

Climate & Ecological Emergency Forum

19 September 2023, 6.30-8pm

Guildhall, Totnes & via Zoom

Present

Cllr J Hodgson (JH)	—	Totnes Town Council (Chair)
Cllr T Cooper (TC)	—	Totnes Town Council
Cllr J Cummings (JC)	—	Totnes Town Council
CG	—	Local resident
DH	—	Harberton Parish Cllr
AM	—	Local resident
JN	—	South Hams Beekeeper
Maiken Hutchings (MH)	—	TTC Sustainability Officer (notes)

Apologies: BP, RP, FB

Recommendations

1: The Forum RECOMMENDS that the draft Terms of Reference be adopted subject to agreement by Full Council

Actions

- 1: JH to send FB's diet flyer round to Town and neighbouring Parish Cllrs for their input
- 2: MH to add FB's diet flyer to future agenda for further discussion
3. MH to liaise with JN on putting together information on Asian Hornets to share widely, both via CEEF mailing list and via TTC social media channels.
- 4: JC to liaise with JN on doing an Asian Hornets presentation at the Climate Hub
- 5: MH to enquire with Carolyn re what areas their Adopt a Grave project covers.
- 6: MH to add Asian Hornet info to Gardening for Wildlife booklet

1. Welcome & who is here

2. Notes and actions

MH and JH gave a quick update on previous recommendations. Council Matters discussed and approved funding for Transition Town Totnes' Energy Wise Show (£2457) and Totnes Bike Hub (£600).

MH gave a brief update on **FB's diet flyer** (see Appendix A) advocating for a plant-based diet, which he sent through earlier that day. He had requested the following information be passed on:

- The new flyer has been improved to increase its impact, and now specifically advocates endorsement of the Plant Based Treaty.
- He has delivered A5 versions door to door in central Totnes.
- It will shortly be published in Reconnect, the free magazine.

- Please may the Forum decide to support and endorse the widespread dissemination of the flyer, especially for FB to circulate to all Councillors (Town, District and County) with a view to TTC, SHDC and DCC passing motions to endorse the Plant Based Treaty.

There was not time to discuss in depth, but there was some brief discussion around the flyer and the topic in general, including the fact that it needs to list who has created and distributed it. It was agreed that:

ACTION: JH will send FB's diet flyer round to Town and neighbouring Parish Cllrs for their input

ACTION: MH to add FB's diet flyer to future agenda for further discussion

3. Draft Terms of Reference: 2nd iteration

MH presented the second iteration of the draft Terms of Reference for the Forum. These had incorporated suggestions from the previous meeting, as well as a suggestion to include a yearly goal/focus-setting and budget allocation discussions.

JH suggested this should happen in October/November as Council Matters Committee usually consider the draft budget in their November meeting.

There were no other comments.

The Forum **RECOMMENDS** that the draft Terms of Reference be adopted subject to agreement by Full Council.

4. Presentation: Asian Hornets in Devon – Judith Norman, South Hams Beekeeper

JN from the South Hams Beekeepers gave an excellent presentation on the threat of Asian Hornets (AH). The presentation slides can be found in Appendix C.

Key points made:

- AH eat our pollinators: one AH can catch 30 - 50 bees a day to take back to the nest to feed their young. It is therefore a huge threat to biodiversity and food production.
- We are in a crucial moment right now as we need to locate and destroy nests before the new queens leave and set up new nests next year.
- New queen wakes from hibernation in spring. The number of workers out foraging peaks in August and September.
- In late September, drones and new queens are produced. The mated queens disperse. New queens can fly many miles before hibernating. They can also travel when hibernating in caravans, etc.
- Defra and beekeepers are working hard to locate and destroy any AH nests.
- Public awareness and ability to identify AH is critical. If an AH is suspected, notify Defra via the Asian Hornet Watch, ideally with a photo if possible.



Asian Hornet

- Black in appearance
- Neat orange band near tail end
- Yellow socks

Native European Hornet

- Slightly bigger
- Yellow and brown in appearance
- Brown legs and yellow headband

After the presentation there was an opportunity for those present to ask questions.

Questions included:

- Are Asian Hornets pollinators?
 - No, the adults feed vast numbers of insects to their larvae in the nest.
- When the queens are hibernating in winter, how do you find them?
 - They usually hibernate in sheds/caravans and the like. Use a torch to look up in roof/corners. They will just be hanging there in the open, not in any nest. Once they have come out of hibernation, they start building a nest and so you will see her coming back and forth.
 - Once found, they should be destroyed.
- How can the Forum and TTC support the campaign to protect pollinators from the Asian Hornet – if someone would like to help track them, who should they contact?
 - Help spread the word and educate the general public on how to identify AH.
 - Any offers for tracking - contact South Hams Beekeepers online: shbk.org.uk/contact/

ACTION: MH to liaise with JN on putting together information to share widely, both via CEEF mailing list and via TTC social media channels.

JC suggested that JN could do a presentation at the Climate Hub, as they would very likely be interested in this. JN said she would.

ACTION: JC to liaise with JN on doing a presentation at the Climate Hub

5. Local nature projects

TTC printed and distributed the **Gardening for Wildlife booklet** to Totnes residents via the Totnes Directory. This booklet was created by the Habitat Group and made available to anyone wishing to use it. This will be available to download from TTC's Climate Emergency page soon.

Anyone who didn't receive can pick one up from the Sustainability Officer at the TTC offices, from the library, Climate Hub, St John's Church or Bridgetown Community Hall.

JH asked whether anyone had any updates on nature projects, whether from the booklet or not. She asked DH whether he knew of any projects run by **Sustainable Harbourne Valley**.

- DH informed the group that SHV have been working on a number of projects, such as a fruit growing corner in the local playpark. There have also been treeplanting events, social 'green gatherings', and organised talks on topics such as food production. He highlighted that at a recent 'Community Conversation' event – linked to the Neighbourhood Plan – many people were calling for more green sites/community spaces.
- There was some brief discussion about how living in the countryside often does not mean you have any access to it. It is often privately owned with no access given.

AM mentioned she is a part of **Transition Street** which is looking at gardening projects, possibly working with Incredible Edible.

JH mentioned the **Sustainable Farming Incentive**.

<https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/13/sfi-pinned-post/>

MH mentioned the **Agri-Innovation Programme** launched by Devon County Council/South Hams/West Devon. <https://businessinfopoint.co.uk/agri-innovation/>

Adopt a Grave

MH had been contacted by CS from the Totnes with Bridgetown Parochial Church Council. They are inviting people to adopt an untended kerbed grave, clear it and plant it with wild flower seeds, which they can provide. The graves that are not kerbed are strimmed. About 12 people have volunteered so far, mainly church members but also two members of Totnes W.I.

If anyone else would like to do this, they need to know which grave they would like to adopt so that nobody chooses the same one!

Those interested can contact Carolyn directly: cas273@yahoo.co.uk

- JH asked whether it is possible for this to be done at Follaton Cemetery as well.

ACTION: MH to enquire with Carolyn re what areas their Adopt a Grave project covers.

ACTION: MH to add Asian Hornet info to Gardening for Wildlife booklet

6. AOB

Community Composting update from JH

- JH now Executive Member at SHDC responsible for community composting.
- She is working with Sustainable South Hams
- She is funding them £21,000 to work on projects.
- Couple of weeks ago Marldon got their planning permission to go ahead with theirs.
- Difficult for people to progress. In recent meeting they were discussing what the barriers are to the projects and considering how to simplify the process.
- They are looking at setting up a quarterly forum to share info, etc.
- The Community Composting site at South Brent is now a demonstration site.

End of meeting: 20:05



DIET CHANGE STOPS CLIMATE CHANGE!

★ **GUESS WHAT?!** ★

Diet change makes a **HUGE** difference to halting climate change & restoring biodiversity loss

More than 50% of European and 90% of American consumers have reduced their meat consumption since 2018

 **Diet change is crucial**
Did you know that the food we eat, particularly meat and dairy, has a massive impact on our planet?

 **Farming methods must change**
Agriculture produces up to 37% of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHGe) which drive climate change.

 **The science speaks for itself**
Scientists agree our typical Western meat-based diet threatens the World with climate catastrophe.

WHAT'S YOUR DIET?

 **MEAT-BASED DIET?**

 **VEGETARIAN (no meat or fish)?**

 **PLANT-BASED ONLY?**

Diet change is the simplest and single most effective action you can take to stop climate catastrophe.



WHAT CAN I DO?!

1. CHANGE YOUR DIET!

2. HELP OTHERS CHANGE THEIR DIETS

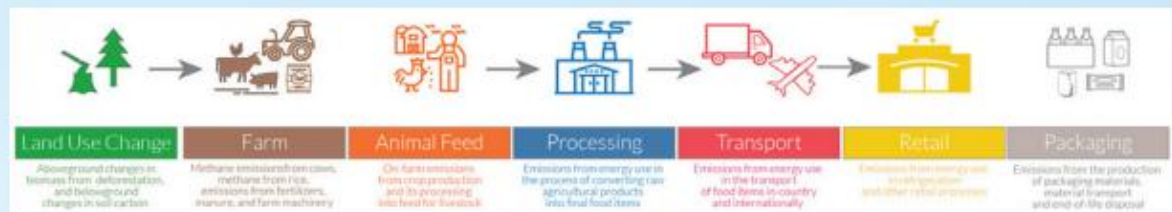
3. SIGN UP TO THE: **PLANTBASED TREATY**

[Plantbased treaty: https://plantbasedtreaty.org/](https://plantbasedtreaty.org/)

EXTREME WEATHER WILL MAKE LIFE UNBEARABLE IN OUR CHILDREN'S LIFETIME. WILL YOU TAKE ACTION NOW?

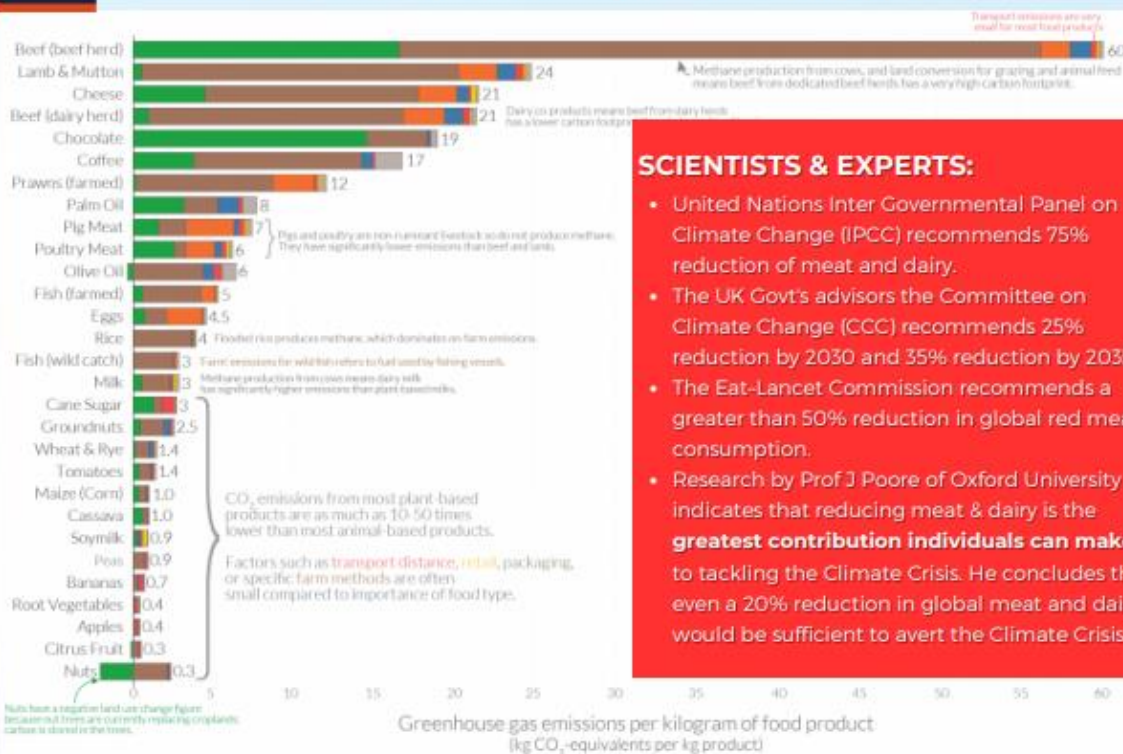
★ DIET CHANGE ... ★ STOPS CLIMATE CHANGE!

DON'T BELIEVE IT? CHECK THE SCIENCE BELOW ...



Our World
in Data

Food: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Across The Supply Chain



Additional benefits of reducing meat and dairy consumption:

- Improve human health** - The World Health Organisation (WHO) classifies red meat as a possible carcinogen.
- Remedy the Biodiversity Crisis** - 30% of the 60% loss of all wild animals since 1970 is linked to livestock production. Ref: Westhoek et al, *Global Environmental Change*, 26.
- Improve Animal Welfare** - Stop the cruel practices of intensive factory farming.

**SMALL CHANGES IN YOUR DIET WILL HAVE A BIG IMPACT
WILL YOU TAKE ACTION NOW?**

Appendix B: Draft Terms of Reference

Climate & Ecological Emergency Forum

Draft Terms of Reference – September 2023

Purpose

The Climate & Ecological Emergency Forum (CEEF) is an advisory body to Totnes Town Council (TTC). It works to progress local action on the climate and ecological issues. The Forum does not have any delegated authority but is a way of discussing issues and projects informally and including members of the community. Meetings are open for anyone to attend. The Town Council will seek the views of its advisory bodies on all matter of relevance to them.

The CEEF reports to the Town Matters Committee who will make a recommendation on any budgetary decisions to the Council Matters Committee. Any recommendations then go onwards up to Full Council for final approval.

Responsibilities

1. Recommend steps to reduce the environmental impact of TTC's activities and infrastructure
2. Consider proposals for allocations of the Climate Change budget to support appropriate projects, and make recommendations to TTC
3. Goal/focus-setting, including proposed budget allocations, yearly in October/November to fit with budget discussions at Council Matters Committee
4. Proactively inspire, investigate and progress projects and plans to reduce our carbon impact and enhance biodiversity in line with SHDC policy and targets, and Devon Carbon Plan
5. Work with existing Town Council Working Groups and Committees to ensure that recommendations are cognisant of any associated climate and environmental impacts, and that mitigation and adaptation are considered in all decisions
6. Work with higher tier local authorities and DALC to enable and encourage positive individual and group action on climate change and biodiversity
7. Collaborate with local groups to promote action on climate change and biodiversity, focusing on increasing the resilience of the town and its environs
8. Provide information to parishioners and businesses to enable individual and group action
9. Collaborate on responses to relevant public consultations

Membership

Totnes Town Councillors elects Councillors to represent TCC at the CEEF on a yearly basis. There is otherwise no formal membership and meetings are open for anyone to attend.

Frequency of meetings

Forum meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month, between 18:30-20:00 at the Guildhall, Totnes, except for December and August. These are normally in-person / Zoom hybrid meetings to enable as many people to attend as possible.

Agenda and notes

The CEEF is administered by the TTC Sustainability Officer who takes notes and issues agendas. The agenda is circulated a week prior via the TTC website and via the mailing list. Anyone can submit items for discussion for the meetings. Notes are normally posted onto the TTC website within two weeks.

Code of Conduct

All meeting attendees and members agree to follow the Code of Conduct outlined below. We will

- Treat and speak to others with respect and civility
- Speak one at a time and not interrupt others
- Have mobile phones off/on silent, or (if absolutely necessary) set to vibrate, and not on the table.
- Be punctual
- Stick to the timings agreed for the agenda items and finish on time

Asian hornets - in Devon

An introduction to the problem



What does it look like?

- Black in appearance
- Neat orange band near tail end
- Yellow socks

What does it look like?



- Black in appearance
- Neat orange band near tail end
- Yellow socks



What does it look like?

- Black in appearance
- Neat orange band near tail end
- Yellow socks



What insects look similar?

- Our native European hornet is slightly bigger
- Yellow and brown in appearance
- Brown legs
- Yellow headband.



Why is it dangerous?

- Eats our pollinators
- One AH nest can eat 11kg (24 lbs) of pollinators
- Thereby it reduces biodiversity
- Reduces food production from insect pollinated plants
- Spoils fruit
- Stings fruit pickers, especially grape pickers (single stings)
- Stings people picking blackberries, trimming hedges (multiple stings with fatalities) when nests are low.

Where has it come from?

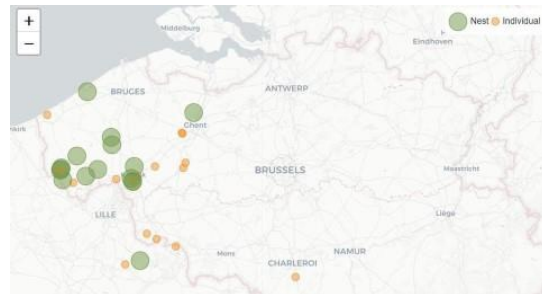
- Origin in the West has been traced back to a single hibernating queen. She is thought to have arrived in France in a boatload of garden pots from China, in 2004.
- AH have spread through France, Spain, Italy, and recently are moving North into Germany, Belgium and Holland.
- The entire incursion on the continent is shown genetically to have descended from a single queen.

How likely is it to invade Devon?

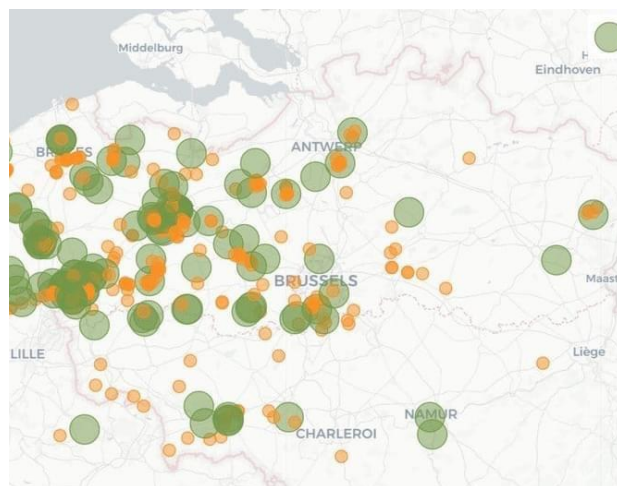
- We had a nest in North Devon in Woolacombe in 2017
- Sporadic nests in Cornwall and Dorset in subsequent years
- Two nests in Plymouth this year

How rapidly does it spread?

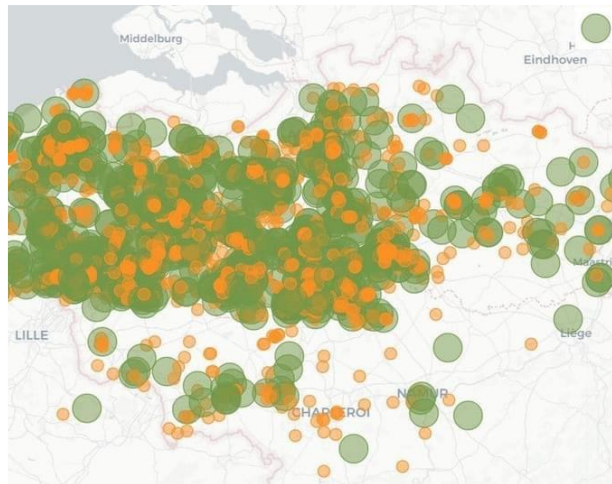
- Belgium year 1



Belgium year 2



Belgium year 3



How does the season begin?

- New queen wakes from hibernation in spring
- She feeds on early nectar, (camellias), later on insects when she has brood.
- She builds her nest low down in a sheltered spot

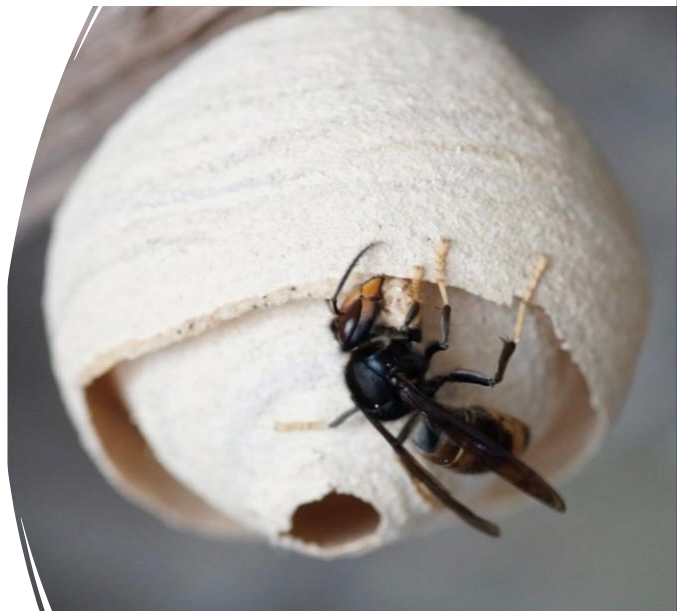


Photo: John de Carteret



Secondary nest

- They move out of the primary nest and build a bigger secondary nest
- The secondary nests grow up to 1.5 m across
- The workers enlarge it progressively by nibbling out from inside and adding to the outside



Tall trees.....

- Nests are usually in tall trees– here is one spotted after the leaves have fallen.



.....or lower down

- May be lower down in brambles, hedges
- Entrance at the equator, usually east facing



Inside the nest

- Larvae are laid in horizontal combs
- Each shelf tightly packed with new larvae to be fed

How does the season progress?

- The number of workers out foraging peaks in August and September
- In late September, drones and new queens are produced. The mated queens disperse.
- New queens can fly many miles before hibernating.
- They can also travel when hibernating in caravans etc

How do we detect the hornets early?

Simple bait bowl



Jar of bait with cloth wick



What steps can we take?

- Educate public:
 - How to identify an Asian hornet
 - Where to look for them
 - How to report them to DEFRA on “Asian HornetWatch”
- Track down their nests as soon as workers are spotted, to destroy them



How do we track down the nests?

- Put out bait
- Watch where the hornets fly from the bait
- Time how long they take to return
- Pinpoint nest position
- Mainly August and September

Nest destruction

- Only by specialist pest controllers
- Wear a sponge lined suit and visor
- France – fire service
- Jersey – tree surgeons
- Cherry picker
- Extendable lance
- Urgency to do it by end of September

The way forward

- Publicity to increase detection rate
- Local volunteers to confirm ID when no photo sent in with report
- Local volunteers to track nest when ID confirmed

Volunteers will need:

- Coordination (especially August and September)
- Training to ID and to track
- Insurance (beekeepers have this)
- Could draw from other groups – birdwatchers, ramblers, community gardeners, wildlife groups.

- Right now we have the best opportunity to prepare for this that we will ever have. It would be foolish to waste it.