**PeCAN’s contribution to COP26 East Hampshire M Oxley 03.10.21**

**Land-use and Agriculture Action Group**

PeCAN made serious and positive contributions to this process, many of which have made their way into the final report from the Action Group Chairman, Sir David Normington. These comprise national and local recommendations for government at both levels.

Key: \* Successful PeCAN proposal > Unsuccessful PeCAN proposal

**Terms of Reference (TOR)**

Our original TOR were confined to the matter of how to reduce carbon emissions from agriculture, food production and land management.

\* PeCAN made a strong submission to change our TOR to include carbon sequestration and energy production, since land holdings offer enormous potential to mitigate carbon emissions through certain land practices & initiatives.

It followed that nature restoration played an important part of our discussion. This helped all to see that the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis are intimately related.

**National-level recommendations**

**Farmed landscape**

\* PeCAN asked for the National Farmers Union (NFU)’s misleading UK figure of 10% for UK farming’s contribution to emissions, to be revised.

***Our Final Report added, “These are, however, only the direct effects of farming and land use. If we look at the whole food supply chain, there are substantial additional CO2 emissions from the manufacture of fertilisers and pesticides and in the processing, packing and transportation of food”.***

> PeCAN queried two or three times why the NFU’s ‘Achieving Net Zero – Farming’s 2040 Goal’ did not mention reducing stocking density for all livestock by 10%, as advised by the government’s Climate Change Committee (CCC).

This did not result in a clear action point, but did achieve, ***“There is increasing evidence of the benefits of regenerative farming where the emphasis is on mixed rotational farming with diversity of crops, more cover crops and the integration of stock to provide natural manure”*,**

ie. regenerative farming tends to involve lower stocking densities.

**Local Authorities**

The National Audit Office report - ‘Local Government and net zero in England’ - sets out the governance actions required to help local authorities deliver on net-zero targets. It identifies serious weaknesses at the centre, mainly that there is no clear government lead with the authority to ensure that net zero carbon initiatives travel throughout departments, and down to local government.

\* PeCAN pushed hard for the group to ask our government to place a statutory obligation on local councils to deliver net-zero carbon within the agreed timeframe.

***The wording of this in our final report is, “We urge the Government, therefore, to put this right by placing a statutory duty on local authorities to take action on climate change in every aspect of its work, providing the necessary financial support to make this possible and establishing an accountability framework so that we can all tell whether our own local authorities are making progress or not”.***

**Local-level recommendations**

**Farmed landscape**

> PeCAN proposed the inclusion of a “30 by 30” pledge for all East Hampshire landowners, in line with the Environment Bill (and ELMS) which calls for 30% of all land to be protected by 2030. (There was much defensiveness from farmers who maintain they are already doing this, which is not true.

My comment on farming includes an enhanced role for the NFU:

Zero-carbon emission from farms can be achieved through a change in how

we farm and/or a reduction of the numbers of head of livestock. This would require farmers to make an estimation of their current impact, both with regard to carbon emissions and diminishing biodiversity and switch to the kind of farming that will encourage the soil itself to soak up carbon and become beneficial to wildlife. Solutions come from regenerative farming which advocates a less intensive demand on our soils through mixed, rotational farming with lower stocking density and cover-crops (green manures). This farming method will result in smaller incomes, BUT it will have greatly reduced costs, eg. little, if any, need for artificial fertilizers or pesticides.

In East Hampshire we need to phase out repeated arable cropping, which has the most damaging effect on our environment, including loss of soil, loss of soil health and loss of carbon to the atmosphere.

The NFU’s commitment to net-zero carbon should fall in line with the recommendations from the Government’s Committee on Climate Change, ie. commitment to reducing the overall head of livestock. The NFU has a pivotal role to play as the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) are rolled out, notably through lobbying on the National Food Strategy and promoting its Integrated Pest Management with Groundswell.

**Some of this made it to our Final Report***.*

**Local authorities**

**\*** PeCAN proposed that the role of our local authorities was an extremely important one, if they could be encouraged to step up to the challenge of the climate crisis. This meant that, within our Action Group, land held and managed by our local authorities came under a level of scrutiny that would not have happened without PeCAN’s intervention, especially with reference to our verges campaign,

**We had a session devoted to this subject.**

**\*** PeCAN proposed central Government funding will be required to help EHDC establish a climate crisis department, staffed by competent and experienced staff, including a number of senior roles covering the new statutory obligation on net-zero carbon, as well as expert communicators and co-ordinators with the public and local groups.

**This was included in our Final Report.**

**\*** PeCAN supported a proposal that EHDC’s planning department adopts the same climate-sensitive criteria as the national park when assessing development applications throughout East Hampshire: this could require strategic plans and local plans to be revisited in light of the climate and biodiversity crisis.

Our Final Report states, ***“A key step would be to adopt the same landscape-led, climate sensitive approach to planning as the South Downs National Park Authority”.***

> PeCAN proposed that EHDC Tree Officers are given greatly enhanced roles in protecting trees from damage and felling, aimed towards protecting and maintaining present tree stocks in good health, including the power to fine people for damage and tree loss. We proposed that EHDC should set about improving and restricting licences so that the casual felling of trees is prohibited.

This did not get in and I regret to say that trees/forestry/agroforestry did not have a great mention in our work. However we do have this rather broad statement in our Final Report, **“a very large increase in tree planting and establishment coupled with better woodland management, including greater protection and conservation of existing trees”.** This was aimed at both EHDC and land-owners including farmers.