

Dear All,

We are writing to you to raise your awareness of the increasing levels of climate anxiety amongst the younger generations living in the UK including in Shropshire. In March 2020, Children's BBC Newsround conducted a survey hoping to discover just how children and young adults are reacting to the climate crisis. It revealed that

**'More than 2 in 5 young people don't trust adults to tackle the challenges of climate change.'**

**'Nearly 2 in 3 children don't think people in power are listening to young people.'**

*Source: Savanta-Comres survey for BBC Newsround of 2,000 8-16 year olds.*

According to Elizabeth Haas (Chair of Committee on Climate Change and Mental Health for American Psychiatric Research) one way that adults can support the younger citizens in their communities is to show them that they are prepared and are taking clear steps to tackle the issues that are threatening the world the youth will inherit by taking care of it.

Generation Zero Carbon Shropshire is a group of young adults who represent the generations who are inheriting the climate crisis: Generation Zero and Generation Alpha. We urge Shropshire's decision makers to create and support the necessary measures outlined in the Zero Carbon Shropshire Plan to reduce the county's emissions to net zero by 2030.

Since our launch in April 2021, we have been actively involved in campaigns designed to raise awareness of the many ways we can contribute. We have spoken to conferences and schools, run workshops and clothes swaps, shared ideas via press, social media and radio and consulted via Commonplace online. Now we are asking you for your help on an issue that is really important to us: food waste.

Food waste is bad for the environment. Producing, moving, storing, and cooking food uses energy, fuel, and water, each of which let off greenhouse gases contributing to climate change. The estimated area of land required to produce food thrown away by UK households is 19,000 square kilometres, that's an area approximately five and half times the size of Shropshire!

A proportion of waste food will end up in a landfill site, where it rots and releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. If we stopped throwing this good food away it would save the equivalent of at least 17m tonnes of carbon dioxide. That's the environmental equivalent of taking one in five cars off UK roads.

We are aware that the councils of Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin are already actively working towards reducing the impact of food waste. However, we would like to ask for more.

Two things concern us:

- a) The inconsistent strategy for managing food waste across the region.
- b) The level of confusion about what can be recycled and what should be disposed of in which bin.

The latter point was highlighted in a recent episode of the BBC's Shop Well for the Planet which followed a family in Shrewsbury (Episode 3 BBC October 2021). This is despite a government press release from May 2021 indicating that

- **“every household will receive separate, weekly food waste collections from 2023”**
- “Additional funding and support will be provided to councils for their recycling collections, ...This means council taxpayers will not have to foot the bill,”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-plans-unveiled-to-boost-recycling>

We believe that the early instigation of a consistent approach to weekly kerbside food waste collection coupled with a refreshed and updated public information and education campaign right across our region would normalise food waste management at household and business level. In turn, this would contribute significantly to our goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

In particular, we are calling for all councils:

- To provide separate weekly kerbside food waste collections in all areas as soon as possible and hopefully before 2023.
- Where councils do not have separate kerbside collections but do accept food waste in green bins, a new, explicit campaign provides clear information for the public in order to reduce confusion.
- Reintroduce and promote bin stickers for each type of bin to update previous information. Refresh the issue, possibilities, and expectations in people's minds. See footnote<sup>1</sup>
- Run a high profile public information and education campaign for press, radio, social media, schools, council buildings and public areas, to educate young people and the wider public. Many people believe that because food is biodegradable it does not cause environmental issues in landfill.
- Provide separate food waste bins in public areas and town centres and work closely with fast food outlets, cafes etc on this matter to ensure they make suitable provision for separate waste food collection.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is the Telford bin sticker campaign info

<http://www.sustainabletelfordandwrekin.com/what-the-council-is-doing/council-case-studies/bin-collections>

- Relaunch the food caddy and biodegradable liners campaign promoting wider usage.
- Provide new caddies or make it much easier for the public to access replacements. One of our members living in Telford was unable to find an option to order one online and had to ring up.
- Continue to investigate the usage of local biodigesters right across the region.

We are aware that much is being done already. However, if we are to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 in Shropshire we know we have to do more. We are calling for a consistent, high level approach to food waste management wherever you live in Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin. Furthermore, we know that changing habits is hard and requires constant reinforcement. That is why we are calling for the re-issue of public information, easier access to replacement equipment and a continual information stream for households and business which not only explains how to deal with food waste but also why it is important.

By working directly with schools, colleges and youth organisations, we believe that the councils will help reduce climate anxiety amongst its young citizens. Young people will begin to see that the adults are not only prepared but are taking action. They will also be informed and therefore empowered to contribute to some of the solutions.

We are keen to be part of the solution and have done a lot of research around this topic. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the above points with you and to explore how we might contribute to making them a reality.

Our own website can be found at:

<https://zerocarbonschropshire.org/generation-zero-carbon>

Yours faithfully,

Generation Zero Carbon Shropshire.

Daniel Jones  
Sally Lancaster  
Deborah Murphy  
Jess Walton