

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council		
MEETING DATE:	19 September 2024		
TITLE:	Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report		
WARD:	All		
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM			
List of attachments to this report:			
Appendix 1: Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report (includes Progress on Actions (Annex A))			

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report sets out our progress on tackling the climate and ecological emergencies over the last financial year (2023-24). We have a commitment to report on our climate progress each year as set out in the Climate Emergency Strategy, and it is the first time we are reporting on the Ecological Emergency Action Plan. As Tackling the Climate & Ecological Emergencies is one of the council's core priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy, this report brings together both elements for the first time.
- 1.2 This report notes that there is significant activity underway and planned within the council and across the district to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. It recognises that more action is needed if we are to meet our climate change targets to be a carbon neutral council by 2030 and lead the district to net zero by 2030.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the positive progress achieved over the past year across the priorities set out in the Climate Emergency Strategy and Ecological Emergency Action Plan.
- 2.2 Approve the Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 This Report sets out our overall progress with reducing emissions and highlights some of the key work that has been undertaken over the past year.
- 3.2 Bath and North East Somerset district has seen a 39% decrease in emissions between 2005 and 2021, which is consistent with the average across the UK. Data from 2021 is the most recently available at the district level. As a council, we have successfully reduced our own emissions by 36% between the 2016-17 financial year and the 2023-24 financial year.
- 3.3 We have been recognised by independent organisations for our leadership, including our first B score by the Carbon Disclosure Project and ranking 7th of all UK local authorities by Climate Scorecards UK (including ranking 1st for buildings and heating, and joint 1st for biodiversity).
- 3.4 Progress on decarbonising our own operations includes the installation of air source heat pumps, LED lighting and rooftop solar on two care homes resulting in estimated annual carbon savings of approximately 100 tonnes CO₂. The Keynsham Recycling Hub has opened and includes a 3800m² rooftop solar PV array, rainwater harvesting for vehicle washing and plant watering, and planting of more than 200 trees and 500m of perimeter hedgerows to support biodiversity net gain.
- 3.5 Decarbonising our vehicle fleet remains a key challenge, and trials have begun for electric HGV refuse trucks with the potential to replace existing diesel models. This trial complements progress elsewhere in our vehicle fleet, with 20% of light commercial vehicles now electric.
- 3.6 Where the council has more limited control, we use regulatory levers and our convening role to drive change at the district level. Examples include the enforcement of minimum energy efficiency standards which has led to energy efficiency improvements in more than 70 privately rented homes, resulting in a fall in annual energy costs by an average of £388 per property and enabling the saving of more than 125 tonnes of CO₂. The Green Open Homes weekend in November 2023 saw 22 homeowners open their homes to showcase energy saving measures to almost 800 people. Bath and West Community Energy has secured funding to run more Green Open Homes events in BANES communities in 2024.
- 3.7 The council has renewed its cooperation agreements with Bath and West Community Energy and Keynsham Community Energy, enabling continued joint working to deliver local energy projects and opportunities for local people to invest in renewable energy. B&NES is currently in the second phase of Solar Together West of England, a group-buying scheme delivered in partnership with WECA and their partner iChoosr Ltd. This second phase will see around 280 installations of solar panels on BANES residents' rooftops.
- 3.8 The number of people choosing to travel by rail, bus and active travel options (walking, wheeling and cycling) has increased and further projects and investment is planned to continue to encourage such mode shift. Bath now has its first electric bus route, operated by community interest company The Big Lemon and subsidised by the council, providing a vital link between Bath city centre, the University of Bath and the Royal United Hospital.

- 3.9 The council was one of the first to adopt Biodiversity Net Gain, meaning developments in the district will be delivering net gains for nature ahead of much of the UK. A new development at Englishcombe Lane, delivering 16 new homes built for people with autism and/or learning difficulties, has been designed to create a nature-rich setting, aiming to achieve the Building with Nature accreditation and deliver 20% biodiversity net gain.
- 3.10 The Somer Valley Rediscovered project has delivered over 1000 hours of wellbeing activities as part of a Green Social Prescribing offer and has been working with local communities to improve the management of sites across the Somer Valley. This includes work in Waterside Valley where a masterplan has been developed with local people and landscape architects, and ongoing actions to help nature and improve access for local people.
- 3.11 The council is continuing to support people's access and engagement with nature. A successful bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is enabling Avon Wildlife Trust to deliver the Nextdoor Nature project, which empowers local communities to manage green spaces for nature. Bathscape continues to engage thousands of people through walks, events and volunteering opportunities. Bathscape's Footprints podcast was nominated for Best Local Show for the second time at the Audio and Radio Industry Awards.
- 3.12 We are working in partnership to deliver new woodland across BANES. The Great Avon Wood is well underway to becoming a 100 acre woodland near Pensford as part of a crucial partnership with Avon Needs Trees and the Forest of Avon Trust. This will be joined by 422 acres of woodland made possible by the recent purchase of land by Avon Needs Trees. This new woodland, the Lower Chew Forest, will be home to 100,000 trees and a mosaic of nature-rich habitats, including wetlands, miles of hedgerow and species-rich grassland.
- 3.13 The Report also sets out the council's next steps for the series of actions set out in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plans, published in 2023.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Council's climate action plans are in keeping with the role identified for local government in the Climate Change Act 2008 and the regular reports of the UK's climate advisory body, the UK Climate Change Committee.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report outlines the next steps that are covered by existing budgets or notes where there are resource constraints associated with delivery. Business case development will be undertaken and opportunities to increase external funding will be sought.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 This report recommends that Council note the positive progress achieved over the past year across the priorities set out in the Climate Emergency Strategy and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. As such, a risk assessment has not been conducted in relation to this report.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 An EIA has not been carried out as this is a report on progress, not new policy. It should be noted that actions to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies have benefits that extend beyond just climate and nature. Home energy efficiency improvements and domestic retrofit can reduce household energy bills. Improved access to public transport and active travel can improve health outcomes and reduce social isolation. Access to nature and green social prescribing can have positive impacts for people experience limiting health conditions.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 This Report provides a direct update on the council’s progress towards tackling the climate and ecological emergencies, built on the climate and ecological emergency declarations in 2019 and 2020 respectively. It delivers on our commitment to report annually.

8.2 The Report presents the combined actions of services across the council and sets out the next steps across the identified priority areas for climate (decarbonising buildings, decarbonising transport, increasing renewable energy generation and decarbonising council operations) and ecology (leadership and evidence, land and water management, nature-based solutions, access and engagement, evidence and monitoring, and working in partnership).

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None – providing an annual progress report was a commitment set out in the Climate Emergency Strategy and Ecological Emergency Action Plan.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 As part of the council’s response to the climate and ecological emergencies we conduct regular community engagement, the highlights of which are included within the Report.

10.2 The Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report has been reviewed by the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

Contact person	Eleanor McGhie eleanor_mcghie@bathnes.gov.uk
Background papers	Appendix 1: Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report Appendix 2: Progress on Actions (Annex A to Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report) Climate Emergency Strategy – available online - https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/read-our-climate-strategy-and-action-plan

	Ecological Emergency Action Plan – available online - https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/ecological-emergency-action-plan
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