



**Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 31 January 2018**

REPORT TITLE:	CLIMATE CHANGE ANNUAL REPORT AND ACTION PLAN 2017
REPORT OF:	Strategic Commissioner for Environment

REPORT SUMMARY

1.1 The report presents an annual update on climate change action in Wirral. It introduces:-

- The function and activities of the Wirral Climate Change Group;
- The latest 'Cool Steps' report detailing recent progress with the climate change strategy;
- The most recent version of the 'rolling' action plan developed to help implement the strategy; and,
- An overview of progress made over the first three years of the five year strategy period.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Committee is requested to:

- (1) Note the work of the Wirral Climate Change Group and the progress outlined in this report to implement the climate change strategy; and
- (2) Recommend to the Cabinet Member that the 'Cool Steps' annual progress report (Appendix 1) and latest version of the climate strategy action plan (Appendix 2) are formally endorsed and used to meet the Council's Climate Local commitment.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Cabinet has requested annual reports on climate change.
- 1.2 Wirral Council is a signatory to Climate Local and is duly committed to identify actions on climate change and the public reporting of progress with respect to these.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 None.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In order to reduce the problems caused by climate change, there is an urgent need to work internationally, nationally and locally to significantly reduce 'greenhouse' pollution. In practical terms this usually means measures to cut fossil fuel use for heat, power and transport as well as steps to reduce indirect impacts through consideration of the wider influence that our decisions have (e.g. through the amount of waste we produce, or type of food we eat). There is also a need to adapt to the changes in our climate that are already unavoidable. This entails considering the main risks of these changes and putting in place plans and actions to limit them.
- 3.2 Wirral Council is publicly committed to set out its actions on climate change and to regularly review and report progress on them. It is a signatory to the Local Government Association's 'Climate Local' initiative (Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 29 January 2013, Minute 63). It has also pledged its support for the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change (Cabinet, 7 November 2016, Minute 58). In order to honour its commitment, the council supported the creation of a climate change strategy for Wirral. This was developed through a process of wider consultation and public engagement overseen via the Wirral Climate Change Group. The five year strategy, Cool (2014-2019), was subsequently endorsed by the council in October 2014. The council continues to support the Wirral Climate Change Group as a partnership to co-ordinate local action in support of the strategy.

3.3 Cool (2014-2019) sets a vision and framework for local climate action. It has two overarching goals:

- Reducing climate pollution; and
- Adapting to unavoidable change.

The following aims support these goals:

- Reducing demand for energy and making Wirral more energy efficient.
- Meeting more of our energy needs from renewable sources.
- Making use of more sustainable means for transport.
- Reducing indirect climate pollution.
- Identifying risks and developing resilience; and
- Building capacity for action.

The climate change strategy and its reporting arrangements were established prior to the creation of the Wirral Plan and the council's 20 Pledges. The later framework does not address climate change directly. Cabinet has requested annual reports on climate change (Cabinet, 9 October, 2014 minute 67; Cabinet, 7 November, 2016, minute 58). This is the third annual report since the strategy was adopted.

4.0 THE GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXT

4.1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - the international body set up to assess the science related to climate change - states in its most recent assessment (IPCC, 2014) that:

“Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems...

Without additional mitigation efforts beyond those in place today, and even with adaptation, warming by the end of the 21st century will lead to

high to very high risk of severe, widespread and irreversible impacts globally”.

- 4.2 In response to the threat of climate change, the international community adopted the Paris Agreement in December 2015. This agreement formally came into force in November 2016 after being ratified by the requisite number of countries. It sets a goal to limit global temperature rise this century to ‘well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels’ while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees. Under the agreement, countries formulate and submit their own “nationally determined contribution” towards meeting this goal.
- 4.3 The Paris Agreement was a major step forward for international climate diplomacy coming into force relatively swiftly as well as securing the support of the two largest emitters, China and the USA. Following a change in President, the US Government has since signalled its intent to withdraw. It is still unclear how much impact this announcement will have, or if and how it will be followed through. Other parties remain committed. There is also momentum behind the global shift to cleaner energy.
- 4.4 In the UK, the Climate Change Act 2008 creates a framework for action with legally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The long term target is for an 80% reduction by 2050 compared to 1990 levels with a series of five year ‘carbon budgets’ as steps towards this. Whilst there has been good progress with emissions which are already down by 42%, the UK’s independent committee on climate change has recently raised concerns about progress stalling and the need to identify further measures to maintain momentum (Committee on Climate Change, 2017). The UK Government was expected to have produced a plan in 2016 to set out its intended path to meet future carbon budgets. A Clean Growth Strategy was eventually released in October 2017. This new strategy clearly positions decarbonisation as a major economic opportunity rather than a cost. It charts a broad approach to low carbon growth including a planned new measure of performance - an annual Emissions Intensity Ratio to indicate the amount of greenhouse gases produced for each unit of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) created. Being a broad strategy rather

than a detailed plan of action, not all outcomes are quantifiable and a gap still remains with respect to meeting future carbon budgets. Future updates will need to account for this and the committee on climate change will provide feedback to the Government in due course. The release of the strategy reaffirms Government commitment towards deep decarbonisation across the economy. It underlines that radical transformation is expected. It highlights the need for innovation and signals corresponding investment in key sectors.

4.5 At the Liverpool City Region (LCR) level, the new metro-Mayor has signalled intent to ensure the area makes its contribution to tackling climate change. The original devolution deal did not mention climate change directly but the subsequent 100 Day Plan issued by the Mayor and Combined Authority includes a commitment to sign up to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, and the UN Compact Cities Programme. Several aspects of the devolution deal such as transport and energy have a direct bearing on the achievement of local climate strategy objectives.

5.0 THE WORK OF THE WIRRAL CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP

5.1 Climate change work in Wirral is based on a partnership approach. The Wirral Climate Change Group includes councillor representation from the three main political groups, key public sector bodies, voluntary and business interests.

Those who have played a recent part in include:

- Magenta Living
- Energy Projects Plus
- Faiths4Change
- Wirral Environment Network
- Peel Holdings
- LCR Local Enterprise Partnership
- Merseyside Police
- Merseyside Recycling and Waste Disposal Authority
- Community Action Wirral
- Planet Heswall

- 5.2 Since last year's annual report, the Wirral Climate Change Group has met four times - in December 2016 and April, September and December, 2017. The group has received presentations and updates on:
- 5.2.1 Peel Holdings' plans for Wirral Waters as an exemplar sustainable city extension. Peel has the aspiration to make Wirral Waters the most sustainable redevelopment project in the UK. The climate change strategy recognises this opportunity. Following the presentation, Peel Holdings is now represented on the climate group. A bid has since been submitted that involves Peel to bring further investment for improvements in sustainable transport and green infrastructure in the Wirral Waters area.
- 5.2.2 The work of the LCR Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on sustainable energy. LEPs have a role mediating between different energy interests to help meet a variety of objectives including productivity improvements, jobs and inward investment, upskilling the workforce, increasing resilience of cities, reducing fuel poverty, local ownership of energy infrastructure, a reduction in climate pollution and transport-related air quality amongst others. Building a relationship with the LCR LEP is identified in the climate strategy as a means to progress it. Following the presentation, the LEP is now represented on the climate group. A LEP energy strategy is now under development. This will seek to draw on experience from Wirral.
- 5.2.3 Local work on home energy efficiency. Considerable improvements have been achieved in Wirral through past interventions. Recently, the scale of programmes has diminished as funding from energy companies has reduced. That which is available is now often targeted at alleviating fuel poverty. A variety of interventions are being pursued locally including free advice, loans, targeted grants, and work with landlords to improve housing standards.
- 5.2.4 A study into potential sites for community-owned solar energy developments in Wirral. Wirral Community Renewables is now formally constituted as a Community Benefit Society. It has appointed consultants to conduct a feasibility study into potential sites for it to develop community-owned solar power plant

with a short-list of the most promising sites subject to more detailed investigation.

5.2.5 The Refresh Project. This is a project developed in partnership between Wirral Environment Network, Wirral Council and Magenta Living. The project promotes skills in refurbishment and upcycling to help prevent surplus furniture and materials from being wasted. The pilot phase, now complete, involved the refurbishment and furnishing of a flat in Seacombe. The flat formed a temporary base for community courses to promote re-use and up-cycling.

5.2.6 The Government's Clean Growth Strategy (see paragraph 4.4)

5.2.7 The work of the Wirral Chamber of Commerce in support of the climate change strategy. In addition to work to encourage local inter-trading and promote local businesses from the environment sector at trade shows, the Chamber has recently established a business-led energy and environment forum.

5.2.8 The 'World Faiths, Climate Change and Community Influence' event held in Wirral during Interfaith Week in November 2017. The event, organised by Faiths4Change, attracted representatives from Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities from across the Liverpool City Region to learn and share experiences about faith community responses to climate change. It is anticipated that the event will be the first step in building an active network of local faith communities working on climate change issues.

5.3 Since the last progress report the Wirral Climate Change Group has:

5.3.1 Maintained a rolling action plan in support of the climate strategy. Actions are recorded via an on-line platform to enable updates to be made directly at any time. A snap-shot of this action plan as at August 2017 is reproduced in Appendix 2. Over 200 actions have been identified so far, with around 50% completed.

- 5.3.2 Revised its terms of reference. This is in line with the climate strategy's intent that the group evolves as a partnership to champion the strategy and local climate change action.
- 5.3.3 Produced the third annual progress report on the climate strategy (Appendix 1). This summary report for public consumption details recent steps to help advance climate objectives. It also includes indicators of progress and highlights changing circumstances that may have an influence. The report indicates that progress is being made but there is much still to do to achieve the strategy's objectives. It underlines the importance of action over the remaining two years towards the strategy's overall success.

6.0 AN ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS TO DATE

- 6.1 To inform action over the remaining two years of Cool (2014-2019), a wider assessment of progress has also been made. The nature of the climate problem makes it difficult to measure local progress with the strategy's goals over a relatively short time scale. The scope of the strategy is also broad and cross-cutting with six aims and over 70 objectives to support its goals. The assessment thus focuses on progress to meet these objectives rather than their ultimate impact.
- 6.1.1 *Reducing demand for energy and making Wirral more energy efficient.*
Although there has been progress on the majority of the energy efficiency objectives, it is unlikely that local ambitions to improve domestic energy efficiency will be achieved over the life of the strategy. Good progress has been made to upgrade outdoor street lights with a street lighting strategy in place and a sizable first phase of upgrades implemented. A major investment in the NHS estate has resulted in the installation of an efficient combined heat and power system. The Wirral Waters regeneration remains a major strategic opportunity to develop sustainable energy. A substantial reduction in funding from energy companies has limited progress to improve the energy efficiency of domestic properties. Interventions are being advanced but the number of upgrades to hard-to-treat homes is below that anticipated. Delays with the development

plan make it unlikely higher energy efficiency standards for new developments will be demanded in the short-term. Funding to support energy efficiency improvements in community buildings has yet to be secured. It remains unclear what, if any, opportunities exist to advance smart networks locally. The national roll-out of domestic smart meters remains a potential opportunity to promote energy efficiency but initial prospects for local involvement were very limited. More recently Energy Projects Plus has secured some funding to assist raising awareness about smart meters.

6.1.2 *Meeting more of our energy needs from renewable sources.* Several renewable energy objectives have already been met. Wirral is a recognised centre of excellence for off-shore wind with investment secured to support growth in this sector. The creation of Wirral Community Renewables has established a co-operative entity capable of pooling local resources for investment in renewable energy schemes. The LCR collective switch now includes a renewable energy option. Some changes in government policy have frustrated the realisation of local objectives. Prospects for an on-shore wind trial are far less likely following changes in Government planning policies to limit on-shore wind. Local sites that had been identified as having potential for solar schemes may no longer be feasible in the immediate future following changes to the incentive regime. The evidence available suggests that the early growth in micro-renewable energy installations - particularly solar power - has been curtailed following cuts to incentive rates. In the face of falling incentives, the feasibility study currently in progress for Wirral Community Renewables is significant. A timely response to its recommendations may determine whether community owned renewable energy plays a part in the local energy mix as anticipated in the strategy.

6.1.3 *Making use of more sustainable means for transport.* There has been progress towards achieving some sustainable transport objectives. Secure cycle parking is now in place at all local Merseyrail stations bar one. A cycle route map has been produced and improvements to cycle routes are being advanced with a particular focus on areas around Wirral Waters and the A41 corridor. There has also been progress to establish a network of electric vehicle charging points with public facilities now established at Seacombe Ferry Terminal, Birkenhead North

Park & Ride and Elgin Way car parks. The recent government announcement about phasing out diesel and petrol vehicles by 2040 presents an opportunity to further promote electric vehicles and associated infrastructure. Prospects to better integrate bus services and introduce more flexible ticketing may improve following the Liverpool City Region devolution deal. Some local programmes to support sustainable transport choices have now ceased having reached the end of their funding period. The absence of these programmes may limit achieving related objectives.

6.1.4 *Reducing indirect climate pollution.* This aim covers a diverse set of objectives spanning food, local trade, waste reduction and sustainability appraisal amongst others. 'Better Food Wirral' has been established as the brand to promote the value of local and seasonal food. A website has been created along with a social media presence to support networking amongst local food interests. Several local food projects have also been supported via Better Food Wirral innovation grants. The wider benefit of reducing meat consumption has featured as a topic in local Eco Schools work resulting in meat-free menu choices being introduced in local schools. Work to encourage local inter-trading is being advanced by Wirral Chamber with a meet the buyer/local supplier event for the construction sector held recently. With respect to waste minimisation a new waste strategy for Wirral has been adopted. The 'Warp-it' service has also been adopted by CWP NHS Trust, Wirral Council, Community Action Wirral and local schools to facilitate the re-use of surplus resources. It has taken longer than anticipated to introduce the council and community sector on-line Warp-it portals, but now they are in place there is an opportunity to promote re-use within and between local organisations. There has been little or no work to encourage sustainability appraisal of decisions or to organise a green procurement fair.

6.1.5 *Adapting to unavoidable changes in Wirral's climate.* Although work to support climate adaptation objectives is more limited, there has been progress in some areas. Wirral's Local Climate Impact Profile has been updated. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment now includes a regularly-updated section on climate change and health. The Wirral resilient parks project reported on ways

local parks might need to adapt in the face of climate change. A surface water investigation has since been undertaken at Coronation Park to test some of the proposals to limit flood risk arising from it. The closure of the Environment Agency's 'climate ready' programme removed a key opportunity for business engagement with the adaptation agenda. Nevertheless a guide to climate resilience has been produced aimed at small and medium enterprises in the Liverpool City Region. A planned local workshop on this topic did not take place with too few bookings. There has been little work to promote the use of porous materials, green roofs and walls. A recent funding bid to support further green streets-type interventions in the Wirral Waters area was successful.

6.1.6 *Building capacity for action.* This aim underpins all the others and is therefore pivotal to the strategy's success. Progress is not as well advanced as it could be with some of the related objectives. Climate change work with schools is well developed via the Eco Schools programme. Progress is less well developed with respect to life-long learning opportunities. Exemplar eco-buildings exist but not in all constituency areas. Work is in progress to establish a Planet Heswall group, to join Transition Town West Kirby as a focus for local community action on climate change; the strategy anticipates similar groups in each of the four constituency areas. Plans for a Cool Wirral campaign and network are less well developed. The campaign has a brand and social media presence and belatedly an on-line mailing list. Earlier plans to establish a website were thwarted and this has hampered related objectives including that to expand the number of good practice case studies on-line. The Wirral Climate Change Group has recently adopted new terms of reference in line with the climate strategy objective that it evolve in to a partnership with a more independent voice. There are now provisions for the group to select a chair from within its number. Up until now the group has been chaired by a senior council officer. Participation by member organisations has fluctuated over time, including changes in staff stemming from rationalisation in the face of austerity.

6.2 Whilst the full impact of local climate interventions remains to be seen and there is much to do to achieve strategy objectives, a broad and outwardly focused programme of activity has been maintained in accordance with the council's

public commitments. In the face of austerity, the amount of local authority supported climate change activity has diminished. The LGA's own web site now refers to the Climate Local programme in the past tense following the withdrawal of staff resources to support it from the Environment Agency. The Climate Local online hub remains for signatory authorities to share information and post the required updates. The most recent overview of Climate Local activity from January 2016 recorded Wirral as one of the 50 authorities - from a total of 120 signatories - to have submitted action plans and progress reports in accordance with the commitment made. Locally, at this time, Knowsley and Sefton Councils had also submitted both an action plan and progress report; Cheshire West and Chester Council had submitted an action plan. Liverpool was listed as a signatory but had yet to submit an action plan or progress report. Neither St. Helens nor Halton Councils were listed as signatories. Since regular meetings of local authority officers working on climate change in the LCR no longer take place, it is difficult to provide an up-to-date local comparison. A one-off meeting has been requested to remedy this and is likely to take place in January. Early indications from the contact made to arrange this meeting suggests that climate work may have stalled, fragmented or narrowed in scope in some neighbouring authorities. In contrast, in Wirral it has been sustained through a partnership approach.

- 6.3 To make a greater impact over the remaining two years of the strategy, attention to climate change needs to extend further beyond the Wirral Climate Change Group. Decisions taken on a wide range of matters may hinder or present opportunities to achieve climate objectives. Long term investments need to be 'future proofed' anticipating both the radical shift required for a low carbon future and the implications of changing weather patterns. Extending the use of sustainability appraisal and related techniques and tools should help alongside efforts to raise awareness and build capacity for action within the Council and with partners.
- 6.4 At the time of the development and establishment of Cool (2014-2019), environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation came under the management function of Assets Management. However as part of the creation

of the Strategic Hub the function, including the role of Sustainability Liaison Officer, was moved into the Strategic Environment Team with new reporting lines created. Work has been undertaken since to align climate change work with other environmental service functions and strategy. The Strategic Environment Team has also created a linkage between the work undertaken to deliver the Attractive Local Environment (ALE) Pledge of the Wirral Plan and Cool (2014-2019). As a result of this Cool is now part of the performance reporting arrangements for the ALE Pledge Delivery Plan. It is proposed that the work to create closer alignment between Cool and the Council's corporate framework should continue ahead of and as part of the development of the next corporate plan.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The action plan does not commit the Council to any additional expenditure. It includes actions that promote the efficient use of energy and water that help ensure the Council does not waste money.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no legal issues foreseen associated with the recommendation.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

9.1 The action plan does not commit the Council to any additional staffing or ICT infrastructure. It supports the efficient use of assets to reduce the use of energy and water and promote more sustainable patterns of transportation.

10.0 RELEVANT RISKS

10.1 A failure to develop and pursue a local response to climate change will likely increase the risk of negative impacts locally and further afield.

10.2 A failure to fulfil obligations under Climate Local could pose reputational risk for the Council

11.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

11.1 The latest annual progress report and action plan have been developed via the Wirral Climate Change Group which includes representation from numerous partner organisations spanning the public, private and voluntary sectors.

11.2 The climate change strategy 2014-2019, which this report concerns was developed through a wider public consultation process.

12.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The impacts of climate change will affect everyone but are expected to be more severe for vulnerable groups.
- 12.2 The climate change strategy was subject to an equality impact assessment

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cool Steps: Wirral Climate Change Strategy 2014-2019 3rd Annual Progress Report July 2017

Appendix 2: Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, August 2017 version

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Wirral Climate Change Group (2014) Cool: Wirral Climate Change Strategy- 2014-2019
(<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/climatestrategy>)

IPCC (2014) Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland

United Nations (2015) The Paris Agreement
http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php

Committee on Climate Change (2017) 2017 Report to Parliament – Meeting Carbon Budgets: Closing the policy gap
(<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2017-report-to-parliament-meeting-carbon-budgets-closing-the-policy-gap/>)

HM Government (2017) The Clean Growth Strategy - Leading the way to a low carbon future
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>)

Liverpool City Region Mayor (2017) Mayoral Combined Authority 100 Day Plan
(<http://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/100-day-plan>)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
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CABINET	07/11/2016
CABINET	08/10/2015
REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE	15/09/2015
CABINET	09/10/2014
REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE	22/09/2014