Hope Valley Climate Action Strategy 2021 – 24 Draft v8

**Context**

The climate crisis is the biggest challenge currently facing human society. Arguably, it is the biggest challenge human society has faced for centuries. Action will be needed at all levels, and Hope Valley Climate Action was established to address this by working in three ways:

1. Raising local awareness
2. Local action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
3. Advocating for policies at all levels that address the climate emergency.

The climate emergency, and our response to it, is in the news, and so on the public agenda, as never before. The forthcoming COP26 in Glasgow, and debates about how we recover from the pandemic will ensure that this remains the case, on top of climate events themselves.

Our **objective** is to advocate authoritatively and effectively for radical action to address the climate crisis, based on promoting local initiatives that make a material difference in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. To do this, we need to be a credible, well respected, organization.

**Where we are now**

Over the past two years, HVCA has grown and developed. We have established a decentralised structure, with Action and Village groups, became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2020, have built up a supporter base of over 600 people, and now have four (part time) staff.

We are now recognised as a credible organization, with good expertise on climate change. We have built up a working relationship with local politicians, and major local employers. We have two projects (renewable energy feasibility study and Travelling Light) with paid project officers.

Our structure has strengths, but also weaknesses. The Action Groups are to a great extent autonomous, which allows them to build on the enthusiasms of individual members, but this can make coordination of groups’ activities more challenging, and presents us with challenges if we want to have a single strategy that all will work to implement. Some action groups, such as food and farming, have not been sustained. We have few younger active members.

Some ‘visioning’ discussions have taken place within our Action Groups, which provided some ideas of what HVCA is aiming for. However the outputs from these will require some work to make them consistent and complementary. Moreover, a vision is not the same as a strategy. We do not currently have an explicit end goal. We have talked from time to time about a carbon neutral Hope Valley by 2030, but we have not formally adopted this as a target, and nor have we been clear about exactly what we mean by it. Still less have we developed an action plan that might get us there.

Now is the time to take stock as to what the most effective strategy will be for the next phase of HVCA.

**Where we want to get to – the outcomes we want to achieve**

Over the next three years we, as HVCA, want to make a difference locally as well as nationally, and to add value to the wider debate about our response to the climate emergency. We want to consolidate our position as an effective, respected, campaigning organization, and to have brought about a step change in local awareness about climate change and its impacts, as well as implemented changes locally that have led to reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in ways that can be emulated elsewhere.

Because the GHG emissions from the Hope Valley (even when including those from the cement works), are only a tiny proportion of global emissions, reduction, even elimination, of our emissions of itself will not have a significant effect on global temperature rises. The thing that we can do which is most likely to make a difference to the future of the climate is to advocate for the adoption and implementation of effective policies, at all levels, but in particular at the highest (national and international) levels for policies that will rapidly reduce GHG emissions, and enable effective adaptation. Crucially, this also includes ensuring that sufficient finance is allocated to delivering against policies and commitments.

We are also part of a global effort to change the way in which human activity impacts on the planet and its natural systems. Our efforts in themselves will only make a small difference, but combined with thousands of others they can bring about big change.

Our vision is of the Hope Valley being more sustainable, less polluted and with quieter roads. There will be a greater sense of community and self-reliance, better transport, a healthier diet and lower energy bills. We want to demonstrate that a step-change to a lower-carbon, future with greater bio-diversity is possible and desirable in:

### Travel and transport

By 2030 CO2 emissions from transport will have been reduced dramatically because many more local people and visitors walk and cycle for everyday short journeys, use high quality, integrated rail and bus services, and have switched to electric vehicles which they use selectively and on a shared basis. The tranquil Valley has become a national exemplar of sustainable travel, benefiting local people and the visitor economy.

### Home energy efficiency

The energy efficiency of our homes will need to have been improved dramatically by 2030. The majority of homes (90% or more) will have an energy rating of C or better. This will have involved insulating walls roofs and floors to current building regulation standards or better, installing high performance double glazing and making homes fairly air-tight.

### Renewable energy generation

All homes will buy their electricity from a genuinely green supplier and over a quarter of the domestic electricity demand in the Valley will be generated locally from renewable sources. Energy storage including in large scale batteries, electric vehicle batteries, and pumped storage will be used to help manage peak demand.

### Farming, land management and restoring nature for bio-diversity

Land will be managed more sustainably, to increase bio-diversity and capture more carbon. New patterns of livestock grazing will have been established which benefit nature. Peat bogs will have been restored, trees will have been planted where appropriate, and bio-diverse meadows will have been cherished and protected. We will have constructive engagement with farmers and land owners. The Environment Land Management Scheme (ELMS) will be fully operational.

**How we are going to get there.**

There are a number of things that are necessary if we are to do this.

First, we must have a large and thriving supporter base at local level. This will demonstrate the level of interest and commitment among the local population. The population of the Hope Valley is approximately 9000, so we should aim for a supporter base of at least 2000.

We must be the established ‘go to’ place for information and advice about the climate crisis – the organisation that is known and respected for its expertise on these matters in the Valley. This will also mean an increased organizational capacity, with a full time organiser/administrator and project officers. We must support our Action and Village groups, while they maintain their autonomy and develop.

Secondly, we must have been able to demonstrate locally what can be done in terms of reducing GHG emissions. So projects such as retrofitting houses and Travelling Light are critical, not only to show what can be done, but also to show our commitment to change, adding credibility to our voice. They also help to demonstrate that the population at large is prepared and able to make the necessary changes that more ambitious policies will require. By 2024 we should aim to have five (tbc) such projects active or completed.

Thirdly, we need to ensure that reducing GHG emissions runs through everything we do.

Fourthly, we need to be able to show that we are engaged with, and speaking for, the wider population, including those groups that we have not currently engaged with as effectively. In particular this means engaging with the agricultural community, with people across the socio-economic spectrum, and with children and young people in particular.

Fifthly, we need to have developed strong links with other organisations locally and nationally, both those explicitly climate focused as well as those whose primary focus is on other things, but which overlap, for example the NFU, or local tourist organisations, as well as, where appropriate, political parties. Local action attracts allies. Joining forces with them can in turn make our voice louder.

Finally, we must develop our advocacy, both in terms of capacity and content. This means both having a clear set of ‘asks’, of the changes we want to see, and the type of policies, activities and financial flows required to deliver them, as well as developing the communication channels necessary to bring these to the attention of policy makers. The policy changes we call for must be clearly linked to social justice, both here and abroad. By 2024 there will have been another UK general election: we will have ensured that addressing climate change is a critical policy issue.

In seeking to influence policy, we will carry much more weight because of our local strengths. Action on the ground is vital both for our credibility as well as building public support for the necessary changes. Being able to demonstrate that we have a large and active supporter base is critical in ensuring our voice is heard. Local action and local awareness raising is what engages supporters.

Demonstrating that public opinion wants something to happen, and that there are votes at stake, will increase the likelihood that politicians will take the necessary policy decisions. At a very simple level, keeping something in the news, in public discourse, helps to ensure that it remains on politicians’ agenda.

If we accept that the most important thing for us to be doing is advocacy, then we need to concentrate on that, and ensure that all our activities are linked to it. We need to do the following:

* (Continue to) raise awareness about climate change locally. There remain high levels of misunderstanding on the topic. To this end we should:
  + Promote carbon literacy and similar courses
  + Seek as much local publicity as possible (Parish Mags, social media etc)
  + Run local events (climate fair, etc)
  + Demonstrate that, as well as challenges, there are wider social and environmental benefits that come from addressing climate change
* Identify our key target audiences and refresh and expand our communications to more effectively engage them, including the use of social media. Use our local experience of change as an effective part of our communication strategy.
* Encourage the establishment of action groups relating to agriculture and land management, and children, young people and education
* Recognise the value of and continue to support local action, for a number of reasons:
  + It engages people
  + It helps to raise and maintain awareness
  + It demonstrates what can be done
* Continue to build and nurture relationships with key decision makers and influencers, including
  + Local MPs and national politicians;
  + Local Authorities, local Councillors;
  + Peak District National Park
  + Transport authorities
  + Breedon and other big economic actors
  + Other climate change related advocacy groups
* Refocus on advocacy and engagement with policy makers as our primary purpose, using the forthcoming COP26 as an immediate platform, and linking with other key events in future, such as local and national elections
* We must make the link between local action and advocacy more transparent and explicit. For example, by writing up reports of our activities, inviting policy makers to see what we are up to.
* Amplify key messages and action through strategic engagement with key allies and climate change related coalitions
* Complete the documentation of our vision, for use as a tool in our advocacy.

Jeremy Wight, August 14th 2021