

# Agenda



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## A meeting of the **Climate Emergency Advisory Committee** will be held on Wednesday, 1 July 2020 at 6.00 pm virtual meeting

Joining instructions for members of the public: To watch the virtual meeting, you must copy the following link to your internet browser:

**<https://bit.ly/2ByuiXi>**

When your web browser opens, select "Watch on the Web instead" button and then when the "Welcome to the live event!" window opens select "join anonymously".

### Members of the Committee:

#### Councillors

David Grant (Chairman),  
Eric Batts,  
Eric De La Harpe,  
Amos Duveen,  
Hayleigh Gascoigne,  
Alison Jenner,  
Max Thompson

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M Reed".

Margaret Reed  
Head of Legal and Democratic

# Agenda

## Open to the Public including the Press

### 1. Chairman's announcements

To receive any announcements from the chairman and general housekeeping matters.

### 2. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence and the attendance of substitute members.

### 3. Minutes

(Pages 4 - 7)

To review the minutes of the last meeting on the first of June 2020, to agree that they are a correct record of the meeting and for the Chairman to sign them as such.

### 4. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

### 5. Urgent business

To receive notification of any matters which the chairman determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent.

### 6. The Green Recovery from Covid-19

(Pages 8 - 19)

Committee to note the key themes and policy thinking of using the Covid-19 recovery to accelerate and prioritise green initiatives and contribute to climate change action and how this could impact the progression and steer of the projects within the Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020/21.

### 7. The Corporate Plan 2020-24

(Pages 20 - 28)

An opportunity for Committee to review the Cabinet's developing thinking on the Corporate Plan 2020-24 themes and illustrative projects and provide any recommendations to Cabinet on its contents with particular regard to climate change and links to the CEACs Climate Emergency work programme in advance of any public engagement and Cabinet on 10 July.

## **8. Update from the task and finish group**

Task and finish group to provide a verbal update on the presentation on the Vale's carbon emissions baseline received by Aether on 18 June 2020.

## **9. Public participation**

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

held on Monday, 1 June 2020 at 6.00 pm



This was an online virtual meeting. To view the meeting, copy and paste this link into your browser:

<https://youtu.be/kkWJd2WKHHM>

**Open to the public, including the press**

### **Present:**

Members: Councillors David Grant (Chairman) Nathan Boyd, Amos Duveen, Hayleigh Gascoigne, Eric De La Harpe, Alison Jenner, Max Thompson

Officers: Chloe Bunting, Steve Culliford, Candida Mckelvey, Michelle Wells, Heather Saunders and Michael Flowers

Also present:

Number of members of the public:

## **21. Chairman's announcements**

Councillor Grant welcomed everyone to the greenest climate emergency advisory committee to date. He addressed the committee, saying that having a virtual committee was a pipe dream, but has now been made possible due to arrangements being made to continue committees during the current crisis. It demonstrates that we are willing to make changes and that at times of crisis, there can be silver linings – we can choose to try and return to how things were, or we can forge a new green future.

Officers have been working hard to keep local services running and helping vulnerable people. There have been close to zero carbon emissions due to everyone working from home. One of the issues we face with virtual meetings is that we currently cannot have external attendees to speak publicly at meetings. Due to the meetings being broadcast publicly and live as required, we are still looking for a solution to allow external speakers. Currently written statements can be submitted to the meeting. This means that item 6 of the agenda, a presentation by Aether, cannot go ahead. When we get to item 6, the committee will be asked to decide how we receive this presentation.

## **22. Apologies for absence**

Councillor Eric Batts submitted apologies, and Councillor Nathan Boyd was present as his substitute.

## **23. Minutes**

The minutes were approved as a correct record of the last meeting and will be signed by the Chair as such.

## **24. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Gascoigne declared that she is an investor in the low carbon hub.

## **25. Urgent business**

None.

## **26. 'Determining the Vale of White Horse District Carbon Baseline'**

The committee agreed that the written report by Aether, regarding the Vale of White Horse District carbon baseline, should be presented to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee's (CEAC) councillor-officer task and finish group as soon as possible. The task and finish group would then feedback into the committee.

## **27. Work programme update and the impact of the Covid-19 response on progress.**

The Policy and Insight Manager was present to answer questions regarding the work programme and the impact Covid-19 has had on progress and steer.

It was explained that there has been a shift in staffing towards resourcing the Vale of White Horse Council Community Support Hub in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to support residents. Also, staff have been working from home and have to balance work and family commitments.

Officers recommended another Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) meeting in early July in order to review a report on the Oxfordshire and regional recovery programme, in tandem with reviewing the draft corporate plan before it goes out to public consultation. The review of the draft corporate plan by the CEAC would be focused on priorities regarding environment and health.

Officers were thanked for their contribution to Covid-19 support efforts.

The committee worked through the update. The following points were raised:

- The committee's budget was discussed in light of Covid-19 – councillors queried if this budget might be reallocated. It was confirmed that any uncommitted spend may be challenged. We can carry over budget to the following financial year.
- The committee expressed their support of active transport measures and the recent increase in cycling and walking due to Covid-19 social distancing measures and traffic restrictions. The committee agreed that encouraging home working to continue and encouraging relevant authorities to implement such measures would be helpful to reduce carbon emissions.
- The committee asked for the report to include some highlighting (editing) of the changes. An officer confirmed that the items labelled "paused" were the ones where progress had been impacted by Covid-19.
- There was interest in the Faringdon Leisure centre renewable energy (item 4). An officer responded that the leisure team are looking at the cost and the carbon benefit. Upfront costs are a consideration, but the potential is being explored.

- Oxfordshire tree mapping (item 5) – an officer confirmed that a specialist planning officer can come to a future CEAC committee meeting to present to the group.
- It was confirmed that the economic development team were focussed on Covid-19 efforts, and that Oxfordshire Green Tech (item 7) was to be progressed at a later stage.
- Item 6 on solar energy opportunities – an officer updated that this is delivered by an external company and is in progress. Senior Management Team (SMT) approval is needed to sign off the specification and quote received.
- Crowmarsh office project – contingency was built into the programme of work. SMT and Cabinet will review the impact of Covid-19.
- The planning design guide (item 13) – delivery of the project is expected by Sept 2021. A task and finish group was agreed, to be held with the specialist planning team. The committee should advise on climate-related principles. The guide should be set up to make green alterations to current stock, not just projects of 10+ homes. Officers to put this point forward to the planning team. Current planning policies to be circulated to the committee before the task and finish.
- The Project Lead for climate emergency – Michelle Wells is working on the job evaluation and the salary banding – which needs to go to SMT before being advertised.
- Electric pool vehicles for staff travel (item 18) – there is still time until the delivery date – may need to wait and see whether this project changes in light of Covid-19 and widespread working from home.
- The lighting at the Beacon in Wantage (item 20)– proposed that this could be done whilst the building is closed. The corporate energy officer confirmed this is being discussed within the parameters of safety advice and social distancing.
- The committee were supportive of cycling and walking encouragement measures
- Solar panels in carparks – this was suggested by members, examples include Northern France.
- Officers reminded the committee that the work programme has been ratified by Cabinet and cannot be changed after a thorough and well-rounded selection process by the CEAC and is fixed for 2020/21.

In summary, it was proposed that:

The task and finish group will review the Aether report in July, will have a specialist planning officer present to them regarding the tree mapping project at a future committee meeting, and the specialist planning team will consult the CEAC regarding the design guide; initiation of this through a task and finish group meeting.

It was noted to also invite substitute committee members to the task and finish group regarding the Aether report.

Other mentioned items:

- Will there be an update on car parking charges
- Discussing virtual meetings will be a future agenda item
- Proactive promotion of meetings needed – twitter etc

## **28. Public participation**

There was one statement submitted before the meeting.

Statement:

“Dear Councillors,

We have all enjoyed the quieter streets in Abingdon during the coronavirus lockdown and have also noticed the increase in traffic over recent weeks. As you are aware, on 9th May, the

government announced that it is making funds available to create and improve infrastructure for cycling:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking>

We want to know what the plans are in Abingdon to improve the safety of cycling in response to this announcement. In particular, we would like feedback on what the plans are for pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle- and bus-only corridors as part of the £250 million emergency active travel fund which the government has made available across England.

We have some suggestions on routes in Abingdon which we feel are currently unsafe and where safety for cyclists could be improved through pop-up cycle lanes. These are: Oxford Road, Wootton Road, Spring Road, Ock St and Drayton Road. We also suggest that the Oxford Road through Bagley Wood could be closed to through traffic to create a direct and safer route for cycle commuters to travel into work.

Some other suggestions we have which could be immediately implemented include an end to free car parking and creating more cycle parking in Abingdon town centre.

Longer-term measures which should be considered to improve safety for cyclists include widening current cycle paths, giving cyclists priority at junctions, closing off roads used as rat runs for through-traffic (where there are alternatives) and introducing 20mph speed limits on residential roads.

We appreciate that road infrastructure decisions are made by the county council. If they are the ones who will be administering the government funding, then we would like to see the district council's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee putting pressure on them to begin urgently using this money to create local, safe cycle spaces.

Kind regards,

Jenny, Pete, Tim, Michelle and Nicky (Representatives from XR Abingdon)"

Councillor De La Harpe is cycling champion and welcomes suggestions like this, and from other Parishes in the Vale of White Horse district. It was discussed that CEAC should show support of active travel and traffic restriction measures that have been set up in light of Covid-19. Also noted that a letter from Council would add strength to the message.

A motion was moved by Councillor De La Harpe and seconded by Councillor Jenner. All seven members were in favour.

**Resolved: To**

- a) ask the Chairman to write to Oxfordshire County Council to show support of the active travel and traffic restriction measures being developed by Oxfordshire County Council, and support these to become a permanent measure, and:
- b) ask Cabinet to recommend to Council that they write to Oxfordshire County Council in support of these measures also.

The meeting closed at 19:35

# Climate Emergency Advisory Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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To: Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

DATE: 01 July 2020



## A Green Recovery from Covid-19

### Recommendation(s)

- (a) Committee to note the key themes and policy thinking of using the Covid-19 recovery to accelerate and prioritise green initiatives and contribute to climate change action and how this could impact the progression and steer of the projects within the Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020/21 and feed into the council's emerging recovery plans.

### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides a summary of the national government and Oxfordshire Councils' anticipated approach to the Covid-19 recovery, predominantly focusing on green recovery although elements of economic, health and social recovery are also included.

### Strategic Objectives

2. Work is currently being undertaken to develop the Corporate Plan 2020-2024, and climate emergency related goals are emerging as strong proposed priorities in the initial draft for the Plan. Following Covid-19, there is global recognition that climate change and the environment have increased in their importance.
3. Additionally, at the meeting of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC), 1 July 2020 committee members will review a draft of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 proposed themes and illustrative projects. Consideration of this alongside this Green Recovery report will better enable the CEAC to consider whether they would like to recommend the re-focus and re-prioritisation of projects within the Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020-21.



## Background

4. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our society and economy. Both central government and local government have a crucial part to play in a recovery framework that can support, and even prioritise, a green recovery.
5. The Prime Minister and central government have faced mounting pressures on all fronts, with charities, corporations, community groups, academics and members of parliament demanding a green recovery. This report will explore the various 'Calls to Action' made by specific organisations, that are likely to influence the upcoming commitments made by central government.
6. Carbon dioxide emissions, which plunged when lockdown took effect, have since begun to rebound sharply according to National Geographic<sup>1</sup>. Experts fear "we will leap from the COVID frying pan into the climate fire"<sup>2</sup> and without strong government interventions, the UK will return to business as usual with high carbon emissions, or even higher emission levels above pre-lockdown levels should people desert public transport in fear of their health in favour of driving their own cars.
7. The United Kingdom's role as president of COP26 means the UK government has a critical role to play, if trends towards a bailout of a high-carbon economy are to be reversed and the world is to reach net zero emissions. COP26 is the annual UN climate conference to co-ordinate global action to deal with the climate emergency. The UN summit postponed by a year to November 2021, due to Covid-19, is seen by some as the last chance to put the world back on track to meet the Paris Climate Agreement. For COP26 to be a success, the UK government must lead by example in setting out a green recovery.
8. During a national briefing session on 28 May 2020, The Prime Minister stated that the UK government will push for a green and climate resilient recovery, he stated "we owe it to future generations to build back better and base our recovery on solid foundations, including a fairer, greener and more resilient global economy"<sup>3</sup> following Covid-19.
9. The Prime Minister is expected to deliver a speech detailing specific plans for the UK's economic recovery strategy inclusive of a green recovery at the end of June 2020.

## Themes that could be included in a green recovery

10. By "bouncing back better" there is a chance to facilitate a green recovery as we emerge from lockdown and think about the lessons Covid-19 has taught us about

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<sup>1</sup> National Geographic, *Carbon emissions are falling sharply due to coronavirus. But not for long*. April 3, 2020. <<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/04/coronavirus-causing-carbon-emissions-to-fall-but-not-for-long/>>[Accessed on 14 June 2020].

<sup>2</sup> Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, *Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change?* Working Paper 20-02 4 May 2020, p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister Boris Johnson, *Downing Street Coronavirus News Conference*, [television broadcast] BBC, 28 May 2020.

community response, behavioural change, resilience, the role of the government and the need for action based on science.

11. Following Covid-19, a green recovery provides a rare opportunity to align economic, social and environmental agendas. This section of the report summarises and splits out the key themes associated with a green recovery under the subheadings of economic, social and environmental. There is recognition that many of these themes overlap. Further detail on each theme is provided in the next section of the report.

## 12. Economic

- Increasing job creation
- Building a resilient financial system
- Reskilling and retraining for a well-adapted zero carbon economy

## 13. Social

- Addressing inequalities
- Further enable walking & cycling given the increase in these activities during the crisis
- Harnessing community spirit: the power of the community response to Covid-19 has highlighted the absolute requirement to work alongside people as agents of change and to understand how we can give the right support to that
- Long lasting behavioural change. This links to the role of government regulation, which has enabled a shift in behaviour at scale following Covid-19 regulations

## 14. Environmental

- Low carbon developments
- Infrastructure investments in renewable energy
- Restoration projects, including tree planting
- Green neighbourhoods: during the pandemic we have seen how important access to green space and natural capital has been important for people's physical and mental health
- Energy efficiency: including retrofitting existing homes and Clean Heat Grants
- Enabling the uptake of Electric Vehicles (EVs)

## National approach to a green recovery plan

15. The Prime Minister and Central Government are facing mounting pressures on all fronts to deliver a green Covid-19 recovery plan, with calls to action being made being made by corporations, charities, community groups, members of parliament and cabinet members. This section details some of these individual groups calls to action and recommendations.
16. The Aldersgate Group is an alliance of leaders from business, politics and civil society that drives action for a sustainable economy. They launched a policy briefing on 12 June 2020 highlighting how an economic recovery focused on stimulating low carbon and nature restoration projects could help address regional inequality, unemployment and build a more resilient financial system.
17. Executive Director of the Aldersgate Group, Nick Molho said: “There has rarely been a time when the economic, social and environmental agendas have been so closely aligned”<sup>4</sup>.
18. A recovery with these projects at its heart would strengthen the UK government’s influence ahead of the G7 and delayed COP26 summits and enable UK businesses to be competitive providers of low carbon goods and services. The Group of Seven (G7) is an international intergovernmental economic organisation consisting of the seven major countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States which are the largest advanced economies in the world.
19. The Aldersgate Group have recommended that the government work closely with the Green Finance Institute and the newly launched Clean Growth Fund to identify “key market barriers and gaps to investment in emerging green infrastructure and technologies”<sup>5</sup>. This refers to a partnership between Triodos Bank, Tesco and Pod Point which saw Triodos providing a debt facility to support the rollout of EV chargers.
20. The Aldersgate Group have also made several recommendations relating to EVs, including bringing forward the phaseout of internal combustion vehicles - including hybrids – to 2030 or sooner, which is something the government is consulting on.
  - This would have the potential to create 200,000 permanent jobs, 57 per cent of which would be involved in the installation, operation and maintenance of charging points.
  - Commitments to accelerate the switch to EVs could be car focused, but there is recognition that there also needs to be understanding of what role will be played by e-bikes and micro-mobility modes e.g. e-scooters.
  - Enabling the uptake of EVs coupled with increasing active travel and improving bus and rail services will be essential to decarbonise the transport sector. The transport sector has been heavily impacted by Covid-19 and there may be long term impacts, such as public reluctance to take public transport.

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<sup>4</sup> Current ±, *Green COVID-19 recovery as ‘historic opportunity’ as organisations turn up the heat*, 12 June 2020 < <https://www.current-news.co.uk/news/green-covid-19-recovery-a-historic-opportunity-as-organisations-turn-up-the-heat> > [Accessed 14 June 2020]

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

21. The Energy Efficiency Infrastructure Group (EEIG) is also calling for a green recovery. They have focused on energy efficiency measures to support this, describing buildings as the “litmus test for a net zero recovery”<sup>6</sup>.

22. EEIG June 2020 report details a proposed two-year stimulus package:

- Bringing forward the £0.1 billion ear-marked for Clean Heat Grants from 2022 to 2020.
- Fully committing to the £9.2 billion worth of commitments to energy efficiency investments made in the government’s 2019 manifesto. These include the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Home Upgrade Grants and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.
- Direct investments in homes from both public and private sources. The proposed stimulus package comes in at £4 billion over two years, which would support 500,000 renovations and 34,000 full-time jobs across the supply chain.

23. In a letter of 6 May 2020, the Committee on Climate Change wrote to the Prime Minister advising how climate policy can play a key part in rebuilding the UK with a stronger economy and increased resilience following COVID-19; “Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change should be an integral part of any recovery package”<sup>7</sup>.

24. The Committee on Climate Change highlight areas of focus that have clear economic, social and environmental benefits. These are largely in line with projects within the Vale of White Horse’s Climate Emergency Programme of Work 2020/21:

- Investments in low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure
- Support reskilling, retraining and research for net-zero, well adapted economy
- Upgrades to our homes ensuring they are fit for the future
- Making it easy for people to walk, cycle and work remotely
- Tree planting, peatland restoration, green spaces and other green infrastructure

25. The Committee recommend that the government prioritise actions according to their six principles for a resilient recovery:

- Use climate investments to support economic recovery and jobs
- Leads a shift towards positive long-term behaviours. This refers to embedding new social norms, such as travel that benefits well-being whilst also reducing emissions. This will involve infrastructure provisions to

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<sup>6</sup> Energy Efficiency Infrastructure Group, *Energy efficiency’s offer for a net zero compatible stimulus and recovery*, June 2020, p.1

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Committee on Climate Change to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson, *Building a resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis*, 6 May 2020

improve safety for cyclists and investing in measures to facilitate social distancing on both public transport and pavements.

- Tackle the wider 'resilience deficit' on climate change. Strong policies are needed from across government to reduce vulnerability to the destructive risks of climate change and avoid a disorderly transition to net-zero. Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of evidence-led preparations for the key risks facing the country.
- Embed fairness as a core principle. The crisis has exacerbated existing inequalities, whereby the response to the crisis has disproportionately affected the same lower income groups and younger people who face the largest long-term impacts of climate change.
- Ensure the recovery does not 'lock-in' greenhouse gas emissions or increase the climate risk. There is a risk of a high carbon rebound from Covid-19 given the very low oil prices we are currently seeing. In addition, perception of the safety of crowded public spaces (including trains and buses) could see people rejecting public transport in favour of personal transport options. This should be seen in the context that transport is already the biggest sector source of CO<sub>2</sub> (by end user and source) and sector emissions have stayed relatively level for 20 years.
- Strengthen incentives to reduce emissions when considering fiscal changes.

26. More than two hundred top UK firms and investors (including Lloyds Bank, Asda, Mitsubishi, Siemens and Sky) are calling on the government to deliver a Covid-19 recovery plan that prioritises the environment. In a letter to the Prime Minister the proposals include:

- Driving investment in low carbon innovation, infrastructure and industries
- Focusing sectors that can best support the environment, increase job creation and foster the recovery, whilst also decarbonising the economy
- Putting strings on financial support to ensure firms getting cash bailout are well managed and in line with climate goals

27. Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment (SSEE) have written a working paper on 'Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change?' where they have surveyed 231 central bank officials, finance ministry officials, and other economic experts from G20 countries on the relative performance of 25 major fiscal recovery archetypes across four dimensions: speed of implementation, economic multiplier, climate impact potential, and overall desirability.

28. SSEE identified five recovery policies that can deliver both economic and climate goals:

1. Clean physical infrastructure investment in the form of renewable energy
2. Building efficiency spending for renovations and retrofits including improved insulation, heating, and domestic energy storage systems
3. Investment in education and training to address unemployment resulting from Covid-19 and structural unemployment from decarbonisation

4. Natural capital investment for ecosystem resilience and regeneration including restoration for carbon-rich habitats and climate-friendly agriculture
5. Clean Research & Development spending

29. The paper by SSEE also identified other co-benefits; these are non-economic, non-climate attributes of climate-positive policies which aid in their overall desirability:

- EV incentives reduce local air pollution, especially valuable in dense urban areas
- Support for energy efficiency retrofits could be directed to lower-income households to decrease social & health inequalities by reducing real electricity costs and keeping houses warm in winter

30. Other key insights that emerged from the SSEE survey:

- Many climate-positive policies were perceived by respondents to have high overall desirability
- Most climate-negative policies had relatively low desirability
- Long-run multipliers of climate positive-policies were found to be high, reflective of strong return on investment for government spending

31. As economies re-open some behaviours may return to pre-crisis normal however other behaviours may change permanently. One estimate is that up to one-third of the global workforce will sustain remote working practises part-time on a permanent basis<sup>8</sup>. Post-crisis recovery spending offers an opportunity to embed climate-positive behaviours by supporting teleworking and high-speed broadband connectivity and residential energy efficiency.

32. The Climate Coalition (a coalition of 57 charities) are the latest to call on the UK government to adopt a green recovery from Covid-19. In a letter to the Prime Minister on 15 June 2020, they argue that a resilient economic recovery will only be possible with a just, sustainable and clean energy transition at its core and they highlight seven priority areas for action:

- Prioritise and increase public capital investment, training and re-skilling in renewable energy, energy efficiency, zero carbon transport and infrastructure
- Accelerate private sector investment in the net-zero transition
- Set economic policy foundations for a sustainable recovery
- Prioritise investment in the transition to a UK land use and farming system that delivers for nature, climate and human health
- Aligning all UK public finance abroad with a just energy transition

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<sup>8</sup> Global Workplace Analytics, *Work-At-Home After Covid-19 – Our Forecast*, 2020  
<<https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-our-forecast>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].

- Build a resilient, sustainable and inclusive global recovery by strengthening international support for the most vulnerable countries and communities worldwide
  - Engage with the international community to halt and rapidly reverse the decline of biodiversity and nature globally
33. Race to Zero, launched on Friday 5 June 2020 to coincide with World Environment Day, is a government initiative designed to mobilise a renewed level of leadership from businesses, cities and regions and nations to spur a zero-carbon recovery. After the launch of Race to Zero, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) secretary Alok Sharma confirmed that more than 1,000 businesses, more than 500 universities and nearly 500 cities and regions are now Climate Ambition Alliance members, along with 120 countries and 36 major investors. This cohort covers around one-quarter of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. He concluded that “we must go further” and “unite behind a green global recovery” from the socio-economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic<sup>9</sup>.
34. The government conducted a green recovery roundtable on 10 June 2020, as part of a series of five, looking into the economic recovery of the UK following Covid-19. The roundtables were chaired by energy and business secretary Alok Sharma, bringing together businesses, trade bodies and leading academics.
35. The green recovery roundtable explored how to seize economic growth opportunities from a shift to net zero. There were twenty-four participating organisations. The questions participants were asked to address included:
- Which areas of infrastructure investment should we prioritise for early action to drive economic recovery and support delivery of net zero and our broader environmental objectives?
  - What action should we take to align investment in the UK and globally with net zero and to protect natural capital?
  - What are the key regulatory barriers weakening incentives to invest in net zero, and how do we address them?
  - How can we more effectively support businesses across the economy in acting to access growing low carbon markets and support delivery of net zero? (e.g. innovation support, advice, regulatory barriers)
  - How can we help the UK’s carbon intensive sectors to transition to low/zero emissions while maintaining competitiveness?
  - What actions should we take to ensure local and regional economies can effectively contribute to the net zero target?
36. The other four roundtables focused on economic recovery and discussed how to ensure the UK has the right skills and opportunities in place for its workforce over the next eighteen months;

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<sup>9</sup> edie newsroom, *Race to Zero: What’s set to be included in the UK’s green Covid-19 recovery package?*, 8 June 2020 <<https://www.edie.net/news/11/Race-to-Zero--What-s-set-to-be-included-in-the-UK-s-green-Covid-19-recovery-package/>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].

- Increasing opportunity: how to level up economic performance across the UK, including through skills and apprenticeships, 11 June 2020
- Backing new businesses: to make the UK the best place in the world to start and scale a business, 12 June 2020
- The future of industry: how to accelerate business innovation and leverage private sector investment in research and development, 12 June 2020
- The UK open for business: how to win and retain more high value investment for the UK, 13 June 2020

## **Oxfordshire plans for a green recovery**

37. Oxfordshire County Council are hoping to maintain the environmental benefits which have emerged from the coronavirus lockdown. Following a noticeable increase in levels of walking and cycling across the county during the pandemic, the plans will encourage more residents to choose sustainable and active alternatives to motor vehicle travel.

38. Cyclists and pedestrians in Oxfordshire will soon start to notice the benefit of urgent plans to spend £600,000 over the next eight weeks (June-August), to help them to travel safely whilst maintaining social distancing measures. These plans are the first part of a wider £2.9m of funding to be awarded to Oxfordshire County Council by Government to improve cycling infrastructure, footpaths and roadwork networks as the nation responds to the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus will be on:

- Enhanced maintenance for paths and cycle routes
- New cycle parking facilities across all districts and Oxford
- Changing signal timings to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists
- Restricting hours of loading/servicing in key city centre streets
- Park & Ride upgrades with more room to park bikes
- Freeing up routes for pedestrians only
- Improved signage

39. This funding comes as part of a £250m Department for Transport nationwide Active Travel Fund from the UK government, for local authorities to use immediately in reallocating road space with pop-up cycle lanes, widening pavements and bus and cycle corridors. The secretary of state recognised that it is a “once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Sustrans, *Re-allocating road space to make walking and cycling safer*, <<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/urban-design-and-planning/re-allocating-road-space-to-make-walking-and-cycling-safer-during-covid-19-and-beyond>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].



40. With social distancing measures set to continue for the foreseeable future, Transport for London set out a plan 'Streetspace for London' which is designed to allow more people to walk and/or cycle whilst maintaining social distancing.
- The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan stated "many Londoners have rediscovered the joys of walking and cycling during lockdown and, by quickly and cheaply widening pavements, creating temporary cycle lanes and closing roads to through traffic we will enable millions more people to change the way they get around our city"<sup>11</sup>.
  - As lockdown measures continue to ease, the government recognise that it is important to make it easier for those who have taken to cycling/walking for essential travel and exercise during lockdown for this to continue post-lockdown in order to transition into a greener and healthier nation.
41. Much like London and other cities in the UK, some of these measures might be sustained beyond the pandemic to transform the Vale of White Horse into a cleaner and more pedestrian friendly environment, whilst also supporting businesses and the local economy to return to operation.
42. Oxford City Council have noted that since the start of lockdown at the end of March 2020, the air pollution monitoring station on St Aldates has seen nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels fall by 59 per cent compared with pre-lockdown measurements<sup>12</sup>. This is the cleanest Oxford city centre air in several generations, and, according to the City council, perhaps not previously seen since the days of the horse and cart.
43. On World Environment Day, 5 June 2020, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district councils announced that following lockdown there has been a marked reduction in air pollution in our districts, down by nearly 60% in Watlington<sup>13</sup>. The lack of traffic and the increase in walking and cycling has helped improve the local air quality.
44. Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council have released their 'Covid 19 RECOVERY STRATEGY: Restart, Recover, Renew' setting out their recovery objectives and priorities. They highlighted data from a YouGov poll conducted for the Royal Society of Arts (published on 17 April 2020) to highlight how Covid-19 could be a driver of societal change:
- Only nine per cent of Britons want life to return to "normal" after the crisis is over
  - Over 50 per cent hoped that they will make changes to their own lives and for the country to learn from the crisis
  - 2/5 said there is a strong sense of community

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<sup>11</sup> Mayor of London Press Release, *Mayor's bold new Streetspace plan will overhaul London's streets*, 6 May 2020 < <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-bold-plan-will-overhaul-capitals-streets> > [Accessed 14 June 2020].

<sup>12</sup> Environmental Journal, *Oxford plots green economic recovery plan*, 13 May 2020, <<https://environmentjournal.online/articles/oxford-plots-green-economic-recovery-plan/>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].

<sup>13</sup> South Oxfordshire District Council, *Air pollution reduced by more than half in our districts as walking and cycling increases*, 3 June 2020 < [www.southoxon.gov.uk/news/2020/2020-06/air-pollution-reduced-more-half-our-districts-walking-and-cycling-increases](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/news/2020/2020-06/air-pollution-reduced-more-half-our-districts-walking-and-cycling-increases) > [Accessed 14 June 2020].

- 51 per cent noticed cleaner air outdoors
- 27 per cent noticed more wildlife

45. Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council's approach to 'restart, renew, recover' will aim to take a holistic view and consider the interdependencies between socio-economic factors, health outcomes, the economy, environmental matters and communities. They are looking to support their economic objectives by engaging with partners and sector representatives to secure a 'V' shaped bounce to the crisis-induced recession. In tandem, ensuring the Councils' climate action commitments and zero emissions targets underpin a drive to achieve a greener, more sustainable economic growth in the long term.

46. Both councils want to:

- Support a new kind of economic growth that focuses on a 'green economy which digital connectivity enhancement could support
- Find ways to hold on to the gains during Covid-19, such as reduced congestion and carbon emissions which are consistent with the district's ambitions for climate change and transport connectivity
- Use the opportunity to address critical issues including net-zero emissions, tackling inequalities and future proofing our transport system

47. The Oxfordshire Growth Board is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with strategic partners. It facilitates joint working on economic development strategic planning and growth. The Growth Board is due to update its terms of reference in July and it is anticipated that the revised terms of reference will be much clearer about the importance of the environment, climate change and sustainable, healthy and happy living.

48. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy is also being refreshed (OxIS) this year. The early scope of the refresh, as considered by the Growth Board on 2 June 2020, was clear that the Strategy would seek to maximise opportunities to build long lasting resilience to climate change. Creating sustainable communities by providing good access to employment, housing, open space, transport, education, services and facilities to meet community needs and that address the climate emergency and support our zero-carbon ambition.

49. The impact of Covid-19 on our communities will now be a material factor to consider in all future strategy documents, and specifically the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and OxIS, which will be overseen by the Growth Board.

50. There is certainly an impetus that the Pandemic may help to accelerate innovation in technology and policy to support a greener future. These discussions are being had at the Growth Board level informally, but they are not yet the subject of any formal plans or papers.

51. A new governance structure and executive group have been created for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Aspects under consideration include a Nature Recovery Network and zero carbon development however there are, as of yet, no published commitments or work programmes to review.

## **Vale of White Horse Recovery Plan**

52. Vale of White Horse District Council are currently developing the council's wider recovery plan working closely with partners across the Oxfordshire system on areas that span across the county. The council's recovery plan will link to internal themes such as business continuity, the corporate plan, the transformation agenda and workforce and culture. Further it will take into consideration the financial impact of Covid-19 and any new obligations from HM Government. This represents a good opportunity to reflect whether the CEAC wish to reprioritise, refocus or introduce some areas of work that could be considered for inclusion in the council's recovery plan or update the one-year work programme.
53. The council's Economic Development Team is working with partners to develop messaging to encourage businesses to adopt new low carbon ways and not revert to previous unsustainable practices as they reopen.
- For example, festival and event businesses will be encouraged to avoid relying on drive-in events and cinemas and look at alternative ways to generate income
  - The district will use the Reopening the High Street Safely Fund to promote the new bike racks and cycle path improvements being developed by the County Council's Active Travel Fund and will encourage residents to cycle into our market towns

### **Risks**

54. There are no risks arising from this report.

### **Financial Implications**

55. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **Legal Implications**

56. Currently there are no legal implications from this report.

### **Conclusion**

57. This report gives an overview of the likely focus of central government's green recovery, in response to Covid-19. Following official commitments to be made by Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the end of June, a further report 'Part 2: Green Recovery from Covid-19' could be of interest and use to the CEAC.
58. Looking forward, in light of the conclusions of the national and local green recovery plans and with consideration to the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020-24, a future CEAC meeting could look at re-prioritising or re-focusing projects within the Vale of White Horse Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020-21 to strengthen and align with the renewed national approach, local priorities and the council's wider recovery plans.

# **Draft Vale Corporate Plan 2020-24**

**Developing Thinking on Vision, Themes, Programmes and Example Projects**

**Vale of White Horse District Council**

**Climate Emergency Advisory Committee**

**1 July 2020**

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For Committee to review the Cabinet's developing thinking on the Corporate Plan 2020-24 themes, programme and example projects and provide any recommendations to Cabinet on its contents with particular regard to climate change and links to the CEACs Climate Emergency work programme in advance of any public engagement and Cabinet on 10 July 2020.

# Vale of White Horse District Council Vision

*Vale of White Horse District Council aims to help **build and support thriving local communities**, where everyone can **enjoy the opportunity to live a happy and fulfilling life**. We will do all we can to contribute to making that a reality in the Vale, and we will ensure that our council and our district play their part in **tackling the Climate Emergency**.*



## THEME ONE

# Providing the homes people need

We will find ways to provide **more genuinely affordable housing**, including **housing for social rent**, to **better provide for the needs of Vale residents**. We will aim to provide a **mix of tenures** in each development to **build balanced communities**. We will use our influence on decision makers, where the responsibility lies outside of Vale.

### Programmes

1.1 Explore and consider opportunities to bring forward the delivery of homes people can afford.

1.2 Adopt a policy framework that ensures those homes could be delivered in a way that supports the environment and people living healthy lives.

### Example Projects

Develop an affordable homes Supplementary Planning Document

Strengthen work with developers to ensure they meet their obligations to deliver affordable homes

## THEME TWO

# Tackling the Climate Emergency

We will do everything we can to help tackle the Climate Emergency. We will:

- reduce council emissions by 75% by 2025
- become a **carbon neutral council** by **2030**
- reduce all emissions across the Vale District by 75% by 2030
- aspire to be a **carbon neutral Vale district** by **2045**

### Programmes

2.1 A climate emergency programme, focussed on what the council has control over, working towards our targets.

2.2 A programme around exercising our influence with partners on wider policy, lobbying Government and identifying environmental policy gaps.

### Example Projects

Explore green investment offering within the Treasury Management strategy

Develop new policies to tackle Climate Change in the new Local Plan

**THEME THREE**

**Building Healthy Communities**

We will contribute to **making people’s lives healthier** by encouraging the **switch to more active travel, improving air quality** where people work and live, and providing **active opportunities**.

<b>Programmes</b>
3.1 Building strong communities and connections, with a sense of place and strong community identity.
3.2 Promoting healthy place shaping and active communities, for everyone
3.3 Safeguarding and supporting our vulnerable residents.

<b>Example Projects</b>
Develop an Active Communities Strategy
Provide and promote opportunities for residents to increase their level of activity



## THEME FOUR

# Building Stable Finances

We will **manage the council's resources responsibly** and make **effective use of the council's assets**. We will do our best to **build financial resilience** to protect the council against future uncertainties. We will work across the public sector to influence and maximise funding for local government, in order to continue to invest and provide the services residents and businesses need.

### Programmes

4.1 We will explore and actively consider all avenues to deliver financial stability, including maximising income available to the council.

4.2 We will make effective use of the council's assets acting in a financially sensible manner.

### Example Projects

Undertake a strategic property review to inform which assets to hold on to, make better use of or dispose of

Adoption of the CIPFA financial management code of practice

## THEME FIVE

### Working in Partnership

To help us achieve our aims and objectives effectively, efficiently and fairly, we will work in partnership with other councils, authorities and businesses, non-profit organisations, community and residents' groups. We will **provide support to** residents and organisations to effect and drive change **in the community** and we will provide all the support we can to **businesses in the Vale** to help them succeed.

#### Programmes

5.1 We will work in partnership to influence and shape regional and national agendas to maximise opportunities for our communities and businesses.

5.2 We will work with and support our residents, businesses and communities to effect and enable change

#### Example Projects

We recognise the importance of partnership working and its strength and value in delivering our priorities and will undertake a partnership mapping and review project to ensure that the partnerships we are in deliver improved outcomes to residents

Undertake an economic development review to ensure that the council is providing support to SMEs, homebased businesses, supporting skills development

## THEME SIX

# Working in an Open and Inclusive Way

We will **work openly and transparently**. We will **listen to feedback** from local residents, communities, businesses, partners and our own officers. Our work will particularly aim to include those groups that have historically been marginalised or those that have been hard to reach. We will **ensure we are accountable** and that **our decisions are open to appropriate scrutiny**, and we will **admit when we get things wrong**.

### Programmes

6.1 We will improve our use of technology to increase understanding and access to what we do, how we work and the decisions we make.

6.2 We will increase meaningful engagement and communication with everyone.

6.3 We will strengthen our governance framework and address our policy gaps, improving transparency.

### Example Projects

Create a Youth Council, tying in with climate emergency activity to increase engagement with young people and local democratic decision making

Undertake a policy review to identify policy gaps and look to consolidate policies with linked outcomes and create a publically accessible policy library

