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Priorities for reaching Carbon Neutrality by 2030

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In this paper, WinACC makes our suggestions of the most important priorities for achieving the 2030 net zero carbon target. We hope to stimulate a discussion about the **top priorities** that will lead most quickly to the biggest reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We don't imply that the City Council isn't already doing many of these things. More discussion is needed to agree the few top projects.

Context

To reach a net zero carbon district by 2030, Winchester City Council has to:

1. **Show leadership and courage.** Champion what needs to be done, even where it is difficult, or may be unpopular, or may involve risk (such as a new technology).
2. **Concentrate on where the Council can have the biggest impact and act fast on the top priorities across *all* emissions** associated with the district - not emissions from the City Council's estate and services[i].
3. **Monitor implementation** against activity milestones and output targets, and take quick remedial action when needed. Impact can be assessed using BEIS data.[1]
4. **Apply a zero emissions lens** to every WCC project and decision so that nothing is approved that maintains or increases greenhouse gas emissions.

Priorities

WinACC proposes the following top priorities. These are selected because they could have the biggest impact, and the City Council has power to make them happen[ii].

Many of them are cost-neutral or would even generate funds. The suggestions are colour coded green (income generating), black (cost neutral), or red (cost, though initial costs will sometimes be recovered over time).

Many people have good ideas which should be recorded; but given the Council's shortage of resources, these should be collated, assessed, and where useful implemented only after the top priorities are under way.

Finance and assets

1. Make it a policy that Winchester (City Council or partners like WinACC) always applies for any national funding that could be used to reduce emissions. This includes funds that have been overlooked so far (as far as we know) like the New Stations Fund, grants for low emission bus fleets, green investment funds.

[1] A reduction in emissions of 12.5% every year in each topic below is still insufficient to reach zero by 2030, given emissions from areas not covered such as imported goods and food.

2. Task the Director of Finance to produce a report for approval by the Strategic Investment Board that sets out how the City Council will use investments to help achieve carbon neutrality. WinACC suggests exploring:
    - investing Council money in large-scale renewables, locally or elsewhere
    - setting up a revolving Green Fund (open to public contributions - like Shared Interest)[iii] or Community Municipal Investments[iv] or Green Bonds[v] to fund large
    - carbon reduction projects (whether City Council or other not for-profit bodies such as WinACC)
    - pressing Hampshire Pension Fund move much faster on its responsible investment strategy.
3. Set out how the City Council will use the Council's assets to help achieve carbon neutrality. WinACC suggests exploring:
    - Prioritising actions that contribute to carbon reduction when allocating S106 and CIL money wherever possible
    - solar panels on Council land and buildings
    - a "Preston Model" approach to climate change spending: collaboration with anchor institutions to benefit the local economy
    - using all Council land for allotments or a minimal intervention regime with no "tidying up" or planting, to encourage rewilding, increase biodiversity and carbon sequestering, and reduce fuel use and staff costs, with public messaging to explain and celebrate this
    - making low carbon, both embodied and in use, the key decision-factor in all procurement.

Renewable energy generation

4. Encourage developers to propose large scale renewable energy schemes by doing everything possible to show that they will be approved (e.g. Local Plan; delegation of approval powers to officers within overall Council framework).
5. Support communities to create their own renewable energy schemes (e.g. by supporting Community Energy South's work on this).

Transport

6. Publicise the support for low carbon travel from both national government and the majority of voters[vi]
7. Energise support for the new Local Transport Plan (LPT4) to prioritise creating zero carbon transport across Winchester District including:
    - abandoning outstanding road projects, restricting money spent on roads to essential maintenance and repairs and re-allocating it to infrastructure for walking, cycling and (possibly free) public transport, with high frequency, high quality fast buses between major settlements
    - timetabling schemes, with priority to those which will reduce emissions the most
    - cutting emissions from freight distribution e.g. rail-based hubs, cargo bikes.
8. Require all transport schemes to identify the impact on greenhouse gas emissions; oppose schemes which increase emissions, and aim for carbon reduction.

9. Press the County Council to allocate a much larger share of its transport funding for schemes for pedestrians, cycling, or public transport including rail transport.
10. Set a timetable with milestones and penalty clauses for the County Council to do everything in its remit as transport authority to implement the Winchester Movement Strategy at once – and encourage them to go further e.g. closing all roads in Winchester town centre to private vehicles with exceptions for people with disabilities, deliveries, tradespeople, home carers etc.
11. Meanwhile, quickly make all changes within the City Council's powers to reduce private vehicle traffic including:
    - a congestion charge (for as long as private vehicles are permitted within the city walls)
    - Clean Air Zones, with charging
    - close all public car parks within the old city walls
    - treble charges for residents' and visitors' on-street parking permits
    - implement a workplace parking levy
    - revise car parking standards for new dwellings, and at change of occupancy, so that town centre sites have zero car parking spaces, and all other sites a maximum of one car parking space (with exceptions for parking for people with disabled badges).

Energy use in buildings

12. The emerging Local Plan should:
    - identify sites for large-scale zero-carbon energy production and/or supply (such as wind farms, solar farms, combined heat and power, electricity storage)
    - allocate development sites in locations that minimise transport access needs, and make best use of existing infrastructure and transport links and provide primary access by active/public transport
    - set high standards of carbon neutrality for all new buildings
    - encourage heat networks for new developments, and remove planning restrictions on photovoltaic and thermal roof panels
    - encourage density on housing developments wherever possible.
13. Set development management policies to require (in order of priority):
    - zero carbon, with penalties where monitoring shows they did not achieve it
    - fewer emissions than are produced by whatever developments replace
    - maximising potential for solar power and heat pumps, passive heating and cooling
    - minimise impermeable hard surfaces.
14. Support a programme of deep retrofit for homes, including council homes, to bring them as close as possible to zero carbon standard[vii], with:
    - training for retrofit co-ordinators and tradespeople
    - a rolling fund to enable retrofit of private dwellings, including replacing fossil fuel heating with zero-carbon renewable systems
    - a framework that empowers home-owners to make their properties listed or in Conservation Areas more energy efficient by removing bureaucratic barriers, listing retrofitting changes that will be approved and restricting the power of Conservation Officers[viii].

Land use

15. encourage all landowners to measure their carbon footprint using one of the three UK market leading apps[ix].

Policy and procedures

16. Integrate climate crisis measures into the City Council's overall strategy, and into all the City Council's strategies and policies.
17. Emphasise the economic benefit for Winchester of being seen as a leader in planning for climate heating of adaptations that make Winchester District an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest in.
18. Lobby central government for support, policy change and funding.
19. Follow best practice using evidence from leading local authorities to inform Council decisions – educating officers and members about what can be done.
20. 81% of people in the UK want action on the climate emergency[x]. So act with community groups, parishes and business; and involve a representative sample of residents in a process to make informed decisions about priorities and actions, giving legitimacy to the Council's work on the climate emergency.

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[i] Cutting Council emissions demonstrates to voters that the Council is serious about climate change and is doing its share, but in itself doesn't make much impact because the City Council's emissions are less than 0.5% of the whole.

[ii] WinACC can provide data to explain our priorities. We can also provide more detailed plans to underpin the recommended priorities

[iii] This has been done in Australia for biodiversity - see http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/conservation/revolving-funds

[iv] https://www.abundanceinvestment.com/how-it-works/about-municipal-investments

[v] An example: West Berkshire Council

[vi] "Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the government should act in local neighbourhoods to increase road safety (88%), improve air quality (86%), reduce traffic congestion (83%) ." and 82% of people in the south-east supported reduction of road traffic – Kantar Public Opinion Survey on Traffic and Road Use https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/934617/DfT-Public-Opinion-Survey-on-Traffic-and-Road-Use-Phase-1-Report.pdf

[vii] reducing carbon emissions by a factor of 10 costs a rough estimate of £10,000 to £20,000 per home

[viii] For example, double-some types of double-glazing can only be distinguished from old glazing with an expert eye and are accepted in conservation areas in other places e.g. Bath

[ix] There are c400 farm businesses farming 48,000 hectares. If all those farms adopted regenerative techniques, carbon sequestration would make a material contribution to net zero. Over 20 years it would be realistic (i.e. prudent) to target 40 t CO2e/ ha on average, plus a huge basket of other ecosystem and economic benefits once transition was happening at scale.

[x] Reported at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/27/un-global-climate-poll-peoples-voice-is-clear-they-want-action. The BEIS Public Attitudes tracker also reported in August 2020 that 81% are concerned about climate change .