

## Briefing note

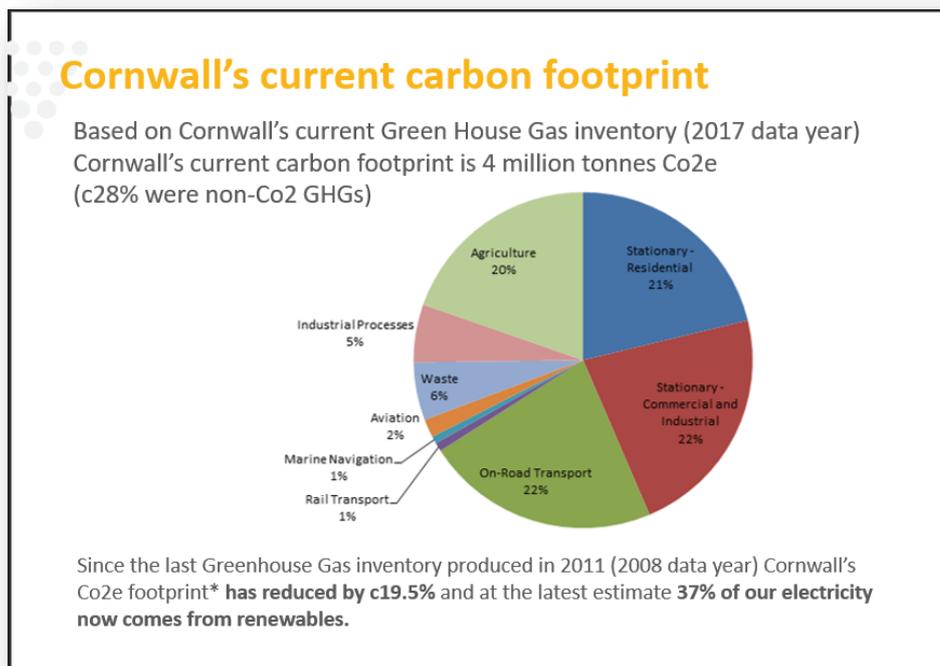
# Carbon Neutral Cornwall Update

Date 14/02/2020



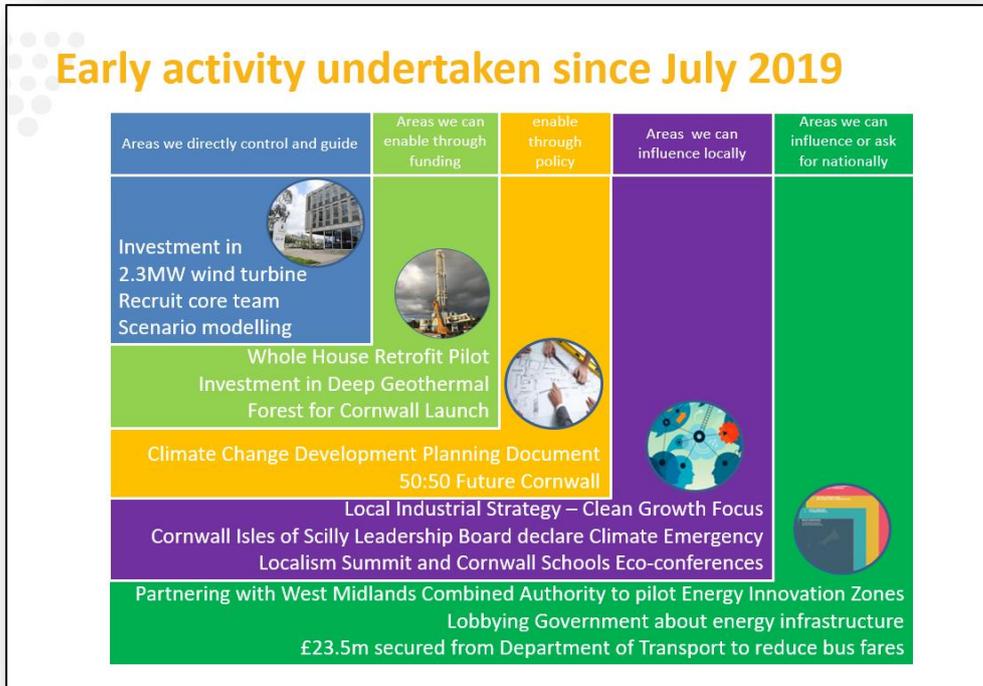
Cornwall Council declared a climate emergency on 22 January 2019, calling for the development of an action plan that would set out the steps required for Cornwall to strive to become carbon neutral by 2030.

In developing the report, the Council undertook a greenhouse gas inventory that highlighted Cornwall's key emitting sectors and engaged with key stakeholders including over 3,000 residents, schools, town and parish councils. Alongside the inventory we commissioned the University of Exeter to carry out 2030 and 2050 scenario modelling which identified solutions to high emitting sectors and the potential timescales for reaching carbon neutrality; this evidence-based approach set the focus and framework for the subsequent action plan development.



On 24 July 2019 Cabinet unanimously agreed the emerging Climate Change Action Plan; this plan set out a regional leadership approach across multiple systems that is redefining the role of Cornwall Council as it realigns significant resources and focus onto the battle against climate change. Cabinet supported the resourcing of a core Carbon Neutral Cornwall Team and priority projects including the [Forest for Cornwall](#), a Whole House Retrofit Pilot and the development of a [Climate Change Developing Planning Document](#) (DPD), supported by committing £16m capital funding to enable the delivery of phase one of the action plan.

Since July 2019 when the action plan was signed off, the Council has recognised the importance of quick win projects that help to gather momentum and also provide important symbolism to rally support. Our focus since July, based around both what is in our own control and how we work with others, is captured in the diagram below:



Cornwall Council is one of four local authorities to secure BEIS funding for our Whole House Retrofit programme that will pilot innovative improvements to 83 of our existing social housing homes to make them more energy efficient. Work will start on the first homes in April, using innovative solutions that aim to reduce their running costs by at least 20% and emissions by 80%. The pilot will use underfloor mapping, whole-house cladding and other retrofit methods to reduce the homes’ carbon footprint and will be used as a platform to enable wider mass retrofit across Cornwall’s housing stock, helping to reduce fuel poverty.

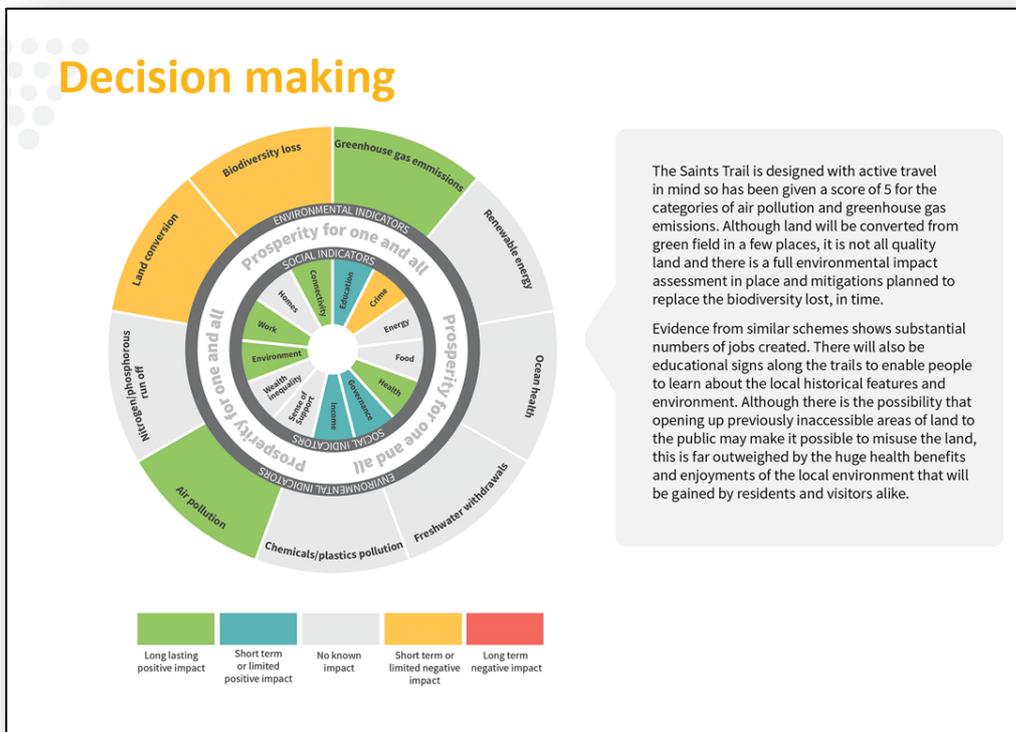
Work is also underway to progress a Climate Change Development Plan Document (DPD), which will provide policy that will require future developments in Cornwall to be more energy efficient, promote the use of renewables, and manage coastal change and flood areas. The DPD will form part of the Cornwall Local Plan, against which Neighbourhood Development Plans are developed, and would provide a sound planning policy background to deliver part of the Council’s response to climate change in Cornwall.

The Forest for Cornwall, which is our flagship natural climate solution project, has been praised by the Woodland Trust for having the ambition to create a woodland for the benefit of people, wildlife and the climate. It will form 8,000 hectares of new canopy cover created from trees in Cornwall’s countryside and towns, sequestering upwards of 1% of Cornwall’s greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality. Formally launched in December 2019, the programme is matching trees with land-owners and individuals or organisations wishing to plant trees with in excess of 52,000 trees planted to date.

Funding has also been allocated to investigate the generation of bio-methane on six Council Farms along with working with local farmers to develop sustainable farming methods to reduce our agricultural carbon footprint. These pilots will be used to develop learning and understanding across the agricultural community and with our residents to promote healthy eating and buying locally, supporting the creation of a circular economy.

The climate change action plan is based around the principles of systems leadership, with no one organisation able to deliver this - the responsibility is incumbent on us all. The plan is split into 3 parts acknowledging our role in the system; the Operational Programme focused on the Council becoming carbon neutral and leading by example; the Facilitation Programme focusing on outcomes we can enable through funding, policy and partnership working; and a National Programme, where we will work with Government in areas that are beyond the remit or capabilities of local system action.

Whilst the adoption of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan and priority actions was unanimous, the Council has acknowledged the need to consider social justice and ensure that no Cornish residents are worse off when we are developing our response to the climate emergency. As a key part of our approach to accelerating the operational and facilitation programme, one of our first steps as a Council was to introduce a new decision-making tool, based on the economist Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics model, which has been utilised in all Cabinet decisions since September and attracted interest from across the UK. The tool aims to show the environmental and social implications of proposed decisions to ensure that neither our climate nor residents are negatively impacted by the decisions the Council makes and will be rolled out across all of our decision-making processes challenging our strategies, procurement and investment decisions with the purpose of placing people and the climate at the heart of our policies and decisions (example below).



Utilising the principles of the wheel the Council have committed to halting the installation of fossil fuel heating in new Council-built properties; approved funding for a 2.3MW wind turbine that will generate enough electricity for 1,200 homes and has co-invested £1.4m in deep geothermal energy

at the Eden Project alongside European funding and institutional investors. Cabinet also approved a £2m investment into the £17m Saints Trail development which once completed will provide a 30Km network of trails that will connect coastal communities, link housing and employment growth areas, helping to reduce transport emissions and improve air quality. This focus on modal shift is aligned to £23.5m of Government funding secured for a pilot starting in April 2020 to reduce bus fares across Cornwall and encourage people out of private vehicles.

Having adopted the Action Plan the Council is developing a holistic programme that aims to tackle the key emitting sectors and achieve the following outcomes:

**Our focus**

The Council is now working towards developing programmes of work which will achieve the following aims:

- Reduce carbon emissions from commercial, industrial & public sector organisations and promote a circular economy
- Cornish households reduce their carbon footprint and make more sustainable choices
- Reduced emissions from transportation including people and goods
- Expansion of renewable energy
- Climate resilient communities, landscapes and infrastructure
- Increased carbon drawdown through natural and engineered climate solutions



In agreeing our priority actions, it was essential to understand what impact they would have. The first-year targets for the Operational Programme are:

Information Classification: CONTROLLED

## What will be different by the end of phase 1

- 83 Cornwall Housing stock retrofitted reducing emissions by 80% per home 
- First 50 hectares of the Forest for Cornwall and carbon offsetting scheme implemented
- 25% of the council pool car fleet transitioned to ULEV 
- Council green travel plan implemented targeting business and commute travel
- Low carbon county farms plan showcasing sustainable farming practices 
- Carbon management mainstreamed into council business
- Carbon literacy training for all Council staff implemented 

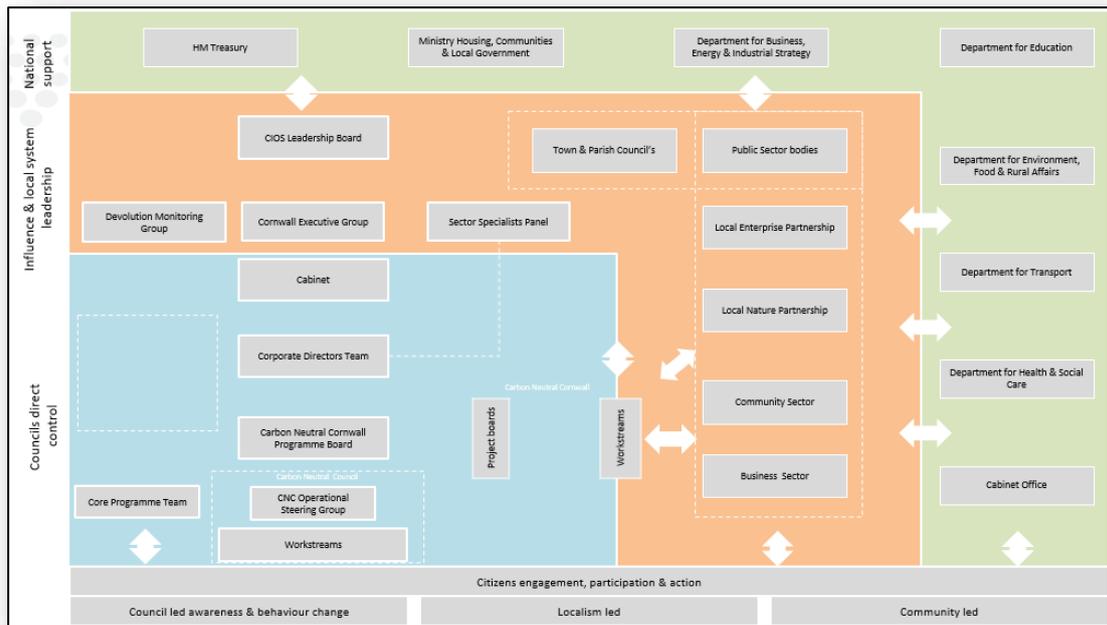
 [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

Reducing Cornwall Council's carbon footprint which is approximately 1.5% of Cornwall's overall footprint is a key priority. Internal governance structures have been finalised with the Chief Executive taking on the role of Senior Responsible Officer and monthly programme reporting to the Corporate Director Team on the progress of actions across the Plan which, along with the decision wheel, will be used to measure progress against becoming carbon neutral as part of our annual report processes. Directorate Change Leads and a network of over 100 green champions have been created to drive the bottom up and top down changes that will be required across directorates.

Having identified several key areas that are within the Council's control to reduce emissions, such as staff travel, Council fleet, Council Farms Estate, our supply chain, reducing waste and decreasing energy usage in Council buildings, an Operational Steering Group has been established. The group comprises Heads of Service and Senior Leadership Team officers from all services and will be accountable for internal actions to create a Carbon Neutral Council. This governance structure will enable the core team to identify barriers to delivery and allow appropriate mitigations to be put in place.

Following a climate change workshop at the Council's Leadership Conference the climate emergency response is being embedded into service plans with key performance indicators against carbon reduction, including business miles and paper use agreed. The Council has also developed its own carbon inventory with reporting and monitoring systems now embedded into the decision-making process to enable the Carbon Neutral Cornwall team to identify priority actions alongside the development of new technologies and modal shift.

The major focus of our systems approach in Cornwall is to build leadership across multiple sectors through the facilitation and national elements of our programme; right from the outset it has been essential to embed a shared sense of ownership for the agenda through strong internal and external governance structures:



The Carbon Neutral Cornwall Action Plan identifies the need to reduce our carbon emissions through a variety of actions across all sectors and enable existing strategies and policies to be aligned. To facilitate this and supported by the Carbon Neutral Cornwall Team, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board, our rural alternative to the combined authority mayoral system, declared its own climate emergency. In adopting the Action Plan it enabled the Board to take overall responsibility for the governance of the facilitation and national programmes to ensure a strategic overview is maintained and that strong, unified organisational leadership continues to drive system change.

The Carbon Neutral Action Plan identified three key areas of focus that require Government support if we are to unlock the potential of Cornwall's low carbon economy and tackle inequalities:

1. **Housing retrofit:** Present the case to government for the financial and training requirements needed to undertake the mass retrofit of all Cornwall's homes below EPC level C by 2030. Focusing on whole house retrofit of Cornwall's over 90,000 solid wall and circa 133,000 off-gas homes
2. **New build homes:** To push for a quicker transition towards the Future Homes building regulations standard as the right way to deliver low carbon homes through clear national government regulation, prioritising higher fabric standards
3. **Grid reinforcement:** Support the National Infrastructure Commission's recent call for a new statutory duty to be placed on Ofgem and grid system operators mandating them to promote the achievement of net zero greenhouse gas emissions<sup>1</sup> and encourage Government to work with Cornwall Council and key stakeholders to facilitate strategic investment in the South West's energy grid. Enabling anticipatory investment models that will ensure that the vital electricity grid upgrades which are needed to decarbonise our energy system are made in a timely manner.

Along with our focus on the three priority asks the Carbon Neutral Cornwall Team will focus on developing a climate change book for New Frontiers, our future devolution prospectus that focuses on developing our distinctive strengths and builds on our existing devolution deal, in recognition of the second part of the climate emergency motion to call on Westminster to provide the necessary

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/NIC-Strategic-Investment-Public-Confidence-October-2019.pdf>

powers and funding to delivery on our 2030 ambitions, with a particular focus on enabling two new energy sectors for the UK (namely deep geothermal and floating offshore wind). Utilising the successful approach to developing New Frontiers, the team have assessed the content of the action plan and will continue to engage partners and constituent bodies to ensure strategic oversight and ownership is embedded in the work programme as part of our systems leadership approach.

Cornwall Council is also working with our Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure the Local Industrial Strategy has a ‘clean-growth’ focus that works symbiotically with the work that we are undertaking and influences other major strategies such as the refresh of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ‘Future Cornwall’ strategy. We have also engaged the health systems leads who have now adopted the majority of the principles that the Council is working towards and are intending on declaring a climate emergency of their own.

As part of our systems leadership and governance approach we have also established a sector specialist panel whose membership reflects the key emitting sectors in Cornwall, community stakeholder groups and youth panels. Our experience to date in developing the Action Plan has illustrated the need to work collaboratively with experts, key stakeholders and communities. We will facilitate a ‘Team Cornwall’ approach where Cornwall Council will be one of several partners who will co-host events across Cornwall to share information, best practice and promote collaboration through initiatives such as six Town and Parish Council Summits and two schools eco-conferences.

Community engagement and behaviour change is vital to achieving carbon neutrality and will remain at the heart of the programme with a dedicated Communications and Engagement team who have launched a Climate Emergency [website](#) to keep residents informed of the progress of Council projects and provide practical suggestions to help individuals, community groups, schools and businesses reduce their own carbon footprint. To mark the first anniversary of our climate emergency declaration we recently ran a three-week, daily, social media and news campaign summing up our key achievements so far and, working in partnership with the Eden Project, giving residents practical ideas to cut their carbon footprint which resulted in nearly 30,000 video views and over 10,000 engaged users on climate posts. Alongside our community and sector engagement programmes we will be delivering ongoing resident behaviour change campaigns across multiple channels to encourage lower carbon living.

