



ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 20 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2021/22
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency through an all-party resolution in July 2019. This commits the Council to develop an Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP) in response to the declaration.

This report provides the second update on the Council's response to the declared environment and climate emergency and progress on the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan, covering the 2021/22 financial year.

The latest evidence indicates that we need to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions across the globe by mid-century, however as greenhouse gases persist in the atmosphere, further global heating is inevitable even if we ceased emissions today. To reduce or minimise the severity of climate change we need to all but eliminate the use of fossil fuels for heat, power, and transport as soon as possible. This will require a considerable change in the way we all live.

In recognition of this the ECEAP is ambitious and proposes that the Council as an organisation aims to achieve 'net carbon neutrality by 2030'. In doing so it shows leadership and supports progress of decarbonisation across Wirral by 2041 and the Government's legally binding national target of net zero carbon by 2050.

Progress of the actions is summarised within this report and further details are provided within Appendix 1.

The report looks ahead to priority actions on climate for the next 12 months to ensure we remain on track to deliver our carbon budget savings.

This matter is not a key decision but affects all wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee is requested to:

1. Note the progress of the environment & climate emergency actions undertaken in 2021/22 and endorse the priority actions for 2022/23.
2. Endorse the preparation of a public-facing Environment & Climate Emergency Action Plan and progress report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency through an all-party resolution in July 2019. This commits the Council to develop an Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan in response to the declaration.
- 1.2 The Environment & Climate Emergency Action Plan supports the delivery of the Environment and Climate Emergency Policy and the Wirral Plan 2021-2026 'Sustainable Environment' theme; 'Working towards a clean-energy, sustainable borough that leads the way in its response to the climate emergency and is environmentally friendly' and the Active and Healthy Lives theme: 'Working to provide happy, active and healthy lives for all'.
- 1.3 The ECEAP ensures that Wirral Council are responding to the declared environment and climate emergency, there is an element of governance and scrutiny to ensure the Council are working towards Wirral becoming a greener, more active and climate resilient place that supports residents to make better choices.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options were considered as the alternative is the Council not responding to the climate emergency. This would mean not delivering on the Wirral Plan and our Environment and Climate Emergency target of becoming a net zero carbon council by 2030.
- 2.2 The Council has declared an Environment and Climate Emergency and with it an expectation that action will be taken to address the emergency. Therefore, the options of not acting or delaying action have not been considered as this would not respond to the Council's declaration. The emergency declaration has established an urgency for action and corporate priority to be accelerated and for the Council to transform the way it functions.
- 2.3 The Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan progress report ensures transparency in how the Council is delivering on its commitment to respond to the climate emergency.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Global action on climate change

- 3.1.1 Climate change refers to the long-term change in the planet's average weather patterns (such as temperature and rainfall) and changes in the frequency and severity of these patterns. Unnatural climate change across the world is widely evidenced and its impact is highlighted by significant events across the world. The world has already experienced a 1°C of abnormal heating since 1900. The speed of this change has risen, and the impacts are demonstratable and concerning.

- 3.1.2 2019 was the second warmest year on record and at the end of the warmest decade ever recorded. Saving lives and livelihoods requires urgent action to address both the pandemic and the climate emergency.
- 3.1.3 World leaders are increasingly concerned about climate change and in recognition of this there have been several significant developments. The United Nation's Paris Agreement on Climate Change formally came into force in 2016. This sets out the globally agreed approach to mitigating carbon emissions and adapting to unavoidable change. The global goal is to limit average rises in temperature to 'well below' 2°C above the pre-industrial level and pursue efforts to limit the rise to 1.5°C. Under this agreement nations are required to develop their own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) setting actions to help achieve the global goal. The agreement includes a 'ratchet mechanism' designed to encourage progressive improvement in these NDCs which must be updated periodically and reported to the UN. At present the NDCs submitted do not yet put us on a safe path.
- 3.1.4 In the wake of the Paris Agreement and subsequent review by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of evidence concerning the impacts of 1.5°C warming, the UK Government's own independent Climate Change Committee has made recommendations to Government. As a result, the UK Government has now tightened its legally binding target for emissions reduction. The target is now to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Previously it was an 80% reduction in emissions compared to 1990 levels. More work will now be needed to keep within future legally binding carbon budgets.

3.2 Local action on climate change

- 3.2.1 The international and national position is well reflected here in Wirral. We have a well-established climate change partnership; 'Cool Wirral' and the Council has maintained a commitment to tackling the impacts of climate change over many years. The Council is a member of the Cool Wirral Partnership and has committed to supporting the delivery of the Cool2 Climate Strategy and to a contribution to it through the development of an Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 3.2.2 In March 2021 the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee approved the Council's Environment and Climate Emergency Policy which provides the basis for the Council's commitment and journey to becoming carbon neutral within the decade. It recognises that all aspects of the Council's function, ways of working, decision making, and service delivery, will change to address the environment and climate emergency.

3.3 Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan

- 3.3.1 The Environment and Climate Emergency Policy committed the Council to the establishment of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP) and the ambitious but achievable target of the Council and its entity being 'net carbon neutral' by 2030. The ECEAP is the Council's locally determined contribution to Cool2 which sets a target for Wirral as a whole, to be net carbon zero by 2041

3.3.2 The ECEAP was developed in 2020 and is designed to drive fundamental change to the way the Council operates, makes decisions, and provides services. The plan contains a significant number of actions to transform the Council.

3.3.3 This report forms the second annual progress report for Wirral’s Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan.

3.4 ECEAP Progress in 2021/22

3.4.1 The Council’s way of working have been subject to some COVID-19 restrictions over part of the year, and it is important to note that the shift to home working and a decrease in the amount of staff travel had a beneficial impact on the Council’s carbon equivalent (CO₂e) emissions in 2020/21, going into 21/22 and it is important to maintain these to some degree. Staff are now partially returning to a more normal way of working, however many of the changes bought about or accelerated by the pandemic will remain and a ‘hybrid’ way of working will become the new ‘normal’.

3.4.2 There has been some ‘bounce back’ in emissions from heating due to the reintroduction of staff into buildings as Covid restrictions were eased, however there are sustained reductions in emissions from fleet and staff travel. Overall electricity consumption has increased, however net carbon emissions are zero due to the purchase of ‘green’ electricity.

3.4.3 The Council has made progress against the action plan over the last year. Many actions have been completed; however, some have stalled due to the Covid-19 pandemic or have had to change the nature of their delivery. In late 2021, a review of short-term actions took place with the aim of completing delivery where possible this was successful and led to completion of many of the actions.

3.4.4 An overview of progress for all workstreams is summarised in the table below.

Workstream	RAG rating			
	Complete	Green	Yellow	Red
Governance and leadership	15	7	2	
Resource and finance	2	5		
Measurement and reporting	5	7	2	
Staff investment	4	9	4	1
Transport	11	35	6	4
Assets and energy	1	6	5	4
Culture and events		3		7
Communication	9	5	3	2
Waste Management		8	9	
Procurement management	1	2	10	17
Carbon capture	10	17	12	
Resilience and adaptation	10	4	1	
Ways of operating	9		2	
Wiser decisions	2	6	1	
Community engagement	4	6	5	
Highways	7	9		

Health and wellbeing	-	-	-	-
Regeneration	8	7	2	1
Future generations	4	13		1
Total	102	149	64	37

3.4.5 A more detailed outline of the ECEAP actions are reported in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.4.6 Headline actions that were completed in 2021/22 are:

- Purchase of 'green' electricity.
- Installation of an electric vehicle charging infrastructure pilot project.
- Commissioning of a 'greening the fleet' review to prepare for a transition to low emission vehicles.
- Achieving status as a bronze award carbon literate council.
- Planting of 21,527 trees through community planting sessions.
- Purchase of eCargo bikes to be used for internal deliveries and promote alternative transport.
- Supporting Cool Wirral partners through the facilitation of Cool Wirral partnership.
- Completion of phase 2 of the streetlighting replacement scheme.
- Progress on the Birkenhead Heat Network Project
- Funding acquired to deliver a 'natural curriculum' initiative to teachers in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University.

3.5 Proposed Priority Council Actions for 2022/23

3.5.1 The ECEAP has been reviewed by the Climate Emergency team, with regards to the large-scale actions that are vital for the Council to deliver our ambition of being net carbon zero by 2030. Urgent action needs to be taken in certain areas now to ensure we have the correct policies, investment, and delivery mechanisms in place to secure carbon reductions across all our service areas.

3.5.2 Key priority actions have been identified for action in 2022/23 to ensure the Council continues the trajectory to keep pace with the carbon budget and meet our net zero target by 2030. They are:

- Implement the recommendations and action plan developed by Internal Audit following a detailed audit of the Council's response to the environment & climate emergency declaration.
- Establish a green fleet strategy for the Council.
- Develop an EV strategy for the borough.
- Define the Council's scope 3 emissions from good and services.
- Become a Silver award carbon literate organisation.
- Establish a decarbonisation plan for building emissions and create a 'project pipeline' to enable funding bids.
- Increasing communication and engagement from residents and communities through a climate emergency communications strategy.
- Increase awareness and action from internal staff
- Increase accountability through a public-facing ECEAP introduction and progress report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The nature of the report is to monitor progress of the action plan, therefore there are no financial implications from the report
- 4.2 However, the Council has established dedicated resources to take action in response to the declared environment and climate emergency. As well as in kind resource allocation such as the Climate Emergency Team and Environment and Climate Emergency Action Group, the Council has set a Climate Emergency budget. The Climate Emergency budget allocation for 2022/23 is £250,000, made up of £125,000 revenue and £125,000 capital. The Climate Emergency Manager as the budget holder oversees spent against climate emergency priorities and actions as set out in the ECEAP.
- 4.3 Unnatural climate change presents an existential threat. There are already many direct risks associated with existing and unavoidable change locally, including disruption and damage from more frequent extreme weather events including recent high-profile storms, flooding, and heat waves. The actions needed to prevent more dangerous change demand a response from all parties from a global to local level. Everyone must play their part in addressing climate change and organisations who can lead and support others such as the Council must do so. Having a robust ECEAP with clear targets in place is a crucial mechanism to mitigate identified risks and play a part in wider efforts to address the problem.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK government to reduce domestic greenhouse gas. In June 2019, the Act was update in line with amended climate projections, and the UK Government increase the UK legislated target for greenhouse gas emission reductions to at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline by 2050. In April 2021 a new target was enshrined into law to cut national emissions by 78% by 2035.
- 5.2 There are no direct legal implications from the establishment and delivery of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan. It should, however, be noted that the adequacy and inaction of both national and local government is under scrutiny by environmental interest groups with the threat of potential legal challenge in some areas. Several local authorities have been criticised for not putting their climate emergency declarations into action. A failure to demonstrate action and commitment to change would present a reputational risk.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The annual ECEAP progress reports are delivered through existing staff resources within the Climate Emergency team and drawing on services across the council to provide regular updates to the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Group to keep the ECEAP as a live document. Although there are no staffing implications arising directly from this report it should be noted that there is a requirement incumbent upon all employees to consider the impacts of their role on greenhouse gas emissions and work to reduce them as far as possible.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council has made a series of public commitments to act on climate change including the declaration of an Environment and Climate Emergency in July 2019 that included an instruction to reinstate the Carbon Budget. A failure to demonstrate action and commitment to change would present a reputational risk. There are local authorities across the country who, having declared a climate emergency, are now under scrutiny for having apparently done little to turn their declaration into action.
- 7.2 The Council's corporate risk register has been updated to reflect the environment and climate emergency declaration and the identification of the risk climate change has on the Council, Wirral as a place and its residents. The delivery of the Environment & Climate Emergency Policy and working jointly with partner organisations and communities forms the mitigation to such risk. The risks associated with the effective delivery of the Environment and Climate Emergency Policy have been identified and mitigated. The Environment and Climate Emergency Action Group monitor these risks as part of their management of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation was undertaken with Council staff to develop the action plan and report progress on those same actions.
- 8.2 The ECEAP has also been subject to internal audit with the outcomes informing the priority actions for 2022/23. A summary of these is presented in this report.
- 8.3 No external consultation was undertaken in relation to this update report.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 An Equality impact assessment has been reviewed and found to be valid. It can be found at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>. Navigate to Equality Impact Assessments since 2017 – then Delivery Services

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Environment and Climate Emergency Declaration was resolved with all party support at Council on the 15 July 2019 due to 'extreme concern' about the impact of climate change and the urgent need for action. The Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan has been developed in response.
- 10.2 Through the establishment and delivery of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan the Council is committing to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030. This is an ambitious but achievable target, and it will have fundamental benefits to

Wirral's environment and residents. A key objective of the action plan is for officers and members to be 'carbon literate' in order to fully understand the climate related implications of their decisions and the impact of the way services are delivered.

10.3 The annual progress report on the ECEAP is fundamental to the monitoring and delivery of the council's actions in response to the climate emergency. The content and recommendations within this report are expected to:

- Reduce emissions of CO2
- Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases
- Demonstrate that Wirral Council plan to deliver on its commitment to the climate emergency
- Contribute towards attainment of Wirral Cool 2 Strategy.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The aims and objectives of the ECEAP are aligned to the objective of community wealth building, working in partnership with communities and businesses to strengthen local economy which supports fair work, encourages local spend and uses the land and property we own for the common good.

11.2 Acting on climate change presents an opportunity to redesign our local economy and adapt to environmental challenges and opportunities. It also helps us to be more aware of where goods and services come from. Actions such as community food networks and a closed loop economy makes everyone think more about keeping it local and it has the potential to shorten supply chains. The Council can also use their land and assets in different ways to support the net zero carbon targets and ensure a sustainable local environment. We will also work with partners in Cool Wirral to encourage them to consider their environmental impact and take action to reduce it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress 2021/22

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cool Wirral Partnership [Cool 2 Strategy](#)

UN Sustainable development goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

UN Paris Agreement

http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

IPCC Sixth Assessment Report <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>

Committee on Climate Change Progress Reports 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/committee-on-climate-changes-2019-progress-reports-government-responses>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council – Extraordinary Meeting – Declaration of Environment and Climate Emergency (Minute 21)	15 July 2019
Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Environment and Climate Emergency Declaration Update	24 September 2019
Council – A New Climate Change Strategy for Wirral ‘COOL 2’	31 March 2020
Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Climate Emergency Headlines	12 March 2020
Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport – Committee Meeting – Approval of the Environment and Climate Emergency Policy and Action Plan	14 June 2021