

COOL

STEPS

WIRRAL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2014-2019

3rd Annual Progress report - July 2017



Background

Cool - Wirral's climate change strategy 2014-19 - seeks to encourage and co-ordinate climate change-related action and investment by people and organisations with an interest in Wirral. Its goals are to cut local climate pollution and to adapt Wirral to unavoidable change.

This report is the third in a series of annual progress reports about *Cool*. It outlines some recent steps taken under each the strategy's six aims. It also highlights where there have been changes in context that have had an impact on progress or that present new opportunities. The format continues to evolve. This year several indicators have been included to help present a wider picture.

The actions highlighted in this report have been advanced by organisations directly involved in the Wirral Climate Change Group – the partnership tasked with co-ordinating local climate-related action. This in itself is not enough. The importance of widespread action from all quarters is vital to the success of our collective response to climate change. Readers are thus asked to take stock of their own actions and reflect on their potential role to help take the strategy forward. *Have you done what you can to help advance the aims of the strategy at home, at work and in your community? What are the best ways you can help over the two remaining years of the strategy?*

The bigger picture

The two main goals of the *Cool* strategy mirror global and national priorities for climate change. Globally there is a need to reduce climate pollution to stop further temperature rises that will drive potentially catastrophic climate disruption. There is also a need to prepare for changes that are now unavoidable.

At present humanity is not doing enough to curb climate-related pollution - primarily carbon dioxide that arises from burning fossil fuels. Emissions remain higher than those considered to be acceptable to avoid dangerous change. The impacts of present extreme weather events serve to illustrate the vulnerability of the human and natural world to a changing climate.

In order to address climate change at the international level, the Paris Agreement formally came into force in November 2016. The new framework applies to more countries – both developed and developing - and has arguably a more ambitious goal than the Kyoto Protocol it replaces. The agreement seeks to keep the average global temperature rise this century to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C. It relies on countries submitting plans for their 'nationally determined contribution' to achieve this.

The Paris Agreement appeared to be a major step forward for international climate diplomacy with the support of the two largest emitters China and the USA. However, the US Government has since signalled its intent to withdraw from the agreement following a change in administration¹. With momentum now firmly behind a global shift to cleaner energy it is unclear how much impact US withdrawal will have. Other parties remain committed to the agreement.

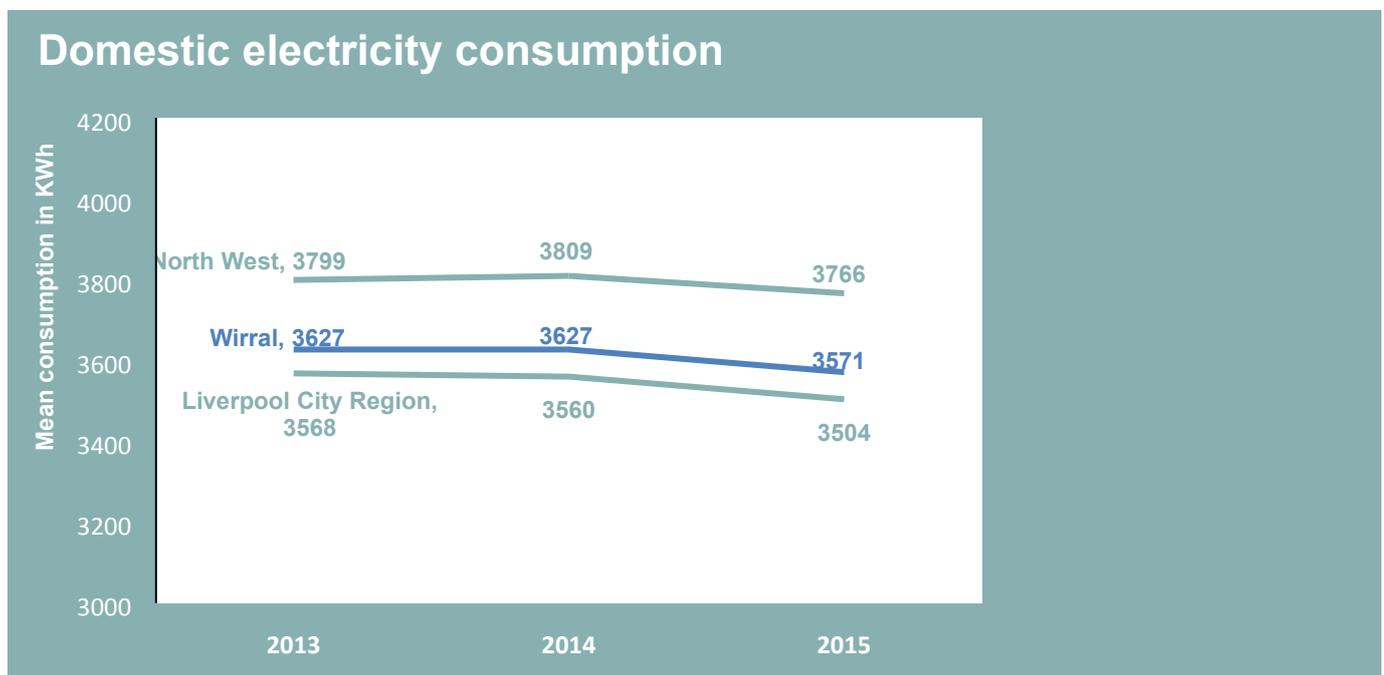
¹ Such a move is not without precedence; the United States previously withdrew support for the Kyoto Protocol - also following a change in political administration.

At the national level, emissions of greenhouse gases are already about 42% lower than in 1990 which is just over half-way towards the 80% reduction in emissions envisaged by 2050. However, progress is at risk of stalling without the identification of new measures. The UK's independent climate change committee has raised concerns about this in its latest report to parliament. It has called for the identification of new strategies and policies to maintain momentum.

At the local level, progress is being made but there remains much more to do to achieve the objectives set out in the Cool framework. There has been activity in relation to each of the six aims of the strategy but not uniformly across these. In some cases objectives have already been achieved and in several they are well advanced. In others progress is being made in spite of more hostile conditions but the outcome remains uncertain. In a few cases changes in context have rendered the achievement of objectives obsolete or unrealistic. In others action can still not be confirmed due to insufficient information. Three years in, in spite of the difficulties, more has happened to tackle climate change locally than would likely have been the case without the strategy. Actions over the next two years will be crucial in determining how much of a difference the strategy actually makes.

Aim 1: Reducing demand for energy and making Wirral more energy efficient

Local energy consumption in focus ...



Domestic gas consumption



Recent steps...

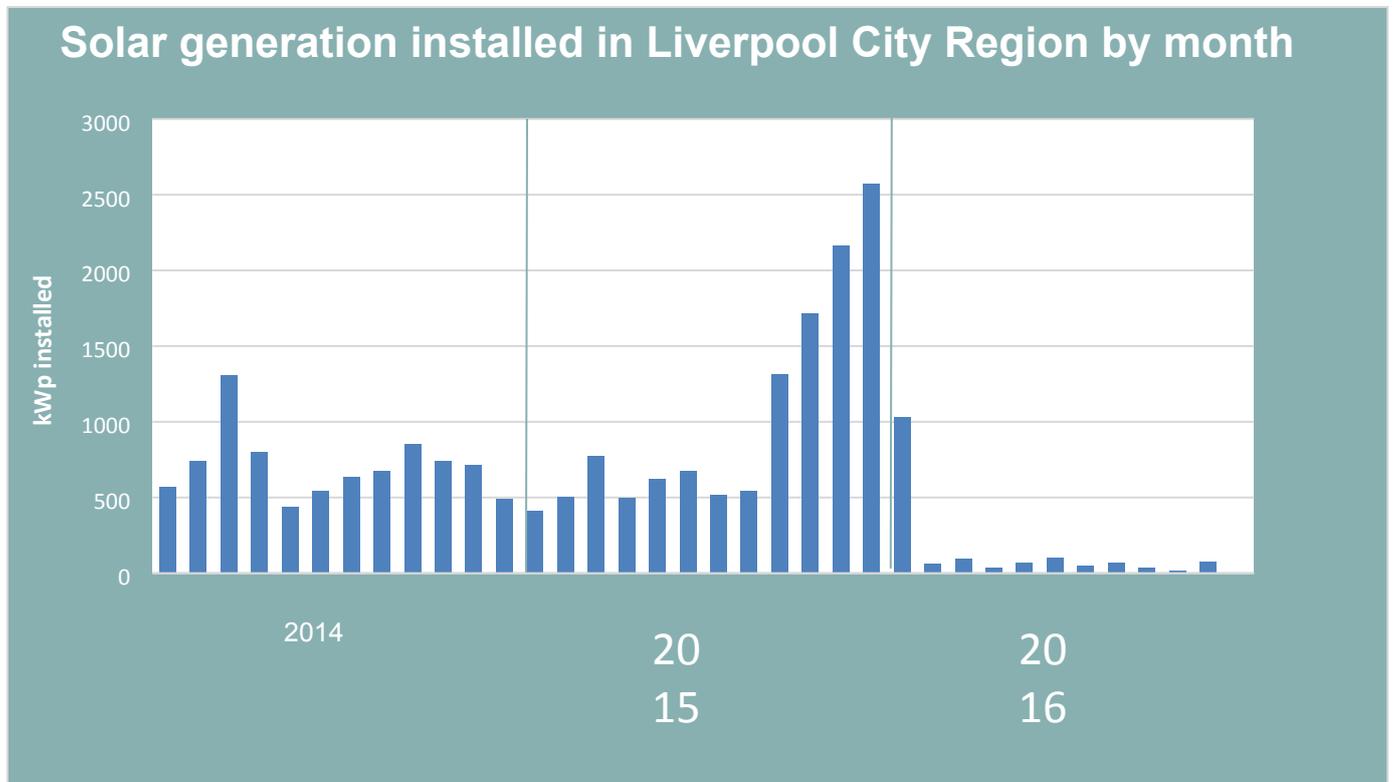
- 26 grants were given to support installation of insulation in solid walled properties
- The installation of a new solid wall insulation system was successfully trialled by Magenta Living on two houses in Bromborough
- A condition survey of remaining less energy efficient street lighting assets is underway and nearing completion with £500,000 funding secured to begin the replacement of life-expired and condemned lighting equipment with LED units

The number of new energy efficiency measures being installed in homes in Wirral is below that expected when the strategy was developed. This is primarily due to a reduction in funding following a refocus in the obligations of energy companies to support energy efficiency. With more limited support on offer it is now targeted at specific areas and focused on alleviating fuel poverty. In the face of a reduction in anticipated funds it has been necessary to seek funding from different sources. This is both time consuming and unpredictable.

Last year's report highlighted that the Government had withdrawn funding for the Green Deal Finance Company after the 'Green Deal' mechanism established to fund energy efficiency improvements had failed to meet expectations. The strategy had initially envisaged that Green Deal loans would be an opportunity for householders particularly in the west of Wirral where other means of support were limited. The Green Deal Finance Company has now been sold on with Green Deal loans now an opportunity again. It remains unclear what the overall impact of this development will have, but an option now appears open that previously seemed to be closed.

Aim 2: Meeting more of our energy needs from renewable sources

Local solar installations in focus ...



Recent steps...

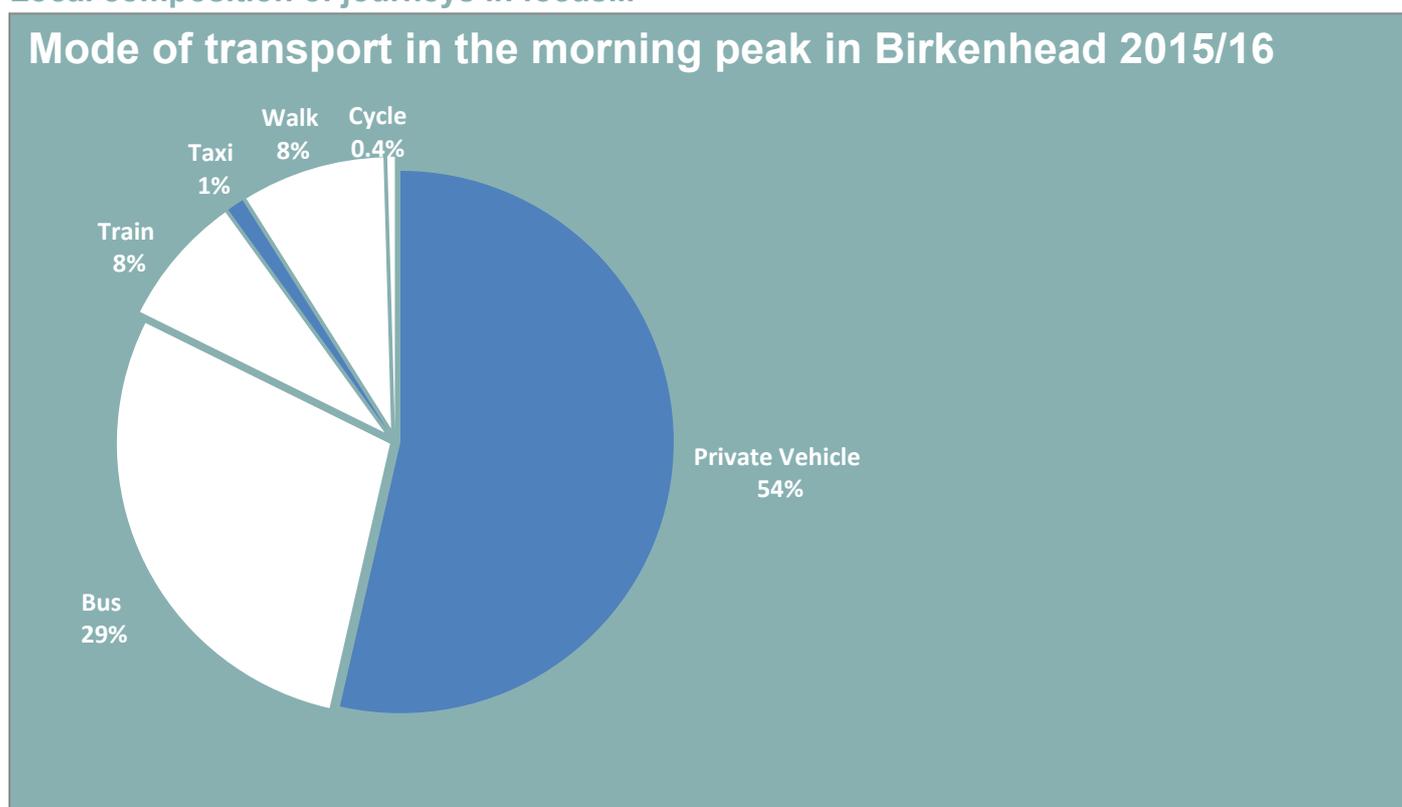
- 248 kWp of solar photo voltaic (PV) panels were installed (registered for Feed in Tariff (FiT)) in 2016/17, bringing the total installed capacity to 8,525 kWp. (DECC, Sub-regional Feed-in Tariffs statistics, April 2016).
- Wirral Community Renewables is now formally constituted as a Community Benefit Society and has appointed a consultant to conduct a feasibility investigation for potential solar schemes. This investigation follows a successful bid for support from the Urban Community Energy Fund.



As anticipated in last year's progress report, the growth in PV installations fell back sharply after a reduction to the Government's Feed in Tariff (FiTs) incentive rate. It will be important to continue to highlight the existence of incentives albeit now at a lower level. These incentives will likely continue to be offered for installations up to 2019. In the face of less fertile ground for new community renewable energy initiatives, the present investigation being undertaken for Wirral Community Renewables is significant. Assuming that the investigation identifies some feasible solar developments, there will likely be a need act swiftly to progress them.

Aim 3: Making use of more sustainable means for transport

Local composition of journeys in focus...



Recent steps...

- Investment in infrastructure for cyclists continued with schemes progressed in the Wirral Waters area and A41 corridor
- Merseytravel, Arriva and Stagecoach made a new Bus Alliance agreement that will deliver more than £25m worth of investment in bus services in year one of the five year partnership
- There were 18 'Dr Bike' events held in 2016/17



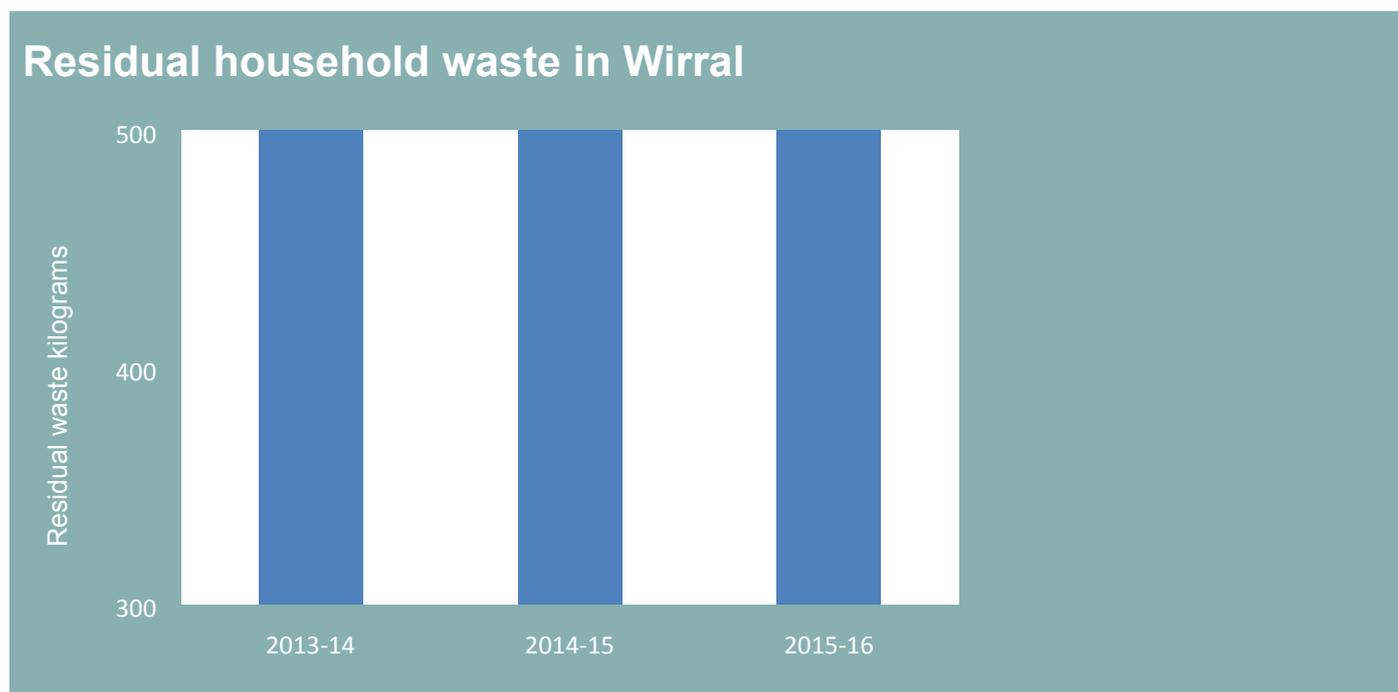
Several local travel support programmes have ceased with funding no longer in place to sustain them. Work under the Wirral Business Travel Support service and local Living Streets programme finished at the end of March 2017.

Progress with some sustainable transport objectives will depend on decisions taken at a national and regional level. In areas such as public transport integration and smart ticketing the implications of the devolution of powers to the city region and developments in the wider region are likely to be significant. For strategy objectives to be realised in these areas, opportunities at the local level may be restricted to restating local ambitions through appropriate regional and sub-regional platforms.

Whilst the number of electric vehicles in the vehicle fleet remains small, there appears to be growing momentum towards the electrification of motor transport. With heightened interest in this area the local economic opportunity is now more obvious.

Aim 4: Reducing indirect climate pollution

Local household waste in focus...



Recent steps...

- 75% of Wirral schools now recycle 50% or more following a 'big bin challenge'. This compares with only 19% of schools who did so two years ago.
- A 'warp-it' portal has been established by Community Action Wirral to encourage the re-use of surplus items amongst local community and voluntary sector organisations. Similar portals have already been created for Cheshire and Wirral NHS Partnership, Wirral Council and for local schools.

The strategy seeks to minimise waste and encourage re-use of materials. At present the statutory powers and obligations available to key partners in the climate group focus on the collection and disposal of domestic waste. It is recognised that this is only part of the picture but it can be difficult to sustain activity in areas beyond, for example, efforts to 'design out waste' and promote the development of a 'circular economy'. At present residual waste is actually increasing and recycling is stagnating both locally and nationally.

Aim 5: Adapting to unavoidable changes in Wirral's climate

Recent steps

- A survey of topography and drainage features has been undertaken in Coronation Park to investigate the prospect to progress ideas to limit flooding arising from the resilient parks project.
- A further update to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Climate and Health paper has been completed.

At present efforts to progress local co-ordinated work on climate adaptation seem less well developed than in other areas. Work that relates to aspects of adaptation is being progressed but the overall picture is less clear.

Aim 6: Building capacity for action

Recent steps

- Transition Town West Kirby and partners held a successful Wirral Earth Fest event in September 2016



- There have been regular updates for the @CoolWirral twitter feed. There were 569 tweets during 2016/17 financial year with 111,882 tweet impressions recorded.
- A series of events were held as part of the Wirral Festival in October 2016 to promote the formation of a new sustainability focused community group called 'Planet Heswall'.
- The 'light's out' project involved 15 schools working with artists to create artworks to highlight local species under pressure from climate change and habitat loss.
- A school 'Cool Climate Challenge' event was held in June 2017 with ten schools taking part.

The strategy anticipates the evolution of the Wirral Climate Change Group to champion climate change work. To this end, the group is in the process of sharpening its terms of reference. The group continues to meet to promote and co-ordinate climate action². Over the life of the strategy there has been some turn-over in participants in the climate group, often following staff changes

² Not all places have created or been able to sustain forums to co-ordinate local climate action in the face of limited resources and competing priorities.

some as a result of organisational rationalisation. As a consequence some organisations that were very active when the climate strategy was developed are no longer represented on a regular basis or at all.

Next steps

The Wirral Climate Change Group maintains a rolling plan of action in support of the strategy. A 'snap shot' of this plan is reported to Wirral Council each year. This is available publicly. Success will ultimately depend on a combination of the implementation of this plan and wider support and action beyond. To get involved and find out how you can help put Cool into practice, at home in your community and in your workplace:

- Read the strategy available at: www.wirral.gov.uk/climatestrategy
- Join the free mailing list to keep in touch via www.wirral.gov.uk/coolwirral
 - Follow @CoolWirral on twitter.
- Connect with others via our Cool Wirral group at www.projectdirt.com.

