

TITLE	Declaring a Climate Emergency Initial Action Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 23 January 2020
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Adopting the Climate Emergency Action Plan fulfils the criteria required for Wokingham Borough Council to declare a climate emergency. A working document, this first version of our Climate Emergency Action Plan sets out the initial steps Wokingham Borough can take towards becoming net zero carbon by 2030, including positive environmental changes that will improve the quality of life of all our residents and help to avoid the impacts of climate change.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Endorsing the assessment of Wokingham Borough's carbon footprint and the initial actions proposed for Wokingham Borough Council to play a full a role as possible in achieving a zero carbon Wokingham Borough by 2030.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

At a Council meeting on 18th July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council agreed a motion declaring a climate emergency. The declaration set out the Council's commitment to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon-neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. The Council agreed to report to Council within six months, setting out an initial plan of action towards becoming a zero carbon Borough and to set up a cross-party member-working group to monitor progress. With the publication of this plan, which is a live document that lays out the initial steps on our journey to net zero carbon, all of these commitments are now in place.

Wokingham Borough's carbon footprint has been calculated to create a baseline of carbon dioxide emissions. Based on government data and reported two years in arrears, Wokingham Borough's carbon footprint is **580.9 ktCO₂e** (based on 2017 data).

The Council has identified eight key priority areas (below) to focus on for reducing CO₂e

1. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Transport
2. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Domestic and Business Property - Green Bank Project
3. Generate more Renewable Energy in the Borough
4. Create a Local Plan that Specifies Net Zero Construction and Infrastructure
5. Increase the Levels of Carbon Sequestration the Borough Through Greening the Environment
6. Engage with Young People and Support Sustainable Schools
7. Reduce Waste Sent to Landfill
8. Encouraging Behaviour Change

The action plan, which has been populated with ideas from local residents, Town and Parish Councils, Council officers, and local businesses, is not exclusively limited to these areas.

The Council has committed £50 million pounds over the next three years (subject to approval at Council of the annual budget) to implement the actions in the Plan
A progress report with a fully costed up action plan with carbon dioxide emission data will be brought back to Council in July and reported annually thereafter.

Background

The Paris Agreement (2015) set out a framework to limit greenhouse gas emissions to levels that would prevent global temperatures from increasing to more than 2°C above the temperature benchmark set before the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. This was considered, at that time, to be the tipping point that would trigger extreme weather events across the world. Resulting in risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth

In autumn 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report, which advised that global warming must be limited to 1.5°C as opposed to the previous target of 2°C to avoid the devastating impacts of climate change. As the climate has already warmed by 1°C since the industrial revolution benchmark. The report warned that there are now only 12 years (to 2013) left within which to take the actions required to avert a crisis, rather than the 32 previously thought (to 2050).

In response to the claims made by the IPCC, in the autumn of 2018 Councils across the world started declaring a climate emergency starting with Durban, South Africa. To date 245 local authorities in the UK have done so with more declaring by the day.

Wokingham Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency on 18th July 2019. The declaration states that,

‘Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) believes the world is now in a climate emergency. More concerted and urgent action is needed at local, national and international level to protect our planet for future generations. As such, this Council commits to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030 and report within six months as to what actions are required’.

In declaring a climate emergency, Wokingham Borough Council committed to preparing a Climate Emergency Action Plan within six months, to report the actions that the Council will take and to set up a cross-party working group to monitor progress. With the publication of this Climate Emergency Action Plan all of these commitments are now in place. The report has been praised by external consultees including, the Wokingham Borough Business Partnership and the Energy Hub who have both endorsed.

The 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which recognize that ending poverty and deprivation must go hand-in-hand with strategies that reduce climate change. The Council recognises the importance of these goals and has decided to align the actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan to the SDG framework. In doing so, the Council hopes to ensure that its actions lead to a socially just response to climate change.

Analysis of Issues

Wokingham Borough's Carbon Footprint

In order to assess how the borough can become net zero carbon by 2030 and to understand the scale of the activity required, the starting point has been to calculate Wokingham Borough's carbon footprint to create a baseline of carbon dioxide emissions.

The carbon footprint is based on Government data from the department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and is reported two years in arrears. Emissions are expressed in kilotons of carbon dioxide or ktCO_{2e}. Total emissions are broken down into three sectors, commercial and industrial, domestic and transport sectors.

Wokingham Borough's carbon footprint is **580.9 ktCO_{2e}** (based on 2017 data).

The carbon footprint does not include areas that are outside the Council's area of influence such as carbon dioxide emissions from motorways and from rail travel.

Analysis of the BEIS data has also identified the highest carbon emitting sectors for the borough, which has helped the Council select its eight key priority areas where focused activity will have the most impact.

The total carbon dioxide emissions for the borough are made of three sectors; transport (31.4%); industrial and commercial (26.6%), and the domestic (43%). Further analysis shows that transport is the highest emitting sector in the borough, closely followed by the use of gas in the domestic sector.

Carbon offsetting/sequestration, where trees and other plant life absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere effectively reducing overall emissions, is also reported in the BEIS data. The amount of carbon dioxide being sequestered through trees and plants in Wokingham has been steadily increasing over the period that data has been reported.

The data shows that the Boroughs Carbon Footprint has been slowly declining since 2012. The reasons for this is that; Government targets for national renewable energy generation is increasing the proportion of sustainably generated electricity in the grid electricity supply, changing behaviours of residents and businesses, more energy efficient technologies and an increased removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through carbon sequestration.

The projected trajectory of the decrease in emissions (assuming that it would continue at its current rate) would mean that the Council's carbon footprint would be 274.6 ktCO₂ by 2030. This gives an idea of the scale of reduction required to achieve the Council's target of net zero carbon by 2030.

Wokingham Borough Council as a corporate organisation has a total carbon footprint of 11,156 tCO_{2e}, which accounts for 1.45% of the total Borough's footprint. The Council aims to continue to reduce these emissions by improving renewable generating infrastructure and energy efficiency become a net zero carbon organisation by 2030.

The Council's Key Priorities for Reducing Carbon Dioxide Emissions to Net Zero by 2030

The analysis above has helped the Council to identify eight key priority areas (below) to focus on for reducing carbon dioxide emissions. The action plan, which has been

populated with ideas from local residents, Town and Parish Councils, Council officers, and local businesses, is not exclusively limited to these areas.

1. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Transport

The Council will seek to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from transport by using technology to help improve traffic flows, reducing congestion by optimising the use of the existing road network and increasing the number of EV charging points across the borough. The Council aims to encourage residents to take up more sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling, and bus and train travel.

2. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Domestic and Business Property - Green Bank Project

There are around 72,000 dwellings in the Borough, of which an estimated 85% use fossil-fuel based natural gas. The Council will set up the Green Bank Project to help residents and businesses pay for the cost of converting from natural gas to other low carbon forms of energy. The Green Bank will help install energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy technology into homes and businesses across the borough.

The Council will implement the necessary measures to improve the current energy usage of its own corporate properties and aims to become net zero carbon by 2030.

3. Generate more Renewable Energy in the Borough

The Council plans to develop five largescale solar PV farms throughout the Borough over the next five years. This will not only increase the production of renewable energy, but has the potential to generate an income, which will then be reinvested into delivering other carbon reduction projects.

4. Create a Local Plan that Specifies Net Zero Construction and Infrastructure

All major residential and commercial developments will be expected to deliver high sustainable construction standards. Policies to enable this will be embedded in the upcoming Local Plan Update (LPU). Major developments will embrace innovative sustainable design solutions for energy efficiency and low carbon energy generation and use.

5. Increase the Levels of Carbon Sequestration the Borough Through Greening the Environment

The Council will plant 250,000 new trees over the next five years. As well as increasing the capacity for carbon offsetting, afforestation will allow for a biodiversity net gain, an approach to development that increases levels of biodiversity at a greater rate.

6. Engage with Young People and Support Sustainable Schools

The Council will launch a sustainable schools programme. The programme aims to promote behavioural change amongst young people by engaging with schools to work with children to encourage the adoption of new 'climate-friendly' behaviours that will influence their families and communities.

7. Reduce Waste Sent to Landfill

The Council aims to achieve zero waste to landfill and 90% recycling by 2030. The Council will reach the 2020 target to reach 60% recycling of waste produced in the borough. This step-change has been achieved through encouraging people in the borough to change their

behaviour. An example is the introduction of food waste collection which has been a great success borough-wide. There remains great scope for future improvement with opportunities available regarding glass recycling and increasing the range of plastics that can be recycled.

8. Encouraging Behaviour Change

As a community leader, the Council will set an example and set high standards in becoming net zero carbon. This includes its own estate but also its policies, service delivery and investment decisions. The Council will communicate and engage with all of its residents, businesses, schools, Town and Parish Councils, charities, the University of Reading, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Greater South East Energy Hub and other local authorities to work together to initiate education programmes and encourage behaviour change

Finance

The Council will seek funding wherever possible to support the delivery of the actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan. This will include bidding for funds but also some of the activities in the action plan will themselves generate income or make savings. This income will be ring-fenced to be reinvested on other projects in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The Council has already established a new role, the Climate Emergency Strategy Officer, and going forward has committed to investing £50 million pounds over the next three years (subject to approval at Council as part of annual budget agreement) to implement the actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Governance

The Council has set a Climate Emergency Working Group. Made up of a cross party group of members and representatives from Town and Parish councils, the Working Group will provide a high level steer on policy direction in relation to carbon dioxide reduction. The Group will review the delivery and performance of key carbon reduction projects by the Council and progress toward the Council's ambition to achieve net zero carbon for Wokingham Borough by 2030

The Climate Emergency Advisory Group made up of representatives from industry, academia and charities will meet on a quarterly basis. This Group will explore how new ideas and innovative technology can help reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the borough.

The Climate Emergency Officers' Group meets monthly and is attended by officers from across the Council. The Officers' Group delivers the activities set out in the Climate Change Action Plan.

Next steps

An annual Climate Emergency Progress report will be developed and brought to Council for approval in July 2020 and annually thereafter. This report will have a fully costed up action plan with carbon saving quotas against individual projects. The report will summarise the boroughs achievements and demonstrate the benefits of becoming net zero carbon.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£16,060,000	Yes – subject to approval at Council	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£15,595,000	Yes – subject to approval at Council	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£18,830,000	Yes – subject to approval at Council	Capital

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Funding to be approved at Council as part of annual budget process.

Cross-Council Implications

The Climate Emergency Action Plan is a Council wide project that requesting that all Council services, investments and delivery projects to review and prioritise reducing carbon dioxide emissions where possible.

Public Sector Equality Duty

An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached

List of Background Papers

Wokingham Borough Council Climate Emergency Action Plan. January 2020

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