frequency of mowing on the land we've taken back from The Surrey Wildlife Trust. Already more wildflowers and pollinators can be seen flourishing in these rural

areas. We hope to save the saplings that are growing through with the intention of offering them to the public in the autumn.

The Administration has started asking for information from our contractors, such as Amey, about what they are doing to mitigate Climate Change.

Like all of you, with trepidation, the Administration watched the Corona Virus approaching. Going into lock down meant our officers' jobs had to be diversified, immediately. Their time had to be spent, urgently, helping residents and businesses. Through nobody's fault the team of officers working on the environment had to be side tracked.

However, I continued working. Throughout the last three months I have attended courses and countless virtual meetings with companies and individuals to discuss what the Administration can introduce to Mole Valley. I've discussed projects with air and ground source pump suppliers, solar panel experts, companies that will put solar panel roofs on our car parks. Now some of whom are working on reports for us.

In June we reported on the Surrey Climate Strategy. Stating we want to work with Surrey, however, we feel there is more work to be done on their strategy. This week we will meet them to suggest changes and improvements - in a positive way, hoping to lead the way.

This crisis has cost the Council huge amounts of money, until it's over, we won't know if we will have any budget to initiate schemes. That will not stop us, we are looking for other courses of action. For example, getting companies to invest or for the Council to borrow to do these. Nothing has been agreed yet, but the conversations are being had.

Locally in my ward, I am initiating a new project to create a Community Garden on the local estate. Our officers have shared this idea across the District. Brilliant for well-being, these would cheer up drab areas, increase biodiversity and offer the local community a chance to grow plants and meet with each other.

In my role as Environment Cabinet Member, I wrote to support the Local Electricity Bill in Parliament. This will help facilitate small businesses to sell their green electricity to the National Grid.

Things are, slowly, beginning to return to normal. Our officers are beginning to have the time to concentrate on this very real Climate Emergency.

I see my job as a vocation and will continue to push and achieve much needed improvements and changes with this ambitious Administration, which takes the Climate Emergency Declaration very seriously.