

Things you can do to help combat the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis

Eight ways to help the planet

1) **Start the journey!**

Nobody is perfect and the journey to sustainable living starts with a simple change. Try calculating your carbon footprint to identify where you can make changes that are easy or will have the biggest impact to start with. [Cambridge Carbon Footprint](#) (CCF) have a calculator.

2) **Look after your health and the planet in the kitchen!**

Global food systems account for 1/3 of total greenhouse emissions and the way food is produced and transported can impact negatively on nature e.g. damaging the soil and biodiversity. Small changes can make a big difference to the environment and our health; consider reducing your meat and dairy intake: 'red meat's a treat', or have a 'meat free Monday'. Where possible consider buying locally produced, seasonal, unprocessed and organic food; use up leftovers. Find lots of good ideas and tasty recipes from [Cambridge Sustainable Food](#).

3) **Reduce energy use in the home and save money**

Heating our homes and powering appliances is where we use a lot of energy. Simple changes such as remembering to put a lid on saucepans, turning off electrical items (not just using standby) and turning down the thermostat to the WHO recommended 18°C are free and easy habits to make. For lots of great ideas [go to CCF](#) for personalised home energy advice.

4) **Use Active or Public Transport where you can**

Cars and plane travel are carbon intensive forms of transport. Did you know for short distances petrol or diesel cars use 40% more fuel per km when the engine is cold, and produce more emissions? Did you know that SUVs consume, on average, 20% more energy per km than a medium sized car? Replacing short car journeys with walking or cycling benefits our own health, saves money, and improves air quality. How about replacing one car journey a week, or 10% a year, with cycling, walking or taking public transport? For more ideas go [here](#).

5) **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!**

In that order! Everything we buy has an energy and resource cost at each stage of its production, transportation and disposal. The more affluent society has become, the more we consume, which means that each year we use up more of the planet's resources than can be replenished. [Earth Overshoot Day](#) marks the date each year when our demand for resources exceeds what the planet can regenerate in that year. In 1987 the date was 23 October; in 2021 it fell on July 29.

So buy less stuff! Do you really need it?! If so, can you get it secondhand or borrow/share? Think about whether something can be used lots of times and repaired before you buy it. Even recycling has an energy cost so should be seen as a last resort. Make your own compost, reduce food waste and support the circular economy. Watch ["The Story of Stuff"](#) for some inspiration.

6) **Help wildlife where you live**

One third of all major food crops worldwide are dependent on pollinators. Did you know that in the UK urban gardens total more hectares of land than all the nature reserves added together? If we all gardened for wildlife, just imagine what positive impact we would have, then add in all the land in verges, roundabouts etc. Native plants are best for native wildlife. Check out the [Royal Horticultural Society](#) for lists of pollinator friendly plants for your garden/window box and other top tips; and [The Wildlife Trust](#) for ideas on how to garden for wildlife. Simple ideas from mowing your lawn less to using rainwater make a big difference to the life in your garden. If you can plant a tree in your garden use the [Woodland Trust's guide](#) to choosing one, if not consider sponsoring a tree in your [community](#) or with the [National Trust](#).

7) Save water

Only 1% of the water on our planet is fresh, salt-free and available to us in streams and underground reserves. It is essential to life. We only drink around 5% of the water we use, the other 95% goes down the drain from showers, taps, laundries and toilets or into the garden. To get clean drinking water to our taps costs energy to extract it, pipe it, clean it and then pipe it and clean it again (hopefully!) before it heads back to the rivers. In Cambridgeshire the water is taken from the chalk aquifer, the ever-increasing demand for which is so high that not enough is left to flow down our rare and important chalk streams, causing them to dry up, which harms local biodiversity. Saving water is easy, from washing your clothes or flushing your toilet less to having shorter showers or installing rain water butts. Check out [Anglian Water's Love Every Drop campaign](#) for more ideas.

8) Consider Green Finance

Whatever your passions - be it anti-deforestation or opposing arms dealing - how do you know that your money is not being used to fund industries you don't agree with? Consider switching your current account to an 'ethical' bank or join a campaign to green your pension. Two websites with food for thought and ideas: [Make my Money Matter](#) and [Tiny Eco Home Life](#).

Five ways to help yourself and others

1. Talk about what you are doing

- The 'non-converted': It doesn't have to be an Earnest Conversation – a casual remark eg 'because it's better for the environment' will help to normalise this as a reason for what you are doing
- Those who are already committed to doing things: Try to touch base regularly with those who think like you do for fresh inspiration and support. 2G3S (of course!) [Cambridge Carbon Footprint](#); [Transition Cambridge](#); wildlife groups; issue-based groups such as [Cambridge Cycling Campaign](#), [Friends of the Cam](#).

2. Get involved

- Educate yourself; not just the problems but the many solutions being proposed. Loads out there: press, magazines, internet – or books. Two at random: 'There is no planet B' by Mike Berners-Lee; 'Gardening for bumble bees' by Dave Goulson. Watch out for the featured books on climate change and the natural world at Shelford Library this autumn.
- Take an interest in the news
- Sign petitions
- Write to your councillors or MP or the government
- Consider whether direct action – demos etc – is for you.

3. Engage with other people

- Smile or say hello when out walking
- People rather than profits; community rather than corporations – will be our salvation.

4. Don't be a misery!

- Have fun. Laugh with friends. Ritual, festival, celebration – all are important.
- Take time to appreciate things (remember – sing, even?! - the Simon & Garfunkel song 'Feelin' Groovy': 'Slow down – you move too fast. You've got to make the morning last.....I've come to watch your flowers growing.....').

5. Be kind to yourself and others

Do what you can and don't beat yourself up that it isn't more. It all helps. And try not to judge other people - you don't know what constraints they may be under. Lead by example!