

# The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel Public speakers

13 March 2023



## Question

### 1. George Curtis on behalf of Bioabundance

Thank you for the opportunity to ask the FOP Scrutiny Panel on behalf of Bioabundance questions about the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map & Action Plan Final Report. Bioabundance is an Oxfordshire based Community Interest Company. Our objective is to protect, extend, grow and restore nature in our district.

I have taken the liberty of repeating in italics a number of quotes from the draft Net Zero Route Map & Action Plan Final Report. I have added my input in plain text.

*Tackling climate change is an international priority – for governments, businesses, and citizens... The size of the challenge ... to achieve net zero carbon by 2050 at latest ... remains significant and will require a considerable step change in activity... All of Oxfordshire's local authorities have declared climate emergencies and have committed to delivering net zero by 2050 – or sooner... We need to embed climate change into decision making across Oxfordshire's local authorities.*

The report notes:

*Reducing Scope 1 and 2 emissions are the key focus of this report and the key priority for Oxfordshire over the next decade, and so are included within the modelling scope. Whilst outside of the scope of this work, we acknowledge that there is considerable interest across Oxfordshire in Scope 3 emissions, and that over time we expect increased focus on this area. Scope 3 emissions are the result of activities from assets not owned or controlled by the reporting organisation. However, the activities of an organisation will indirectly impact value chains outside of its direct control. Therefore, they are the indirect emissions upstream/downstream of the organisation's activities.*

*Scope 3 emission sources such as embodied carbon in materials, will likely form an ever-growing proportion of the county's total emissions. indirect emissions upstream and downstream of the organisation's activities. Examples include purchased goods and material and labour to build homes and roads. Scope 3 emissions in a construction project, could refer to waste processing, employee travel, transportation of goods, mining and production of materials, and manufacturing of machinery. The total carbon footprint of building a new house has been estimated as nearly 56 tonnes. I am told that current building plans would use up the whole Oxfordshire carbon budget to 2050 by the mid 2030s but I don't have the data to confirm this assertion. The scope 3 footprint of the HFI road will be significant.*

Hence, the Net Zero Route Map & Action Plan is invalid if it does not include the Scope 3 emissions of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. *The Action Plan Converts the broader targets presented in the Route Map, into a specific set of actions that need to be adopted to meet these interim milestones. They can contain short-, medium- or long-term*

*actions, but crucially they provide direction on how the targets can be broken down into tangible, measurable and deliverable steps.*

This will pose some difficult decisions for Oxfordshire District Councils: How many homes do we really need? Can we increase housing density - the occupancy of empty bedrooms? Can we release more brown field sites for homes? Can we build smaller less carbon intensive social housing as opposed to market value or 'affordable' at 80% the cost and size of market value? We request that the Net Zero Route Map & Action Plan be re-worked to include the Scope 3 emissions of the County's home and road building plans.

We also ask the FOP to focus on the measuring and presentation of the wellbeing and environmental aspects of their Strategy. Could the opportunity be taken to use Doughnut Economics to guide the Oxfordshire economy to enable wellbeing and prosperity for existing residents whilst minimising environmental harm? Doughnut Economics is a globally recognised framework which is used to avoid the problem of pursuing GDP with minimal attention to the impact on communities and the natural world.

Bioabundance question for the Scrutiny Panel: Please will you recommend to the FOP that:

1. The Net Zero Route Map & Action Plan must be reworked to include the Scope 3 emissions of building development and new roads in the County before it can be accepted.
2. The Economic Strategy should include the use of Doughnut Economics measure and present plans for enabling prosperity for existing residents whilst minimising environmental harm.

## **2. Suzanne McIvor on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire**

OxLEP launched its Local Industrial Strategy in 2019. The priority behind both this and the subsequent Investment Plan was purely economic growth. Both documents lacked even a passing thought for the natural world around us. Whilst disappointing this is unsurprising because even now, nearly four years later, as a quick review of OxLEP's website shows, its focus is still entirely on economic growth with no consideration of the natural environment.

The Local Industrial Strategy was also largely unfunded. As such, in many ways it was simply aspirational rather than strategic. But despite its hugely ambitious nature and the potential impact on Oxfordshire, shockingly it was never the subject of a public consultation.

NNGO had hoped that since 2019, OxLEP would have developed a better understanding of the need to balance economic growth with other factors such as: protecting our natural environment; biodiversity; and the carbon impact of growth. While the proposed Strategic Economic Plan Briefing mentions inclusivity and net zero carbon, the natural environment and biodiversity appear to have been completely overlooked. In this way it is reminiscent of Oxford City Council's recent Oxford's Economic Strategy - with its one mention of biodiversity in the entire document.

A Strategic Economic Plan prepared along the lines of this briefing would be entirely unacceptable and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership should be expected to do better than this. We should also be aware that economic growth creates a housing need which would not necessarily be welcomed by all Oxfordshire Local Authorities.

NNGO believes that we need a better balance between economic growth and our natural environment, as for example is provided by Doughnut Economics, an Oxford originated, globally recognised framework which could be used to avoid the problem associated with pursuing economic growth with no attention to the impact on communities and the natural world.

Can the Scrutiny Panel ask the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to:

1. Acknowledge that any Strategic Economic Plan must balance economic growth with our natural environment and biodiversity and to recognise that the briefing must be amended accordingly?
2. Seek to ensure that the Strategic Economic Plan is the subject of a full public consultation?
3. Ensure that the effect of any Strategic Economic Plan on Oxfordshire's housing need is clearly explained as part of the plan?