

Great Aycliffe Town Council

Climate Emergency Policy and Carbon Reduction Action Plan



December 2024

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Climate Emergency Policy and Carbon Reduction Action Plan

1.0 Scope of the Policy

- 1.1 The Town Council recognises that climate change is having a global effect on the environment and that increases in global warming will lead to harmful and irreversible changes to the earth's climate and ecosystems.
- 1.2 The implications of climate change are already being seen locally in extreme weather events, most notably the increased storms, rainfall and flooding which have impacted on many Council land holdings, services and events.
- 1.3 The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and made a commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon zero by 2050.
- 1.4 This Climate Emergency Policy and the associated Carbon Reduction Plan aims to set out the principles that will be followed and the actions that will be taken by this Council to address this emergency and deliver upon the above commitment.
- 1.5 Accomplishing this will require a clear vision, underpinned by strong principles, and taking a structured approach to the net zero journey, including the setting of a baseline via the calculation of the Council's carbon footprint, and the preparation of a comprehensive action plan which sets out clear, prioritised, evidence-based targets, alongside a commitment by the Council to invest, as is necessary in carbon reduction related initiatives.
- 1.6 The Council cannot act alone and implementation of this Policy and the Carbon Reduction Plan will also require working with partners such as Durham County Council and the local community to address the challenges that are posed by climate change across the Parish, as swiftly as possible.
- 1.7 This policy contributes towards the achievement of Strategic Aims 1, 2 and 6 in the Council's Service Delivery Plan:-

Aim No. 1 – To provide good governance and management of the Council

Aim No. 2 - To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner

Aim No. 5 – To contribute to the environmental improvement of Aycliffe by managing and developing parks, play areas and green spaces.

Aim No. 8 – To research information and make the case for Great Aycliffe

2.0 Purpose of the Policy

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:-

1. Define the vision and principles of the Town Council in addressing the climate emergency.
2. Highlight the key themes and priorities that will be focussed upon.
3. Ensure the calculation of the current carbon footprint of the Council.
4. Ensure the preparation of a Carbon Reduction Action Plan identifying the key targets and actions that will be implemented over the coming years to achieve the Council's aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon zero by 2050.

3.0 Vision and Principles

- 3.1 The overriding vision of the Town Council is to become Carbon Neutral by 2030 and Carbon Zero by 2050.
- 3.2 Carbon Neutral is defined as the Council calculating its carbon footprint and developing and implementing a Carbon Reduction Action Plan to reduce emissions to as low as possible, with any residual emissions being offset by high quality, certified carbon credits.
- 3.3 Carbon Zero is defined as being the Council reducing its full value chain emissions in relation to all services, facilities and events to zero, with any remaining hard to decarbonise emissions being compensated with certified greenhouse gas removal, via methods such as tree planting or using technology to absorb the remaining emissions.
- 3.4 This vision is built upon five key principles which will underpin the approach taken by the Council. These principles are:-
1. Carbon Emissions Reduction
 2. Procurement and Supply Chain Practices
 3. Awareness Raising and Working with the Community and Other Organisations
 4. Ecological Actions and Carbon Offset
 5. Council and Planning Policy

4.0 Key Themes and Priorities

- 4.1 Under each of the five key principles there are a number of key themes or workstreams which taken together will form the basis of the Council's Carbon Reduction Action Plan. These are summarised below.

1. Carbon Emissions Reduction

- Decarbonise the Council's energy supplies and implement renewable energy generation across all Council facilities
- Improve energy efficiency of all Council buildings and reduce energy use
- Reduction of vehicle related emissions and sustainable transport initiatives
- Reduction of waste and increased recycling

2. Procurement and Supply Chain

- Review of procurement policies and practices
- Consider buying local and green as far as is practicable

3. Awareness Raising and Working with the Community and Other Organisations

- Training and raising awareness of staff and councillors
- Promoting and publicising carbon reduction initiatives and achievements
- Partnership working e.g. with DCC Low Carbon Team, Wildlife Trust etc
- Supporting local groups and projects e.g. via grants and donations

4. Ecological Actions and Carbon Offset

- Tree planting
- Management of land for nature e.g. the creation of wildlife corridors and wildflower meadows
- Sustainable planting and reduced use of pesticides and peat-based compost

5. Council and Planning Policy

- Scrutiny of planning applications
- Lobbying of Central Government and Durham County Council
- Neighbourhood Plan Review
- Considering climate change and ecology in all Council decisions

5.0 Carbon Footprint

- 5.1 In order to progress the Council's Climate Emergency Response and the development of a Carbon Reduction Action Plan, it is critical that the Council understands its carbon emissions as an organisation, both in terms of where they are generated and how much carbon is being produced.
- 5.2 Understanding and calculating its Carbon Footprint will provide the Council with a base line for measuring progress in the journey to becoming carbon zero.
- 5.3 The Council has calculated its Carbon Footprint using the Climate County Durham Carbon Footprint Calculator used by Durham County Council and kindly shared with the Town Council.
- 5.4 This tool has been used to calculate the Council's Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions.
- 5.5 Scope 1 and 2 emissions are defined as follows:-
 - Scope 1: Direct emissions from combustion of gas and other fuels.
 - Scope 2: Emissions resulting from the generation of electricity and other energy purchased (but generated elsewhere).
- 5.6 This includes all carbon emissions relating to the Council's use of gas and electricity running its various buildings and facilities, as well as its use of petrol, diesel, oil and compressed gas in running its various services and events, and the use of vehicles in providing those services.
- 5.7 Scope 3 emissions, which are those made by third parties of the Town Council such as suppliers and service providers in connection with the Council's operational services, events and activities, have not been included at this stage due to the complexities of calculating these emissions.
- 5.8 **The Council's Carbon Footprint (Scope 1 and 2 Emissions) has been calculated at 196.2-ton-CO₂-eq for the 2023/24 financial year and is summarised in the chart attached at Appendix 1.**
- 5.9 The Council's carbon footprint includes all of its Scope 1 and 2 emissions relating to its buildings, vehicles, parish lighting, and all operational activities and events. Carbon reduction will be calculated on an annual basis from a starting point of 2023/24 and the Council's target is to reduce the carbon footprint by at least 5% per annum to give the Council the best chance of becoming carbon zero by 2050.
- 5.10 In the longer term the Council will also need to investigate and calculate its Scope 3 emissions, and also the level of carbon offset that it is achieving through actions such as tree planting and creating and maintaining wildflower meadows, in order to better understand its net carbon generation position.

6.0 Carbon Reduction Action Plan

- 6.1 A Carbon Reduction Action Plan has been prepared under the five key principles and underlying themes identified in this Policy.
- 6.2 This is attached at Appendix 2.
- 6.3 The Action Plan includes a total of 57 actions, each with a description, an indication of how they will be measured, where the responsibility for implementing the action lies, including any partnership working, the possible cost, the estimated CO2 saving, the level of priority and the estimated completion date.
- 6.4 Priorities within the Action Plan have been defined as follows:-
- High (21) Implement the action as soon as practicable and no later than 2030*
Medium (33) Implement the action within 10 years (by 2035)
Low (3) Implement the action within 25 years (by 2050)
- 6.5 Please note that at this very early stage in the process, and bearing in mind the lack of specialist carbon reduction knowledge within the Town Council, in many cases the cost and potential CO2 savings have not yet been quantified and would be subject to the feasibility of each individual action being fully investigated and costed before this could be added into the Action Plan.
- 6.6 However, the Carbon Reduction Action Plan will allow the Council to take effective strategic decisions and prioritise actions over the next 10 to 25 years to achieve the Council's vision to be carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon zero by 2050.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 The Carbon Reduction Action Plan will be continually reviewed with half yearly updates to the Council on progress, financial implications and required investments and budget provision and estimated and actual CO2 savings.
- 7.2 Progress of delivering the Action Plan will be shared with colleagues within the Net Zero Team at Durham County Council who will provide feedback and advice on emissions reductions.
- 7.3 Financial provision will be made in future updates of the Asset Management Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan for the potential capital costs of delivering the Carbon Reduction Action Plan.
- 7.4 The Council's Carbon Footprint will be calculated every year to monitor reductions in carbon emissions as a consequence of the actions taken under the Carbon Reduction Action Plan.

