

Cabinet approves Climate Strategy and Natural Environment Plan

Wiltshire Council's Cabinet has today (Tuesday 1 February) approved the council's Climate Strategy and Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy, Wiltshire's Natural Environment Plan - two documents that will help to shape the next five years of the council's carbon reduction and environmental plans.

Pending approval by Full Council on 15 February, both documents will now be used as frameworks for all forthcoming council policies and plans, to ensure the council is on track to meet its pledge to make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030, and its ambition to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral.

Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, said: These two strategies show just how seriously we are taking the climate emergency and the need to safeguard Wiltshire's countryside and support nature's recovery.

We know that we have much more to do, but these strategies will help to guide us as we ensure that environmental considerations and carbon reduction are at the core of everything we do.

But we can't do this alone, and I'd urge our town, parishes and communities to get involved and make changes that will help us to reduce carbon emissions across Wiltshire as we aim to make the county carbon neutral.

At the same meeting, Cabinet also received an update on the council's progress on carbon reduction over the past six months. Some of the highlights include:

- A new green energy contract for schools so they can access green energy at a competitive rate; 128 schools have signed up so far.
- Thanks to sustained investment in solar panels, in 2020/21 the council generated 450,135 kWh renewable electricity on its own estate, a 39% increase on the previous financial year.
- Two successful grant applications to Natural England totalling £10,000 to support the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, plus evidence mapping for habitats across Wiltshire and Swindon.
- All eight household recycling centres (HRCs) operated by FCC now provide separate labelled walk-in containers where residents and site staff can store good-quality items suitable for reuse or refurbishment, such as furniture. Many of these items are made available to charities, which refurbish and re-sell them or donate to families in need. Between April and September 2021, 90 tonnes of items were reused.
- An action planning day was held for town and parish councils to empower them to make practical changes in their communities.
- A new solar panel bulk buying scheme that will enable Wiltshire residents to get high quality solar panels at a lower cost.

- The ongoing #WiltsCanDoThis behaviour change social media campaign has been seen more than 1.1 million times.
- The launch of a scheme that enables Wiltshire households with an income of £30,000 or less, and living in a property that is rated D, E, F or G for energy efficiency, the chance to access up to £10,000 for improvements such as insulation, solar panels and double glazing.
- So far 57 council homes have been retrofitted to improve their energy efficiency rating, with measures such as intelligent hot water cylinders, solar panels and high heat retaining storage heaters.
- The council's first Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan has been approved, and funding has been identified and approved for a number of electric vehicle charging points in the county.
- The council is replacing several vehicles, with many of them anticipated to be electric.
- An order for new electric and non-electric bikes for council staff has been placed with a local bike charity to help reduce car miles and carbon emissions.

To read the Cabinet reports, people should go to <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=13780>