

REPORT OF THE CABINET

B. NET ZERO LEICESTERSHIRE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Introduction

1. This report provides concerns the Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan.

Background

2. The County Council declared a climate emergency on 15 May 2019 with unanimous cross-party support. The declaration committed the Council to achieving net zero for its own emissions by 2030 and to working with others and lobbying the Government to support delivery of this commitment. Net Zero refers to the point at which carbon emissions being emitted into the atmosphere are balanced with their removal, meaning there is no overall addition to atmospheric levels.
3. A Carbon Reduction Roadmap for the Council to achieve net zero emissions for its own operations by 2030 was presented to the Cabinet in April 2020 and was approved by the full Council on 8 July 2020.
4. The climate emergency declaration includes a commitment to support the limiting of global warming to less than 1.5°C, in line with the Paris Agreement. This in effect means achieving net zero for Leicestershire by 2050 or before and achieving significant reductions by 2030.
5. The Council's Strategic Plan and Environment Strategy 2018-30 were updated to reflect the targets in the climate emergency declaration and were both approved by the Council on 8 July 2020. The Council agreed that a further report presenting the complete Carbon Reduction Roadmap (incorporating the newly developed Tranche 2) would be submitted to the Council.
6. In December 2020, the County Council signed up to a UK 100 pledge to achieve net zero for Leicestershire by 2045. UK 100 is a network for UK local leaders focused on climate, clean energy and clean air policy.
7. The Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2022–26 is based on five strategic outcomes that outline the Council's vision for Leicestershire. Amongst the five outcomes, is the Clean and Green outcome, to protect and enhance the environment and tackle climate change. The Strategy and Action Plan will help support this outcome.

Net Zero Roadmap for Leicestershire

8. The Net Zero 2045 Roadmap for Leicestershire research was commissioned by the County Council to:
 - a) Provide a comprehensive assessment of area-wide sources of carbon emissions and pathways to net zero in Leicestershire as a resource to be used by all partners for future action plans.
 - b) Inform the Council's response to the climate emergency through the development of strategy and action plans based on evidence.
 - c) Support and encourage engagement with other organisations to develop their own climate commitments and action plans.
9. The Net Zero 2045 Roadmap research and key findings were presented to the Cabinet on 26 April 2022. The Cabinet report concluded that:
 - a) The net zero carbon 2045 target for Leicestershire cannot be delivered by the Council working alone. Public and stakeholder engagement and action will be essential and integral to any future action plan. With this in mind, there could be a role for the County Council to lead, convene partners and inspire commitment and action for net zero, beginning with the development of a Council Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan.
 - b) The pathway to net zero is challenging but feasible if all available policy levers are employed at pace and scale. This would require near total retrofit of buildings, full roll out of electric vehicles and decrease in vehicle mileage, very high PV installation, industrial heat sources switched to electricity or hydrogen and total reduction in embodied carbon in new buildings.
 - c) Investment will be required from all sectors but there are benefits to be accrued for the economy, society and the environment if the transition is just and fair.
10. The findings of the Roadmap were used to develop the draft Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan, which outlined the strategic approach to delivering the Council's ambitions to achieve net zero carbon emissions in Leicestershire by 2045 or before. This was presented to the Cabinet on 26 April 2022 and approval given to conduct a public consultation.

Findings of the Net Zero Consultation

11. A 12-week public consultation on the draft Strategy and Action Plan was held from 4 May to 26 July 2022 with the following objectives:

- a) Inform residents and stakeholders about climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions urgently.
 - b) Provide an overview of the draft countywide strategy for achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the County by 2045.
 - c) Invite feedback on the draft countywide Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan and support to define and shape existing/additional asks and actions.
 - d) Test agreement between the priority objectives and the important issues for organisational stakeholders.
 - e) Open discussions on working together to deliver the net zero target, build productive relationships and invite others to pledge support.
 - f) Hear diverse views on carbon reduction actions and lived experience of interventions.
12. Because of the wide reach of climate change impacts and action required to achieve net zero, the target audience for the consultation was broad, comprising:
- a) The general public including youth and children;
 - b) Community and voluntary groups, social enterprises and charities;
 - c) Businesses;
 - d) Public sector organisations including district councils, health etc.;
 - e) Schools, Further Education and Universities;
 - f) Council employees and Elected Members.
13. A Have Your Say survey was formulated and promoted alongside a range of activity to engage the public and stakeholders, including:
- a) Direct contact;
 - b) Attendance at internal and external meetings and partnerships;
 - c) Attendance at public events;
 - d) A Net Zero Roadshow held across a range of libraries, parks and museums;
 - e) Three dedicated workshops to target town and parish councils, key stakeholder and community action groups;
 - f) An extensive communication plan delivering across online and printed media;
 - g) A contract with Participation People to delivery dedicated youth engagement, created and delivered by young people.

14. Across all types of engagement, around 1400 responses were received with key findings outlined below. A summary of the consultation responses is attached as **Appendix C**.

Have Your Say Survey

15. In total, 593 responses were received to the Have Your Say survey. 98% of respondents had knowledge about the concept of net zero to varying degrees, although 11% did not believe in climate change. 60% were concerned about climate change. Over half (54%) of respondents did not feel informed about the Council's actions to address climate change.
16. Support for the Strategy's vision and goals was mixed with approximately 50% of respondents agreeing. The open text comments revealed that 20% of respondents called for more ambition, while 15% stated that climate change is a natural phenomenon or not an issue. This demonstrates that respondents' views on climate change were polarised.
17. Similarly, just under half of respondents agreed with the 2045 and 2030 targets. This time 30% of respondents called for more ambition, 13% stated that climate change was not an issue, and 11% felt the target was unachievable. Concerns were raised by 11% of respondents about the cost implications the targets may have for residents.
18. Of the five themes, 'Net Zero Buildings and Infrastructure' and 'Nature and Land Use' were identified as the most important themes at 67%, with 'Green Economy' and 'Climate Friendly Communities' the least important at 37%.
19. The demographic profile of those responding to the survey has been compared to the population figures from the 2011 Census and 2020 mid-year estimates. It shows that the profile of respondents is broadly comparable to the Leicestershire population. However, certain demographic groups are underrepresented, for example, females, and those aged under 25, whilst those aged 45-84 are overrepresented, although this does not include the youth engagement described in paragraphs 35 to 37.

Other Consultation Activity

20. Approximately 220 stakeholders and residents provided feedback on the Strategy through the range of meetings, events, roadshows and workshops attended or delivered by the Net Zero team.
21. Additionally, there was a successful communications campaign, including over 200,000 social media impressions across a range of platforms. There were 1,900 views of the consultation page, with 1,117 downloads of the full Strategy or consultation summary.

Youth Engagement

22. A company called Participation People was contracted to deliver dedicated youth engagement via a team of young researchers who designed and delivered a participatory action research project. This included a bespoke youth survey designed by the young researchers as well as a series of listening labs and a creative competition.
23. The team heard from 592 young people aged 7-25 from across Leicestershire.
24. Key priorities for young people included: supporting schools and homes to use renewable energy, making it easier to recycle for everyone, planting more trees and plants, and giving young people the power to help adults make decisions about the climate together, particularly through events, decision-makers attending schools/colleges, and creative activities.

Overall Findings

25. By analysing the responses received across all engagement, twelve key themes have been identified:
 - a) Collaborate and work with others to deliver net zero;
 - b) Leadership, buy in and ambition;
 - c) Ensure the Strategy is understandable and accessible;
 - d) Interim targets, monitoring, and achievement reporting;
 - e) Cost benefit implications;
 - f) Raise awareness, engagement, education and behaviour change;
 - g) Improve and promote transport solutions (public, active and freight);
 - h) Importance of local planning policy and growth;
 - i) Importance of renewable energy;
 - j) Prioritise energy efficiency and low carbon heat;
 - k) Importance of nature and access;
 - l) Waste management service, education, and provision.

Summary of changes made to the draft Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan

26. The table below summarises the changes made to the draft Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan in response to the key themes identified by the consultation findings.

Consultation Feedback Theme	Summary of changes made to Strategy and Action Plan
1. Collaborate and work with others to deliver net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Added section 3.7 “Ensuring Success” to the Strategy, emphasising and providing clear evidence of the need for residents, organisations and partners to take action alongside the Council. b) Added section 1.2 “Who needs to be involved?” to the Action Plan, describing the role of others and the identification of actions the Council will “Lead”, “Ask” or “Influence”. c) Added a glossary of stakeholders to the Action Plan. d) Added section 1.3 “How you can help?” to the Action Plan, giving top tips for residents and a link to further information. e) Added to section 1.4 “Governance” of the Action Plan, to include formation of a Stakeholder Forum to encourage collaborative working and alignment with the 2045 target. f) Added to section 2.2 “Cross Cutting Actions” of the Action Plan, including a Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact, Engagement Plan and engaging the Government as key collaboration actions.
2. Leadership, buy in and ambition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Referenced and made publicly available the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan (see Appendix D) to demonstrate the range of action the Council is taking to tackle its own emissions. b) Added additional case studies to section 3 “The Plan” of the Action Plan to demonstrate successes to date. c) Changes as per theme 1 above, to engage with others. d) Made clear that the Strategy is long-term (2023-2045) but the Action Plan is a short-term plan of action (2023-2027) and reinforced the urgency of action throughout, e.g., section 1.2 “Why must we act?” of the Strategy. e) Targets remain unchanged, but interim 2035 target has been more clearly explained and the ambition to develop 5-year carbon budgets in the future to sit alongside action plans included (see section 3.3 “Targets” of the Strategy). f) Added section 4 “Next Steps” to the Action Plan to demonstrate areas of further work and improvement.
3. Ensure the Strategy is understandable and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Significant restructuring, formatting and design changes to ensure the documents are legible and easy to navigate. b) Split the document into two: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Strategy, including climate change information, development of the strategy, and long-term approach to vision, goals, targets etc.

Consultation Feedback Theme	Summary of changes made to Strategy and Action Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. The Action Plan, providing a framework for short-term delivery c) Reduced complexity, defined technical terms and attempted to increase clarity of approach e.g., section 2.3 “Prioritisation” of the Action Plan. d) Regrouped actions in the action tables to ensure easy navigation e.g., to public transport actions or freight actions, and highlighted key actions which will accelerate countywide carbon reduction. e) Removed any actions included in the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan to avoid duplication. f) Introduced additional graphs and figures to demonstrate emissions sources etc.
4. Interim targets, monitoring, and achievement reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Changes as per theme 2, action e) b) Introduced framework for delivery in the Action Plan to enable easier navigation to the monitoring and reporting plan.
5. Cost benefit implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Added to section 2.2 “Cross Cutting Actions” of the Action Plan, including a Funding Plan, prioritisation of projects, and considering impacts of actions on residents as key funding actions. b) Added action B2 regarding Fuel Poverty support. c) Expanded on section 1.4 “A Just Transition” of the Strategy.
6. Raise awareness, engagement, education and behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Included additional climate change information in section 1 of the Strategy to increase education. b) Changes as per theme 1 above, to engage with others, with the Engagement Plan referenced in action f) a priority. c) Added section 2.4 “Consulting the Public” to the Strategy.
7. Improve and promote transport solutions (public, active and freight)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reviewed “Transport” action table and made minor amendments including addition of Low Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure Fund.
8. Importance of local planning policy and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reviewed all actions referencing Local Planning and growth and expanded where required (for example see actions T6, B19, B20, B21, E4, E5, N20).
9. Importance of renewable energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Renamed Net Zero Infrastructure theme “Buildings and Energy”. b) Reviewed actions referencing renewable energy and grouped them to enable easier location of actions.
10. Prioritise energy efficiency and low carbon heat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Changes as per theme 9 above.

Consultation Feedback Theme	Summary of changes made to Strategy and Action Plan
11. Importance of nature and access	a) Reviewed Nature and Land Use action table and grouped actions to enable easier location of actions.
12. Waste management service, education, and provision	a) Created a new action table “Resources and Waste” to include waste actions previously found within the Communities action table and added additional actions to draw out key elements of the emerging waste strategy, as well as wider carbon reduction opportunities from materials, food and water.

27. The resulting Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan have been appended to this report as **Appendices D and E** respectively.
28. In addition to the Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan, the Council’s 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan has been appended to this report as **Appendix F**. This sets out how Leicestershire County Council will lead by example and achieve its commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions for its own operations by 2030.

Resource Implications

29. There are no resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. The Cabinet approved a budget of £450,000 in September 2019 to facilitate the review of the Environment Strategy, the development of the Net Zero Roadmap, and to take immediate action to implement measures to reduce carbon emissions.
30. The development of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan has been delivered from this existing allocation and it is foreseen that immediate priorities such as a Funding Plan, Engagement Plan and some action to progress carbon reduction can be undertaken within existing resources, including cross- departmental delivery which embeds net zero action into business as usual where viable.
31. Actions to achieve net zero carbon will need both private and public investment. The Council working alone cannot deliver all the change required, although it has some direct control and significant influence over many areas that can support the transition to net zero.
32. The aforementioned Funding Plan will describe and plan for maximising funding into the County to deliver net zero action, including grant, investment and innovative methods of raising finance. The Engagement Plan will describe and plan for maximising action taken by others. These plans will be completed as a priority.
33. Where appropriate, business cases will be developed for individual projects to provide an assessment of the carbon, financial and other benefits of proposals to ensure they positively contribute to the Council’s

objectives. A £2m Environment Fund which will support carbon reduction schemes has been created as part of the 2022–26 Medium Term Financial Strategy, access to which will be subject to business cases.

Consideration by the Cabinet and the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee

34. The Committee considered the matter at its meeting on 20th October and its comments are set out in **Appendix G** to this report.
35. The Cabinet considered this matter at its meeting on 25th October and had regard to the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet also had regard to a written submission from Mr Max Hunt on behalf of the Labour Group and this is set out in **Appendix H** to this report. The decision of the Cabinet is set out below:-
 - a) That the findings of the public consultation on the draft Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan and comments of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted;
 - b) That the amendments made to the Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan in response to the consultation findings, as described in the table in paragraph 39 of the report, be supported;
 - c) That the amended Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan, and the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan be submitted to the County Council for approval;
 - d) That the Director of Environment and Transport, following consultation with the Lead Member for the Environment and Green Agenda, be authorised to make any further minor amendments to the Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan in the light of any feedback from Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet.

(Motion to be moved

That the Net Zero Leicester Strategy and Action Plan and the Net Zero Council Action Plan set out as Appendices D, E and F to this report be approved).

25th October 2022

**N. J. Rushton
Leader of the Council**

Background Papers

Environment Strategy 2018 – 2030: delivering a better future

<https://bit.ly/3Vo812w>

Leicestershire County Council Climate Emergency Declaration

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=59683>

Leicestershire County Council's Carbon Reduction Roadmap

<https://bit.ly/3g25vyM>

Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Outcomes Framework and Plans
2018-22

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/council-plans/the-strategic-plan>

Draft Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan documents used for public consultation
and consultation summary

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/have-your-say/you-said-we-did/engagement-2022>

Appendices

Appendix C: Summary of consultation responses

Appendix D: Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy

Appendix E: Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan

Appendix F: 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan

Appendix G: Comments of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Appendix H: Comments from Mr Hunt CC