

Report from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment

Climate emergency

A £250,000 fund to tackle the Climate Emergency has been included in the proposed budget for 2020/21. The 'Fighting Fund' will take action to stop damaging pollution and make the borough more resilient to the impacts of Climate Change.

The budget proposal could be used to:

- Establish the Borough's tree strategy in early Spring – this will include commencing a major Wirral-wide tree planting initiative.
- Invest in internal staffing opportunities for Active Travel to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), tackle local pollution and improve health and wellbeing.
- Upgrade the Borough's longstanding Eco Schools programme to 'Cool Schools', reemphasising its focus on the climate emergency at both a local and global level.
- Develop the Council's thousands-strong workforce to better understand the impacts of carbon via 'Carbon Literacy' eco-training.

COUNCILLOR WORKSHOPS

X3 climate emergency workshops for councillors have taken place.

Pollinator and wildflower strategy

Wirral Council promise to encourage pollinators and wildflowers along its hedges and verges in a Pollinators Action Plan and sites such as Plymyard Ave and Levers Causeway will be trialled for pollinator planting.

Within the plan, the main concern is to manage hedges and verges differently and make decisions which benefit pollinators such as bees, butterflies and beetles, so that we can better look after them and the borough's unique coastal and countryside landscape.

The Cabinet member decision (which is subject to the usual call-in option) will see:

- Mowing schedules reviewed yearly
- New plantings are good for pollinators
- A review on the use of herbicides and pesticides
- A programme of pollinator events and activities at Wirral Parks
- Promotion of 'Bee Friendly' information
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So far, sites such as Lever Causeway have already seen changes to the summer verge mowing to avoid cutting when umbellifers are in flower. Sites including Victoria Park, Landican Cemetery Baby Garden, Ashton Park and Wallasey Village all saw plantings with species that are good for pollinators and this will continue for all future plantings.

Urban Tree fund

Wirral Council is set to embark on an extensive tree planting programme after learning a bid to the government's Urban Tree Challenge Fund has been successful.

It was confirmed over the weekend that Wirral will be awarded £300,000 under the fund, which the council will be required to match.

If the council approves its own investment of £300,000 when it meets to set next year's budget in March, that means the preparations for a programme worth £600k can begin in April, with more than 1,700 new trees in around 50 different urban locations in the borough being planted during the planting season, November 2020 to February 2021.

The Wirral programme was included as part of a wider Mersey Forest bid for new urban trees. This aims to improve the quality of access routes, encouraging active travel and recreation and improving wellbeing through increased physical activity. It also aims to compensate for the loss of trees due to disease and help to adapt areas to projected climate change.

Green infrastructure is also designed to help make towns more attractive for further investment

Tower Road

This decision report recommended acceptance of a tender from Cambrianway Ltd and award of a contract for the construction of a series of major public realm and highway improvements to the A554 Tower Road. With the provision of wider pavements to provide high quality facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and reduced carriageway widths, the objective of the scheme is to lower traffic speeds through the area and to create an improved environment for all road users.

The work supports the Wirral Council Plan 2020-25, underpinning the main drivers of sustainable regeneration and addressing the climate emergency through the promotion of green and healthy living.

The scheme, which forms a key element of the sustainable transport infrastructure to support the regeneration of the Wirral Waters area, consists of major public realm improvements to the A554 Tower Road with the provision of wider pavements to provide high quality facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and reduced carriageway widths. The objective of the scheme is to lower traffic speeds through the area and to create an improved environment for all road users.

The Tower Road Civilised Streets project was awarded £2.1 million of Department for Transport (DfT) National Productivity Fund (NPIF) for the years in October 2017. The total scheme budget is £3.2 million with the remaining budget being contributions from Wirral Council, Peel Land and Property, Wirral Waters Investment Fund and the European Structural and Investment Fund.

The project delivers significant improvements to the local streetscene and the infrastructure provided promotes sustainable transport alternatives such as walking and cycling in a key economic growth and regeneration location for Wirral Council. The successful supplier has pledged in its social value offer to reduce CO2 emissions from its activities (other than by transport) by 7 Tonnes, and to spend £1.3m in the local supply chain, which will significantly reduce the carbon footprint from construction activities that would normally be associated with a comparable contract.

Green Travel Corridors - 3.7km strategic cycle route from Leasowe to Seacombe Ferry

The Council has accepted a £1.22m funding package from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) and to undertake appropriate land acquisition, consultation, procurement and appointment of a contractor to deliver a 3.7km strategic cycle route from Leasowe to Seacombe Ferry as part of Phase 1 of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – the Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) Green Travel Corridors.

Road Safety

Through the Mind Your Business project, Wirral Council's Road Safety team invited Wirral businesses to a mock trial held at Wallasey Town Hall Chamber.

The mock trial, of which 75 business representatives attended, demonstrated potential consequences a company can face if they fail to fulfill their duty of care obligations if one of their drivers is involved a collision.

The aim of the event, funded by the Road Safety Trust, was to highlight the responsibility of businesses to make sure their drivers are as safe as possible on the roads.