

# NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Date: 24 January 2020  
Issued by: Connor McLoughlin

Issue No: 9/20  
Version: 1.0

## **COUNCIL COMMITS £50M TO HELP REACH CARBON NEUTRAL GOAL**

Wokingham Borough Council commits £50million over three years to jumpstart the borough on its journey to be carbon neutral by 2030. The council has outlined eight key action areas as it looks to reduce its carbon footprint following its climate emergency declaration last summer.

Plans, backed at a full council meeting last night (24 January) include planting 250,000 trees over the next five years (that's equivalent to 1.5 trees for every resident in the borough), developing five solar farms, more electric car charging points, a sustainable schools programme and making the council's property estate carbon neutral.

Data shows the borough's carbon footprint is 580.9 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e (kilotons of carbon dioxide). The total carbon dioxide emissions for the borough are made of three sectors: domestic (43%), transport (31.4%) and industrial and commercial (26.6%).

It also shows the borough's carbon footprint has been dropping since 2012, due to behaviour change, increased proportion of renewable energy in electricity supplies and more efficient technologies. The amount of carbon dioxide being removed from the air through trees and plants in Wokingham has been steadily increasing in recent years.

Despite this positive trend in decreasing emissions, the projected trajectory still leaves a carbon footprint of 274.6 ktCO<sub>2</sub> in 2030. So the council has identified key areas where it can have the most impact in reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Feedback on the council's plan has been positive and supportive from expert energy consultants and local businesses, who were consulted during its development.

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The goals, informed following a wide-ranging public consultation, including residents, businesses and other partners, are created in line with the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development. In doing so, the council hopes to ensure that its actions lead to a socially just response to climate change.

There are eight key areas for the council to work on to reduce carbon emissions. A full outline of each of these areas can be found by going to [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk). These are set out below as focus areas:

- Reduce carbon dioxide emissions from transport
- Reduce carbon dioxide emissions from domestic and business property – Green Bank Project
- Generate more renewable energy in the borough
- Create a Local Plan that specifies net zero carbon construction and infrastructure
- Increase the levels of carbon sequestration in the borough through greening the environment
- Engage with young people and support sustainable schools
- Reduce waste sent to landfill
- Encourage behaviour change

“It’s exciting and incredibly important to show our ambitious and wide-ranging plans to our residents and businesses,” said Cllr Gregor Murray, executive member for Climate Emergency. “After their feedback and ideas we have created a plan which we think will lead us to our goal by 2030.

“This is just the start of a long process where we will look to take the lead in making Wokingham borough carbon neutral. While we are implementing projects of our own, which will make a dent in our carbon footprint, a key part of this will be changing behaviours – so we are asking our residents to come on this journey with us to help us reach this important goal.”

A progress report will be developed and brought to the council for approval in July. It will then be assessed annually and carbon-saving quotas will be set up against individual projects over time. Each time it is published the report will summarise achievements and outline benefits of the work carried out over the previous twelve months.

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To monitor the action plan and steer policy, the council has set a climate emergency working group made up of a cross party group of members and representatives from town and parish councils. It will review the delivery and performance of key carbon reduction projects and the council's ambition to achieve net zero carbon for Wokingham borough by 2030.

A climate emergency advisory group, made up of representatives from industry, academia and charities, will meet quarterly to give expert advice. A climate emergency officers' group, responsible for delivering the action plan, has also been established and has been meeting monthly since the council declared a climate emergency last summer.

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**Further information:**

1. More from Cllr Gregor Murray, executive member for Climate Emergency, on [Gregor.murray@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Gregor.murray@wokingham.gov.uk)
2. (\*) This is based on Government data from the department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and is reported two years in arrears (2017). The carbon footprint does not include areas that are outside the Council's area of influence such as carbon dioxide emissions from motorways and from rail travel.
3. Wokingham Borough Council as a corporate organisation has a total carbon footprint of 11,156 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, which accounts for 1.45% of the total Borough's footprint. The Council aims to continue to reduce these emissions by improving renewable generating infrastructure and energy efficiency become a net zero carbon organisation by 2030.