

Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy

Executive Summary

June 2024

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Introduction

This document is the Year 3 Updated Version of Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy adopted in 2021. It tells you about the Council's Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive goals and the Council's plus target of 35% reduction in supply chain emissions and the tasks we are going to seek to deliver to achieve our 2030 goals. As well as the Council's work in climate action and nature recovery across Denbighshire and its goal to increase climate risk resilience. The document tells you about the progress made in the first 3 years since 2021 and the plan for the remaining 6 years to 2030. The name of the document has changed following public consultation to Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy 2021/22-2029/30.

Scope

Denbighshire County Council declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency in July 2019. In response and by the 31 March 2030 the Council aims to become a:

1. Net Carbon Zero Council

- This means the carbon tonnage emitted by the council through buildings, fleet, waste, staff commuting, street lighting, and business travel to be equal or less than the carbon tonnage absorbed by the council through owned and operated grassland and forestland.
- The Council aims to reduce its emissions by 55% by 2030 (compared to 2019/20 baseline). It is currently at 8.3% reduction (2022/23).
- The Council aims to increase its sequestration by 203% by 2030 (compared to 2019/20 baseline). It is currently at 25% increase (2022/23).
- Whilst good progress has been made in Waste, Business Travel and Street lighting in carbon reduction; more work is needed in Buildings, Fleet, Staff Commuting and Sequestration if we are to meet our 2030 Net Carbon Zero goal.

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2. Ecologically Positive Council

- This means there will be more of council owned and operated land in the highest categories of species richness and not in the lowest categories of species richness.
- The percentage of council owned and operated land in the highest categories of species richness is current 42% (2022/23) and that needs to be 51% by 2030 for the Council to have met this goal.
- Acceptable progress is being made in achieving this goal with projects such as our Wildflower Meadow and Woodland Creation/Nature Space projects meaning we are currently on track to being a more nature positive council by 2030.

3. Reduce supply chain emissions by 35%

- This is a 'plus target' for the council as the Council's supply chain emissions are not included in its Net Carbon Zero goal.
- The Council aims to reduce its supply chain emissions by 35% by 2030 (compared to 2019/20 baseline). It is currently at 24.9% increase (2022/23).
- Monitoring progress in reducing emissions from this source is hindered by an inaccurate way of calculation which all Welsh public sectors are using. Working is ongoing nationally to confirm an alternative and more accurate method of calculation.

The Year 3 updated version of this document has increased its scope to also include how the Council can use its influence in the following areas:

4. Reducing Carbon Emissions and Increasing Carbon Absorption Across Denbighshire

- It is estimated that the Council can influence around a third of an area's emissions through place-shaping and leadership.

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5. Supporting Natures Recovery across Denbighshire

- We aim to influence action to enhance biodiversity across the county by working with and supporting our residents and communities to act.

Sadly, even if emissions are dramatically decreased over the coming decade, further warming is now unavoidable, and adaptation is needed to deal with the climatic changes we are already experiencing and further changes that is now inevitable. The Year 3 updated version of this document includes details about:

6. Increasing Our Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change

- This is important work to increase the Council's and our community's resilience to the impacts of climate change already 'baked in'.

Changes and Actions

To achieve our net carbon zero and nature positive goals by 2030 will require the Council to adjust how it goes about delivering the wide range of work and tasks required of us by Welsh Government, by our partners and by our communities.

The Council has achieved key actions and projects since 2021 to deliver on its 2030 goals which are outlined in the Foreword and within the Technical Appendices.

Under each of the 6 core scope areas, over 140 changes and actions are listed that we are wanting to deliver if/when the resources are available to us. Our aim is to implement as many of these as we can over the remaining 6 years of the strategy. They range from policy and process changes to targeted actions and projects. Some examples are given below:

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1. Net Carbon Zero Council

- An example of a policy or process change identified to contribute to delivering on this goal is the progression of the replacement Local Development Plan to ensure emerging local priorities around climate change and biodiversity are reflected in local planning policy and decision making.
- An example of a targeted action or project identified to reduce carbon across buildings, fleet, waste, staff commuting, street lighting, and business travel is to continue to implement the Electric Vehicle replacement policy.
- An example of a targeted action or project identified to increase carbon absorption across council owned and operated land is to continue to work with schools to identify land to plant trees and introduce wildflowers for biodiversity improvement and carbon sequestration and to create a new 70-acre nature reserve in St Asaph, restoring habitats and supporting rare and important wildlife.

2. Ecologically Positive Council

- An example of a policy or process change identified to contribute to delivering on this goal is to embed the ecological compliance audit for planning applications to ensure mitigation, compensation and enhancement is actually installed.
- An example of a targeted action or project identified to increase the percentage of council owned and operated land in the highest species richness is to continue the wildflower meadow (non-cut) project on council owned and managed areas.

3. Reduce supply chain emissions by 35%

- An example of a policy or process change identified to contribute to delivering on this goal is to ensure any External Frameworks used for procurements have robust requirements in terms of Carbon Reduction & Sustainability.

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- An example of a targeted action or project identified to reduce supply chain emissions is to request Carbon Reduction Plans as part of all tenders above £XX (value to be agreed but is mandatory for all contracts above £5m).

4. Reducing Carbon Emissions and Increasing Carbon Absorption Across Denbighshire

- An example of an identified way to use our influence to support this objective is to devise and implement a plan to achieve SAP 75 housing by 2030 along with a Targeted Energy Pathway.

5. Supporting Natures Recovery across Denbighshire

- An example of an identified way to use our influence to support this objective is to deliver improvement and expansion projects for Denbighshire County Council allotments and to continue to coordinate Bionet, the North East Wales Local Nature Partnership, supporting and promoting partner organisations in the planning and implementation of nature conservation work.

6. Increasing Our Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change

- An example of a policy or process change identified to contribute to delivering on this objective is to develop and implement a new Denbighshire Flood Risk Management Strategy for the county
- An example of a targeted action or project identified to increase the Council's, and our community's, resilience to the impacts of climate change already 'baked in' is to deliver coastal zone management on Denbighshire's natural coastline and work to include: sand dune restoration, the Little Tern Protection Scheme and habitat creation.

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Standing by our Ambition

We know that despite the positive progress projects have made, the pace of change is currently not at the rate needed to meet our 2030 targets in some areas of the programme, in particular in buildings, land use and staff commuting. Our ability to achieve our ambition will be impacted further in the coming years by the financial limitations we, along with all local councils, are facing.

For us to achieve our 2030 goals, it will not be easy, but we maintain our ambition and have not adjusted our targets as we go into the next 3 years of our strategy.

Our work to tackle climate change and bring about nature's recovery has multiple benefits, with actions to reduce carbon, often also reducing costs for the council, and nature work also creating spaces for health and wellbeing, education and leisure for our communities.

The estimated cost of delivering on our goals to 2030 is estimated to be at least £48 million. The council cannot provide all of this money itself and we will need to build on and better our success over the first 3 years of the strategy where 36% of total capital expenditure has been covered by external grant. The programme will aim to capitalise on external funding opportunities from the Welsh Government, National Government and supporting bodies along with maximising on opportunities for community and commercial based financing mechanisms and work to develop 'ready to go' projects for when opportunities arise.

We remain committed to go as far as we can as fast as we can to reduce carbon, increase carbon absorption and support nature recovery in the Council and across Denbighshire for the well-being and protection of our current communities, staff and partners and for future generations to come.