

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Wirral Council**

### **Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan**

**2020 – 2030**

#### **Summary**

##### **FOREWORD:**

This plan sets out Wirral Council's response to the global climate crisis - the things that we are doing and will do in the face of the Climate Emergency.

The latest scientific evidence on the damage to our climate paints a very serious picture. To put it simply, if we do not stop producing the pollution which is causing unnatural global warming as a matter of urgency, then we are heading towards a global catastrophe.

The science says that we need to get to net zero greenhouse gas emissions across the globe by the middle of this Century if we are to stop things getting much worse. To do this, we need to all but eliminate the use of fossil fuels for heat, power, and transport which will require a considerable change in the way we work.

Luckily, we are not starting from scratch. We know many of the things that we need to do and are doing some of them already. However, in the light of the new evidence, we need to move even further and faster.

Though the situation is daunting, we can all play a part in turning things around. This is both a crisis and an opportunity. Through our action plan, Wirral Council will lead the way in reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030, ahead of the Cool Wirral Partnership's area-wide target of 2041 and the government's national 2050 target. Together, we can build a more sustainable and climate resilient Wirral.

##### **INTRODUCTION:**

###### **The Climate Challenge**

Unnatural Climate Change is widely evidenced and is happening right now. We have already seen 1°C of abnormal heating since 1900, and while this may not sound like much, the speed at which it has risen, and the impacts are very concerning.

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a special report which found that we must limit warming to 1.5°C if we are to avoid a tipping point of irreversible changes. The warmest five years on record have all occurred since 2015, and if we continue as we are, we on track to hit 1.5°C as early as 2030 (NOAA, 2020).

Predicted impacts of this global heating and the associated extreme weather events include risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth (IPCC, 2018). We have less than ten years left to take the serious action required to avert this crisis and avoid the potentially catastrophic consequences for people and the planet.

## **What are we doing?**

Even before we declared an Environment and Climate Emergency, Wirral Council prioritised responding to climate change as a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and its successor, the Climate Local Initiative. This commitment was reaffirmed in July 2019 with our cross-party declaration of an Environment and Climate Emergency (CE). It commits us to achieving carbon neutrality by seeking additional funding to resource our response, planting additional trees, investing in more electric vehicle charging points, exploring the possibility of a solar farm, and implementing appropriate decision making tools supported by a staff and member training programme. With the CE declaration we are joining other local authorities which have declared an emergency and committed to carbon neutrality by 2030 to recognise the gravity of the situation, following parliament's national declaration in May.

Tackling climate change demands that we eliminate climate-related pollution and adapt to the unavoidable changes from pollution already in the atmosphere. We aim lead by example and encourage wider action through this Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan for 2020-2030. It is a key part of our locally determined contribution to the borough-wide COOL Wirral Partnership Strategy, laying out how we as a council will mitigate against, and become more resilient to, climate change. Many environmentally conscious measures have already been taken including installing solar panels on council buildings and replacing streetlamps with low LED lamps, but there is much more to be done to reduce the carbon impact of Wirral's public services.

## **Part of a Bigger Picture**

The climate emergency is a 'more than council' issue. It is part of a wider effort locally, nationally, and internationally. Whilst this plan focuses on what we as a council will do, we recognise the importance of using our influence to encourage others to play their full part too. We will build on the foundation we have already established as the convener of the Cool Wirral Partnership to co-ordinate and encourage wider action. By working together, we can achieve carbon neutrality across the council's operations by 2030 and across the borough as a whole by 2041, setting an example for other local authorities and leading the way in the national government's bid to be carbon neutral by 2050.

## **Our Approach**

To develop our Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan, we reviewed pre-existing guidance and best practice examples from a broad range of organisations with relevant expertise in the climate emergency agenda. We used the Association of Public Service Excellence's (APSE) resources and guidance as an initial framework for our action plan, and then cross-referenced this with resources from the Local Government Association (LGA), Ashden, Friends of the Earth, the Centre for Alternative Technology, as well as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Bristol City Council, Lambeth Council and Cornwall Council's climate emergency action plans. A composite action plan has therefore been created building on the experience and expertise of all these organisations, while also being aligned to the existing strategies and unique position of Wirral. The action plan areas have been developed in collaboration with the service areas they pertain to. This cross-directorate ownership not only ensures that actions are ambitious and achievable, but that they will be fully integrated into service delivery to address the requirements of the climate emergency resolution.

## **THE ACTION PLAN:**

### **Leadership**

Wirral Council is committed to providing the leadership and governance mechanisms required to deliver on our ambitious emissions objectives. We will establish an Environment and Climate Emergency Action Group to drive the actions and change processes forward, with representation at a senior level to provide the necessary influence and capacity. The Action Group will ensure that progress is reported against the plan's milestones.

The Council will play a key supporting role in the delivery of the Cool 2 strategy, working with partners and Wirral's communities to drive the change required. We will encourage our partners to declare climate emergencies and develop action plans of their own to support Cool 2. By providing secretarial support to the Cool Wirral partnership's steering group and ensuring there is capacity to respond to the Climate Emergency, we will play an active part in Cool 2's execution.

Through the Council's commitment to becoming a 'Carbon Literate Organisation', Council members and officers will receive training and ongoing support to provide climate emergency leadership across Wirral and the Liverpool City Region.

### **Resources and Finance**

To fully respond to the CE declaration, the Council has committed to ensuring that the necessary resources are aligned to deliver the requirements of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan. We recognise the immense scale of the plan we are proposing and the challenge getting to net zero by 2030 presents given the ongoing financial difficulties the Council faces. However, as a stated corporate priority, the Council is re-aligning finance and resources to ensure that the actions and investment set out in the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan can be carried out. Currently Climate Emergency funding comes from a number of sources including mainstream council funding following the annual budget allocation as well as various grants, funding schemes, and awards.

A key responsibility of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Group will be to identify and pursue funding and resource opportunities to support the delivery of the action plan. The Action Group will work individually and collaboratively with the Cool Wirral partnership, regional colleagues and institutions, and central government to ensure that funding opportunities are utilised to maximise our climate emergency response. All heads of service will be expected to support in the identification and raising of funds for climate emergency initiatives.

### **Measurement and Reporting**

As part of the Environment and Climate Emergency Declaration, the Council has committed to reinstating the production of an annual Carbon Budget Report which will be instrumental in measuring progress made towards emissions reductions. We will work with Local Partnerships, a public sector consultancy firm, to develop a robust pathway projection for getting to net zero by 2030, which will then be a key resource to benchmark our progress against. The CEAP workbook itself will be a dynamic RAG-rated document that will be updated frequently by Council officers as actions are initiated and completed.

The Environment and Climate Emergency Action Group will have overall oversight and will convene monthly throughout the year to monitor progress. It will be responsible for producing an annual

report on the progress made towards achieving the CEAP's key objectives to reach carbon neutrality for the Council and its provision by 2030 and to ensure a more climate resilient Wirral.

### **Staff Investment**

We realise that our bold climate commitments will only go from words on a page to real action if we have our whole work force behind them. We need our staff to be invested: to understand climate change and the contributions they can make individually and as a team to combat it. Crucially this is not just a plan for one team, it is a cross-departmental collaborative action plan for all our service areas and implicates every member of staff.

We will push for awareness and action across all levels of the council from core management competence to climate emergency check-ins and the delivery of carbon literacy training for key officers which will be rolled out further through lunch and learns and internal staff engagement activities. We need everyone who works for the Council to act as Climate Champions and push for the changes we want and need to see within their areas.

### **Transport**

It is well known that the transport sector is one of the major polluters and contributors to climate change, and this is no different at the local level. As a council will are therefore well aware of our transport emissions and have been working hard to reduce them, with the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan committing to even more sustainable travel alternatives. We will do this at multiple levels through the creation of a Wirral Council Sustainable Travel Support Team who will work with local residents, businesses, and the community to encourage sustainable travel.

The Council will push for our staff to travel more sustainably and ensure provision for them to do so via a new Wirral Council Staff Travel Plan and Electric Vehicle Strategy. We will also ensure that the required infrastructure is in place across Wirral to enable active travel, be it in the installation of LED streetlights across the whole borough or the development of more local cycling networks. Wirral's 2020 Active Travel strategy and taking advantage of forward planning development projects will be key to this work.

Lastly, we will push for behaviour change to normalise car sharing, use of public transport, or better still walking and cycling through training and engagement activities like the LCR-wide Sustainable Travel Campaign and walk to school initiatives.

### **Assets and Energy**

One of the most important areas for understanding and reaching our net-zero carbon emissions target is the Council's Assets and Energy sector. If we are to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, we need to understand where our carbon emissions are currently coming from to manage and reduce them.

The first plank in the Asset Management Energy Strategy is therefor to re-establish the Council's Carbon Budget targeting and reporting which will then enable the development of a carbon management system. We will evaluate our assets and identify the biggest corporate carbon emitters, then determine how best to reduce them. Lower emissions standards will also be established and enforced for our assets.

In addition to energy consumption, the source of our energy has a huge impact on our emissions. Accordingly, we will set ambitious targets for short-term low carbon energy and seek out renewable energy alternatives to power our buildings and services.

## **Culture and Events**

The Council runs many events and cultural activities in the community, and these represent an excellent opportunity to demonstrate our green credentials and put pressure on contractors to be more sustainable. We will work to decrease the carbon footprint of our major commercial events which occur as part of Wirral's culture programme by ensuring at least 75% of traders and suppliers are local, reducing the energy intensity of events where possible, banning single use plastics and non-biodegradable materials, providing vegetarian and vegan food is more widely, and promoting sustainable travel.

Cultural events will provide a space to push the climate emergency message and educate and encourage our local communities to act through positive and empowering messaging. We will also work collaboratively with partners to raise awareness of the climate emergency and drive behaviour change throughout the Wirral and Liverpool City Region. We will continue to research new ways of doing things to make sure future events as sustainable as they can be.

## **Communication**

We want our staff internally and residents externally to be armed with the best knowledge around climate change and what they can do to help, so communication work is weaved throughout our entire action plan as well as occupying it's own section. The Action Plan therefore commits to developing a dedicated Environment and Climate Emergency Communication Strategy which will take a two-winged approach.

We will target staff with an internally focussed campaign using roadshows and workplace challenges to keep our employees aware of the corporate work we are doing and how they can contribute. We will also run an externally focussed campaign for residents to raise awareness of the changes local people can make to help with the Climate Emergency and communicate what we are doing as a council to lead by example.

## **Waste Management**

We are all well drilled in the 'three r's' of reduce, reuse, and recycle, but the way we deal with our waste really does have a big impact on the environment and we can all do better to reduce it. That's why our first action within waste management is to promote the principles and benefits of a circular economy to our partners, local businesses, and industries through the Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority, Liverpool City Region, and Chamber of Commerce.

In recognition that resources are finite, we will implement a new Materials Management Policy within the council covering prevention, reuse, recycling, and the correct disposal of all materials. We will make sure that all council buildings have recycling facilities for a range of materials and plan to establish a council employee swap shop to play our part.

We will also promote prevention, reuse, and repair to residents by organising swap events across Wirral, piloting a subsidised bulky collection in targeted wards, and raising awareness in future generations through our Eco-schools and Cool Schools Programme. Lastly, will explore the feasibility of a Joint Waste Management Service to implement new services and meet the needs of the Climate Emergency and new government legislation.

## **Procurement Management Strategy**

As a council, we work with many external contractors to procure good and services. This presents an unparalleled opportunity to directly influence the wider community by building climate emergency

requirements into our existing contracts and holding service providers to account. In response to the CE declaration, we will overhaul our current contract management framework to ensure that all future contracts require contractors to deliver on their end of climate emergency requirements as well.

A Climate Emergency statement will be developed and issued to commissioners to encourage their environmental challenge to contracts. All tender documents will also have to include a Wirral Council Environmental Impact Statement and contractors will need to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability. We will investigate ways to measure and regulate the legitimacy of contractors and suppliers' environmental activity against their commitments to hold them to account.

New council environmental policies such as the ban on single use plastics, the tree strategy, and pollinator policy will all be built into the contract management system. An Environmental Impact Strategy workshop will be offered to commissioners to support this work.

### **Carbon Capture**

In addition to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions directly, the Council recognises that getting to net-zero emissions by 2030 may also require some offsetting. Our new Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy for 2020-2030 will play a major role here by committing to plant 210,000 trees over the next decade, equating to an ambitious doubling in Wirral's tree canopy cover by the time they are fully grown. To achieve this, we will establish an action plan for the tree planting programme and work with local interest groups under the umbrella of the Tree Strategy Overview and Advisory Action Group.

A suite of new environmental policies will support with carbon capture efforts. The council's new pollinator policy will help to protect key pollinators like bees, as will our revised grass verge maintenance approach. Investments in new blue and green infrastructure projects will also support the climate emergency by capturing carbon and making Wirral more resilient to Climate Change. Urban greening features such as green corridors and the potential greening of brownfield sites will all work to sequester carbon and improve the overall environmental quality of Wirral.

### **Ways of Operating**

The way we do things can have a big impact on the environment and behaviour change can be one of the biggest things to alter. However, nothing has shown us that rapid behaviour change is possible better than our response to COVID-19. Although the Council had already introduced Microsoft Teams and was pushing for more virtual meetings to reduce internal business travel, the number of Teams meetings understandably skyrocketed by 276% between March and April as we shifted to homeworking. We will build on this momentum and embed online meetings into the 'new normal' in our Recovery Plan and by establishing WorkSmart champions.

The council will also work to reduce paper usage, creating a cross-departmental Paperless Team to spearhead the reduction of paper use throughout the organisation and actively contact top users each month with support on how to reduce paper requirements. As with Microsoft Teams, the shift to working from home due the COVID-19 has resulted in a 41% reduction in pages printed in April in 2020 compared to April 2019, and we will work to maintain this positive change.

## **Informed Decisions**

Before the actions we take, the decisions we make themselves have a huge impact on how well we can integrate the CE into our day-to-day service delivery and work. At a higher level, we will make sure that the environment and climate emergency implications are considered for all council reports and decisions.

Climate emergency considerations must be embedded into the Council's reports and the way we work. To achieve this, sustainability appraisals will be introduced for all significant plans and strategies. Committee report templates will also be required to refer to environmental impacts moving forward as part of our whole-Council approach to combatting climate change. Annual carbon budget reporting will be re-introduced to inform council decisions and the Green Spec for council buildings will be updated to reflect the climate emergency. Lastly, we will extend our influence by introducing environment and climate emergency obligations for council supported partnerships and arm-length bodies.

## **Resilience and Adaptation**

Climate change projections suggest that we can expect hotter summers, wetter winters, and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as storms, floods, and heatwaves (IPCC, 2018). As a coastal borough highly vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding, it is crucial that we develop a resilience and adaptation strategy to plan for the future. To do this, we will further develop our coastal protection and flood management systems.

We will produce a flood awareness campaign to improve understanding of flood risks, and revise Wirral's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in line with the national strategy. The council will also deliver natural flood management projects such as the work getting underway in Coronation Gardens in Greasby as part of Wirral's Resilient Parks plan. Ongoing research and investment into necessary sea defences along Wirral's coast will also be carried out to make sure Wirral is climate crisis ready.

## **Community Engagement**

We need a whole-society approach if we are to effectively tackle climate change effectively from an individual to local and even national level because we can't do it alone. That means it's really important that we have the people of Wirral on Action Group, and its why we helped to convene the Cool Wirral Partnership to have an area-wide approach. In support of the partnership, we will organise meetings at least four times a year, provide secretarial support, ensure political and officer representation, and support the wider engagement and communications activities of Cool Wirral.

We will work with partners to develop a Cool Wirral Communications programme, share stories of council, partner, and wider climate action to raise awareness of progress towards local climate objectives, and support community engagement via dedicated social media channels like @CoolWirral on Twitter. We will also encourage the development of locally determined contributions in support of the Cool 2 strategy, promoting the Cool Communities, Cool Places of Worship, Cool Businesses, Cool Schools, and Cool Homes programmes.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

The links between health and the environment are clear, with most CE initiatives such as active travel, reducing pollution, and tree planting having co-benefits for individual health and air quality. As a council, our public health team will work closely with the climate emergency team and

communications team to develop decisions and actions which improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

We will raise awareness of the negative impacts that climate change is likely to have close to home in terms of the health of Wirral residents. We will also promote activities residents can actively take up themselves for their own health and the environment such as switching to more active travel types like walking and cycling and changing to a less meat-intensive diet and eating more fruit and vegetables.

As a council our Wirral Air Quality Group will continue to monitor air quality and identify ways to lessen air pollution. We also acknowledge that the impacts and indeed responses to climate change will be played out across Wirral's socio-economically uneven playing field, and so we will work to reduce Wirral's health inequalities and ensure that CE initiatives are for the benefit of all, but particularly the more vulnerable in our communities.

### **Future Generations**

Protecting the environment was voted as the most important issue to young people in the Youth Parliament's 2019 Make Your Mark Survey, showing that young people really care about combatting climate change. This is something which we as a council we must capitalise on by demonstrating what we are doing, and further raising awareness among young people of the causes and impacts of climate change and what they can do about it.

Wirral is already involved in the global Eco Schools programme, so we will mobilise this resource and revise the curriculum to further reflect the climate emergency. We will also develop staff training workshops for teachers and promote Wirral's Cool Schools Programme to encourage all schools to participate, not just our Eco Schools.

We will promote greener practices in Wirral's secondary schools and colleges by encouraging them to hold 'Swap It Up' clothes swapping events. We will also develop a Green Learning Pathways Programme so that young people can develop the skills and gain the qualifications needed to fill knowledge gaps in the local green economy in the future.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

When implementing the action plan, it will be important to ensure climate emergency actions reach all areas of the borough and socio-economic groups to reduce existing inequalities. Lower income groups are likely to be less resilient to the impacts of climate change due to their limited resources to respond. At the same time, some of the more affluent areas of Wirral are exposed to significant flood risk such as Hoylake, West Kirby and New Brighton. For this reason, a resilience and adaptation plan has been developed to counter against flooding and coastal risk. Like the Wirral-wide COOL2 Climate Strategy which the CEAP contributes to, the action plan must promote a "just transition" to net-zero carbon emissions, ensuring the benefits and burdens are shared equally and do not have any adverse effects on the vulnerable (Cool Wirral Partnership, 2019).

### **CALL TO ACTION:**

This Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan is our cross-directorate corporate commitment to tackling climate change. It lays out our ambitious ten-year pathway to achieving carbon neutrality and adapting to the impacts of climate change. We need every individual and team across the council to get invested, get involved, and play their part in its delivery. Together, we



can lead the way in making Wirral a greener and more climate resilient place to live, and empower our residents to do the same

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