

The GB10: Greater Brighton Pledges on the Environment

October 2020

Background & Context

The Greater Brighton City Region pledges to help tackle the climate change crisis and place itself at the centre of partnership efforts to effect real change.

The City Region, governed by the Greater Brighton Economic Board, is made up of Brighton & Hove City Council; Adur District Council; Arun District Council, Worthing Borough Council; Lewes District Council; Mid-Sussex District Council; Crawley Borough Council; University of Sussex; University of Brighton; Greater Brighton MET College; Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership; Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership; Adur & Worthing Business Partnership; Coastal West Sussex Partnership; and the South Downs National Park Authority.

We will use our combined authority, lobbying power, expertise and knowledge to work towards the following ten pledges on a range of environmental issues chiefly concerning water and energy conservation. The pledges are headline actions which reference an extensive range of project work about to begin under Greater Brighton auspices and with partner organisations.

1. Kelp

A scheme to reintroduce a 10-mile kelp forest off the coast of Sussex will be backed by Greater Brighton. The existing kelp forest has been largely destroyed but a plan for a Sussex Near-Shore Trawling Byelaw for Sussex District protecting the seabed proposed by the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) is currently before Government. Greater Brighton supports this effort. A new kelp forest that could be established in the wake of a byelaw could remove 70,000 tonnes of carbon per year from the atmosphere and help prevent coastal erosion. The Greater Brighton Economic Board pledges to lobby government and put its expertise at the service of this crucial enterprise.

Key words

Carbon capture. Greater Brighton members will commit to launching at least one carbon capture project, plant more trees, supporting our marshes and other projects. Many members have already committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

2. Water Recycling

Greater Brighton is partnering Southern Water to begin a pilot project which will introduce recycled water to 3,500 homes on a new estate at the Northern Arc, Burgess Hill. This will mean toilet cisterns and, possibly, garden hose supplies will use perfectly acceptable standard quality water but not drinking quality. This will keep more than 60 million litres in the environment every year and mean cheaper bills for residents. Greater Brighton will support an application for an OFWAT Innovation Fund grant for this project. If successful, this could be rolled out to other housing estates.

Key words

Water preservation. Local water resources are finite and recycling the resource will save significantly on the amount needed to be taken from already stressed chalk aquifers underground.

3. Zero Emission Fleets

Greater Brighton members have hundreds of vehicles, pool cars, refuse trucks and vans. Plans are being developed to replace standard combustion engines with low carbon vehicles as part of contract renewal, to improve air quality, cut noisy engines, and reduce carbon emissions. Greater Brighton pledges to bring fresh impetus into this process so that 50 per cent of all Greater Brighton vehicles are low carbon by 2025. We aim to show the way and work with other fleet operators and partners across the region to achieve this goal together.

Key words

Low carbon. The government has decreed that no diesel, petrol or hybrid vehicles using existing technology can be manufactured after 2030 but Greater Brighton wants to build on this by phasing out the majority of these vehicles five years earlier including exploring hydrogen waste fleet.

4. EV Charging Points

Greater Brighton pledges to work to establish a network of Electric Vehicle charging points so that every resident in the region is within a convenient distance from an energy source for their electric vehicle by 2030. This network is essential in giving residents confidence that the support is in place to power low-carbon vehicles. We will work through the planning process to ensure all new homes have access to EV charge points and on-street EV charging is rolled out along key transport corridors.

Key words

Network. While many people are keen to invest in climate change tackling measures and practices Greater Brighton recognises that it has a key role in ensuring the infrastructure is in place to allow them to do so.

5. Rewilding

Rewilding is the process by which landscape is allowed to develop naturally allowing it to be more resilient to changing climate and encouraging biodiversity. Across Greater Brighton members are already working on rewilding projects such as Wildflower Lewes and Where the Wild Flowers Grow in Worthing. Greater Brighton member University of Sussex is working on research on rewilding and rain garden projects and Greater Brighton will support this.

Key words

Water erosion. Rewilding helps halt water erosion caused by increasing rainfall. Greater Brighton will launch a publicity campaign to encourage the development of rain gardens in new and existing residences.

6. Home Visits

Greater Brighton is to support Southern Water in delivering up to 50,000 water efficiency home visits by 2021. At least 10 per cent of these, or one pilot project per local authority will be the subject of combined visits to examine energy efficiency as well. It is estimated householders could save up to £78 a year on bills this way.

Key words

Efficiency. A one-stop visit by experts is an effective way of helping to achieve water and energy efficiency. A package of energy efficiency advice and referrals will also be offered, developed jointly with existing energy efficiency programmes such as LEAP and Warmer Sussex.

7. Low Carbon Heating

Decarbonisation of the housing stock is a clear priority. Greater Brighton members will support the roll-out of planned heat networks in Crawley, Shoreham, and Worthing. In rural villages we will work with the Community Energy sector on replacing outdated and polluting oil heating with electric heating and other low-carbon fuels. Heat networks require a long-term vision and new infrastructure, so local authorities are ideally placed to coordinate with developers and planners. These projects will ensure comfort for our residents and resilience.

Key words

Heating. Heating is responsible for 40% of Greater Brighton's carbon emissions and on average 55% of home energy costs. We commit to making our council homes warmer and cheaper to heat through retrofitting, developing the local supply chain to create jobs for the future.

8. Public Buildings

Greater Brighton members own a considerable amount of building space. Members are committed to reducing energy use by 50 per cent by 2030. Already energy efficiency refits and solar panels are helping cut energy use considerably for public buildings across the Greater Brighton region. Making public buildings beacon sites will demonstrate pathways to energy reduction to the business and communities that we serve.

Solar. Solar panels are a crucial way of reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Already the combined members of Greater Brighton are making great strides in increasing the contribution of solar powered energy to overall energy usage. For example the University of Sussex has the largest solar farm of any university in the UK.

9. Innovation

Greater Brighton's members, including two universities and business partners, will establish an Innovation Forum to drive forward local project delivery, build partnerships and aid local capacity building and learning. It will also bring together latest research and best practice that can be shared across the region. Greater Brighton will explore opportunities to establish a Green Fund allowing environmental entrepreneurs to access seed funding for innovative climate change tackling projects.

Key words

Research, innovation, partnership, investment, delivery. The science behind tackling climate change is ever changing and Greater Brighton with its important Universities is ideally placed to be at the centres of this research in the region.

10. Lobby

Greater Brighton members together have a powerful voice which has been used to call for progressive change for its citizens. Greater Brighton has the ear of government, MPs and other key decision makers. In this programme Greater Brighton pledges to press central government to increase water and energy efficiency standards for new and existing buildings to reduce bills, cut carbon emissions and increase climate resilience so that usage is reduced to 80 litres per day from the current voluntary requirement of 110 litres per day. We will also lobby on energy efficiency and renewable energy issues such as changes to the Renewable Heat Incentive.

Key words

80 litres. Greater Brighton will lobby for tightening water efficiency standards for new homes from 110 litres usage per person per day to 80 to reduce the pressure from new buildings on our water-stressed region.

