



South Staffordshire Council

Climate Change Strategy

2020

Taking action to protect the environment for future generations



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Foreword

Councillor Len Bates BEM
Cabinet Member Community Services



Climate change has been recognised internationally as the most important environmental challenge that we currently face. A changing climate has profound effects on all our lives, and those of future generations. It directly impacts how we, as a Council, plan our activities in order to meet the needs of all residents in the district. The Council has declared a climate emergency.

This Climate Change Strategy sets out our commitment to local action on climate change. We expect to contribute by continuing to reduce carbon emissions and improve resilience to the effects of a changing climate and extreme weather events. The strategy recognises that our local contribution is part of a wider challenge that involves managing our budgets within available resources as well as influencing and working with partners, and is part of a national and global agenda.

This Climate Change Strategy ensures the Council meets its statutory environmental duties and looks to capture the opportunities and benefits of tackling climate change. These include savings on energy bills, encouraging renewable energy in the transition to a low carbon economy, strengthening business competitiveness, reducing flood risks and managing the impacts of extreme weather.

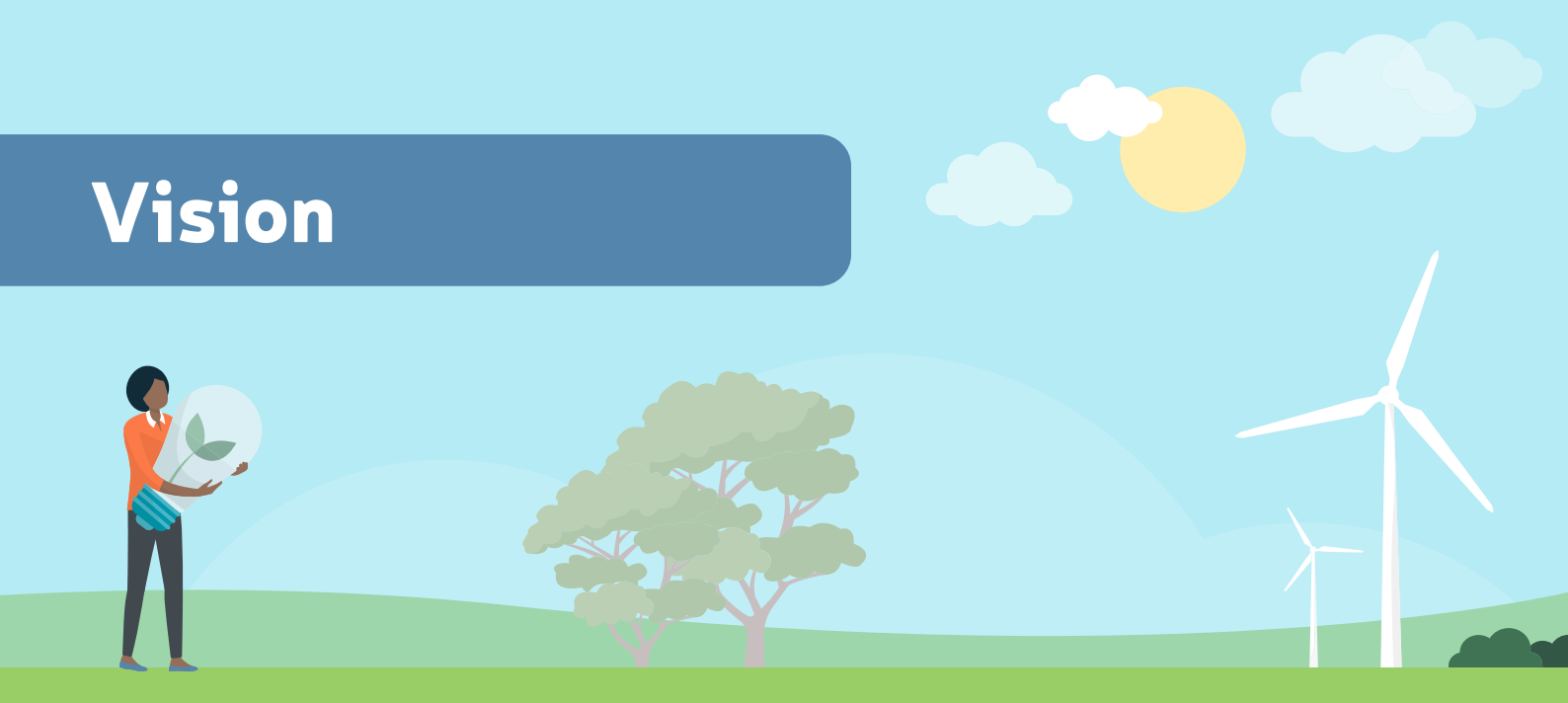
Our Council is committed through its Community Leadership role to encouraging local people and businesses to be smarter about their energy use, deliver services that are resource efficient, ensure council buildings and operations use low carbon energy supplies and are well prepared for the impacts of a changing climate. Significant progress has been made so far in improving the energy efficiency of our own operations and reducing the overall carbon emissions associated with them. However, there is still more we need to achieve to move towards a low carbon future as we all work to deliver the Environmental Bill objectives and call upon the Government to provide the necessary powers and resources to support implementation of the Sustainable Development goals.

Climate change is a collective issue and we can all make changes to our lifestyles to reduce our impact on the environment. Together, these contributions will influence the extent to which the climate changes. We recognise the key role that the Council has in supporting and promoting these local actions and supporting local people and businesses in the move to a low carbon future.

Len Bates BEM
Cabinet Member Community Services

September 2020

Vision



Taking action to protect the environment for future generations is a priority the Council recognises in our Corporate Plan 2020-2024 through working in partnership.

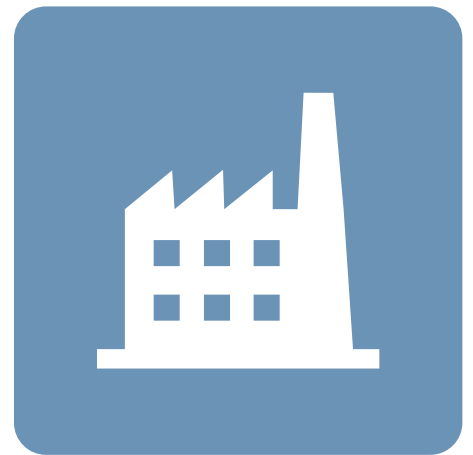
We will seek to:



Minimise the environmental impacts of our own activities.



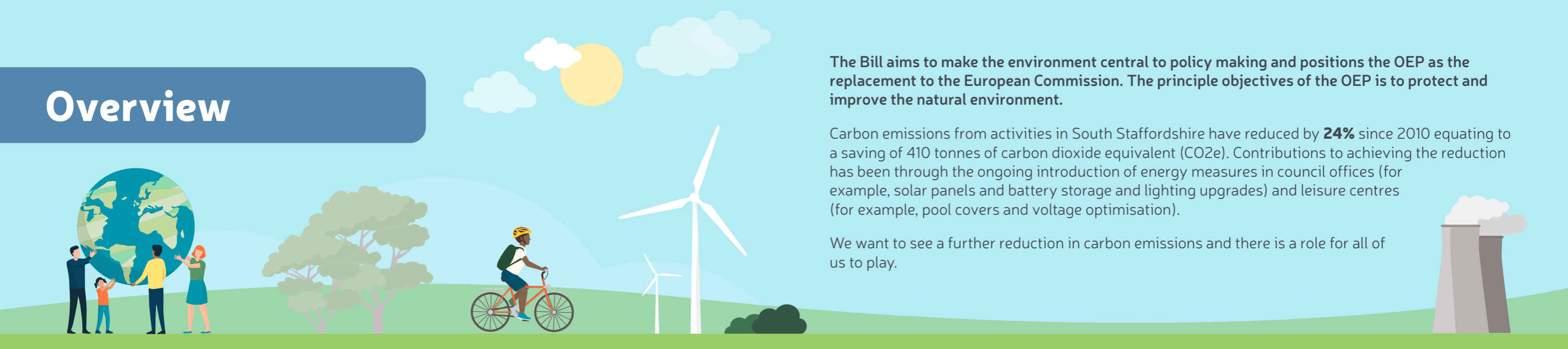
Work with partners to protect and enhance our local environment.



Raise awareness and encourage our communities and businesses to reduce their impact on the environment.




Overview




Climate change is a large-scale, long-term shift in the Earth's weather patterns or average temperatures. In recent decades, changes in the climate have caused extreme weather conditions such as flash floods, storms and high winds, heatwaves, and a reduction in summer water availability.

The Environment Bill was introduced to the House of Commons and given its first reading on 30 January 2020. (This is now subject to delay due to COVID-19.) The Bill seeks to address the environmental and climate crisis we are facing, and it utilises the opportunity for reform created by leaving the European Union to set a new domestic framework for environmental governance.


The Environmental Bill 2019-20 focuses on key environmental issues such as improving the natural environment, reporting on:




Environmental protection




The introduction of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)




Waste and resource efficiency




Air quality




The recall of products that do not meet environmental standards




Water



Nature and biodiversity



Conservation covenants




The regulation of chemicals

The Bill aims to make the environment central to policy making and positions the OEP as the replacement to the European Commission. The principle objectives of the OEP is to protect and improve the natural environment.

Carbon emissions from activities in South Staffordshire have reduced by **24%** since 2010 equating to a saving of 410 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). Contributions to achieving the reduction has been through the ongoing introduction of energy measures in council offices (for example, solar panels and battery storage and lighting upgrades) and leisure centres (for example, pool covers and voltage optimisation).

We want to see a further reduction in carbon emissions and there is a role for all of us to play.


The baseline position - 2020




6% of people commute by public transport, 1% cycle and 5% walk
(figures taken from the National Census 2011).

53% of residents want the Council to protect the natural environment and there is a demonstrable interest in environmental volunteering (South Staffordshire Council Locality Profile 2018).

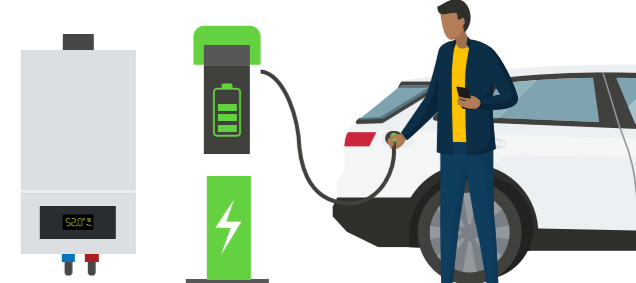
9.2% of our households are in fuel poverty compared to **10.9%** in England.



South Staffordshire Council manages **422** lighting columns up and down the district; the aim is to upgrade 100+ by 2022.



Improvements to our Leisure Centres on pool covers, voltage optimisation, upgrades of lighting and reviewing out of hours shut down has resulted in carbon savings of **165 tCO₂e** per annum, saving **£23,000** per annum on fuel bills.



There is one electric vehicle (EV) charging point installed at Jubilee House; it is proposed that eight (including six for general use and two disabled) are to be installed through the Codsall Community Hub development.

The Council's current emissions are **1,277 tonnes** of CO₂e (31 March 2019)

1.6 hectares

of afforestation since 2008 - the Committee on Climate Change recommends **30,000 per year** across the UK.



There are two cycling schemes and 13 healthy walks in place across the district.

Taking Action



This Climate Change Strategy provides the strategic direction that our sustainability initiatives will be aligned to over the life of the Council Plan. The Strategy has been developed taking in to account the important role the Council plays in protecting and improving the lives and livelihoods of its residents, communities and businesses.

The Council Plan identifies through Working in Partnership the need to collectively act and Caring for the Environment.

This plan has been developed with the following priorities:



Raising awareness

community leadership responsibilities



Our strategic planning responsibilities

influencing the future for the next generation



Influencing partners

seeking to align working in partnership to collectively tackle climate change



Council operations

reducing our impact on climate change

Raising Awareness



Climate change is one of the challenges facing South Staffordshire today. Climate projections show that past, current and future greenhouse gas emissions will influence the climate for decades. Ensuring that the district fully contributes to local efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change is a priority for the Council. We can all make changes to our lifestyles to reduce our impact on the environment. These collective contributions will influence the extent to which the climate changes.

We can help our communities and businesses understand what support is available and what they can do themselves to reduce their impact on the environment. We will focus our activities on the following actions and objectives.

We will recognise climate change as a corporate commitment for the Council.

- By declaring a Climate Emergency.
- Recognising climate change as a priority within the Corporate Plan 2020 to 2024.
- Identifying a Cabinet Member lead.
- Annually reporting on progress against the Climate Change Action Plan.
- Reviewing the Action Plan following the Environmental Bill legislation publication.

We will encourage environmental understanding and awareness by promoting climate action through a proactive communication campaign.

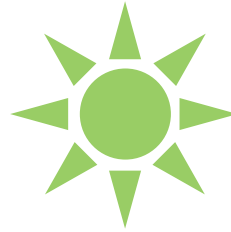
- Encouraging residents to adopt energy efficiency measures.
- Encouraging residents to adopt the Waste Hierarchy, which promotes reuse and recycling.
- Improving our environment through working in partnership across our localities with the County Council and the Parishes.
- Promoting the benefits and raise awareness to council staff.

We will encourage energy reduction, clean energy and energy efficiency and promote its benefits to our community and businesses.

- Updating and implementing the Home Energy Conservation Act Report.
- Working in partnership to deliver government energy efficiency programmes.
- Working with utility companies on delivering their obligations and helping those vulnerable residents to tackle fuel poverty.



Our strategic planning responsibilities



The Council is currently progressing with a new local plan, which presents an opportunity to take stock and incorporate and consider climate change initiatives within the Plan; this will involve balancing the need for new homes and jobs with protecting the Green Belt.

South Staffordshire remains a regional focus for economic growth and whilst we are committed to ensuring economic prosperity, it cannot come at any price so we will also seek to continue to prioritise our natural and historic environment in the Plan and wider growth aspirations.

We will minimise the climate impact of growth and encourage a low carbon economy through the planning system.

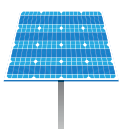
- Encouraging a sustainable pattern of development supported by a low carbon transport infrastructure.
- Encouraging renewable sources of energy supply.
- Promoting sustainable design in buildings and wider developments.
- Promoting climate resilient buildings through the revised Local Plan.
- Use of planning mechanisms and obligations to contribute to climate actions where appropriate.
- Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships/Neighbouring authorities to ensure climate risks and opportunities are built into economic growth plans.

When new development is considered in areas with nature conservation value, we will ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures.

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, native species and habitats.
- Protect existing local green spaces and locally designated nature sites.
- Promoting and supporting opportunities for environmental enhancement and regeneration.
- Where release of Green Belt land is proposed through the Local Plan, offset the impact of this loss by improving the environmental quality and accessibility to the District's remaining Green Belt land and seek to maximise the climate change mitigation opportunities this presents.

As part of the development of the new Local Plan, we will take account of actions to mitigate climate change.

- Identifying areas suitable for renewable energy through the Local Plan review.
- Commissioning a study on sustainable energy/climate change and open spaces to support the development of the Local Plan.
- Review local planning strategies to facilitate increased tree cover across the local authority area, ensuring existing trees are protected as far as possible in order to store carbon, support nature and improve soils and water quality.
- When considering locations for growth, we will fully utilise our evidence base to understand and mitigate the impacts of development on flood risks, habitats, biodiversity, ecology, landscape sensitivity and sustainability.



Influencing partners



We will endeavour to reduce our impact on the environment and work with partners to protect the environment. We will collaborate with partners to provide a coordinated approach focusing on the following actions and objectives.

We will work with County and District partners on infrastructure challenges.

- Through implementing the actions in the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.
- Promoting cycling, walking, running and other physical activity to our own staff and the wider community.
- Reducing car use by promoting car sharing and public transport plans.
- Developing a county-wide plan for increasing access to electric vehicle charging points.
- Exploring a waste to energy plant/growth.
- Working with Keele University to progress the Carbon Neutral agenda.
- Continuing the Street lighting replacement programme with energy efficient lighting.

We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership and wider partnerships to encourage a low carbon economy.

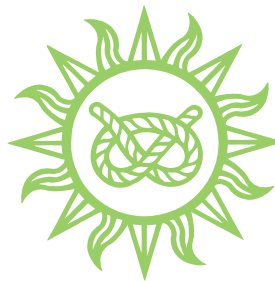
- Promoting the need for decisions to be made in line with climate change principles.
- Providing support to SME businesses to access funds and support for adopting energy efficient measures.
- Ensuring skills and training is in place to support the transition to a low carbon economy.
- Working with housing providers to ensure homes are built/retrofitted to reduce need for energy, limit overheating and enable EV access.
- Working with partners to encourage businesses to adopt energy efficiency measures by signposting to relevant services and opportunities through our business support offer.

We will work with our partners to understand the current and future risks of flooding.

- Identifying areas most at risk of flooding and review policies and actions to enable a response to reduce the risks of flooding.



Council operations



As an authority we need to be a role model to ensure we are leading by example in how we manage our own estates and how we deliver services we will therefore take the following actions and objectives to reduce our own impact on the carbon footprint

We will measure and reduce carbon emissions across our buildings and operations, including our fleet.

- Reviewing low carbon solutions and energy efficiency measures across Council buildings.
- Investing in Street Scene vehicles and kit that support energy efficiency through a 10-year strategy.
- Following the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method) principles for the Codsall Community Hub project for refurbishment and new build project.
- Making a commitment that the Council's own developments will meet the latest energy efficiency standards.
- Continuing with the Council's transformation and agile programme relating to energy efficiency, for example, remote working and energy efficiency IT equipment.
- Supporting tree planting across the district to offset CO2 emissions, provide habitat for wildlife, enhance natural landscape and reduce flood risk.
- Phasing out use of single-use plastics within the Council Offices and buildings.
- Carrying out stock condition surveys to monitor energy condition of Council Assets and ensure we have up-to-date energy performance certificates.

We will ensure that services are delivered in a way that protects the quality of the environment.

- Considering environmental and broader sustainability issues throughout the Council's procurement process.
- Protecting the environment through maintenance plans for our green spaces and street cleaning regimes.
- Considering climate change initiatives when planning the re-tendering of the Waste and Recycling contract in 2022.
- Monitoring and reviewing air quality across the district to ensure national air quality objectives are met.

We will ensure our business continuity planning is resilient to climate impacts.

- Ensuring our Business Continuity Plans are reviewed and support our resilience.
- Working with the Local Resilience Partnership to align our plans across the partnership.
- Advising residents on steps to increase resilience.



Actions and monitoring



This Climate Change Strategy sets out strategic priorities and objectives and will be refreshed to coincide with the new Council Plan every four years.

A Corporate Action Plan will be developed to demonstrate how the strategy will be delivered and the actions from this will then be incorporated into the service plans of the individual service areas.

It is important that actions are monitored in order to evaluate performance of delivery and to assess how much progress is being made in achieving the objectives of the strategy. Monitoring of actions will occur through the Council's Performance Monitoring Framework with additional annual reporting of progress to Members.



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