



## **ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

**Monday 15 July 2024**

<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT &amp; CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2023-24</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency at an extraordinary meeting of full Council on 15 July 2019 and through this committed to action the ecological and climate crisis we face. The Council developed an Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP) in response to the declaration.

This report provides an 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 2023-24 financial year.

The Environment & Climate Emergency Action Plan supports the delivery of the Environment and Climate Emergency Policy and the Wirral Working Together Council Plan 2023-2027 priorities 'To play our part in addressing the climate emergency and protecting our environment' and 'To be prepared to innovate and face the future' and is focussed on the 'Working together to protect our environment' theme.

Progress of the actions is summarised within this report and full details are provided within Appendices 1 and 2.

The report looks ahead to priority actions the next 12 months to ensure that the Council endeavours to deliver its environmental commitments and carbon budget targets. The single most important action for the Council to undertake in the coming years is the decarbonisation of its buildings if the Council is to reach net zero.

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

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

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

1. Note the progress of the Environment & Climate Emergency actions undertaken in 2023-24; and
2. Endorse the priority actions for 2024-25 contained within section 6 of Appendix 1.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The latest evidence indicates that there is a 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. The level of climate change seen will depend on how quickly emissions of greenhouse gases are cut, the sooner emissions are reduced, the smaller the changes will be, and everyone has a part to play.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The ECEAP demonstrates that the Council is responding to the declared environment and climate emergency and the outlined priorities are fundamental to delivering policies outlined in the ECE policy. Governance and scrutiny are provided by Senior Management and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee to ensure the Council is playing their part to address the climate emergency and protect our environment.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 The Council has declared an Environment and Climate Emergency and with it an expectation that action will be taken to address the emergency. The options of not acting or delaying action have not been considered as this would not respond to the Council's declaration or ensure the Council meet the target of becoming a net zero Council by 2030. The emergency declaration has established an urgency for action and for the Council to transform the way it functions to deliver the required response.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Globally 2023 was the warmest year on record. 2023 is the tenth year in succession that has equalled or exceeded +1.0°C above pre-industrial temperatures (1850-1900). The global average temperature for 2023 was 1.46°C above the pre-industrial baseline. A transition into El Niño conditions contributed to further elevated temperatures for the latter part of the year. The Met Office global temperature forecast for 2024 is to be between 1.34°C and 1.58°.
- 3.2 The UK experienced 11% more rain than average. Northern Ireland had its third wettest year on record. Some parts of the UK recorded a third more rainfall than normal. This is something we can expect to continue as a warmer atmosphere has a greater capacity to hold moisture. The impacts of climate change will be wide reaching and could include risk to water supplies, localised flooding, loss of biodiversity, increase of public health incidents such as heat stress, damage to infrastructure and increased food insecurity.
- 3.3 Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency through an all-party resolution in July 2019. As part of the response to this declaration the Council has developed and adopted Environment and Climate Emergency Policy.

- 3.4 The Environment and Climate Emergency Policy committed the Council to the establishment of the ECEAP and the ambitious but achievable target of the Council becoming 'net carbon zero' by 2030 was set.
- 3.5 The ECEAP is the Council's locally determined contribution to the Cool2 strategy. This sets a target for the entire Borough of Wirral to be net carbon zero by 2041. This target is consistent with the Liverpool City Region aims and National priorities.
- 3.6 The Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress report (Appendix 1) forms the third annual progress report for Wirral Council's ECEAP. The report details progress made on actions in 2023-24.
- 3.7 Alongside this report, the carbon budget progress shows that the Council failed to meet the target reduction for CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalent) emissions for 2023-24, with actual net CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions of 5,774 tonnes, against a target of 4505 tonnes. 80% of the Council's reported net emissions in 2023-24 derived from heating council assets. The reductions seen over previous years have plateaued due to the exhaustion of the 'quick wins' and limited investment in the decarbonisation of our buildings and council fleet due to financial constraints.
- 3.8 The ECEAP Progress Report (Appendix 1) outlines priority actions for 2024-25 to ensure the Council keeps pace with the carbon budget trajectory. The target net emissions for 2024-25 is 3414 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e a reduction of approximately 41% on 2023-24 actual emissions (5774 t CO<sub>2</sub>e).
- 3.9 During 2023-24 ECEAP was 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. It highlights the urgent action and investment needed to ensure that the Council has the correct policies, investment, and delivery mechanisms in place to secure carbon reductions across all our service areas, particularly in decarbonising our buildings and transitioning the fleet to low or zero emission vehicles.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The nature of the report is to monitor progress of the action plan, therefore there are no direct financial implications from the report.
- 4.2 Within the MTFS capital requests are prioritised to include projects that support the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan following the declaration of a Climate Emergency by the Council in May 2019.
- 4.3 The Council has established dedicated resources to deliver change 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 2024-25 is £250,000 revenue, which will support staff resource and projects throughout the Council. However, the response to the climate emergency will require significant investment, most evidently in council assets and fleet. This will be explored by the various workstreams taking place within the action plan and external funding streams sought.

## **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.

## **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 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.
- 7.2 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. Organisations, such as Climate Emergency UK actively scrutinise local authorities ranking them on a range of indicators, the results of which are widely published in local and national press.
- 7.3 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 are RAG rated to identify and mitigate risks to delivery, this will be strengthened with development of the Power Bi dashboard. The Environment and

Climate Emergency Action Group monitor these risks as part of the management of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 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/files/climate-emergency-action-plan-wirral-council-eia.pdf/download?inline>

## **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 CO<sub>2</sub>
- 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 strong local economy which support 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 the local economy and adapt to environmental challenges and opportunities. It also helps in raising awareness of where goods and services come from. Actions such as community

food networks and a closed loop economy make everyone think more about 'keeping it local' and have the potential to shorten supply chains. The Council can also use its land and assets in different ways to support the net zero carbon targets and ensure a sustainable local environment. The Council 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 2023-24

Appendix 2 Eco school report 2023-24

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Cool Wirral Partnership [Cool 2 Strategy](#)

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

Wirral Council Plan <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/council-plan>

UN Paris Agreement

[http://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](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>

Council 15 July 2019

<http://s03vs-intrcm.core.wcent.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=123&MId=8102>

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee in accordance with Section 5.2 (a) of its Terms of Reference.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

- (a) in co-ordinating the response to cross-cutting sustainability issues such as reducing carbon emissions, air quality issues, climate change response, improving resource efficiency and developing sustainable energy.

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Council – A New Climate Change Strategy for Wirral ‘COOL 2’</b>	<b>31 March 2020</b>
<b>Environment Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee – Climate Emergency Headlines</b>	<b>12 March 2020</b>
<b>Environment, Climate Emergency &amp; Transport – Committee Meeting – Approval of the Environment and Climate Emergency Policy and Action Plan</b>	<b>14 June 2021</b>
<b>Environment, Climate Emergency &amp; Transport Committee Meeting - Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Report 2021/22 (Minute 11)</b>	<b>20 June 2022</b>
<b>Environment, Climate Emergency &amp; Transport Committee Meeting – Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Report 2022/23 (Item 7)</b>	<b>19 June 2023</b>