

Wirral Council Environment & Climate Emergency Policy Statement



Keeping Wirral Green



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Wirral Council will take action to address the environment and climate emergency we face , and do all in our power and influence to make the necessary changes set out in this Policy'

Councillor Liz Grey – Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee.'



Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency at a meeting of full council on 15th July 2019 and through this committed to action to address the ecological and climate crisis that we face. The commitment to action aims to:

- Cut climate damaging pollution locally in line with global targets, whilst developing resilience to more extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels that impact Wirral.
- Protect and enhance biodiversity.



Tackling the ecological and climate crisis presents major opportunities locally to improve quality of life, health, well-being and the economy.

Introduction

As a local authority, we can have a positive influence through how we organise our operations and services; the regulations and policies we set; the goods and services we buy; the investments we make; and the example we set to others. Tackling the ecological and climate crisis presents major opportunities locally to improve quality of life, health, well-being and the economy. Wirral Council is committing to acting to:

- Achieve 'net zero' carbon emissions associated with our activities by 2030 and to promote wider action to help reach 'net zero' emissions for Wirral as a whole no later than 2041.
- Identify risks and prioritise nature-based solutions to build resilience to climate change.
- Become a 'Carbon Literate' organisation.
- Promote sustainable regeneration and green investment, with a brownfield first development strategy in the Local Plan.
- Reduce unnecessary travel through planning and the use of information technology.
- Facilitate modal shift from fossil fuelled vehicle use to active travel, public transport and ultra-low carbon vehicles (e.g. electric vehicles).
- Manage our use of energy, water, and resources as efficiently as possible.
- Promote sustainable resource use more widely, to encourage the transition to a less wasteful 'circular economy'.
- Make use of cleaner renewable energy to meet our energy needs.
- Promote a wider shift to non-fossil fuel clean energy sources.
- Manage at least 30% of land in Wirral for the benefit of wildlife by 2030 (in line with Government commitments).
- Ensure a 20% 'net gain' in biodiversity across all council land
- Increase tree planting to double Wirral's tree canopy cover.
- Increase the number of parks and open spaces achieving green flag status.

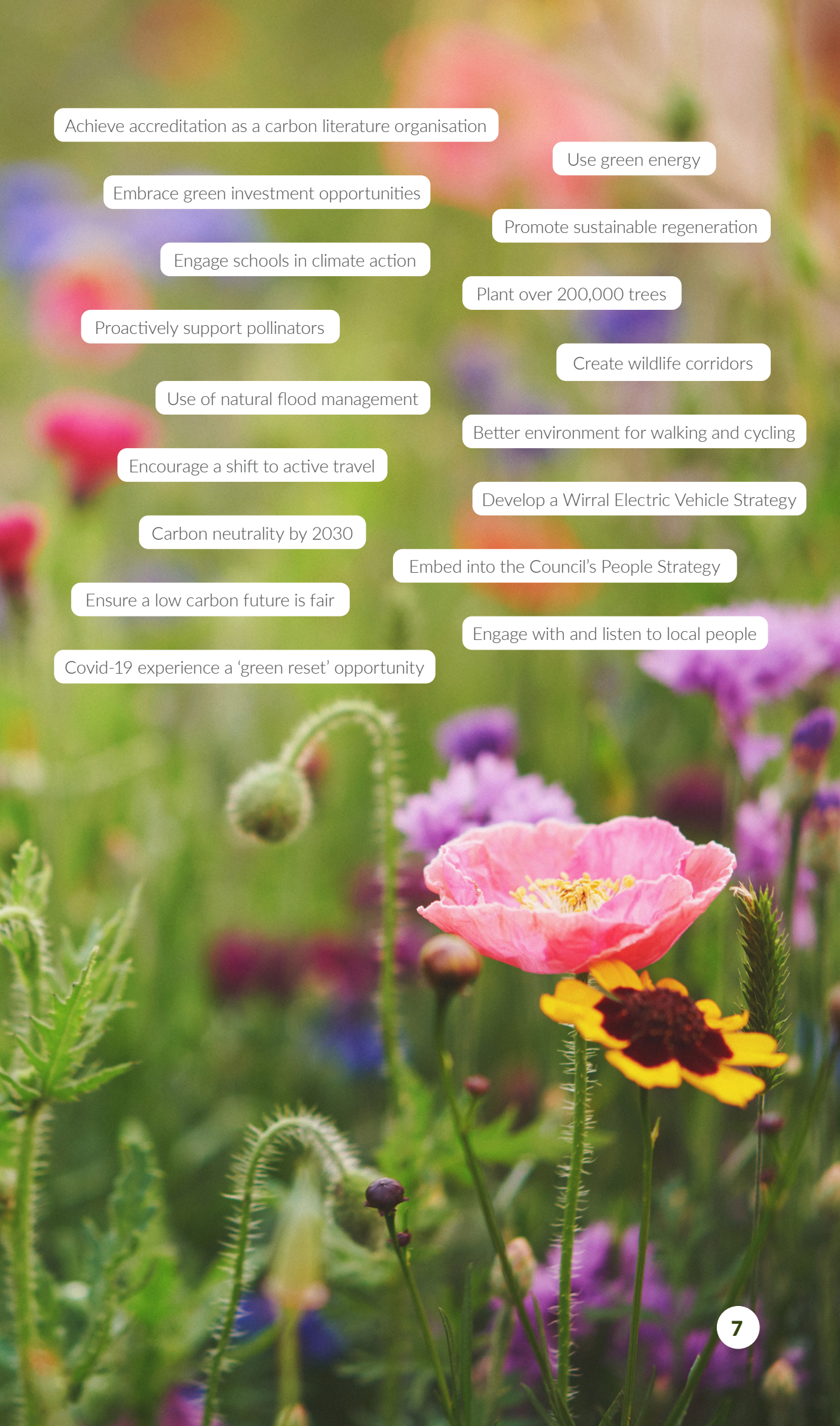


Wirral Council seeks to progress its ambitions by ensuring that consideration of the environment and climate emergency is integral to its function, decision-making, service delivery and resource allocation; by learning from and working constructively with others; and by showing leadership and encouraging wider action. We will:

- Embed sustainable decision making and ways of working in all areas of council activity.
- Monitor progress on the impact of the Council's actions and seek to achieve continual improvement.
- Provide training and briefings for councillors and employees about the environment and climate emergency.
- Communicate progress regularly and publicly.
- Encourage learning and innovation within and between organisations.
- Support positive engagement with partner organisations and residents.
- Develop and deliver the Council's Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- Support the delivery of the 'Cool2' Wirral Climate Change Strategy.
- Deliver the Wirral Tree Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy.

- Further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through the development of a local nature recovery strategy for Wirral.
- Develop a Wirral walking and cycling implementation plan.
- Help deliver the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) transport plan objectives to decarbonise travel and the LCRCA local journeys strategy.
- Develop a Wirral electric vehicle strategy.
- Review and update this Policy on an annual basis from the date of implementation.

The Wirral Council 2025 Plan underline's our ambitions concerning the environment and climate emergency. The authority's Chief Executive, directors, and managers have responsibility to incorporate environment and climate emergency issues into business planning and day-to-day procedures and practices in dialogue with staff. Councillors have responsibility for shaping policy, taking decisions, and scrutinising progress. All elected members and employees have a role in helping to put this policy into practice.



Achieve accreditation as a carbon literature organisation

Use green energy

Embrace green investment opportunities

Promote sustainable regeneration

Engage schools in climate action

Plant over 200,000 trees

Proactively support pollinators

Create wildlife corridors

Use of natural flood management

Better environment for walking and cycling

Encourage a shift to active travel

Develop a Wirral Electric Vehicle Strategy

Carbon neutrality by 2030

Embed into the Council's People Strategy

Ensure a low carbon future is fair

Engage with and listen to local people

Covid-19 experience a 'green reset' opportunity

Sustainable Resource

The Council recognises it is necessary to use resources wisely to avoid damaging the natural systems upon which our quality of life and health ultimately depends. It will develop this approach through:

1 A net zero carbon council by 2030

- The Council's Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan will provide the route map to carbon neutrality by 2030.
- A coordinating action group will drive the implementation and delivery of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan across all functions of the Council.
- A 'Carbon budget'1 set, with regular reports to Committee to enable progress to be monitored and the implementation of the Policy scrutinised.

2 An energy and resource efficient council using 100% clean renewable energy.

- Raise standards of performance across the Council's estate, audit buildings and invest to save.

- Rationalise the Council's property portfolio and use our influence to ensure that any surplus assets released do not simply add to the borough's wider emission footprint
- Improve efficiency of energy and water use where practical and cost-effective.
- Reduce energy and water waste with due consideration to value for money and health and safety.
- Use green energy to power our buildings, provide service provision and street lighting, and install renewable energy generation where practical.
- Prepare for the decarbonisation of heat.
- Reduce the Council's generation of waste.
- Digitize the Council's service provision and achieve 'paperless' status.



Digitize the Council's service provision and achieve 'paperless' status.

3 Supporting the transition to a 'circular economy', designing out waste and environmental damage.

- Promote connections and the uptake of innovations in the economy to help eliminate waste and improve environmental performance, working with Wirral Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.
- Encourage re-use and recycling, working with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Disposal Authority to eliminate waste and improve local recycling services.
- Use the Council's buying power as a force for good, through sustainable procurement policies and contract management systems, to actively engage suppliers and service providers to reduce emissions and improve biodiversity to address the environment and climate emergency.

4 Helping to create resilient neighbourhoods and sustainable regeneration.

- The Local Plan will help create sustainable places and promote a 'brown field first' development strategy.

- All council-led regeneration and development schemes will require excellent standards of building energy and environmental performance.
- Embrace green investment opportunities and promote sustainable regeneration.
- Encourage investment to raise the standard of existing buildings across Wirral.
- Encourage investment to develop infrastructure in line with the challenge of rapid 'decarbonisation'.

5 Investment in future generations to be climate ready and resilient

- Engage schools in climate action through the 'Cool Schools' offer as part our Eco Schools support programme.
- Engage young people in shaping and responding to environmental and climate issues through our youth service offer.



Biodiversity

The Council recognises importance of the natural environment and the role that it can play in tackling climate change. It will develop this through:

6 A Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy to double canopy cover

- Establish a nature recovery network for Wirral to identify where tree planting, habitat restoration, recreation and management opportunities can bring the strongest environmental benefits for biodiversity, flood attenuation and mitigation of climate change.
- Rewild verges and hedgerows to connect and enhance the wider ecological network.

- Require all development proposals to deliver an overall 10% net gain for biodiversity calculated using a biodiversity metric.
- Planting over 200,000 trees in Wirral by 2030.
- Work with partner organisations through the Tree Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy Advisory Board and engage with local and national stakeholders.

Rewild verges and hedgerows to connect and enhance the wider ecological network.



7 Transforming our open spaces and enhancing biodiversity

- Proactively support pollinators through a pollinators plan.
- Commit to phasing out the use of Glyphosate and other harmful chemicals on our estate.
- Invest in 'blue/green' infrastructure including re wilding verges and hedgerows to create wildlife corridors.
- Uphold our allotment policy and support for local food production.
- Protect and enhance our natural assets, obtaining further green and blue flag awards and improve the ratings of our SSSIs.
- Increase the biodiversity value of our parks and green spaces by wildlife-friendly management and habitat creation, supported by public and staff education.

8 Adapting to climate change and working with nature to build natural resilience.

- Coastal protection and flood management systems to help protect vulnerable communities and assets.
- Use of natural flood management and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.
- Use our tree planting and other planting to 'slow the flow' of water during intense rainfall, contribute to natural cooling.
- Develop the Council's Resilient Parks Strategy.





Transport

The Council recognises that transport must be transformed to support the required change to operations and to support residents to embrace lifestyle changes. It will develop this through:

9 Supporting an increase in the use of ‘active travel’

- Investment to create a better environment for walking and cycling.
- Encourage ‘modal shift’ to active travel with a walking and cycling implementation plan.
- Work with key stakeholders through the Active Travel Forum.

10 Working to support an increase in public transport use

- Encourage ‘modal shift’ to public transport working with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) to increase investment in, and coordination of, public transport.

- Engaging with public transport, taxi, and community transport operators to encourage high quality integrated services to meet local needs.

11 Securing investment to support the necessary shift to use ultra-low carbon vehicles

- Green our vehicle fleet.
- Use our influence to help encourage the greening of local vehicle fleets.
- Develop a Wirral Electric Vehicle Strategy to ensure suitable infrastructure is in place to support the growth in electric vehicles more widely across Wirral.



Council Approach

The Council recognises its position as a significant force for positive change in the local area, in addition to its ability to change its own ways of operating. It will develop this through:

12 Becoming an accredited ‘Carbon Literate’ organisation

- Achieve accreditation as a carbon literacy organisation through the Carbon Literacy Trust.
- Ensure all its staff and councillors are trained and briefed so that the climate emergency and the necessary steps to tackle it are readily understood.
- Carbon literacy and knowledge of the environment and climate emergency will be embedded into the Council’s People Strategy as a core competence.
- All Council staff and members will receive environment and climate emergency briefings and updates.

13 Transforming the way we operate and function

- The environment and climate emergency implications of decisions will be set out in all Council reports and briefings.
- Use the lessons learned from the Covid-19 lockdown experience as a ‘green reset’ opportunity and integral part of recovery planning.
- Embrace digital communication for its operations and use this to reduce unnecessary resource consumption.
- Adopt suitable indicators to understand the impact of our actions.
- Measure and publish progress against our targets and commitments.

Ensure all councillors are trained and carbon literate

Wirral Council wishes to acknowledge the support and contribution of the following organisations to the development of the Environment & Climate Emergency Policy: The Cool Wirral Partnership, Local Partnerships, APSE Energy, Friends of the Earth, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and Wirral Initiative for Trees