

Climate Emergency Action Plan

(Summary version)



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Foreword

"I am pleased to present the council's latest climate action plan, which details what we will do locally as part of the wider effort to address the climate and ecological emergencies.

"As a council, we declared a climate emergency in 2019 and have been working with dedication to reduce our emissions that add to the problem, with our new climate emergency action plan setting out what we plan to do next.

"One of the main calls to action from the recent Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy - developed by the independent Warrington Climate Emergency Commission - is for residents, organisations, and partners to develop climate action plans for themselves at home, at work and in the community.

"We have responded to this call and urge others to do so too. We can't solve the crisis alone, but it is vital we all play our part."



Cllr Janet Henshaw

Cabinet member sustainability and climate change

Introduction

A thickening blanket of pollution in the atmosphere is overheating our world. This has serious consequences for our lives and livelihoods and the natural world.

We need to stop this pollution to prevent things getting worse. We also need to adapt to the impacts of the overheating taking place.

This is a summary of our plan to:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas pollution from our own activities
2. Adapt our operations and services so they are more resilient
3. Use our roles and influences to help the borough as a whole to cut pollution, adapt to climate change and help nature recover.

The plan is our response to call for action made in the Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy. We urge you to heed this call too.

By taking action we can bring many benefits to our communities and help make Warrington a healthy, thriving, greener, resilient and sustainable borough.

The current position

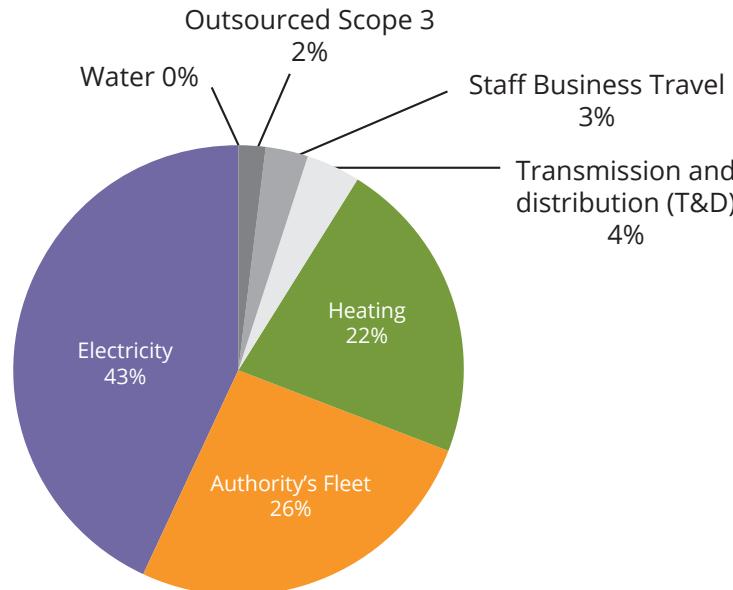
In 2019, when we declared a climate emergency, our greenhouse pollution or ‘carbon footprint’ was 6,556 tonnes CO₂e. Our use of heat, power and transport account for the lion’s share of these emissions. We have good data on the pollution linked to our use of fuel and power. We have much less data about the pollution associated with our activities indirectly. We need to be mindful that this wider footprint is much greater even though we don’t have the data yet to quantify it.

A breakdown of our known carbon emissions in 2021/22

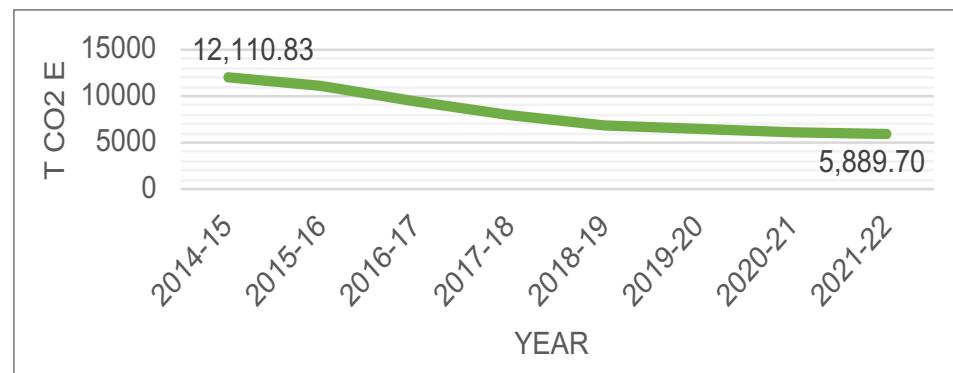
Our known emissions have been falling. They have dropped by a half since 2014/15. To stay in line with global climate agreements our emissions need to fall faster (at least 13.7 % per year). This means we have a total remaining “carbon budget” for our operations of 27,901.75 tonnes CO₂e until 2030.

Data for the Warrington area as a whole indicates that transport and energy make up the vast majority of the borough-wide carbon footprint. Other emissions arise from waste, industrial processes and agriculture, forestry and other land uses. The total footprint estimated for the borough in 2019 was 1,979,088 tonnes CO₂e. Our operational emissions are a tiny fraction of this but we do have some influence over these wider emissions too.

Carbon emissions breakdown 2021/22



Gross carbon emissions over time





Goal: Net Zero Operations

Area for Action: Building Decarbonisation

We use a lot of energy to power and heat our facilities. Greenhouse pollution linked to the power we use continues to fall as the way electricity is generated in the UK changes. The pollution linked to heat we use however is harder to tackle. A quarter of our emissions as a council arise from burning gas to heat buildings. We will need to change the way we heat individual buildings.

We currently operate from around 70 different properties. Our facilities are varied and of different ages. They range from protected heritage buildings e.g. Warrington Town Hall, to new offices, e.g. 1 Time Square offices.

Recent work and challenges

We have built a new, more efficient main office at 1 Time Square to replace several less efficient ones.

The vast majority of our street lights (27,480) have been upgraded to more efficient LED lights. We have solar panels on some of our buildings, e.g. 1 Time Square, Walton Lea Crematorium, Warrington Market and The Base. We have some solar generation on buildings owned by others too. We have also invested in three large solar farms outside the borough. We generate more new renewable power from these solar farms than what we buy in from the grid.

The upfront cost to upgrade buildings to limit greenhouse pollution is still high. We have limited funds so must apply for funding as opportunities arise.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Develop a Council building decarbonisation framework	Structured route to decarbonise council estate	Short	Growth
Establish a new contract to ensure more detailed surveys are conducted to support the development, funding and implementation of decarbonisation works	Foundation to develop detailed proposals, funding applications, and the delivery of council building decarbonisation schemes	Short	Growth
Develop energy reduction interventions following energy efficiency good practice	Lower energy use	Short	Corporate services
Set high standards for new council building projects	Higher performing facilities in line with net zero and climate resilience objectives	Short	Growth
Consolidate sites and continue to progress work so a decision can be made on the long term location of a depot and new waste transfer station	Reduction in number of sites and improvement in facilities	Medium	Growth
Upgrade remaining outdoor lights to more efficient LED ones	More energy efficient lighting and less power use	Medium	Env & Transport



Area for action: Fleet decarbonisation

Our vehicle fleet and use of equipment accounted for more than a quarter of the carbon footprint of council operations in 2021/22. We operate a varied fleet of 213 vehicles which includes cars, vans and minibuses, as well as more specialist heavy goods vehicles. Most fleet emissions are from the heavier diesel vehicles. We own the majority of our fleet, although it includes hire and lease vehicles too. We also have some 600 items of plant and machinery, e.g. lawn mowers and hedge trimmers.

In addition to our vehicle fleet, we outsource our highways maintenance services to an external provider who operate a fleet on our behalf. This fleet accounted for around 2% of our total emissions footprint (125.24 tonnes CO₂e in 2021/22).

Recent work and challenges

Most diesel vehicles in our fleet have newer engines for improved economy and emissions. However, there is a long way to go to change the fleet from fossil fuels. The decarbonisation of our heavier fleet, which includes specialist vehicles like bin wagons, is particularly challenging as there are few alternatives available. Where alternatives exist, prices are high.

Cars and vans present an easier prospect for change with a greater choice of vehicles available. We currently have two electric vans, and the Mayoral car has been changed from a diesel to an electric model. We lease around 40 cars for social services which operate from Irwell Road Intermediate Care Centre. These cars are being changed to hybrid electric models with an opportunity to renew to full electric.

To change the fleet we need to have suitable electric charging or alternative refuelling facilities in place too. Investment in this is linked to the longer term certainty over our depot sites. Alongside investigations

into our future depot provision, we are also looking to identify a new waste transfer station to reduce the distance travelled by waste vehicles.

We are currently exploring options for battery powered handheld plant. We are setting up equipment trials to inform future replacement decisions.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Develop a Council fleet/plant decarbonisation plan	Structured route to decarbonise council vehicle fleet (and plant)	Short/Medium	Env & Transport
Decision to be made on future council depot	Ability to plan investment for refuelling facilities	Short / Medium	Env & Transport
Introduce interventions to increase the efficiency of our existing vehicles	Less polluting fleet and vehicle use	Short/Medium	Env & Transport
Consider decarbonisation of highways fleet in future renewal of the maintenance contract	Decarbonisation of highways fleet	Medium/ Long	Env & Transport
Investigate installing electric vehicle charging points at Irwell Road Intermediate Care Centre to support electrification of lease vehicles	Establish potential to upgrade lease cars to electric	Short	Env & Transport



Area for action: Staff travel

Greenhouse pollution arising from business travel totalled 179.5 tonnes CO₂e in 2021/22. This is around 3% of our operational footprint.

We also need to consider how our employees commute and how visitors travel to our facilities.

Recent work and challenges

We offer incentives to employees via our workplace travel plan. These include discounted rail and bus passes and a cycle to work scheme. We also offer an electric vehicle (EV) 'salary sacrifice' lease scheme. 147 employees have already leased an electric car, with the proportion of EV miles claimed slowly increasing.

We offer a number of pool bikes at our Time Square offices with showers, lockers and secure cycle storage. Cycle storage is also available at Woolston depot, Walton Hall and Victoria Park. Staff can take advantage of cycle training. Bike maintenance and bike marking events are also held annually. We have funding for six e-bikes for an e-bike promotion.

There are more than 700 council employees that have essential car user status. These employees are required to have access to a car for work. We used to have six pool cars but these have been reallocated for other dedicated uses. We have shifted working practices to adopt more flexible, hybrid working arrangements. The use of online meetings has risen despite Covid-19 restrictions having eased.

Staff now occupy a smaller number of sites that helps reduce the need to travel. We aim to make the most efficient use of staff time to limit distance travelled, for example, utilising a rostering system to improve use of carers time.

Business mileage data does not always differentiate between the type of vehicle and fuel used.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Improve messaging to staff and visitors on sustainable travel options	Higher uptake of sustainable travel options	Short	Corporate Services
Explore potential for electric pool cars/ utilising 'car club' electric cars for council business	Increase use of lower carbon vehicles	Medium	Env & Transport
Promote use of e-bikes	Increase uptake of e-bikes	Short	Env & Transport
Expand the provision of pool bikes to other sites	Great access to pool bikes across the council's estate	Medium	Env & Transport
Continue to offer flexible working	Reduction in unnecessary commuting journeys	Ongoing	Corporate Services
Establish a staff car sharing database	Fewer low occupancy car journeys	Medium	Corporate Services
Improve means of gathering business travel data	Increased understanding of travel modes used for business travel	Short	Corporate Services
Review our 'essential car user' policy	Potential to improve flexibility in travel choices and reduce private car use	Medium	Corporate Services



Area for action: Commissioning and procurement

Our most recent annual expenditure on works, goods and services was £271million (2021/22). The supplies we use will have an impact through the way they are produced. The services we buy will have an impact through the way they are delivered.

Recent work and challenges

Our procurement strategy and some parts of our tender evaluation process include some environmental considerations, but we have a lot of work to do to meet the full potential of the influence we have over our supply chain.

We know there is a need to engage more closely with our supply chain to limit our impact. We know they will need support to help translate our climate concerns into contract specifications.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Review and update contract standard terms	Council objectives reflected across all contracts	Short	Corporate Services
Set a new sustainable procurement policy	Clarity on council objectives across the supply chain	Short	Corporate Services
Develop programme to decarbonise our contract register and work with supply chain	Reduced climate and ecological impact from procurement and commissioning. Improved data.	Medium	Corporate Services

Area for action: Waste reduction

Eliminating waste not only helps us reduce emissions but also to reduce wider environmental impacts.

Recent work and challenges

Recycling bins are currently available in only 10 of our operational buildings. Many of our community centres have extended their waste contracts to include recycling for 2023/24.

Our internal waste is transferred in Widnes, where it is treated and separated. Residual waste is forwarded to an energy from waste centre in Runcorn. Co-mingled products are separated and forwarded to recycling facilities.

We know our own waste will have an impact but we do not currently weigh it so cannot calculate the emissions associated with it.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Move to paperless operations where practical and legal	Reduced paper consumption and waste	Medium	Corporate Services
Improve recycling provision at our buildings	Increase in recycling across sites	Medium	Env & Transport
Improve monitoring of waste	Better understanding of waste and impact	Medium	Env & Transport
Explore means to stop the use of single-use plastics	Reduced single use plastic waste	Medium	Education & Comms
Explore options to limit waste and increase durability, remanufacture, reuse, recycling and reprocessing resources for further use	Reduced waste. Greater resource efficiency.	Medium	Env & Transport



Area for action: Off-setting residual emissions

Background

Our focus is on eliminating emissions. However there may be some emissions that we can't eliminate. We will need to consider how we can 'off-set' these by investing in the removal or prevention of emissions elsewhere.

There are arguments against the use of off-setting, particularly when it is used in place of in-house emissions reduction. There are also concerns about the quality of projects used by those who sell 'off-ssets' to others. This has led to the creation of various codes to provide some assurance.

Recent work and challenges

Some of our natural assets will be valuable carbon stores, and can be managed to increase carbon storage. Locally woodlands, peatlands and saltmarsh are key habitats.

We own Risley Moss, and have worked to restore its peatland habitat. With years of work and substantial investment we have achieved positive results. We have not yet investigated the possibility of this restoration work being used to offset carbon emissions in line with the peatland code.

We have over 90 hectares of maturing woodland but managing it is challenging with limited resources. Woodland areas with high volumes of ash are rapidly deteriorating due to ash dieback (a serious fungal disease). These will need removing and replanting with different tree species. We will need to prioritise this work before we can explore new tree planting projects. There may be opportunities for partnerships with other parties. We have worked with a number of Parish Councils who have funded the establishment of feature trees.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Develop an agreed approach to off-setting that explores local opportunities to invest in natural carbon stores and emission reduction schemes	Clarity on approach to enable use of appropriate offsets for residual emissions. Identification of local opportunities and potential to reduce emissions through natural stores and emission reduction schemes.	Medium	Corporate Services/ Env & Transport
Update our woodland restoration and management plan to outline how we will manage our existing tree stock going forward	Improved management of stock. Potential to manage to a standard that would enable use as an offset for residual emissions	Medium	Env & Transport



Goal: Resilient organisation/services

Area for action: Identifying risks

Background

The climate will continue to change until we can stabilise global temperature rises. Some change is unavoidable which poses risks for our activities.

We have a duty to manage risk as well as to plan and prepare to respond and recover from major emergency situations. We need to have robust plans to ensure critical services continue in the face of disruption.

UK Government publish a Climate Change Risk Assessment every five years. In Warrington we face warmer wetter winters, hotter summers with longer dry spells, and more storminess.

Recent work and challenges

We play our part in the wider Local Resilience Forum, a Cheshire-wide multi-agency partnership set up to meet emergency planning duties. Currently we do not ask services to directly consider climate change when considering business continuity, but it is indirectly related to some of the criteria we use.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Review climate risks to the council	Understanding of risks for council services	Short	Education & Comm Services
Add climate change as a key risk to our business continuity template	Climate risks incorporated in business continuity work	Short	Education & Comm Services
Raise awareness of risks from a changing climate	Wider awareness of risks from a changing climate	Ongoing	Education & Comm Services





Area for action: Adapting to climate change

Background

The nature of climate change poses some unique challenges. It will extend over decades and centuries, but we tend to manage risks over shorter periods. Emergency planning tends to focus on preparing for exceptional circumstances, but in the context of a changing climate what are presently exceptional weather events will become commonplace. We need to begin to adapt our culture and practices over a longer timeframe and move beyond making contingencies for relatively infrequent events, to planning for a 'new normal' where the climate is very different from now.

Recent work and challenges

There has been no recent activity to adapt our services to deal with the effects of a changing climate. Our internal Carbon Literacy training course highlights a need for this and aims to embed this thinking.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Undertake a review using the Local Partnerships' local authority Adaptation Toolkit	Understanding of adaptation interventions needed	Short	Education & Comm Services



Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

We face major challenges to get our own operational emissions to near zero, and to adapt our practices to the changing climate. We could simply focus all our efforts inwards, but this would miss a much wider opportunity.

In this section, we present our influence in relation to each of the themes from the new Borough-wide climate emergency strategy.

Travel, transport and connection

We are the local highways authority, land use planning authority and taxi licensing authority. We also own Warrington's Own Buses, the main local bus operator. These roles means we have a crucial part in the supporting the shift to sustainable travel.

Recent work and challenges

Through our Local Transport Plan (LTP4), Local Plan, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan, we have the opportunity to make Warrington a thriving, attractive and well connected place, with popular, high quality walking, cycling and public transport networks.

We have a town centre 'Cycle Hub' project under development which will provide training, maintenance, advice and cycle hire as well as a high quality secure cycle parking facility.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan details how we intend to enhance local services and infrastructure to increase patronage. It aims to make local buses more frequent, faster and reliable, cheaper, easier to use and better integrated. Recently we were successful in securing funding to deliver a bus priority route southbound on A49 Winwick Road. We've also secured a further £6.3m to support the newly signed Enhanced Bus

Quality Partnership Agreement with all bus operators. This will allow the continuation of £2 capped fares for adults, plus reduced child fares, and additional bus services.

In 2021, we were successful in securing around £20m towards converting the entire Warrington's Own Buses fleet of 105 diesel buses to electric. The new electric buses are due in 2024. In tandem we have commissioned a new bus depot which opened in March 2023.

We have developed a new electric vehicle (EV) strategy to support residents, visitors and businesses to make the switch away from petrol and diesel-powered vehicles. We've already delivered several new charging facilities. Our Electric Vehicle Taxi Strategy (2022) sets out how we will promote the uptake of EV taxis.



Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Deliver new active travel schemes	Better environment for walking, wheeling and cycling	Ongoing	Env & Transport
Promote uptake of electric vehicles by implementing EV strategy	Increase uptake of electric vehicles and wider provision of charging infrastructure	Ongoing	Corporate services
Deliver new workplace, school and residential travel plans	Maintain and increase use of sustainable modes of transport.	Ongoing	Env & Transport
Develop a freight strategy to promote sustainable logistics	Co-ordinated approach to decarbonising freight. Improved access to alternative fuelling infrastructure	Medium	Env & Transport
Improve and maintain bus services across Warrington	New electric bus fleet. More bus priority. Improved bus patronage.	Ongoing	Env & Transport
Ensure new development promotes sustainable and active travel	Active travel principles embedded in design and through Planning Obligations	Short	Growth



Energy, buildings and infrastructure

Buildings and infrastructure will need to be adapted to cope with the changing climate. The way we use and generate heat and power also need to change radically too. We have some influence through the buildings that we own that are used by others. Gas heating in our 47 schools alone had a carbon footprint of 1,992.86 tonnes CO₂e in 2021/22.

Our proposed Local Plan (September 2021) acknowledges the energy transformation needed. It anticipates new development will be built to the highest levels of energy efficiency and that Warrington will be at the cutting edge in the use of new green technologies. To help develop more low cost housing, locally, we own a company named Incrementum Housing.

Recent work and challenges

A new proposed Local Plan is going through the formal process towards its adoption. When developing it we included some new policies designed to ensure new development is in line with our climate concerns. A new Housing Strategy is also under development to ensure we have the right type of housing in the right places at the right times to meet local needs. Its objectives include a local housing market that promotes good health and supports affordable warmth and energy efficiency.

Under the 'Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard' (MEES) regulations, landlords must meet certain standards before they can let properties. We have a role to enforce these regulations. Over time we expect the minimum standards will rise.

In recognition that future heating needs have to be met in a different way, we secured funding towards a heat mapping and heat network feasibility study. This identifies the potential for district heat networks to serve several areas across the borough. It identifies two potentially viable low carbon heat network options for the town centre for further investigation.

We have a wealth of experience on solar projects. We have invested in solar panels on 1,630 social houses and a large solar roof on a commercial building in Warrington. We have developed three new large solar farms outside the borough, one of which generates more than enough clean power to cover our own power use. Land prices, grid connection issues, and environmental constraints have made it hard to find a suitable local site but we continue to look.

Limited capacity on the local power distribution network is a barrier to action. The network in Warrington is owned and managed by two different operators. We are consulted as a stakeholder by the operators and have worked in partnership with them on various projects. We recently supported a successful SP Manweb bid for green recovery funding by Ofgem allowing it to bring forward investment to improve power capacity in the centre of Warrington. We have helped find a location for a new substation in the town centre.

To explore the development of a smarter local energy system we participated in an innovation project called Rewire NW. This explored the issues that need to be overcome to develop a smarter local energy system for Warrington. A 'digital twin' of the town was created. This tool enables different options to be tested to help find the best ways forward.

A recent funding bid, which we supported, includes the development of an Advanced Construction and Civil Engineering Centre at Warrington & Vale Royal College. This will have a key role in upskilling local people for green building work.

The Government expects nuclear power to play a key part the UK's future energy mix and Warrington is a major centre for nuclear businesses. Many of them located on Birchwood Park which we own.

There has been major investment in industrial decarbonisation and hydrogen generation in neighbouring areas. It will be important that Warrington benefits from the investments taking place. We are already being consulted on potential hydrogen pipeline routes.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
A report on the scale, nature and cost of retrofitting homes across Warrington to help secure investment and plan for new green skills	Clarity on the scale, nature and investment needed to retrofit buildings across Warrington. Improved capacity to provide advice and skills.	Short	Growth
Develop support for retrofit improvement, including seeking funding for property improvements	More buildings upgraded. Better signposting and access to support.	Medium	Education & Comm services
Review opportunities to improve our leased out buildings	Buildings that are lower carbon and more climate ready	Medium	Growth
Ensure the new Warrington housing strategy reflects climate emergency concerns	Future housing interventions in line with climate and ecological objectives	Short	Growth
Make clear the scale of the challenge to help plan for the skills provision	Information to inform provision for necessary skills development	Short	Growth
Promote net zero and climate ready approaches for new developments	More 'future proof' buildings and developments	Short	Growth
Explore the feasibility of local solar farms and other renewable opportunities, including group buying schemes	Increased local renewable energy capacity. Increased uptake of domestic solar.	Short / Medium	Corporate Services

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Develop the business case to secure investment in local heat networks	Investment in low carbon heat network infrastructure	Short	Growth
Investigate arrangements to sell renewable power locally, drawing on ideas developed in the Rewire NW project	Progress towards a smarter local energy system	Medium	Corporate services





Resources, Consumption & Wider Impacts

We want to encourage the development of a 'circular economy' to reduce consumption and waste production, and promote more nature and climate-friendly products and diets. We need to better consider the wider impacts of our decisions.

We are obliged to provide kerbside waste collection services to residents. Our services include general waste, garden waste and mixed recycling. Recycling rates were 46.4% in the most recent quarter. We also provide commercial waste services.

Recent work and challenges

The Environment Act seeks to standardise waste collection approaches across England. Under this Act, we anticipate introducing weekly food waste collections in 2025.

We have promoted two repair shops in the borough including Birchwood Repair Café and a pop-up repair shop in Warrington Market. We have worked with schools to promote healthier and more sustainable school meals and to educate on food production and reduce food waste.

We have also developed six 'Bread and Butter Thing' sites to reduce food waste and provide affordable food to residents in the borough. A community shop is due to open later this year that will offer surplus food, which may have otherwise been wasted.

We own and manage a number of allotments in the borough, which are currently oversubscribed. We additionally own 10 patches of farmland including a mix of grazing and agricultural land, which are leased to farmers.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Develop interventions to improve domestic recycling	Higher domestic recycling rates.	Short	Env & Transport
Develop interventions to reduce consumption and promote circular economy practices	Less waste	Medium	Env & Transport
Embed climate change and ecological considerations into our decision making process	Improved basis for decision taking and developing projects	Short	Corporate services
Prepare for measures to come in under the Environment Act	Increase in recycling rates and introduction of domestic food waste collection	Medium	Env & Transport
Promote climate and nature friendly diets	Reduced meat and dairy consumption. Greater awareness of environmental impact	Medium	Education & Comm Services
Promote local and sustainable food production	Increase in production and consumption of local, seasonal, organic and Fairtrade food	Medium	Education & Comm Services
Raise awareness of the wider impacts of our purchases and investments	Divestment from fossil fuels	Medium	Corporate services



Resilience and nature

Warrington needs to be better prepared and adapted to changing weather patterns as well as to the wider disruptions these changes will bring.

Flooding is an increasing threat under climate change with more intense rainfall and an increase of tidal levels. Up to 1,032 properties (890 residential, 117 business, 25 critical services) in Warrington could be at risk from surface water flooding under extreme rainfall events.

Bringing nature in to recovery is closely related to the wider climate emergency. The natural world is under threat yet nature can provide many useful functions to help us limit the impacts of climate change. For example, by providing cooling, shade and flood prevention and by helping to store carbon naturally.

Recent work and challenges

The most recent major flood event was a result of Storm Christoph in January 2021. In Warrington approximately 1,043 properties were affected with 438 properties flooded internally. Flooding occurred across 32 locations. A report of the 32 flood investigations was published in April 2022.

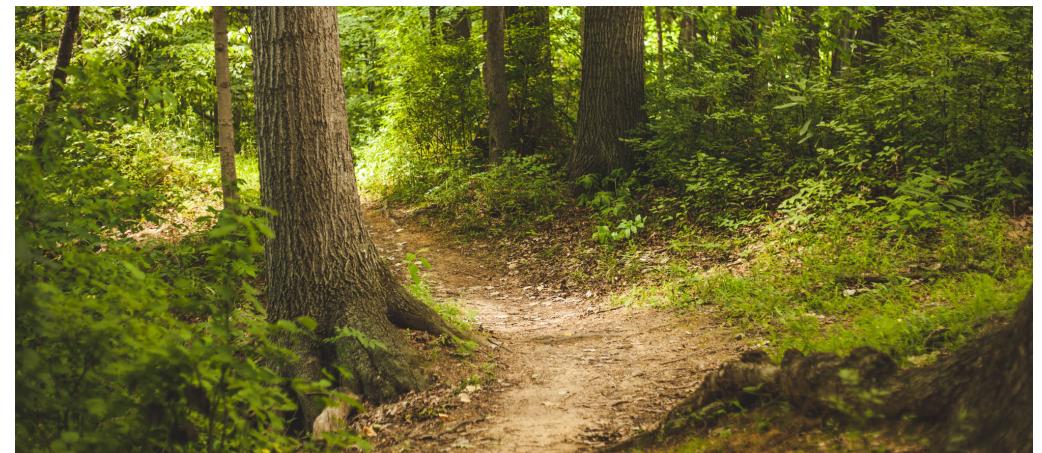
Many of the drainage systems across the borough are old and in poor condition. These systems will have to deal with increased volumes of rainfall as a result of climate change. Risk of flooding is amplified by a lack of maintenance to existing watercourses and the existence of contamination or clay type soils which limits ground infiltration. Our knowledge on drainage assets is generally improving but there still remain gaps.

Warrington benefits from a rich heritage of tree stock including mature woodlands, specimen trees and tree lined avenues. In 2016 Warrington's tree cover was estimated to be 13.5%. Much of the local tree stock dates from the Warrington Newtown Development Corporation era from the 1970s through to the early 1990s.

We cultivate 18,500m² of pollinator-friendly flower meadows in partnership with Parish Councils, local schools, and the Land Trust. In 2021, we began a rewilding programme in some community spaces and verges to enhance biodiversity through bulb and wildflower planting. The new bus shelter contract includes provision for a number of bus shelters with green roofs.

We are actively involved in restoration works at sites already designated to protect wildlife. At Risley Moss, rewetting and habitat restoration works have enabled the reintroduction of a number of very rare plant and invertebrate species. At Rixton Clay Pits Nature Reserve we have delivered land management interventions to enhance habitat to support local populations of Great Crested Newts. The in-house skills we have in our ranger service are critical for this restoration and management work.

We have been working to transform the former Gatewarth landfill site from scrub to species rich grassland. By doing so we will be creating a habitat to support ground nesting birds. Capital works are nearing completion but will require ongoing management to improve ground nesting bird breeding outcomes.



Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Contribute to the Cheshire Resilience Forum work plan to review risks and highlight climate change as a key risk to the area	Resilience Forum work plan reflects climate risks	Short/Medium	Education & Comm Services
Address the increasing risk of severe weather in the Council's Major Emergency Plan	Emergency plan reflects severe weather events	Short/Medium	Education & Comm Services
Apply the latest climate change allowances as part of the flood risk assessment process for new developments	New development takes account of heightened flood risk.	Ongoing	Env & Transport
Ensure flood risk is considered in all stages of the planning process	Planning process accounts for flood risk at all stages	Ongoing	Growth
Ensure new developments adopt SUDS in line with new government legislation	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems introduced widely	Short/Ongoing	Env & Transport
Support communities at risk of flooding	Greater resilience in communities at risk from flooding	Medium	Education & Comm Services
Work with key partners to deliver flood risk management schemes	New flood risk management schemes implemented	Ongoing	Env & Transport
Review the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and implement agreed measures	Up to date flood risk management strategy	Medium	Env & Transport
Build our knowledge of key drainage features and flood risk across the borough	Good understanding of drainage features and flood risk	Ongoing	Env & Transport
Confirm how the council will apply biodiversity net gain through the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Cheshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy	New biodiversity net gain obligations on developers maximise local benefits and support nature recovery objectives	Short	Growth
Promote use of green infrastructure to achieve biodiversity net gain on development sites	Green infrastructure improvements on sites	Ongoing	Growth
Embed adaptation principles within emerging Warrington design guide SPD	More climate ready resilient developments. Design guide informs development	Short	Growth
Extend rewilding programme to increase biodiversity on council-owned land and verges	Increased biodiversity	Short/Ongoing	Env & Transport



Awareness, Engagement, & Support for Action

Awareness is vital to promote wider action. Here we have a unique position as a council. We can use our voice to help translate what the global climate crisis means for Warrington. We can also help bring interests together so we achieve more than we can alone. Part of our potential role involves highlighting existing support, or trying to secure support where it is lacking.

Recent work and challenges

We have convened the Warrington Climate Emergency Commission to help lead the wider conversation on climate issues across Warrington. This commission speaks with an independent voice. It is comprised of a number of advisors and representatives from different local organisations. We are represented and present our work at its meetings.

The commission has helped draw together the new climate strategy for Warrington. We helped support the public consultation used to inform it. A key challenge will now be promoting action in support of the strategy. Our staff have a key role to help get the message out and promote action. We have increased coverage of climate topics in our staff newsletter. We've also started to build a network of in-house volunteer climate champions. The champions have already helped us develop a bespoke Carbon Literacy training course for staff and members.

We have made good progress promoting Carbon Literacy in-house. We have achieved bronze status as a Carbon Literate Organisation. Several other Warrington-based organisations are using Carbon Literacy or interested in it. With this experience, we recently bid for funding to develop a support programme to expand Carbon Literacy activity.

We have also contributed to wider sub-regional partnership work via the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission.

This commission has recently made a series of recommendations for sub-regional action.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Promote action in support of the Warrington climate emergency strategy	Greater awareness, engagement and action on climate and ecological issues. More visibility for climate and ecological issues. More pledges of action and action plans	Ongoing	Corporate Services
Promote routes for engagement	More schools signed up to let go zero	Ongoing	Corporate Services
Extend and embed Carbon Literacy	Greater carbon literacy. Council progress to Carbon Literate Organisation silver status and beyond	Short/Medium	Corporate Services
Support partnership work	More organisations adopt Carbon Literacy. Warrington Climate Emergency Commission develops as vehicle for promoting an effective borough-wide climate response. Council feeds into wider partnerships including skills commission and sustainable and inclusive growth commission	Ongoing	Corporate Services

Driving the plan forward

Governance

Our cabinet member for climate and sustainability is responsible for championing this plan. All other cabinet members have responsibility for championing the plan's actions in their respective work areas. Our Assistant Chief Executive is the lead officer to champion this plan. All other directors and senior officers have responsibility for championing the plan's actions in their respective directorates.

We will report progress annually and more frequently during the early life of the plan. Progress will also be subject to scrutiny via our various committees. Internal Audit will provide assurance on the delivery of elements of the Plan through their work.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Establish a corporate climate emergency group	Mechanism in place to drive progress	Short	Corporate services
Introduce climate and sustainability implications section in committee reports	Implications on climate and sustainability are clear when decision-making.	Short	Corporate Services
Introduce climate and sustainability impact tool for developing projects	Implications are factored into the development of projects	Short	Corporate Services
Commit to lobby government on legislation and finance where necessary	Better understanding of constraints on local action. Improved allocation of resources and better legal framework to support net zero transition	Ongoing	Corporate Services

Carbon budget, monitoring and reporting

To help stay on track we aim to report our greenhouse gas emissions annually so they can be compared with our carbon budget. To make a start we provided initial data for our carbon budget with this year's financial budget report.

We need to improve the way in which we record and share data to ensure we get the information together on time. We also need to improve data collection in areas where we have limited or no information.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Report our carbon budget alongside our financial budget	Consideration of climate implications of council budget	Ongoing	Corporate services
Establish a system to record and gather relevant information to facilitate production of annual emission reports	Efficient means to gather and report relevant data	Short/ Ongoing	Corporate Services
Improve data collection relating to our indirect 'scope 3' activities	Better understanding of the council's indirect impacts	Ongoing	Corporate Services



Green Finance

We need to attract finance to make progress and we will need to develop innovative funding and investment structures in order to help. We are already seen as a leading council in the use of green finance. We have developed close links with the international bond markets and have formed a Local Authority ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) Investment Fund (ASIF). Challenges to developing green finances include the accessibility of funding, lack of workforce capacity, internal skills and expertise, the conditions and reliability of funding, short deadlines for funding bids, and risk.

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Publish an ESG Investment & Borrowing strategy each year with progress reported half yearly	Environment, social and governance issues are picked up in the council's treasury management approach	Short/ongoing	Corporate Services
Integrate green finance in to mainstream financial decision making	More robust financial decisions	Medium	Corporate Services
Develop green finance decision-making processes, based on systems thinking	More robust financial decisions	Medium	Corporate Services
Roll out officer and member training on green finance	Wider awareness of green finance	Medium	Corporate Services
Look to invest in green businesses and projects	Council investments contribute to climate and ecological objectives	Medium	Corporate Services

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Ensure adequate resourcing to prepare bids for government grant funding	Greater number of successful funding bids. More climate and ecological projects delivered	Medium	Corporate Services
Maintain and build up a Climate Change Reserve to help fund future climate change initiatives and mitigate risk	Funding available to support future climate and ecological projects	Short/ongoing	Corporate Services
Seek partnership working opportunities in line with the Government's Green Finance Strategy	Greater access to green finance	Medium	Corporate Services
Update risk management systems in line with emerging best practice	Improved information for decision making	Short	Corporate Services
Explore carbon-offsetting investment in line with a council agreed policy	Identification of investment opportunities	Medium	Corporate Services
Explore the use of new funding sources	Identification of competitive sources of finance for climate and ecological projects	Medium	Corporate Services
Consider new forms of transaction structures	Innovative transaction structures		Corporate Services

Organisational development – continuing to progress as a Carbon Literate Organisation

To progress the plan we need to ensure staff and members are equipped to fulfil their roles. We have already made good progress promoting Carbon Literacy in-house and need to build on this. Our recent bid for innovation funding to combine Carbon Literacy with follow-on support will help develop our capacity and capabilities.

Working with others, locally and nationally, is important. Learning from others helps us to avoid re-inventing the wheel. We are an active member of APSE Energy¹ and participate in their events and activities.

We actively engage on climate change with neighbouring authorities too and have contributed to the work of the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission. This commission has recently made a series of recommendations for sub-regional action.



¹The Association of Public Service Excellence's bespoke local authority energy collaboration

Our planned actions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Directorate
Extend Carbon Literacy training across all parts of the workforce	Staff equipped to translate the implication of the climate emergency into their roles	Ongoing	Corporate Services
Establish an internal Carbon Literacy Alumni network	Staff engaged in climate emergency response over the longer term.	Short	Corporate Services
Develop a communications programme to showcase staff actions and council initiatives	Staff engaged in climate emergency response. Stimulation of wider action	Ongoing	Corporate Services
Expand internal Climate Champions network and increase involvement	Staff engaged in climate emergency response	Ongoing	Corporate Services
Embed climate in HR processes e.g. in recruitment and performance	Underlines council's value of carbon literacy, underlines importance of climate emergency to job roles	Short	Corporate Services
Review employee benefits to reflect climate and ecological objectives	Employee benefit scheme supports wider climate approach	Short	Corporate Services
Engage regularly with the workforce on climate issues	Staff engaged in climate emergency response.	Ongoing	Corporate Services