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Briefing for members

Thursday 11 November 2021

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Introducing our Climate Emergency Officer

Hi Members, I am Jacqui Warren, the council's Climate Emergency Officer and I started working at Torbay Council eleven months ago. In June 2019, we announced a Climate Emergency and my role is to help us all work towards creating not only a carbon neutral council, but a carbon neutral Torbay by 2030.

As climate change is high on everyone's agenda, especially with COP26 ending this week, this briefing is to provide you with an update on recent progress and how we as a council are tackling the climate emergency in Torbay. Please use this information to inform your residents on the work we are doing and have upcoming.

There is a lot to do by all of us to help us achieve our target of being carbon neutral by 2030 and I will be providing regular briefings to update as we progress through our actions.

Also, if you have an idea about how through your work you or your residents could help the council to reduce our carbon emissions, big or small, please get in touch with me. There is some funding available to support projects that will save significant carbon emissions.

Jacqui Warren (jacqui.warren@torbay.gov.uk)

Climate Emergency Officer





Torbay Climate Conversation

This year our Community Conference had the theme of Climate Change. The Torbay Climate Conversation, which thanks to funding from South West Energy Hub was a COP26 South West Region Event, took place on Tuesday 2 November 2021 at South Devon College.

The aim of the Torbay Climate Conversation was to accelerate conversations with residents, local communities and businesses about climate change and how we can all take action together.

The conversation started with presentations from climate change experts from the University of Exeter who shared the science around climate change, as well as from the council and local community groups and businesses who show cased how they were making changes in the areas of travel, open spaces, schools and around food and waste minimisation. Those that attended had the opportunity to share their hopes and fears for the future and what actions they through Torbay should accelerate to tackle climate change. This conversation will also be followed up by some more focussed conversations in 2022. These actions will then be fed into a new Carbon Neutral Action Plan for Torbay.

You can see more about this conversation on [our website](#), including accessing all the presentations, seeing all the resources available to the attendees and hear the thoughts of those that were there about their hopes and fears to do with climate change and the pledges they are making to help the bay reach zero emissions by 2030.



What is the Council doing to tackle climate change?

What are our commitments?

On 24 June 2019, we declared a 'Climate Emergency'. The Council has a key role to play in tackling the causes and effects of climate change in Torbay. There is now an immediate need to accelerate action and make significant progress over the next nine years to

achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. This commitment is outlined in our [Community and Corporate Plan](#).

What is the Council doing to tackle climate change?

Carbon Neutral Council

- **Creating our own carbon neutral (CN) council action plan by April 2022.** This will look at how we as a council operate and how we can work towards decarbonising our estate, fleet, decision making processes and the way we buy and commission services.
- Created a 40+ **CN Officer Group** to develop and coordinate action across the Council. They will also develop the actions for the CN Council Action Plan and oversee its delivery post April 2022.
- **Rolling out carbon literacy training**, starting with senior staff and Cabinet.
- Final stages of developing a **corporate environment and carbon neutral policy** to help all staff change the way we work.
- We have been **bidding for a range of decarbonisation grants** from government. Most recently we secured funds to improve energy efficiency in fuel poor homes, Torbay Leisure Centre and to develop plans for how to decarbonise some of our primary schools.

Carbon Neutral Torbay

Beyond the council's direct operations there are a range of things we can do to influence and reduce carbon emissions across the wider Torbay-area.

- We have an [Energy and Climate Change Strategy](#). It will be refreshed as part of our planned work to **create a Carbon Neutral Torbay Action Plan in 2022**. We also have a range of other strategies that support carbon reduction. For example, our Local Plan, Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan, waste and recycling and others. These will need to be reviewed to ensure they are in line with our CN ambition by 2030.
 - University of Exeter have [completed a study](#) on how to achieve net zero for Devon, including Torbay.
 - **Created a Torbay Climate Partnership** to help with overseeing Torbay-wide action.
 - Based on the results of the conference, **hold further conversations on what we should tackle in Torbay**. These will feed into the new Carbon Neutral Torbay Action Plan.
 - Continued to work with the **Devon Climate Emergency Partnership** to develop a draft Devon Carbon Plan. Residents of Torbay recently took part in the [Devon Climate Assembly](#). Our local actions will help to deliver this Plan and vice versa.
 - For more visit this [Cabinet paper \(item 9\)](#)
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What immediate action is the Council, with partners, taking this year?

In March 2021 we adopted a [one-year initial Torbay action plan](#) to accelerate action. Below are some updates on various works/projects within this plan:

Solar parks

We are currently developing two solar farms in Torbay, both are in or just starting their planning process/community engagement. Tor Bay Harbour Authority has installed solar PV panels as well as purchasing an electric forklift truck and installing LED lighting.

LED Lighting

We have installed efficient energy saving LED streetlights, together with carrying out a comprehensive overhaul of traffic signal inventories. This has led to significant energy and carbon savings.

Cycling and walking

We are looking at investing £120,000 to various walking and cycling projects in this financial year.

Tree planting & open spaces

Through our three year, i-Tree 2 programme, our plan is to plant 350 of the right trees in the right place and we have just launched our Tree Warden scheme which saw 60 volunteers sign up for. They are currently going through their induction.

Communities across the Bay are making real, sustainable change by volunteering in parks and green spaces enabling wider engagement with the natural environment leading to real local action to help tackle climate change.

With partners Groundwork South and local communities, we are protecting and enhancing Westerland Valley. This is a 35-acre haven for wildlife, with a rich tapestry of interconnected habitats supporting an abundance of wildlife including many species of both local and national significance.

Recycling

Torbay has become a Zero to Landfill authority and has run a variety of waste minimisation schemes.

Our Recycling Officers are now in post and are supporting our residents in recycling more and better. Over the next three years we aim to increase recycling rates from the current 40% to 50%.

Reducing carbon emissions at Torbay Leisure Centre by 60%

Secured £1.8 million from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to install air source heat pumps to create low carbon heating and hot water and solar panels to generate clean electricity.

Electric charging points

All new homes, with off street parking, built in Torbay have electric vehicle charging points installed

We have secured funding for the installation of small banks of charging points in 10 of our off-street car parks. Hope to have some of these in place in 2022.

Energy efficiency

Working with Devon County Council we have secured some funding from the government to help create warm, energy efficient homes. We also work with Exeter Community Energy to offer homeowners and tenants practical advice and support to save energy and money. They can also offer advice on fuel switching and debt advice.

Climate resilience and flood alleviation

As our climate is changing, sea levels are rising, and more storms are hitting Torbay. With the Environment Agency we will act to rapidly reduce properties at risk from flooding. This will include consulting on the design of new sea walls along Paignton and Preston sea fronts.

We also are working with the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership to develop a Devon-wide response to climate change. A Devon Carbon Plan is in development. More can be found on the Devon Climate Emergency website

Ideas for green actions at home

Here are some useful tips and actions that you and your residents can make in your home:

- Visit the Devon Climate Emergency website for top tips on how to calculate and reduce your own carbon footprint.
 - Leave the car at home and walk and cycle more. For local advice including routes visit our cycling webpages.
 - Reduce the amount of waste you create and reuse and recycle more. Lots of top tips on our waste minimisation webpages
 - To save energy in your home contact Exeter Community Energy for friendly impartial energy saving advice. You can also find out more through the Energy Saving Trust - a respected and trusted voice on energy efficiency and clean energy solutions.
 - With more of us working from home there are a lot of simple things we can do save energy like only heating the rooms you use during the day, unplugging all chargers when not in use and turning off every light when leaving a room. For more ideas visit the Energy Saving Trust website.
 - Plant more trees and biodiversity rich plants in your garden. For more ideas see the Devon Wildlife Trust website.
 - Thanks to our partnership with SWISCo and Groundwork South we are able to offer a range of volunteering opportunities in parks and open spaces including gardening, tree planting and lots of other activities. More information on how to get involved on our webpages
 - Share your stories of actions during COP26 via the Better Together for Our Planet – One Step Green
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- [Count us In](#) is also a great website full of fun ideas to inspire you.
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Ideas for green actions for organisations and businesses

If you own, run or are part of an organisation or business that would like to reduce their energy and carbon footprint please find tips below. Please also pass these onto any organisation or business that you know who may benefit:

Visit the [Devon Climate Emergency website](#) for top tips on how to calculate your carbon footprint and how to reduce it including:

- Develop energy efficiency and renewable/ low carbon power and heating projects. For additional advice visit [Carbon Trust website](#) or [Devon Community Energy](#).
- Reduce, reuse and recycle and adopt circular economy principles
- Promote low carbon commuting and minimise business travel
- Procure locally

Sources of help

- [Make it Net Zero](#) – for SME manufacturers based in the South West of England, funded support programme from SWMAS offers businesses valuable advice and guidance at every stage of net zero journey.
 - [Low Carbon Devon](#) – support with knowledge exchange, networking, workshops and support
 - [Devon Net Zero Innovation Fund](#) - funding (ERDF) for collaborations between businesses and researchers
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Our Core Values: Torbay Council is committed to being forward thinking, people orientated and adaptable - always with integrity.
