Climate Emergency Action Plan

GATESHEAD COUNCIL'S ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

Gateshead Council

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INTRODUCTION

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change was signed in 2016 by all UN member states and was a major international step forward in action against climate change, committing countries to:

- Limiting global temperature increase to 2˚C this century, and aiming for 1.5˚C.

- See global emissions peak and decline as soon as possible so that net zero emissions are achieved as close to 2050 as possible.

The UK was the first member state to commit to legally binding targets to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050 and, in May 2019, the UK committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

In the years after the signing of the Paris Agreement, the need to accelerate action became clearer. Following the UN Emissions Gap Report 2018 some alarming facts were raised:

- Current global plans to reduce emissions by 2030 are not now sufficient to limit temperature increase to 1.5˚C

- Global emissions continue to grow and show now sign of peaking.

- Emissions by 2030 need to be 25% lower to remain on track to limit temperature increase to 2˚C, and 55% lower to limit the increase to 1.5˚C.

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GATESHEAD'S RESPONSE

To play our part in responding to the global challenge of climate change, Gateshead Council declared a Climate Emergency at its Council meeting on 23 May 2019.

In doing so, the council committed to:

- Make the Council's activities carbon neutral by 2030

- Achieve 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by 2030

- Ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning decisions are in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030

- Support and work with all other relevant agencies towards making the entire area carbon neutral within the same timescale.

- Ensure that political and chief officers embed this work in all areas and take responsibility for reducing, as rapidly as possible, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council's activities.

- Influence and inspire partners across the borough to help deliver this goal through all relevant strategies, plans and shared resources.

- Proactively include young people in the process, ensuring that they have a voice in shaping the future.

- Call on the UK Government to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to make this possible.

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Gateshead Council believes that adapting to a green future will make a critical contribution to a more prosperous and equitable future for Gateshead, and for delivering our strategic approach of making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives.

In particular, it will:

- Ensure communities are resilient to changing environment,

- Ensure our communities realise the benefits from a changing economy,

- Make Gateshead a more attractive place to live, work, and invest,

- Support our natural environment and biodiversity, which in turn has a strong positive contribution to health and wellbeing,

- Improve and create more equitable transport infrastructure which will make services and facilities more accessible for all.

PREPARING FOR ACTION

During 2020, independent consultants carried out an audit of the Council's carbon and environmental impact. This resulted in Gateshead Council being awarded silver accreditation against the Investors in the Environment framework - a significant achievement which recognises the efforts already made by the Council in recent years to reduce its carbon and environmental footprint.

The environmental audit is the most in-depth assessment of the council's environmental and carbon footprint ever carried out. It has helped us understand what we are doing well, and what improvements we could make.

INVESTORS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Gateshead Council
Silver Level Audit Report

Address: Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent St, Gateshead, NE8 1HH
Report Date: September 2020
Contact: N. Wilkinson
Auditor Name: **Claire Thompson**

OUSEBURN FARM | OUSEBURN RD | NEWCASTLE | NE1 2PA

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ACTION PLAN

We have used the audit's findings to develop an action plan to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and deliver on the commitments made in our Climate Emergency declaration. This focuses on measures to reduce the carbon emissions and environmental impact of Gateshead Council as an organisation.

The Action Plan also sets out some of the things the council will do to help communities and local businesses make a positive difference to the climate change agenda.

The restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic constrained the amount of engagement activity we were able to carry out while preparing the action plan. However, we were able to hold a stakeholder workshop on 24 February 2020 which began a dialogue with our communities and created networks between individuals, groups and organisations.

From January to May 2020 we invited responses to an online survey of residents' views on the climate emergency. A summary of responses to the survey is available here (link awaited). Our action plan has been shaped by the comments we have received so far.
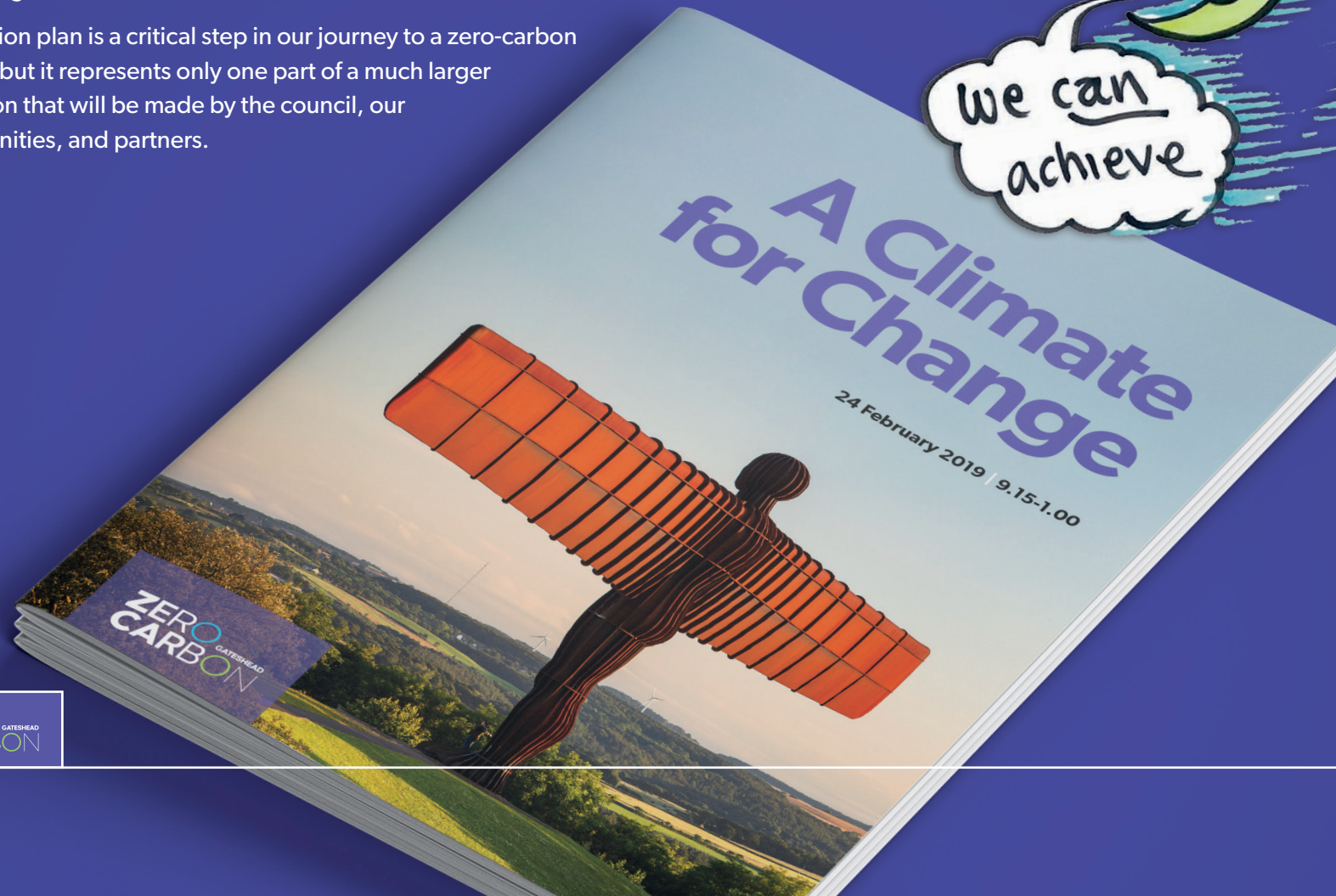
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The action plan sets out specific actions that will be taken forward with relevant services in the Council. However, our ambitions require commitment across all of the council's operations and we will be endeavouring to make sure that all of the Council policies and activities have regard to their carbon and environmental footprint.

To that end, Gateshead Council will ensure that the Climate Emergency is considered in all relevant council policies and strategies, and in decisions regarding council investments and assets.

Our action plan is a critical step in our journey to a zero-carbon future, but it represents only one part of a much larger transition that will be made by the council, our communities, and partners.

Things can & do happen!

Putting a man on the moon

..reach for the stars

We can achieve

A Climate for Change

24 February 2019 | 9.15-1.00

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TRANSPORT

Transport is one of the biggest contributors of carbon emissions in Gateshead. A shift to low or zero-emissions vehicles has great potential to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.

Encouraging active travel (walking or cycling) and public transport as alternatives to private cars are important ways to reduce the environmental impact of transport. These modes of transport are often cheaper and are accessible to more of our residents, and investment in them can help secure better, more reliable and affordable access to places of work, shops, and services.

Improving digitisation and exploring the ways the council delivers its services can also help reduce the need to travel.

We intend to: *

- Increase the use of electric or other low-carbon vehicles within the Council's fleet.

- Support 'agile working' by expanding the use of digital technology to minimise paper use and reduce the need for staff travel

- Encourage the expansion of charging facilities for electric vehicles

HOUSING

Better insulated homes are warmer and have lower heating bills. That can help and improve the health and wellbeing of residents and reduce fuel poverty.

We intend to: *

- Promote low-carbon housing development across Gateshead

- Improve insulation to Council-owned properties, and install low-carbon heat and energy where feasible

- Continue to explore the use of hydrogen as a viable source of energy for homes, transport and commercial use.

ENERGY AND HEAT

Establishing renewable or low-carbon sources of heat and power for our homes, commercial premises and public buildings will make an important contribution to cutting borough-wide carbon emissions.

New technologies are emerging and developing that allow us to use renewable sources of electricity, and alternatives to natural gas. Adopting and nurturing these technologies in Gateshead could help to reduce our carbon footprint and support growth in the green economy.

These technologies also offer potential for our communities to be more resilient to changing fuel prices or to benefit from the sale of the 'surplus' energy the council generates.

We intend to: *

- Continue to deliver low carbon heat and power via district heating networks (Gateshead Energy Company), ground and mine water heat pumps, and solar energy

- Improve insulation to Council-owned properties, and install low-carbon heat and energy where feasible

- Use the technologies showcased in the Gateshead Innovation Village to promote low-carbon housing development on sites across the Borough

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BUSINESS, AND INDUSTRY AND RURAL ECONOMY

Gateshead Council will work with local businesses to help them improve their energy efficiency and reduce their carbon footprint.

Different businesses are likely to need different levels of support. Some are already innovating to reduce their carbon footprint, which in turn can make their operations more efficient and profitable. Other businesses are at earlier stages of this journey and may need practical advice or guidance.

Over coming years, there is likely to be significant growth in the green economy as new technologies emerge and mature. This will provide opportunities for business growth and new employment opportunities, including in Gateshead's more rural communities. Maximising opportunities for growth will be important as we recover from the effects of Covid-19.

We intend to: *

- Work with local businesses to help them to reduce their carbon and environmental footprint and take new opportunities in the 'green economy'

- Develop the Council's planning policies to support sustainable construction, enhancement of the natural environment and sustainable transport

- Seek government funding to support the development of green industries

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COMMUNITY

The Council's own activities only account for a small proportion of the Borough's overall carbon footprint. That is why action taken by, and with, our communities is necessary to make a real difference to Gateshead's overall carbon and environmental impact.

Establishing or supporting community projects can enable lasting behaviour change, can make our communities more resilient to the effects of climate change, and help them make the most of the economic opportunities that will arise. Community projects can also develop links between groups that foster community cohesion.

We intend to: *

- Promote understanding of Climate Emergency issues and involve communities in developing the Council's response.

- Encourage the growth of local 'green' businesses

- Support local food production to minimise 'food miles' and promote access to affordable and healthy food

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NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Improving our natural environment - by the creation of new areas of woodland, for example, or enhancing existing areas with biodiversity value - can make an important contribution to capturing the carbon that is in our atmosphere, as well as making Gateshead a better place for wildlife.

Good access to the natural environment can also have positive benefits for people's health and wellbeing.

We intend to: *

- Use the Council's planning powers to encourage future developments to be environmentally sustainable and enhance the natural environment.

- Protect existing woodland, and plant an extra 250ha of woodland by 2050

- Ensure that the goods and services procured by the Council are compatible with the Council's Climate Emergency commitments

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WASTE

A 'waste hierarchy' prioritising reducing the use of resources, followed by re-using materials, then recycling/composting, and recovering energy from waste, with disposal of waste in landfill as the least desirable outcome, has guided our approach to waste for several years.

The use of new technology to optimise the application of this hierarchy will help reduce our carbon and environmental footprint.

We intend to: *

- Reduce household waste and increase household recycling

- Move away from cleaning and catering products which use plastic bottles and containers.

- Increase the use of electric or other low-carbon vehicles within the Council's fleet.

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APPENDIX

Action	Timescale for implementing	Contributes to (themes)
Increase employees understanding of the carbon footprint and environmental impact associated with Council services and highlight what they can do to reduce it.	Short	Energy and heat, Transport, Nature and the Environment
Reduce the number of journeys made by staff by car, particularly those with a single occupant.	Short / medium	Transport
Relevant transport policies will support a Council-wide commitment to sustainable transport.	Short	Transport
Encourage the expansion of charging facilities for electric vehicles.	Medium	Transport
Increase the use of electric or other low-carbon vehicles within the Council's fleet.	Medium / long	Transport
Use digital route planning software to minimise the distance travelled by Council vehicles when providing services.	Short	Transport
Strive to make all council investments compatible with the Council's de-carbonisation and ethical principles.	Long	Community, Business, Industry and Rural Economy
Ensure that projects which require council approval consider their environmental impact.	Long	Nature and the Environment
Include consideration of environmental sustainability in review of Council assets.	Short	Energy and heat, Transport
Use the technologies showcased in the Gateshead Innovation Village to promote low-carbon housing development on sites across the borough.	Short	Energy and heat, Housing
Support 'agile working' by expanding the use of digital technology to minimise paper use and reduce the need for staff travel.	Short	Energy and heat, Transport
Continue to minimise the carbon footprint of the Council's IT and data use.	Short	Energy and heat

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APPENDIX

Action	Timescale for implementing	Contributes to (themes)
Where feasible, share evidence and coordinate activities that optimise benefits to the health and well-being of residents.	Short	Community
Consider, and seek to optimise the environmental contribution of the Council's land assets through their design and management.	Medium	Nature and the Environment
Improve the council's understanding of the carbon footprint associated with its own operations, and improve reporting procedures	Short	Energy and heat, Transport
Reduce household waste and increase household recycling.	Medium	Waste
Actively promote food options with a lower carbon footprint – such as meat-free meals and locally sourced foods - through the Council's catering operations.	Short	Transport, Nature and the Environment
Support local food production to minimise 'food miles'.	Short	Nature and the Environment, Transport, Community
Ensure that the goods and services procured by the Council are compatible with the Council's Climate Emergency commitments.	Medium	Energy and heat, Nature and the environment, Transport, Business, Industry and Rural Economy Community
Move away from cleaning and catering products which use plastic bottles and containers.	Short	Waste
Continue to deliver low carbon heat and power via district heating networks (Gateshead Energy Company), ground and mine water heat pumps, and solar energy.	Short-medium	Energy and heat, Housing
Continue to explore the use of hydrogen as a viable source of energy for transport, domestic or commercial use.	Medium	Energy and heat, Transport, Housing, Business, Industry and Rural Economy

APPENDIX

Action	Timescale for implementing	Contributes to (themes)
Improve insulation to Council-owned properties, and install low-carbon heat and energy where feasible.	Medium	Energy and heat, Housing
Support the delivery of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, to be confirmed by DEFRA in 2021.	Short	Nature and the environment
Protect and enhance existing woodland, and increase woodland coverage to 17% (250ha) by 2050.	Short	Nature and the environment
Develop the Council's planning powers to encourage future developments to be environmentally sustainable and enhance the natural environment.	Medium	Nature and the environment, Housing, Business, Industry and Rural Economy
Work with local businesses to reduce their carbon and environmental footprint, and take new opportunities in the 'green economy'.	Short	Business, Industry and Rural Economy
Support community wealth building (and Thrive) principles by supporting local 'green' business growth.	Short	Business, Industry and Rural Economy, Community
Seek government funding to support the development of green industries.	Short	Business, Industry and Rural Economy, Community
Ensure Council services are prepared for severe and extreme weather events and can continue to operate.	Short	Community
Promote understanding of Climate Emergency issues and involve communities in developing the Council's response.	Short	Community
Develop and implement a green communications strategy that celebrates successes, shares good practice, and encourages change across the whole of Gateshead	Short	Business, Industry and Rural Economy, Community
Engage with partner organisations to encourage and support a reduction in their carbon emissions	Short	Business, Industry and Rural Economy, Housing, Transport, Energy and heat
Work with those partner organisations that are coordinating action at a local, regional or national level to support their activities, and ensure Gateshead is at the forefront of change	Short	Contributes to all themes

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