



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Council: Wednesday 28th July 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 10
Subject	Climate Action Biannual Report
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor David Harvey, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Email: david.harvey@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Ness Scott, Climate Change Manager Tel: 07525 802994; Email: vanessa.scott@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	This paper presents to Full Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A biannual report on the climate action taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the climate and ecological emergency during the last six months: February-July 2021.• The WODC Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023.• A proposal to continue the Better Housing Better Health service with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in 2021/2022.
Annex	Annex I : WODC Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023.
Recommendations	(a) That the contents of the biannual report on climate action for West Oxfordshire, and of the WODC Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023 included in Annex I be noted; and (b) That the continuation of the Better Housing Better Health service with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in 2021/2022 be approved.
Corporate priorities	1. To protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy 2. Working with communities to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of residents 3. To provide efficient and value for money services, whilst delivering quality front line services
Key Decision	N/A

Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The WODC Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023, has been developed by the Climate Change Manager working closely with the District Council's Chief Executive, its Biodiversity and Countryside Land Management Officer, Sustainable Planning Specialist and Biodiversity Officer. The cross-party Climate Action Working Group has also seen the Biodiversity Work Programme ahead of this being presented to Full Council and have been closely consulted.

I. BACKGROUND

I.1. This paper presents to Full Council:

- A biannual report on the climate action taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the climate and ecological emergency during the last six months: February-July 2021.
- The WODC Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023, in [Annex I](#) (starting at page 16).
- A proposal to continue the Better Housing Better Health service with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in 2021/2022.

2. BIENNIAL REPORT ON COUNCIL MOTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CLIMATE ACTION.

Table 1: Biennial reporting on Council motions associated with climate action.

Notice of Motion	Biennial Reporting Tracker
<p>2.1. Date of Full Council: 22nd January 2020</p> <p><i>NOTICE OF MOTION – CLIMATE ACTION BIODIVERSITY PLAN</i></p>	<p>The Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire, 2021-2025 (published in Feb 2021) incorporates, as a leading theme, <i>“Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems.”</i></p> <p>The Strategy defines a vision and strategic objectives for this theme and is the first step taken in response to a call in January 2020 for a Biodiversity Plan.</p> <p>With the Climate Change Strategy objectives clearly defined, the Council has gone on to develop its short- to medium-term actions for biodiversity in the form of a 24-month biodiversity work programme. The biodiversity work programme is referred to in greater depth in section 3.0 under theme one: protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, and in Annex I.</p>

3. CLIMATE ACTION REPORT

3.1 Progress and activities for climate action are reported under two headings:

- i) Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire, 2021-2025 (published Feb, 2021)
- ii) Carbon Action Plan (published Oct, 2020)

3.2 These two documents provide the Council's framework for prioritising and taking forward a programme of work in response to the climate and ecological emergency.

3.3 Actions taken forward for the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Action Plan are also captured, at a high level, in the Council's Local Recovery Plan (October 2020). This Plan gives further resource and subsequent impetus to the climate work programme.

Table 2: A report of the last six months.

Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire, 2021-2025.	
3.3. CCS Theme one: Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems	<p>Appointment of Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer. In February 2021, Rachel Crookes joined WODC as Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer. Rachel is responsible for developing enhanced Land Management Plans for the Council's parks and open green spaces.</p> <p>The Land Management Plans (LMPs) A baseline LMP position for all council-managed open green spaces is now close to completion. This is the starting point from where recommendations for biodiversity enhancement will be made. Site visits have been carried out to review existing value and status which has been done in close discussion with the Council's Forestry and Landscape Officer (Nick Dalby); Tree Officer (Joe Saxton); Wychwood Project's CEO (Neil Clennell); and volunteer groups (Witney Woodland Volunteers and North Leigh Friends). An LMP Steering Group has also been formed, with officers from across climate, waste contracts, property & estates teams to facilitate cross working.</p> <p>Next steps are to work from this baseline position to develop a vision, biodiversity enhancement principles and GIS maps to illustrate proposals for how the Council's open spaces can be designed as both accessible and natural, providing long-term benefits for people and wildlife. Current proposals are</p>

	<p>to present enhancement plans to Full Council in October 2021 ahead of launching an online consultation with a public survey in the autumn/winter '21.</p> <p>Resourcing models and potential funding streams are being explored and developed so that there is a proposed, longer-term strategy for delivering enhanced land management plans on Council open spaces.</p> <p>A Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023, provides an overview to the Council's collective efforts on biodiversity projects. Please refer to Annex I. This work programme will be retained as a working document and tool for managing resource allocation set alongside the wider objectives contained within the Climate Change Strategy and Local Recovery Plan.</p>
<p>3.4. CCS Theme two: Energy</p>	<p>“Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire”</p> <p>Link to summary report Link to full report</p> <p>A new report has been produced and was launched by OxLEP on 29th June 2021. A consortium of local stakeholders, including Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and all six local authorities asked the ECI to investigate how the county can eradicate carbon emissions from its economy. Produced in collaboration with Bioregional and colleagues from the Transport Studies Unit and Engineering Department, the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire report begins by reviewing recent progress on climate goals. It highlights successes in decarbonising electricity and reducing energy demand over the last decade - a period which has seen rapid economic and population growth in the county. It also showcases the considerable sustainability expertise that exists in Oxfordshire, underpinned by a thriving world-class innovation ecosystem.</p> <p>This report addresses the question of how Oxfordshire can sustain the momentum of the last decade to achieve net-zero emissions. There remains a significant way to go to decarbonise transport, reduce reliance on fossil fuels for heating, and protect and enhance carbon stored in the natural environment. Maintaining the same rate of emissions reduction in Oxfordshire will require relatively greater investment locally, in building retrofit, cleaner heating systems and electric vehicles; and cultural and behavioural changes such as active travel, dietary changes and reduced energy demand. The report</p>

analysis shows that there are different routes to net-zero, and in presenting scenarios for the next three decades, the report outlines three distinct pathways to eradicating emissions from the economy.

Net Zero Carbon Toolkit

A Net Zero Carbon Toolkit has been produced by West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean Councils for new-build and retrofit housing.

In 2019, Cotswold District Council secured funds through the [Local Government Association \(LGA\) Housing Advisers Programme](#), a programme designed to support councils seeking to innovate in meeting the housing needs of their communities. Please see the original press release [here](#).

Publica councils have worked closely and collaboratively on this piece of work to ensure the Toolkit represents a partnership resource. Its original delivery timeframes were delayed amid the Pandemic last year. However, in December 2020, Publica established a cross-council project team to co-ordinate its production and have been working closely with our consultants to produce the Toolkit since. The Toolkit has been written by a team of leading specialists in this field and includes Levitt Bernstein, Elementa, the Passivhaus Trust and Etude. It offers up-to-the minute technical guidance for small/medium house builders, architects and consultants and is the 'how to guide' for delivery of our net-zero carbon policy in Salt Cross. It is also WODC's request for developers to 'align with net-zero carbon' in the new Sustainability Standards Checklist. This is a field that lacks technical guidance and specifications generally, so it fills a much-needed gap in information and provides consistency in how we define net-zero in building terms.

The Toolkit was launched on Tuesday 20th July. The webinar event was recorded so that this can be shared more widely with stakeholders and other Councils after its launch as part of plans for its ongoing promotion.

Better Housing Better Health service

The Council is now seeking approvals at Full Council to continue its commitment to the Better Housing Better Health service run by the National Energy Foundation (NEF) for 2021/2022. The service costs £7,000 per year for WODC as a partner in the Oxfordshire-wide Affordable Warmth Network.

The Better Housing Better Health service aims to deliver the following outcomes for residents:

- Improvement to resident's thermal comfort, particularly those in fuel poverty and / or poor health.
- Increase in household income through both a reduction in the cost of energy bills and new income being identified.
- Reduction in health problems associated with living in a cold and/or damp home and an increase in general wellbeing as a result.
- Raised awareness of fuel poverty/energy efficiency throughout the county and in particular with the health and social care sector.
- Improvement in health and safety in the home, particularly with regards to fire hazards.

In 2020/2021, The NEF delivered for West Oxfordshire:

- 101 in-depth warm and wellbeing assessments. Assessments usually take 20 minutes with the majority leading to interventions and extensive case work which is often needed to ensure a successful outcome for the resident. Due to the pandemic, average house call times increased as people have had more areas where they need support.
- 107 ECO Flex grant applications and installations (including 77 loft insulations, 36 cavity wall insulations as energy-efficiency measures)
- carbon emission savings: in 2020/21, NEF estimates a saving of 58,220kg/CO₂ through their BHBH service and energy-efficiency measures.

Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery, LAD1b, Oxfordshire County Council-led grant scheme. This year, Oxfordshire County Council has been successful in securing £1.5 million in government green homes grant funding for energy-efficiency measures reaching at least 150 homes across the county. All Oxon councils are working together with the delivery partner NEF to help less well-off households retrofit their homes with energy saving equipment – cutting families' fuel bills while at the same time helping to reduce the county's carbon footprint. WODC are working proactively with the NEF to ensure the green homes grant is advertised and subsequently taken up by residents in West Oxfordshire.

3.5. CCS Theme three: Low-carbon transport and active travel

Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OEVIS)

On 24th March 2021, Cabinet approved the OEVIS. Developed in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council and local authority partners, the OEVIS lays out the framework to realise a countywide vision for the charging of electric vehicles (EVs). With an end to sales of diesel and petrol cars set for 2030, it is expected that 25,000 battery electric vehicles will be on Oxfordshire's roads within the next five years. To meet this emerging demand, the OEVIS sets an aspiration for 7.5% of all local authority managed public car park spaces to be adapted to fast or rapid electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs). This represents an ambitious goal for the Council's EVCP plans, making EV car charging available to residents across the district.

Council-led Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs)

EB Charging are now appointed by WODC, working on behalf of Publica councils, to carry out a feasibility assessment of Council-owned car parks for the installation of EVCP. Following a kick-off meeting with EB Charging in June 2021, EB Charging are now in a position to begin their site surveys and make recommendations. All recommendations will need to be considered alongside existing proposals for EVCP as part of Park & Charge Oxfordshire, so that one dovetails and complements the other.

Park & Charge Oxfordshire.

The pilot installation is at Cattle Market car park in central Bicester. Charging points went live here on Thursday 27 May 2021 and EV drivers have been very positive about the new EVCPs.

In May 2021, SSE Utilities withdrew from the project and will not be providing the infrastructure delivery or investment into the project that was previously intended. Fortunately, Park and Charge Oxfordshire continues to be an extremely important project for the County and for the funders at the Office for Zero Emissions Vehicles (OZEV). All remaining project partners and participating District Councils remain fully committed to deliver the agreed programme without the involvement of SSE.

With SSE's departure from the project, the project's infrastructure cost is currently unfunded. OCC therefore immediately set about seeking additional funding from OZEV via the On-Street Residential Charging Scheme (ORCS), administered by the Energy Saving Trust (EST), to cover 75% of the costs of the infrastructure side of the project. News on the success of that funding application will

	<p>be known later this summer. The remaining infrastructure costs will be met by additional funding from lead project partners Zeta Specialist Lighting – a Bicester-based SME - who are also designing and building the bespoke EV chargers for the project right here in Oxfordshire as well as running the Charge Point Operation concession contract under the trading name ‘EZ-Charge’.</p> <p>As a result, the project consortium delivering the project will now be entirely Oxfordshire-based and comprise Zeta Specialist Lighting (Bicester), Urban Integrated UK (Oxford), Oxfordshire County Council and the University of Oxford.</p> <p>Innovate UK – and the two remaining commercial partners Zeta and Urban Integrated - will continue to fund all other elements of Park and Charge Oxfordshire in order for the EV charging hubs to be delivered at no cost to the host Local Authorities involved.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Park and Charge Oxfordshire team are continuing with their successful communications campaign with Green.TV, and are looking forward to delivering up to three on-the-ground public engagement events across Oxfordshire this August: one of these events will be held in Witney.</p> <p>These will be all-day events held on weekend days in towns and villages where the scheme is coming later in the year, and will be a way to get people excited about what is to come and give them a great opportunity to test drive an EV and learn all about the scheme well in advance of their local Park and Charge hub opening in the winter. Further details will be shared online here.</p>
<p>3.6. CCS Theme four: Standards in new development</p>	<p>Appointment of Sustainable Planning Specialist In April 2021, Hannah Kenyon joined WODC as the new Sustainable Planning Specialist responsible for implementing the Sustainability Standards Checklist. Hannah is working as part of the climate team, alongside the Council’s development management team.</p> <p>The new Sustainability Standards Checklist was soft launched online at the end of May 2021. The Checklist and supporting information is available online here.</p>

	<p>Registered major applications are currently being reviewed with consideration to the checklist headings, whilst a new expectation for a Sustainability Statement is now referenced in a pre-application letter and advice being issued by the Council to applicants.</p> <p>A series of technical webinars have also been scheduled to enhance our knowledge and practical application of sustainability considerations in planning. The first webinar introduced the Checklist and was well received by officers.</p> <p>The Council's planning validation checklist is currently being updated: this is work in progress, being done for all Publica councils simultaneously. When the Sustainability Standards Checklist becomes a part of the updated validation checklist process, this will mark its formal launch.</p> <p>Net Zero Carbon Toolkit A Net Zero Carbon Toolkit, referred to in 3.4, provides technical guidance for both retrofit housing and new-build housing projects and will provide a resource for small and medium-sized housebuilders and applicants looking to align their housing development proposals with a standard of net-zero carbon. The Toolkit was launched and presented in partnership by West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils on Tuesday 20th July. The webinar event was recorded so that this can be shared more widely with stakeholders and other Councils after its launch as part of plans for its ongoing promotion.</p> <p>Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan Independent examination of the AAP by an Inspector began on 28th June 2021 and ran for two weeks. Policies covering net-zero carbon, biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure were dealt with on the 6th July 2021 under Matter 7 of the hearing. Planning and climate teams, alongside consultant specialists in the field of net-zero carbon and biodiversity net gain, were present at the hearing responding to issues and questions raised by the Inspector. The Inspector's conclusions on the AAP following the examination will be provided in due course.</p>
<p>3.7. CCS Theme five: Engage, support & educate</p>	<p>Winter and spring (2021) editions of the Climate Action Bulletin were produced and issued to all 320 members of the Council's Climate Action Network. Back editions are available online here.</p>

A **Climate Action Day** for the Parish and Town Council Forum was held in April 2021. This event was organised courtesy of WODC, and hosted by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) – an energy-focused charity. Parish and town councils received expert guidance from CSE on how to develop climate actions at a local level. Ideas were shared during workshops that stimulated debate around ideas including energy monitoring, community surveys, litter picks and community walks. Delegates left the day with a variety of tools and resources to start developing climate-action plans for their own parish and town councils. WODC has now also added a new "Climate Action Near You" section to its Climate Action Bulletins and will be inviting parish and town councils to share their news on how they are getting on with their climate plans.

The Council's 2020 **Climate Art Competition Winners** - Millie Freer, Lexie Boshier and Nicole Harris – have now received and planted their prize trees. With lockdown measures having begun to ease in April of this year, Millie chose to plant her tree in the orchard of Deer Park Wood. Lexie and Nicole planted their tree in the grounds of Wood Green School. Their original winning entries can be viewed [online here](#). The press release can be viewed [here](#).

Climate action webpages are being continually updated to reflect progress being made on climate projects: <https://westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/>

On the 14th June, WODC took part in the **“SwitchUpYourLunch”** Oxfordshire campaign run by Good Food Oxford to raise awareness with staff to the importance of food choices in relation to climate impact. It was a successful event with many staff contributing their favourite vegetarian recipes on Publica's portal.

On 17th June 2021, WODC's Climate Change Manager joined guest speakers at an **Oxfordshire Zero Carbon Homes Initiative** event hosted by Friends of the Earth. Ness Scott presented on the origins and definition of the net-zero carbon policy within the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP), representing an example of best practice.

Carbon Action Plan: The Pathway to Achieving Carbon Neutral by 2030

3.8. Recruitment

Actions within the Carbon Action Plan will be supported by a newly-appointed Climate Change Officer who joins the climate team on 21st July 2021. On arrival, the Climate Change Officer's immediate priority will be to undertake the Council's carbon account for 2020/2021 and support the development and implementation of decarbonisation proposals across the Council's estate and services.

3.9. Priority for action: Council offices, property and sites

Energy and sustainability modelling for Woodgreen and Elmfield offices.

In February 2021, an energy and sustainability consultant was appointed by the Council to produce a report summarising the recommendations of site visits and desktop building energy modelling and viability assessment providing the Council best-practice options for sustainable and low-carbon office retrofit.

The Council's consultant was appointed to:

- Develop models that assess the building energy performance of Council offices for WODC.
- Complete a viability assessment for low / zero-carbon (LZC) energy technologies. For a clean transition and ultimate step towards carbon neutrality, all Council-owned buildings must move away from fossil-fuels to electricity-based systems by installing LZC energy in-situ or a combination of solutions where appropriate.
- Model and conclude with two scenarios, including detailed energy-efficiency specifications and LZC technologies for office retrofit providing options for: 1) essential energy retrofit alongside, 2) exemplary energy retrofit.
- Assess water-efficiency measures, waste reduction and recycling, the provision of safe, accessible and secure cycling storage using BREEAM 2018 standards for assessment as part of an overall review of Council office space.

Two reports were completed in April 2021. The key findings from these reports were presented to the Climate Action Working Group in an April meeting. Retrofit and decarbonisation measures are being considered alongside a wider piece by the Council looking at future office space that reflects staff need, post Covid. They also provide important supporting information on decarbonisation proposals where these are eligible for external government funding.

	<p>Publica Staff Benefits continue to support and incentivise staff, who are eligible for the scheme, in leasing an electric vehicle through the provider Tusker. This offers not only government tax and NI savings but encourages those eligible to consider making that switch to a cleaner vehicle.</p>
<p>3.10. Priority for action: Leisure centres and facilities</p>	<p>Decarbonisation reports and Solar PV viability in leisure buildings. In June 2021, an energy assessment and decarbonisation report, accompanied by a Solar PV viability report, were completed for three council-owned leisure buildings. The three buildings were selected as having greatest, immediate potential for space heating and hot water system decarbonisation and have therefore been assessed as a priority. Decarbonisation reports for Carterton Leisure Centre, Carterton Pavilion, Witney ATP and Pavilion are now complete and provide both short-term and medium- and long-term recommendations for energy-efficiency measures, space heating and hot water system replacement and Solar PV. These recommendations will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help to inform decisions on low-cost, energy demand-reduction measures from a building management perspective; • help to plan for the longer-term decarbonisation of the whole building; • provide important supporting information on decarbonisation proposals where these are eligible for external government funding.
<p>3.11. Priority for action: Council vehicle fleet, machinery and transport</p>	<p>Transitioning to electric vehicles The Council's waste vehicle fleet now includes its first battery electric vehicle (BEV) – a new Renault Zoe R135 Iconic. Ubico, West Oxfordshire's waste and recycling delivery partner, will use the Council-owned vehicle day-to-day. The Zoe's 52kWh battery has enough capacity for staff to undertake their work without the need to recharge during the day. Furthermore, the Council has on order its first battery electric road sweeper, a new addition to the waste vehicle fleet expected on the streets this year.</p> <p>New In-Cab Technology for waste vehicle fleet The Council has also invested in a new "in-cab" technology system. The specialist software system will be retro-fitted to the Council's entire fleet of refuse, recycling, food and garden waste vehicles and will help reduce the number of collections being missed as well reducing the fuel used and cutting vehicle carbon emissions. Greater efficiencies in service delivery will bring projected annual savings of £50,000 per year from the Council's contract with its waste service delivery partner, Ubico.</p>

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The Council's 2020/21 budget originally included a provision of £200,000 and a commitment to review the possibility of adding further funds to climate projects in the subsequent two financial years. Approximately £50,000 of the total £200,000 set aside to implement climate projects has, to date, been spent with the balance rolling forward to fund future projects.
- 4.2. As with all capital projects, the budget available for climate projects is constrained: there is therefore a need to identify and secure external, grant funding sources to enable delivery. Without this external grant funding, some of the objectives listed above may not be achieved.
- 4.3. The Council's Local Recovery Fund (October 2020) now funds four, fixed-term positions within the Council's newly-created climate team, providing resource and capacity within the Council to support delivery of the Local Recovery Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Action Plan. This funds the team as follows:
 - Climate Change Manager: fixed-term until Nov '23.
 - Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer: fixed-term until Feb '23.
 - Climate Change Officer: fixed-term until July '23.
 - Sustainable Planning Specialist: fixed-term until April '22.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no perceived legal implications associated with the proposals within this report.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. There are no immediate risks considered to be arising from the contents of this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1. The design of all projects as a response to the climate and ecological emergency have an equal impact across Council functions, for all customers and staff.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The proposals within this report will have a direct, positive impact on the Council's operations with regard to energy and resource efficiency, water efficiency, waste reduction and recycling and associated carbon reduction. In addition, multiple cross-benefits towards climate change mitigation and adaptation are planned district-wide through work across functions and with partner organisations.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1. One alternative option is to take no action at all.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1. The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:
 - Meeting minutes and motion agreed at Full Council on 26th June 2019.
 - Meeting minutes and motions agreed at Full Council on 22nd January 2020.

- Climate action biannual report at Full Council on 29th July 2020.
- Carbon Action Plan and report at Full Council on 28th October 2020.
- Local Recovery Plan and report at Full Council on 28th Council 2020.
- Climate action biannual report at Full Council on 24th February 2021.

10.2. These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Woodgreen during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.

