

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

15 February 2022

Item 12 – Climate Strategy and Update on the Council’s Response to the Climate Emergency

From Andrew Nicolson

To Cllr Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change

Question (P22-10)

In its written answer to a question I asked last year, the Council agreed that road traffic reduction will be needed, for the Council to meet, or seek to meet, its 2030 carbon neutral target for the County.

Electric cars won't have taken over until the 2030s, and the power to charge them won't be zero carbon.

Yet, in Cabinet on the 1st of February 2022, Cabinet members including Cllrs Clewer, McClelland and Botterill said that they were not seeking to reduce traffic, or even that they do not know how they would do that, and that instead they will rely on the transition to electric vehicles to reduce emissions. Cllr Clewer said words to the effect that "I don't care how many cars are driving along Bythesea Road in the future, as long as they are all electric."

There's a clear contradiction here. Which is the Council's policy, traffic reduction or traffic growth?

Response:

As set out in the Wiltshire Climate Strategy 2022-2027, the next Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) in particular will work out the best mix of transport and travel solutions to help us achieve zero emissions.

In establishing this position, the LTP will be informed by the relevant wider context. This includes the Department for Transport's (DfT's) latest road traffic forecasts (2018) which set out that traffic levels are forecast to rise by between 17% and 51% by 2050.

While, as set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the DfT wants to reduce urban traffic overall there is recognition that there may only be a "...stabilisation, in traffic more widely" and that rural areas face particular challenges:

"While some technological change in transport is happening first and fastest in urban areas, there are different opportunities in rural areas that require different solutions. DfT research found that people living in rural areas were less receptive to exploring non-car travel modes due to having limited alternatives".

"...we recognise the particular challenges faced by rural and remote areas in this regard, and will work, including through the upcoming Future of Transport: Rural Strategy, to ensure policies recognise differing geographies".