Exmouth Town Council

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Exmouth Town Council Environmental Policy

Exmouth Town Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in June 2019.

Exmouth Town Council is committed to making Exmouth cleaner, greener and healthier. We want residents and visitors to thrive in a zero carbon, active town. And we will use our influence to ensure high quality, low-impact development while protecting and enhancing the internationally important and beautiful local environment. Through our Environmental Policy we will use our powers and influence to protect and improve the environment and make continual improvement in our own environmental performance, as set out in the Climate Plan.

Environmental Objectives

These objectives set out what the council will do to minimise its impact on the environment.

Energy and Water Management

- Prioritise the use of renewable energy sources over fossil fuel energy sources wherever possible
- Minimise freshwater usage and maximise the use of natural springs and water butts
- Minimise all forms of pollution including water, light and noise

Recycling and Resources

- Ensure that the Refuse, Repair, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle ethos is embedded in all aspects of Exmouth Town Council's culture
- Eliminate the use of single-use plastics
- Ensure all recyclable materials are recycled
- Use reusable or recycled paper products where feasible
- Minimise printing and the generation of wastepaper
- Compost organic waste

Biodiversity and Green Spaces

- Protect and enhance the quality of Exmouth's natural environment, biodiversity and open spaces
- Identify and protect areas of greatest biodiversity value in Exmouth and take steps to ensure these areas are appropriately managed and enhanced including trees, hedgerows, valley parks and marine habitats.

- Ensure its planting schemes are predominantly pollinator friendly perennial flowers. Further details are included in the management plan in Appendix One.
- Improve our methods for weed control in outlying areas of the town and minimise the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides
- Introduce a hybrid grass cutting protocol to ensure highway verges are maintained to a standard acceptable and safe for our residents and introduce special management measures for verges of greatest ecological importance. Further details are included in the management plan in Appendix One
- Consider biodiversity and endangered species – support with social media (and other) campaigns

Fossil Fuels

- Minimise use of fossil fuels at events
- Minimise unnecessary car journeys on council business
- Promote and support the use of public transport, cycling and walking
- Procure electric tools/vehicles for grounds maintenance where it is viable to do so
- Procure electric vehicles for grounds maintenance, where viable
- Explore move to a bank that doesn't invest in fossil fuels.

Sustainable Procurement

- Procure goods and services locally where requirements for value and quality are met
- Procure organic and Fair Trade products
- Procure FSC certified timber

Awareness, Lobbying and Partnerships

- Encourage partner organisations to meet these environmental objectives
- Raise awareness of environmental issues within the community and provide guidance on how to tackle and help mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss
- Support and initiate projects which contribute towards meeting these environmental objectives across the wider community

Support Transition Exmouth in its work on taking steps towards a cleaner, greener and more sustainable life **Environmental Management**

We will manage our impact and monitor implementation of this Policy, fulfilling our environmental responsibilities and ensuring that all Council activities, and those carried out on our behalf, comply with or exceed statutory environmental requirements and any other relevant commitments we make.

We will take steps to understand and control any risks of harm to the environment resulting from our activities.

We will reference the current Climate Plan during discussions and before making any decisions regarding our environmental impact.

Involvement

We will enable the full involvement of Councillors and employees by providing information, training and other support. We will work with our contractors and suppliers to help them improve their environmental performance and ensure that, when working for the Council, they adopt equivalent environmental standards.

We will encourage the public and partners to act too, through environmental information, advice and services. We will lead by example and share our knowledge and learnings.

Accountability

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Town Council.

Appendix One

Plant and Highway Verge Grass Management Plan

The bulk of the grounds maintenance and grass is carried out in-house by the Town Maintenance Team, but contractors are used for specialised tasks and some highway verge grass cutting.

Grass Cutting

The types and intensity of cutting will vary across the town to provide a variety of habitats and visual styles to satisfy the different situations.

Fine cutting – this is where the grass is cut short with a grass catcher attached, mostly around the roundabout and highway flowerbeds to create a formal, manicured appearance. Cuts will take place fortnightly from late March to November, depending on the weather.

Verge cutting – this is where the grass is cut to a short to medium length with no grass catcher used and will take place every three to four weeks. This will ensure verges remain neat and tidy and clear of the footway and road. This is especially important at junctions where road users require good visibility to maximise safety.

Meadow style cutting – this is where the grass is cut to a medium length around the edge with no grass catcher used, leaving the centre to grow long. This treatment will be applied to majority of large areas of grass off the highway (excluding junctions) and banks. The mowing will include cutting a metre strip to ensure the footway and road is kept clear whilst leaving longer grass margins around the centre and tree bases to support biodiversity. The strips will be cut every four to six weeks and the larger centre areas will be cut once to twice a year and the arisings removed to reduce nutrient loading into the soil. This meadow style management of cutting the grass once or twice a year and removing the arisings will help promote a more diverse plant population. A placard will be placed on each site to explain the management plan for the area.

Specialist management – A selection of particularly botanically important ‘special verges’ will be managed according to tailored management plans in order to encourage and enhance their wildlife value. These verges will be identified on an ad-hoc basis in conjunction with specialists and members of the Wildflower Wardens from the Exmouth Wildlife Group.

Potential special verges include

- Bank on Marine Way
- Bank on Pound Lane
- Greenpark Close large grass area?
- Bank on Ashleigh Rd?
- Dinan Way (top end by Dinan Way Trading Estate, opposite Lidl)?

As wildflower wardens collect data and sites are identified which meet the agreed criteria for a special verge this list will develop and grow. Each site is likely to have a different management plan based on location, type of grass and wildflowers.

Flower Beds

The flower beds on the highway will contain a mixture of perennial and annual bedding to ensure that they are bright and colourful and attract a range of wildlife. Where possible, priority will be given to native plant species and those which provide a rich nectar source. The annual flowers (and in some cases additional perennials) will be planted up twice each year. Summer displays are planted in late May/early June and Winter displays and Spring bulbs are planted in late October. These create a high impact visual display not just for residents but also for visitors, entering the town through its busiest road. These areas are maintained (including planting, weeding, litter picking and watering) throughout the year by the Town Maintenance team.

Hanging Baskets and Troughs

At the start of every summer season (late May/early June), a total of twenty-four hanging baskets for the Magnolia Centre and 12 troughs for the railing by the Train Station will be provided by the Town Council's preferred plant supplier. The plants will provide high impact visual displays and will follow the theme for the In-Bloom theme for the year. These will be maintained (including weeding, litter picking and watering) throughout the summer season by the Town Maintenance team.

Flower Towers

High impact visual displays for forty flower towers around the town will be provided for both summer and winter/spring seasons. Summer displays are planted in late May/early June and Winter/spring displays are planted in late October. These create a high impact visual display not just for residents but also for visitors, entering the town through its busiest road. The plants will be supplied and planted by the Town Council's preferred plant supplier and subsequently maintained (including weeding, litter picking and watering) throughout the year by the Town Maintenance team.

Hedge Cutting

Hedges close to footpaths will be cut frequently to ensure accessibility, but otherwise the aim is to leave the remainder uncut. Any given section of hedge will be cut every other year, or on a three-year cycle for slow-growing thorn hedges. This will provide continuity of habitat for small mammals, nesting birds and insects throughout the year. Should cutting be required during the bird breeding season (March – August), a

suitability qualified ecologist will be present to ensure no breeding birds are disturbed.

Reaffirmed 18th May 2026
Review date: May 2027