

TITLE	Climate Emergency Action Plan Second Annual Report
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 22 July 2021
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Second Progress Report outlines the progress made on the actions that were approved in July 2020 towards the target to become a net-zero carbon borough by 2030.

The setting of targets within the plan will support further action to place Wokingham at the forefront of addressing climate change, whilst improving the quality of life for all residents.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council approves The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Second Progress Report and endorses the targets and actions for carbon dioxide emissions reduction to enable Wokingham Borough Council to play as full a role as possible in achieving a net-zero carbon borough by 2030.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Second Progress Report presents an updated costed action plan, with reviewed carbon saving targets against individual projects where possible. The report summarises the Borough's carbon footprint, the performance for the last year, the plans for the years ahead and identifies the benefits of becoming net-zero carbon.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan sets out targets to achieve carbon dioxide reductions in the identified key priority areas. The report contains an overview of each key priority area, outlining the associated carbon savings and key achievements for the year, the timelines for delivery and associated milestones.

Some of the key achievements and progress made over the last twelve months include: achieving over £2 million of external funding to support the projects identified in the CEAP; reviewed all-new corporate development and applied significant interventions to reduce their carbon emissions, as a result, Dinton Activity Centre is the first net-zero carbon building in the Borough; we made progress in delivering greenways and engaging with residents to support the development of more cycling and walking infrastructure; completed the studies for the first solar farm which is now in planning application, introduced the GHG and ECO schemes to help residents retrofit their homes; introduced the Wokingham Community Energy scheme to give residents an opportunity to invest in renewable energy projects; engaged schools in the first Youth Climate Conference; and businesses through the Climate Conversations online event; amongst others.

Most of the actions to be delivered over the first few years set in motion the groundwork and foundations for new strategies and policies that will influence our way of life locally over the medium and long term. The biggest gains (in terms of carbon savings) are

expected to come towards the end of the decade after most of the actions have come to fruition.

Wokingham Borough's carbon footprint for June 2020 is 573 ktCO₂e (BEIS 2018). Carbon emissions reduced by 7.9 ktCO₂ from those reported on the previous year (580.9 KtCO₂e BEIS 2017).

It is predicted that after all the actions in the plan are implemented, the Borough will still fall short of its net-zero carbon target by approximately 67.1 ktCO₂. It is now two years since the council declared a carbon emergency. Although much progress has been made, we recognise that to close the gap we must continue to be agile and adapt to new, and as yet unidentified, opportunities. Furthermore, there are changes to national policy influenced by the new decarbonisation commitments and the effects of the COVID pandemic. These factors will have an impact on our future carbon emissions and will be closely monitored.

This action plan is a working document and planning tool that allows us to understand where we are heading and to implement new actions accordingly. Without this tool, we would not have a clear path on what the scale of additional action should be relative to ongoing performance. It is expected that this plan will change significantly over time as many of the actions will develop, and new information emerges.

The Council has committed to continually revisit targets, to adjust or even entirely re-evaluate them in line with actual progress, new policies, and global events that might affect the climate emergency agenda. The updated action plan will be published in July each year. The annual reporting process will enable continuous assessment of performance against the 2030 target, predicted future progress and further actions that might be required.

Background

Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency on 18th July 2019. In doing so, the council committed to playing as full a role as possible in achieving a net zero carbon Wokingham Borough by 2030.

On the 23rd of January 2020, the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was approved at full council. The plan set out the borough's baseline emissions 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. In July 2020, a detailed Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Report was published. The report set clear targets along with a fully costed action plan, with carbon saving targets against individual projects.

Wokingham Borough Council committed to return to council with an annual progress report in July every year to summarise the borough's achievements and demonstrate the benefits of becoming net-zero carbon.

Analysis of Issues

Wokingham Borough's carbon footprint for June 2020 is 573 ktCO₂. This is based on Government data from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS 2018). Emissions are expressed in kilotons of carbon dioxide or ktCO₂. Total emissions are broken down into three sectors, commercial and industrial 148.6 ktCO₂ (24%), domestic 258.2 ktCO₂ (43%) and transport 182 ktCO₂ (30%). These are scope 1 and 2 emissions. The carbon footprint figure excludes sectors that are completely beyond the council's scope of influence, namely the emissions from major transport links (M4) (172.8 ktCO₂ in 2018) as well as diesel rail transport (12.8 ktCO₂ in 2018), which are managed by Highways England and national rail companies, respectively.

Carbon sequestration in the Borough accounts for 15.9 ktCO₂ a year through forestry and natural land use (LULUCF), which is around 2.8% of the Borough's carbon footprint.

Overall carbon emissions reduced by of 7.9 ktCO₂ in June 2020 from the reported 580.9 KtCO₂e in June 2019 (BEIS 2017). Emissions are reported two years in arrears, this figure follows the predicted business as usual trajectory from government targets at a national level. CO₂ reductions from interventions led by the council (e.g. retrofitting public buildings and domestic properties, renewable energy generation projects, etc.) are expected to manifest from years 2022-2023 (based on figures published 2021 by BEIS) when projects are been implemented.

The per capita carbon emissions for 2020 were 3.4tCO₂ (BEIS 2018), a decreased of 0.1 tCO₂ from the 3.5tCO₂ reported in 2019 (BEIS 2017). These are monitored to demonstrate the behaviour of emissions in the context of a growing population.

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, then the projected local carbon emissions reduction target for 2030 will be approximately 274.45 ktCO₂. This has been calculated following an extrapolation of the

data provided by BEIS, our projections take no account of the unknown medium and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on future emissions.

It is predicted that when all the actions in the plan are implemented, the Borough will still fall short of its net-zero carbon target by approximately 67.1 ktCO₂. It is anticipated that new, and as yet undefined, opportunities, actions and initiatives will be introduced over the coming years which will help to close this gap. In the current environment, rapid changes to the national policy are taking place. These have been influenced by the new decarbonisation commitments and the effects of the COVID pandemic and will have an impact on our future carbon emissions. New government commitments and policies are closely monitored to inform the CEAP, our targets and emissions trajectories.

Wokingham Borough Council as a corporate organisation has a total carbon footprint of 11,156 tCO₂, 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 to become a net-zero carbon organisation by 2030. Furthermore, changes to our way of working for the last year as a result of the pandemic reduced the carbon footprint of Wokingham Borough Council by 56% according to a recent assessment. This was mostly due to a huge decrease in emissions from commuting.

Overall, more than half of the emission reductions needed rely on residents and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions. However, the council recognises that the targets are ambitious and that to achieve them we need to increase collaboration with our residents, local businesses and organisations, neighbouring authorities and to continually align our efforts to emerging national policy and targets. Many of these decisions depend on having supporting infrastructure and systems in place. Wokingham Borough Council has powers or influence over roughly a third of emissions in the Borough.

The council's role as an influencer and convenor is vital for the successful delivery of this plan. However, local government has seen a significant impact on its finances as a result of additional costs and lost income throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a risk that, despite our commitment to climate goals, projects may be delayed because of resource constraints and the need to fulfil our statutory responsibilities. The Recovery Strategy looks at the opportunities presented by COVID such as encouraging the growth of green industries, maximising the short-term environmental benefits of lockdown restrictions based on data and insights (e.g. air quality, active travel), reflecting the green agenda in all council policies.

Because 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. We will be able to define information more accurately on carbon savings against individual actions as projects develop.

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

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 to focus on reducing carbon dioxide emissions. A summary of each area and progress made over the last year is given below.

1. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Transport

Being one of the key sectors which contributes towards emissions in the borough, transport targets remain a priority for the council. Despite the difficulties presented by COVID-19 lockdowns, projects such as the green ways, park & ride schemes and cycling training were successfully delivered over the last year. Furthermore, as a result of the government ban on non-essential travel and resulting rise in home working, there was a 31% decrease in car-use, leading to potential carbon savings of 44,930.85 tCO₂ over the year.

2. Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Domestic and Business Property

There are around 72,000 dwellings in the Borough, of which an estimated 85% use fossil-fuel based natural gas. The council set up the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Green Homes Grant schemes to support residents to reduce their energy usage and carbon emissions and increase the uptake of green energy technologies. Households who install energy saving measures will see significant savings in their energy bills and carbon emissions. Many of the households benefiting will be low-income or vulnerable households on benefits, whose homes currently have poor energy efficiency ratings. Over the last twelve months, at least 500 properties have benefited from the ECO and GHG schemes achieving potential carbon savings of 209 tCO₂ per year.

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 and to deliver schemes to support residents and businesses to instal renewable energy technologies. 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. Over the last year, the feasibility assessment for the first solar farm was completed and is currently under planning application process. This will likely generate 32MWh's a year and has the potential to save around 6,325 tCO₂ per year when compared to using traditional fossil fuels. Additionally, the Wokingham Community Energy scheme was approved by Executive in January 2021. The scheme will encourage sustainable energy projects, allow residents and local organisation to invest in green energy and help tackle the climate emergency. The council has also delivered the installation of renewable energy systems in public buildings and is planning to continue on this trajectory

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). The programme for the LPU is in the process of being finalised, consultation on an alternative strategy to meet our overall housing targets and the revised Local Plan is anticipated in Autumn 2021. Council owned development has been assessed and measures to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and where possible, make new buildings net-zero carbon have been introduced. As a result, Dinton Activity Centre is the first carbon-

positive building built in the Borough. The new building will generate all of its own power (using solar panels and heat pumps), and, because of all the other energy efficiency measures that will be installed, it will generate more green energy than it uses.

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

The council committed to plant 250,000 new trees over the next five years. As well as increasing the capacity for carbon offsetting, afforestation will also improve our local air quality, protect and enhance important habitats and safeguard our local biodiversity. Over the last year we have focused on doing the groundwork that will ensure the long-term sustainability of this project. In February 2021 the council created a partnership with the Woodland Trust to support the delivery of our tree planting and secured £300,000 through the Emergency Tree Fund.

6. Engage with Young People and Support Sustainable Schools

The council wants to support to schools to become more sustainable. 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 in turn influence their families and communities. The first Youth Climate Conference took place in October 2020, this was the first event delivered online. The video series received a total of 5,600+ views across all social media platforms. In addition, retrofitting projects were undertaken at schools delivering LED lighting and heat pump installations, and six schools are taking part in an air quality project and have diffusion tubes at their schools to monitor levels of pollutants.

7. Reduce Waste Sent to Landfill

The council is committed to achieving zero waste to landfill by 2050 and 70% recycling by 2030. Already the 2020 target to recycle 50% of waste produced in the borough has been met and this step-change has been achieved by encouraging people in the borough to change their behaviour as well as introducing the new food waste collection system, which has been a great success borough-wide.

15,502.79tCO₂ were saved (221.47kgCO₂ per household) due to recycling 35,634 tonnes of waste which is a significant achievement. This was achieved thanks to a number of initiatives such as improving the quality of waste to reduce the loss of recyclable material and several campaigns to increase awareness. There remains great scope for future waste management opportunities and improvements i.e glass recycling and increasing the range of plastics that can be recycled. Although recycling is a key area to manage our waste the focus will now include waste minimisation and reuse to reduce the amount of waste produced.

8. Encouraging Behaviour Change

As a community leader, the council is committed to set an example and set high standards in becoming a net-zero carbon organisation. This includes its own estate but also its policies, service delivery and investment decisions.

Over the last year the council delivered the Youth Climate Conference; Climate Drop-in Sessions with towns and parish councils; Climate Conversations Event with businesses; consultations on greenways, walking and cycling infrastructure; and electric vehicles off-street charging points, amongst others. The council has also increased external communication around climate emergency and progress on projects within the CEAP.

Internal engagement with council staff about sustainability in the workplace has increased significantly with over ten campaigns delivered in the last twelve months.

Behavioural change offers the opportunity to significantly impact the carbon savings to be achieved through this action plan such as increased use of public transport and energy efficiency, as well as reducing out of scope emissions from purchases of goods and services. The council is committed to engage its stakeholders at all levels in the delivery of this plan and to continually encourage the adoption of new behaviours.

Finance

The council will seek funding wherever possible to support the delivery of the actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan as this cannot be delivered without additional resources. 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 in other projects in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

In its 2021/22 budget Wokingham Borough Council committed £71million over the next three years to implement actions in the plan. These include developing solar farms to create a renewable energy infrastructure and energy reduction projects at existing properties to make them energy efficient. The budget also supports managing congestion by improving traffic flow and reducing incidents which cause delays (including using CCTV cameras).

Additionally, more than £2 million of external funding was secured over the last twelve months to support the implementation of tree planting, air quality monitoring, retrofitting council owned buildings and domestic properties, supporting active and sustainable travel, and building Dinton Activity Centre as the first carbon positive building in the Borough.

However, additional funding streams will be required to support the delivery of the plan into the future.

Scrutiny and Review

The Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group was set up in May 2020 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Task and Finish Group focussed on scrutinising the emerging targets and key performance indicators underpinning the Action Plan. The Group has made 13 recommendations to the Executive on ways to help to strengthen the Action Plan, making it more robust, transparent and evidence based. The Council has taken on board the recommendations as the basis for further work.

Additionally, external review and direction to the action plan is given by The Climate Emergency Advisory Board, which is made up of representatives from industry, academia and charities. The advisory board acts as a 'critical friend' and utilises the expertise and experience from its members to provide a level of scrutiny, give advice and guidance at both the strategic and project level.

Next steps

The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) is a ten-year plan, some actions will be delivered sooner than others. Delivery timelines are provided for each action. Short term actions will be delivered within two or three years (2020-2023), medium term actions are designed to take several years to reach fulfilment (2024 to 2028), and longer-term actions will take many years to come to fruition (2028 to 2030).

Each action will be closely monitor with a traffic light rating system (Red/Amber/Green) to provide a visual overview of progress. Additionally, targets will be reviewed, adjust or even entirely re-evaluate them in line with actual progress, new policies, and global events that might affect the climate emergency agenda.

The updated action plan will be published in July each year as part of an annual climate emergency progress report and will incorporate new evidence, policy development and methodology improvements. The annual reporting process will therefore enable continuous assessment of performance against the 2030 target, predicted future progress and further actions that might be required.

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

Equalities assessment has been completed. Appendix C

List of Background Papers

Appendix A. Wokingham Borough Council Climate Emergency Action Plan Second Progress Report
Appendix B. Carbon Accounting Methodology and Assumptions

Appendix C. EqIA

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