

Environment and Carbon Neutral Policy

March 2022

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Contents

Introduction	1
Scope	2
Benefits	3
Key Principles of this policy	4
Funding	5
Training and support	5
All staff and managers	5
Policy Feedback	6
History of Policy Changes	6

Introduction

Torbay Council's operations and services are directly, or indirectly, responsible for a range of impacts on our natural environment. Whilst we carry out a lot of actions to reduce our environmental impacts, more action is needed. Torbay Council declared a climate emergency ¹in 2019 and is

¹ The climate emergency reflects the need for urgent action to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.

committed to tackling climate change locally and becoming a carbon neutral ²Council and working with others to create a carbon neutral Torbay by 2030. Tackling climate change is also one of our four key visions as outlined in the Community and Corporate Plan (2019-2023). We are also committed to protecting and enhancing our high quality built and natural environment, safeguarding it for future generations.

The benefits of protecting our environment and tackling climate change (for instance for health, the economy, and our communities) means it must be part of the way we all work across the Council.

Therefore, we are changing how we work, developing future actions and ways of working that will help us all to minimise the impact the Council has on the natural environment and to play our part in tackling the climate and ecological emergency locally.

The overarching principles and aims of the Environment and Carbon Neutral Policy are:

- **Reduce carbon emissions**
To become a carbon neutral Council by 2030 by reducing carbon emissions across the Council and to:
- **Reduce energy and generate clean energy**
- **Minimise waste and water consumption**
- **Transition to a zero-emission fleet by 2030**
- **Use sustainable resources**
- **Protect and enhance the natural environment**
- **Climate resilience**
- **Measure and report our performance**

Scope

This policy applies to all Council employees. It also applies to the Council's wholly owned companies, the TDA and SWISCo, especially when delivering services commissioned by Torbay Council.

Related Policies and guidance

Please refer to the:

- [Community and Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023](#)
- [Initial Carbon Neutral Torbay Action Plan 2021](#)
- [Ways of Working Policy](#)

² Carbon neutrality means having a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere in carbon sinks. Removing Carbon Dioxide from the atmosphere and then storing it is known as carbon sequestration. To achieve net zero emissions, emissions will have to be counterbalanced by carbon sequestration and through verified carbon offsetting schemes.

Please refer to the [Carbon Neutral Council](#) page for guidance on how to assess and reduce environmental impacts and help tackle the climate emergency.

Benefits

By implementing different ways of working there are benefits to our employees, the organisation, and our customers:

Benefits for employees:

- Add value by delivering environmental improvements as part of our existing and future work
- Can play a part in helping the Council tackle the climate and ecological emergency
- Physical and mental health benefits from increased support for business travel and service delivery through active travel

Benefits for the Council:

- A working culture that is reducing environmental impacts, tackling the climate and ecological emergencies, and meeting its Community and Corporate Plan (2019-2023) vision including helping Torbay thrive.
- More efficient and effective use of natural resources such as energy, fuel, water, and paper
- Ability to reduce the Council's carbon footprint
- A more efficient use of Council resources³
- More teams coordinating action, sharing of best practice, cross-service working and effective management
- Improved employee physical and mental health through increased use of active travel

Benefits for our customers:

- A more efficient use of Council resources meaning that more funds can be devoted to direct service delivery
- Torbay is also reducing environmental impacts, tackling the climate and ecological emergencies, and meeting its Community and Corporate Plan (2019-2023) vision
- Improved air quality and fewer cars & vans on the road

UN Sustainable Development Goals

This policy will also help the Council to begin to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These have been designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". These were adopted by the United Nations and the UK Government as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. There are 17 goals. These goals also align with our Community and Corporate Plan (2019-2023) vision to make Torbay thrive. This policy will help to meet the following SDGs: 7

³ Initially, costs may be higher for what we are procuring, or delivering to meet this policy but that delivering this ambition is essential and the real/social cost of not doing so will be far greater for the council in the future.

(Affordable Clean Energy), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) 13 (Climate Action), 14 and 15 (Life below water and Life on Land)



Key Principles of this policy

- **Reduce carbon emissions**

To become a carbon neutral Council by 2030 by reducing carbon emissions across the range of Council operations⁴. Interim targets will be established⁵. The option of Carbon Offsetting any residual emission will be seen only as a last resort to achieving carbon neutrality for the Council. A separate policy will be developed on carbon offsetting emissions.
- **Reduce energy and generate clean energy**

To minimise energy use and reduce carbon dioxide emissions arising across Torbay Council's estate through the introduction of energy efficient measures, renewable/low carbon electricity generation, low carbon heating, use of renewable energy tariffs and staff behavioural initiatives.
- **Minimise waste and water consumption**

To minimise water consumption and waste created from Council operations and services through reduction, reuse, recycling, and staff behavioural change initiatives and remove consumer single use plastic from the Council's office estate.
- **Transition to a zero-emission fleet by 2030 and tackle air quality and improve health**

To reduce carbon emissions, cut harmful pollutants and improve local air quality by supporting staff to travel for work purposes by healthier and more sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling, e-bikes, e-cargo bikes, and public transport⁶. Where journeys need to be made in vehicles, the use of electric vehicles will be encouraged, and we will work towards transitioning our fleet to zero emission vehicles⁷.
- **Use sustainable resources**

To reduce environmental impacts of the things we build, buy and the services we commission, through making more sustainable, environmentally friendly, and low carbon choices.
- **Protect and enhance the natural environment**

⁴ The target is an aggregated Torbay Council wide target and not bespoke minimum performance targets for individual departments, or wholly owned companies.

⁵ Interim targets will be determined once further estate audits and fleet reviews have been carried out and a robust baseline is in place.

⁶ Where it is safe to do so during the COVID pandemic

⁷ Where there are no feasible or viable zero emission solutions, transition to ultra-low emission alternatives.

To protect, enhance and increase the biodiversity where appropriate of the Council's natural assets through a range of environmentally friendly conservation practices. We will also encourage improvements to our natural assets, including tree planting and rewilding initiatives, to achieve carbon storage and nature-based solutions for climate resilience. We will also protect and enhance where appropriate the marine environments Torbay Council are responsible for. A more detailed Marine Users Policy will be developed in partnership with Tor Bay Harbour Authority.

- **Climate resilience**

Understand the near-term and future risks of climate change for essential Council operations and services and plan for how we will build climate resilience across the Council.

- **Measure and report our performance**

Report progress towards becoming a carbon neutral Council through an annual Greenhouse Gas Report and annual report to the Council's Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board. We will report on how we are taking action to conserve and enhance biodiversity in accordance with our Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act duty.

Managers must ensure that staff have properly considered the above aims and principles when developing new projects, policies, programmes, new procurement contracts and/or commissions.

Employees and managers must acknowledge this policy and support the principles set out in this policy in their work.

Funding

There will be times when additional funding may be required to support this policy. Where staff cannot identify any internal or external funding please contact Jacqui Warren, Climate Emergency Officer for advice. Some environmentally friendly, carbon saving projects/products may have an initially up-front cost that is more expensive, however, please consider the full costs over the whole lifecycle of the project/product, including any operational savings such as using less energy or fuel and reduced maintenance costs. When seeking approval for new proposals, and where funding cannot be found, officers must identify this in their Emerging Issues papers or Cabinet reports under the Climate Change section.

Training and support

All staff and managers

All staff must support this policy wherever possible in their job roles.

Line managers are expected to challenge their teams and individuals to ensure this policy is adhered to.

Please refer to the [Carbon Neutral Council](#) page for guidance on how to assess and reduce environmental impacts and help tackle the climate emergency in projects, policies, programmes, new procurement contracts and/or commissions.

General guidance on what you can do in the office and at home is also available on the [Carbon Neutral Council](#) intranet page.

Carbon Literacy Training is also available, and the Council aims to have a mandatory module on i-learn from 2022. Please contact hrtraining@torbay.gov.uk for further information.

Equality statement

This policy applies equally to all Council employees, as above, regardless of their age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage, and civil partnership. Care will be taken to ensure that no traditionally excluded groups are adversely impacted in implementing this policy.

Policy Feedback

If you have any feedback on this policy, please email Jacqui.Warren@Torbay.gov.uk

History of Policy Changes

Date	Who	Page	Details of Change	Agreed by:
Date	Who	Page	Details of Change	Agreed by:
August 2021	Carbon Neutral Council Officers Group, Geopark, Director of Place	All	Added more on our NERC duties, aligned policy to the UN SDGs and added an interim carbon saving target.	
November	TJCC	All	N/a. Emailed TJCC. Comment received was supportive of the policy.	
4/11/2021	ELT	All	N/a. Supportive.	
Dec/Jan 2022	Carbon Neutral Council Officers Group and TDA (Director of Asset	Variou us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarified 1) scope – footnote 6, 2) amended the principle to - Transition to zero emission fleet by 2030 and 3) 	

	Management, Investment and Housing)			
7/1/2022	Director of Place	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Various and minor 	
18/1/2022	SLT	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removal of an interim target until a robust baseline and various studies have been undertaken. Establish boundaries for the Policy with TDA. 	
15/2/2022	SWISCo Board		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No major issues 	
15/2/2022	TDA Board		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No major issues 	

As it is a climate emergency this policy is to be reviewed every 2 years or when legislation or operational reasons require it sooner.

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