

TITLE	Climate Emergency Action Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 23 July 2020
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The detailed Climate Emergency Progress report presents a fully costed up action plan with carbon saving targets against individual projects.

As a live document, this detailed Climate Emergency Action Plan sets out ambitious targets for Wokingham Borough to 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

That the Council approves the detailed Climate Emergency Action Plan, endorsing the targets for carbon dioxide reduction and the related actions proposed for Wokingham Borough Council to play as full a role as possible in achieving a net-zero carbon Borough by 2030.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

At a Council meeting on 23rd January 2020, Wokingham Borough Council approved the initial Climate Emergency Action Plan. The plan set out the key priorities for the Borough to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. At this meeting, it was agreed to return to Council within six months, with this progress report setting out a costed action plan with carbon savings quotas against individual projects.

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). This is comprised of transport emissions (31.4%), emissions from the industrial and commercial sector (26.6%), and domestic sector emissions (43%). This Borough-wide carbon footprint will be used as a baseline against which future carbon dioxide emissions are measured.

This carbon footprint figure excludes sectors that are completely beyond the Council's scope of influence, namely the emissions from major transport links (M4) (175.5 ktCO₂e) as well as diesel rail transport (14.4 ktCO₂e), which are managed by Highways England and national rail companies, respectively. Embedded carbon emissions (also known as consumption emissions) are out of the scope of the Borough's carbon footprint. However, the Council will support behavioural change through the actions in this plan.

The trajectory of carbon emissions for Wokingham Borough has been steadily decreasing since 2012. This is partly due to Central Government targets to increase the renewable energy infrastructure resulting in a higher proportion of renewable energy feeding into the electricity supply, as well as technological advances leading to greater energy efficiency.

Assuming that the current levels of local carbon reduction activity and the decarbonisation of the electricity grid and transport continues at its current rate, the projected local carbon emissions target for 2030 will be approximately 274.45 ktCO_{2e}. Of this, Industry and Commercial will account for 45.40 ktCO_{2e}, domestic for 102.20 ktCO_{2e} and transport for 143.57 ktCO_{2e}. This reduction still requires a significant level of effort locally. The methodology for calculating the carbon savings has been set out in the Carbon Accounting and Assumptions document attached.

The action plan sets out the targets for reducing carbon emissions in the Borough along with the actions identified to achieve them. Additional information including timelines, milestones and costs are also included where available. The priority areas were identified during the development of the Boroughs carbon footprint and shape how we can meet the commitment in the climate emergency declaration of on how we can play as full a role as possible, leading by example as well as by exhortation, in achieving a carbon-neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. These are:

1. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Transport
2. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Domestic and Business Property
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 in the Borough through 'Greening the Environment'
6. Engage with Young People and Support Sustainable Schools
7. Reduce Waste Sent to Landfill
8. Encouraging Behavioural Change

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

If all of the actions in the plan are implemented there will still be a shortfall of 72.67 ktCO_{2e} for achieving the aspiration of net-zero carbon by 2030. It is anticipated that new actions and initiatives will be introduced over the coming years, which will help to close this gap.

As the action plan forecasts ten years in advance, the targets in the action plan are the best estimates based on the information currently available. This means that in some cases it has not been possible to calculate the carbon savings for projects, as some of the information is not yet available. As a council, we are leading the way, in being bold and aspirational in publishing an action plan with a high level of detail about our carbon targets and how we are planning to achieve them. As projects develop, it will be possible to give more accurate carbon savings against individual actions.

It should be noted that despite the Council's best efforts many of the outcomes rely on factors which are outside the Council's control. The effective delivery of this action plan depends on the influence and support of multiple agencies, including the town councils and parish councils. The Council is committed to working in partnership to achieve these ambitious targets. These partners will not only help us to deliver but will take the responsibility for achieving targets to help close the gap.

Responsibilities will be made clear in future iterations of the action plan. Assumptions and conditions are also likely to change over time, for example, the predicted decarbonisation of the electricity grid may be to lesser extent than predicted.

This action plan is a working document and planning tool that allows understanding the council's trajectory, the scale of ambition and which actions need to be implemented to achieve the 2030 goal. It is expected that this will change significantly over time, as many of the actions will develop as new information emerges.

The development of the plan has been supported in principle by our partners in the Climate Emergency Advisory Board, which is formed with representatives from organisations including businesses, charities and academia including University of Reading, National Grid, Greater South East Energy Hub, Chairman of WBC Business Group, Sustrans, Scottish Southern Electric, Volker Highways, Reading Buses, South Western Railway, Great Western Railway, amongst others.

The Council has committed £50 million over the next three years to implement a number of actions in the plan. This funding has been allocated to the projects initially identified in the climate emergency plan approved by Council in January 2020. Additional funding streams will be required to support the delivery of the plan.

The Council has committed to updating the action plan and will publish it in July each year as part of an annual climate emergency progress report. The run rate for future performance will be calculated, so a more accurate performance assessment can be made in relation to the ten-year target.

Background

On 18th July 2019, a motion was passed at Full Council to declare a climate emergency in Wokingham Borough. In doing so, the Council committed to playing as full a role as possible in achieving a net carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. The Council also pledged to develop a climate emergency action plan to show how Wokingham Borough can achieve its ambitions as well as set up a cross-party working group to investigate and propose further recommendations to achieve a carbon-neutral borough.

The Wokingham Borough Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was approved at a Full Council on the 23rd January 2020. The plan set out the Borough's baseline emissions/carbon footprint along with a breakdown of carbon emissions by sector. This information was used to identify areas of priority where the most carbon savings could be made along with a high-level action plan setting out potential actions that the Council could lead on.

At this meeting, it was agreed to return to Council within six months, with this progress report setting out a costed action plan with carbon savings quotas against individual projects.

Analysis of Issues

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 rail travel. Embedded carbon emissions (also known as consumption emissions) are out of the scope of the Borough's carbon footprint. However, the council will support behavioural change through the actions in this plan.

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 the 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.

Assuming that the current levels of local carbon reduction activity are maintained due to national policy that includes the decarbonisation of the electricity grid and transport, will mean that the projected local carbon emissions target for 2030 will be approximately 274.45 ktCO_{2e}. Of this, Industry and Commercial will account for 45.40 ktCO_{2e}, domestic for 102.20 ktCO_{2e} and transport for 143.57 ktCO_{2e}. This reduction still requires a significant level of effort locally.

The methodology for calculating the carbon savings has been set out in the Carbon Accounting and Assumptions document attached.

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 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 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 by 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 has committed £50 million over the next three years to implement a number of actions in the plan. This funding has been allocated to the projects initially identified in the climate emergency plan approved by council in January 2020. Other funding streams are likely to be needed in addition to this funding to support the delivery of the 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 provides a high-level steer on policy direction in relation to carbon dioxide reduction.

A Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee was set up in May 2020. 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. This group is made up of representatives from industry, academia and charities. The advisory board it is set out to use the expertise and experience from its members to provide a level of scrutiny and understanding that balances the needs of the response against the cost, effort and regulatory processes, explore how innovative technology can help to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the borough.

The Climate Emergency Investment Board. The investment board is made up of relevant representatives who will assess each action in the Climate Emergency Action Plan in terms of carbon saved, income generated and costs to decide which actions will be invested in by the council. The route to apply for funding is through the Climate Emergency Investment Board. Projects need to prepare a business case which demonstrates the carbon savings, make savings or generate income as well as how they will meet service objectives.

The Climate Emergency Officers Group. It is attended by officers from across the Council and meets monthly. The officers' group delivers the activities set out in the Climate Emergency Action Plan, provides direction in relation to carbon dioxide reduction

initiatives, and co-ordinates the council's efforts to ensure a unified response to the climate emergency.

Next steps

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	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

If implemented, the council may need to support the development of further strategies and projects that will result in carbon dioxide reductions. This may lead to additional resource implications to support the transition to net-zero carbon by 2030.

Cross-Council Implications

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

Public Sector Equality Duty

Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

NA

List of Background Papers

Wokingham Borough Council Climate Emergency Action Plan
Carbon Accounting Methodology and Assumptions

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