

# Sustainable Harwell

“Change now, help protect our future”

## Sustainable choices I can make as an individual

### Intro

In our capacity as consumers we have power. Governments encourage things to be done differently by introducing new legislation, taxes and incentives. But by simply altering our behaviour we consumers can be one of the biggest catalysts for change.

Here is our first attempt at to provide some practical choices we can make to be more sustainable as individuals and encourage change around us. It is by no means exhaustive and we hope others will suggest further practical ideas to add to it. Some suggestions are bigger, longer-term and more expensive, but many things can be done easily and straight away. Whatever you decide to change, we hope this will provide you with a useful initial checklist to work with.

### Where is your biggest Impact?

The likely biggest impacts on the environment come from:

1. Heating your house and water
2. Using your car
3. Buying things, including the food you eat

You can take action to reduce these impacts and most of them save money.

### Things I can do now to help:

#### Energy:

1. Install a Smart Meter. Take interest and understand energy use in your home and use it to help save money. The latest ones can provide useful information and can help you reduce the amount of energy you use. The Smart Meter and installation is normally free of charge if you contact your energy supplier. Ask them whether you can have a second-generation smart meter installed as these make it easier to change electricity suppliers in the future without changing the meter.
2. Change your electricity tariff to a 100% renewable tariff. There are lots of reputable, cheap tariffs available and changing is easy.
3. Install solar panels on your roof. It's now relatively cheap and saves electricity costs. Then run your washing machine, dryer dishwasher and charge all your phone and other batteries during daylight hours.
4. Make sure your house is as well insulated as possible. Consider more insulation in your roof/attic. Install double or triple glazing. Install external wall insulation. Make sure door and window drafts are sealed for the winter. We may be able to help you identify where insulation might be needed using a thermal imaging camera.
5. Change all light bulbs to low energy LED bulbs. They are cheap and will save money on electricity bills. Don't forget the cooker hood!
6. When changing your gas boiler consider installing an air-source or ground-source heat pump instead. The Renewable Heat Incentive is an attractive government grant which will pay you

a regular monthly income when you do this. If you have a renewable electricity tariff your house will then be fossil-fuel free. The same applies to businesses and community properties for which other grants may be available.

7. If you have a renewable electricity tariff, change your gas hob for an electric induction hob.
8. Offset your gas use. Some tariffs will do this for you.
9. Switch things off when they're not being used. Lights/computers/TV/audio or run them off timers.
10. Consider using a modern wood-burning stove to burn natural wood from sustainable certified sources to provide heat to your home. Natural sustainable wood is classed as a renewable fuel and using it means you are avoiding using fossil fuel. It is unlawful to burn treated wood.
11. When renovating always consider energy saving options.

### **Travelling:**

1. Buy a fully electric, or plug-in hybrid car. These are well-proven and seem to hold their value well. New electric cars that are going on sale now will typically do 250 miles between charges and have fast charging which will recharge the battery in under an hour. Most people find this is more than enough for most of their journeys. Electric cars have many fewer parts (less to go wrong), are very quiet and relaxing to drive as well as being responsive with instant torque. Their price is reducing, and they are likely to hold their value well in the low-carbon economy. If you have a 100% renewable electricity tariff you will stop using fossil-fuel. The government currently offers a £3,500 grant if you purchase a new car and a £500 grant towards the cost of installing a 7 KW home charging point if you have off-road parking, so pay approximately £350 and you're away!
2. Try making fewer journeys by car. Let the bus/train take the strain.
3. Use a bike for local journeys. Healthier and cheaper.
4. Reduce the number of flights you take. When you do take them, pay a little extra to off-set the pollution caused. There are many providers who will do this.
5. Take the train if travelling to Europe. Its fast and relaxing and can often be as quick and similar in cost as flying by the time you travel to the airport, check-in etc.
6. Go on holiday nearer home.

### **Consumerism:**

1. Only buy what you need. The biggest environmental impact of a product comes from its production, so using less is the least damaging approach.
2. Try to buy refills for your consumable products and shy away from heavy packaging.
3. Complain to companies that put too much packaging on what you buy.
4. Select products with packaging that can be recycled. Complain to retailers and manufacturers about their products that come in non-recyclable packaging.

### **Food:**

1. Cut down or stop eating meat – particularly beef and lamb.
2. When shopping think about where your food comes from. Buy more local produce and cut down on imported food (particularly air-freighted). If you don't know where food comes from, ask your supplier.
3. Buy loose vegetables and if you need to use packaging use paper bags rather than plastic.

4. Avoid buying food items wrapped in single-use, non-recyclable, plastic. (This is hard but worth trying).
5. Use your power as a consumer to ask suppliers to package their food in re-cyclable packaging, particularly compostable paper and card. Suppliers enjoy helping customers and this will encourage change.
6. Order milk and other drinks like juice from the milkman in returnable glass bottles.

#### **Kitchen/Bathroom/Utility Room:**

1. Cut out using wipes which are about 80% plastic. Maybe use disposable paper towels instead.
2. Use soap bars in showers and baths rather than soap contained in plastic bottles. You can put the bars in wooden, washable (bamboo) soap bowls next to the sinks.
3. Use re-fillable containers for things like shampoos and cosmetics to avoid plastic use. There are local schemes run in Wantage and East Hendred where you can fill containers.
4. Use a clothes dryer rather than a tumble-dryer which is energy intensive and increases wear on clothes. Installing a pulley rack which pulls up to the ceiling is a great way to dry clothes indoors in a limited space.
5. Consider using natural cleaning products such as vinegar in the kitchen.
6. Ensure the dishwasher is full before use.
7. Ensure the washing machine is full before use.
8. Use a purpose -made bag for trapping the micro-fibres which come from your clothes when you're washing them. This prevents more plastic being released into the environment.

#### **Clothes:**

1. Avoid buying clothes which are only worn a few times before they're disposed of.
2. Buy clothing that lasts longer and wear it regularly. (Your favourite clothing!)
3. Take pride in wearing older quality garments.
4. Buy second-hand clothing at charity shops. Its better for the environment and supports a good cause.
5. Consider washing garments less often. It saves energy, reduces wear on the clothing and the shedding of polluting micro-fibres into the environment.
6. Hold or attend a Swishing party to swap items of clothing.

#### **The Garden:**

1. Install a pond – it's one of the best things you can do to encourage wild-life.
2. Keep the grass longer and cut it less often.
3. Create wildlife corridors so that animals, amphibians and insects can migrate between borders/ponds and across the garden spaces.
4. Install a wild-flower area or other wild area.
5. Grow flowers and plants which encourage bees and other pollinators to visit.
6. Use natural, non-chemical solutions as alternative pest controls.
7. Install bee and bug hotels.
8. Install bird feeders.
9. Create holes in fences and walls at boundaries to encourage hedgehogs to come into your garden.

10. Reduce or stop having bonfires. If you have a bonfire it's against the law to burn anything which is not natural plant material. Any wood burnt must be un-treated. Reduce the size of your bonfire.
11. Sit back and relax!

**Investments:**

1. Use your power as an investor to change the behaviour of companies. Find out whether your funds are invested in companies acting sustainably. As an investor/shareholder encourage them to make changes in their behaviour.
2. Ask whether your investment provider can invest in more sustainable companies.
3. Change your investment strategy and invest in more sustainable funds. (pensions, life assurance, other investment funds)