



**Tackling Climate Change
in
Rhondda Cynon Taf
(2021- 2025)**

(Think Climate RCT)

**Making Rhondda Cynon Taf
Carbon Neutral by 2030**

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Introduction/Context

Our County Borough has many stunning and unique features which can and will continue to benefit the residents, businesses and visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf. These features include a huge area of semi-natural landscape, with a high level of tree cover and a wide variety of wildlife, both common and rare, close to where we live. Even our mining heritage offers the potential to produce energy for us. We also face unique challenges. The devastating impact of the 2020 floods, Ciara, Dennis and Jorge on Rhondda Cynon Taf and the surrounding areas, is an early indication of the impact of projected warmer, wetter winters in the northern hemisphere arising from the impact of Climate Change. The ecological emergency is affecting our plants and animals and affecting the natural processes on which we all depend.

Welsh Government [data](#), set out in its [Future Trends Report 2017](#), indicates that by 2050, in Wales,

- daily maximum summer temperatures are projected to rise by 3.4°C
- daily minimum winter temperatures are projected to increase by 2.5°C
- rainfall is projected to increase by 14% in winter and decrease by 16% in the summer.

Across Wales, rising temperatures are already changing habitats [affecting plants and wildlife as well as soil conditions and landscapes](#). Rising sea levels in coastal regions are threatening sea defences, frequent and more intense storms bring increased risk of flooding. More winter rain, too much rainfall in a short period and changes across the seasons will contribute to both flood and drought conditions. We are already seeing increasing numbers of heavy rainfall events, and expect this increase to continue, with greater risk of river and flash flooding. More extreme weather events also include more frequent heat waves which will affect our health, livelihoods and for many older and vulnerable people, life expectancy. For the ageing population in Rhondda Cynon Taf, this is one of the significant risks that need to be managed.

As a Council, over the last few years, we have put in place energy efficiency measures in our buildings, schools and street lighting and increased the amount of residents' waste recycled. As a result of this work, between 2014/15 and 2018/19 we reduced the amount of carbon emitted across the Council by 15,884 tonnes, a reduction of 45.24%. Our positive progress in waste recycling has led us to increase our recycling target for 2024/25 to 80%, which exceeds the national target set by Welsh Government.

We have also increased the amount of renewable energy we generate by investing in solar and wind power plants, using the energy produced to deliver Council services. In 2019/20 we generated 2,667,743 kWh – **equivalent *******

More widely, we know that in 2018, **1065.8** kilotonnes of CO2e was emitted across the County Borough, 32.1% or 504.9 kilotonnes, less than in 2005.

We are making progress, but we need to do more, and faster, if we are to reduce our carbon emissions and help to reverse the damage to our planet, both as a Council and community leader. We will continue to lead by example, particularly in those areas where we have the greatest impact.

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This is our plan to meet our commitment to reduce the carbon emissions in RCT and in doing so play our part in tackling Climate Change.

By 2030

- Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will be carbon neutral and
- the whole County Borough will be as close as possible to carbon neutral
- our work with partners will have contributed to reducing carbon emissions across the County Borough by *****.

In order to deliver our Vision, the Council will continue to provide strong community leadership and create a cleaner, greener environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous and for natural eco systems to thrive. We will play our part in tackling climate change and protecting the planet.

In our Corporate Plan 2020-24, [Making A Difference](#), the Council acknowledged that delivering our Climate Change commitment is our greatest challenge. In our plan we committed to delivering three main priorities, all of which will contribute to and benefit from tackling climate change:

- Ensuring **People:** *are independent, healthy and successful;*
- Creating **Places:** *where people are proud to live, work and play;*
- Enabling **Prosperity:** *creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.*

Our Climate Commitments underpin each of our priorities. These commitments have been developed using the best information available at a time of significant and competing local, regional, national and global priorities with new and fast moving opportunities being presented by governments and businesses alike. The pace of change is also being accelerated by the growing pressure of people across the world to take climate action.

No single plan can set out the many ways in which we are working to reduce carbon emissions in to achieve our commitments in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This plan is a framework to guide us and shape what we do to reduce both the Council's carbon footprint and that of the County Borough. We will also be working within the Welsh Government's Delivery Plan for a [Low Carbon Wales](#) and its 'Route Map' to decarbonise the public sector in Wales.

Our commitments to reduce carbon within the Council include:

- Reducing our footprint in respect of all the Council's activities.
- Reducing the demand for energy and embedding carbon reduction into everything we do.
- Using public sector land for green energy generation and/or carbon storage.

- Investing in solar energy installations in Council buildings and making sure that all new schools, offices, homes and commercial buildings within the County Borough are built to a Net Zero standard.
- Supplying all our buildings and offices with low carbon heat and/or generating our own electricity.
- Further developing the use of hydrogen for fuel cells in Council vehicles and buildings.
- Ensuring we recycle or reuse 80% of all municipal waste by 2025.
- Continuing to locate services closer the people that use, work and visit them.
- Procuring a vehicle fleet that is fit for purpose yet has a limited impact on the environment and replacing all our new cars and light goods vehicles with ultra low emission vehicles **by 2025**
- Taking a sustainable approach to the supplies and services we buy within the Council, from major building projects to eliminating single use plastics, so that we better support the local and green economy.
- Reducing staff travel by car by continuing to maximise the use of technology, encouraging active travel and greater use of public transport significantly reducing car commutes and business travel.

The Council is one area's largest employers, and over 80% of staff are resident in the County Borough. The Council's property portfolio includes 447 Council sites 937 individual buildings, of varying sizes located throughout the County Borough. Through councillors representing their communities, Council playing its part in providing strong community leadership, support and scrutiny, and with Council staff trained and encouraged to support climate initiatives, there is much that we can do locally to be part of the global climate solution.

Our approach

Across the wider County Borough, our success will be dependent on the Council playing its part to protect the planet for future generations, and also working with other public bodies and organisations to maximise the impact of this work. This includes encouraging and facilitating changes in lifestyle in all staff and their representatives, elected Members, residents, local business as well as our visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf. The involvement of younger people will be key to creating, developing and delivering this strategy over the long term and we are seeking this involvement through school eco councils and our Youth Fora and through other community organisations.

As well as listening to what people, communities and businesses are telling us, we also need to support and challenge the Welsh Government to do better and to break down any national barriers that mitigate against local action.

Think Climate – PLACES

Using RCT's resources to generate green energy for use in local buildings and homes

We will:

- Explore opportunities to develop micro hydro-electric schemes on rivers and streams.
- Investigate the potential to progress wind and solar energy schemes with a view to supporting the Council's aim to be carbon neutral and generate all our energy needs.
- Progress existing energy generation schemes, including wind turbines at Nant Y Gwyddon and Bryn Pica.
- Consider ways to use existing carbon free energy sources to provide sustainable heat and power to local communities e.g. Taffs Well Thermal Spring.
- Explore potential options to utilise existing energy sources including:
 - waste heat generated at Bryn Pica
 - geothermal energy from abandoned coal mines.
- Contribute to actions within the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to explore options for a hydrogen economy and to generate green energy to fuel our industrial and commercial businesses.

Potential measures/targets

- *Increase local renewable energy generated (MW numerical)*
 - *Solar - currently 1.5 MW of roof top solar installed on Council assets*
 - *Wind – no council owned*
 - *Hydro – no council owned**(targets tbd)*

Making waste work for RCT

We will:

- Increase the amount of waste we reuse and recycle locally by investing in technology, and supporting businesses and residents.
- Adopt a circular approach to recycling and reusing waste material that includes:
 - Ensuring the maximum service life from our resources and finding ways to recycle what is left.
 - Creating outlets for the sale of recycled goods that would have otherwise gone to landfill.
 - Investigating how hard plastic waste can be processed into useable products.
- Reduce transport emissions through improved processes for sorting and transporting cardboard maximising the cardboard capacity transported in a single journey.

- Continue to develop Bryn Pica Eco Park to its completion in 2023.

Potential measures/targets

- *By 2025, at least 80% of all RCT waste will be recycled.*
- *Tonnage of 'hard to recycle' waste diverted from landfill or incineration through specific recycling partnerships (e.g. 'TerraCycle' or equivalent).*

Putting in place low carbon infrastructure for travel

By 2030, we need to ensure that over half of all journeys are taken by public transport, bike or walking, with journeys where this is not possible using electric vehicles

We will:

- Invest in alternative transport options including:
 - Improved public transport through the development of the South Wales Metro;
 - Active travel initiatives that encourage walking and cycling, and which create wider County Borough wide networks;
 - Investing in safe routes to schools across the County Borough
- Work with Welsh Government and the Regional Transport Authority to continue to improve access to public transport and explore opportunities to bring back disused public transport, such as rail lines, for bus routes and active travel.
- Explore opportunities to develop a cycle network to major destinations in the County Borough without impeding main traffic routes.
- Work with private sector to put in place and invest in accessible County Wide network of electric vehicle (EV) charging opportunities, to stimulate market and widen EV charging opportunities.
- Develop an electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and electrical grid at the Eco Park in Bryn Pica, using green energy sourced from waste.
- Use enforcement, where appropriate, to improve air quality, reducing idling traffic and congestion in air quality monitoring zones.

Potential measures/targets

- *No of EV charging points installed at council premises over next 5 years*
- *% shift to zero emission passenger vehicles by 2030*
- *By 2025, 25% of journeys done by foot, bike or public transport*
- *By 2025, 20% more passengers using public transport vs 2009*
- *5% of bays in council owned car parks will be charging bays by 2023 (subject to funding)*
- *KM of safe routes to schools within County Borough*
- *KM active travel routes within County Borough*

Protecting and enhancing our wild spaces and work with nature to tackle both the Climate and Nature emergencies

We will:

- Minimise flood risk by promoting nature based solutions in appropriate locations as well as traditional engineering works, for example Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- Increase area of Woodland regeneration, protecting/storing carbon and reducing the risk of flooding.
- Protect and enhance our most valuable carbon stores, in undisturbed soils and semi-natural vegetation that reside in woods, heathland and grasslands across the County Borough.
- Restore selected local peatbogs following a review of publicly owned land.
- Develop a 'Living Landscape' bringing together existing wildlife sites, local communities and wildlife organisations, sharing knowledge and skills to protect, manage and use these sites to help address the Climate and Nature emergencies.
- In the wider countryside investigate and promote opportunities to use natural processes, green infrastructure and management techniques to reduce environmental risks such as flooding and wildfire, for example, [The Healthy Hillside Project](#).
- Manage our green spaces so they are better able to cope with a changing climate and enhance the benefits they provide to communities.
- Work with partners to expand green infrastructure and limit deforestation which in turn will significantly increase flood defences

Potential measures/targets

- *% of public sector land in RCT managed for the benefit of wildlife by 2030*
- *No of areas set aside for peat bogs (increase)*
- *Number of Properties protected from the risk of flooding for extreme weather events (increase)*
- *Number of nature based flood risk reduction projects (increase)*
- *Area of Woodland in RCT (increase)*
- *Area of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation lost*
- *Areas of/Number of peatbog restoration projects*

Think Climate – PROSPERITY

Setting out Zero carbon ambitions for future development in our Local Development Plan

We will put climate change at the centre of our new development plan for adoption in 2024, addressing carbon reduction measures including proximity of development to public spaces, standards of new house building and protection of RCT uplands.

Potential measures/targets

- *By 2030 all new housing developments carbon neutral*
- *% of developments zero carbon*
- *proximity of new developments to public transport routes/hubs and/or active travel*

Making places easily accessible without a car through active & green travel

By 2030, we will ensure that over half of all journeys are taken by public transport, bike or walking, with other journeys, where this is not possible, using electric vehicles

We will:

- Invest in park and ride facilities across the County Borough, including key metro sites and transport hub sites.
- Ensure all new housing and commercial developments are easily accessible by active travel and/or public transport.
- Support the development of an Ultra Low Emission vehicles charging network.
- Ensure that the transport services we commission, inc. Home to School, are zero or low carbon where possible.
- Support operators to make the switch from diesel to electric taxis and buses.

Potential measures/targets

- *No. of EV charging points installed*
- *% of buses/taxis zero emissions*

Aiming for Zero carbon new homes

By 2025, all new homes in the County Borough will be carbon neutral

We will:

- Support housing development on existing brownfield sites, in particular Town Centres, rather than building on 'green' sites.
- Increase the land supply for new Zero carbon homes through our local development plan making sure the sites reduce the need for car use.
- Ensure that new housing and commercial developments include solar, where feasible, and have the capability to generate, store and use renewable energy onsite and offer EV charging points.

Potential measures/targets

no. of sustainable/zero carbon homes delivered

Making existing homes more energy efficient:

We will work with landlords and homeowners to reduce the amount of energy used in existing homes, reaching Zero carbon where this is feasible to do so, by 2050, *in line with Better Homes Better Wales.*

We will:

- Investigate innovative ways of decarbonising all the housing stock, exploring the Heat Pump systems and hydrogen opportunities.
- Increase the energy efficiency of privately owned and rented homes through our RCT Warmer Homes Fuel Poverty strategy 2019-2023 through supporting improvements to insulation and using more efficient low carbon appliances.
- Work with Registered Social Landlords to make their existing housing more energy efficient.

Potential measures/targets

No. of energy saving measures installed

Supporting local businesses to become more sustainable and capitalise on the new opportunities offered by the green economy

We will:

- Consider how our business grants can support local businesses to become more sustainable.
- Work with Welsh Government to help businesses eliminate waste and implement circular economy principles such as reducing pollution and extending the life of products and materials.
- Work with local businesses to help them source more sustainable products locally and sell to local markets.
- Increase the amount of supplies and services the Council procures from local small and medium sized enterprises by disaggregating the contracts into smaller lots that are more suitable for local businesses to tender for.
- Use natural planting in public areas of our town centres to improve air quality and well-being, reduce flood risk and provide cooling during heatwaves.
- Promote Carbon and Eco-Literacy in our schools and across the Council.
- Work with Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, universities and schools to provide opportunities for people to acquire the skills they need for jobs in the green economy, including tourism.
- Continue to work in partnership with schools to deliver and encourage the use of ecology areas on 21st Century School sites for learning.
- Bring together public and third sector, business and academia to maximise our work so that we can all meet our Carbon reduction targets.

Potential measures/targets to be developed

Think Climate – PEOPLE

Supporting and encouraging different lifestyle choices

We will work with residents to develop the Council's plans to tackle Climate Change and also encourage and support them to make changes to their lifestyles and make the choices that will help RCT to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

We will

- Lead by example, e.g. eliminating our use of single use plastics, installing solar panels on our Council buildings etc. and encouraging our staff to make sustainable travel choices.
- Encourage people to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, which will also help us to achieve our recycling target of 80% by 2025.
- Encourage people to move away from carbon fuelled transport so that half of journeys are walking, cycling or made by public transport by 2030.
- Encourage people to support improvements in air quality by promoting good driving behaviours including implementing no idling zones and reduced speed limits.
- Encourage and support homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes aiming for Zero carbon homes by 2050.
- Develop a training centre at Ynysangharad park that will engage people in their local environment and contribute to activities with positive climate impact, increasing expertise and a love of nature.
- Involve and work with residents and community groups to develop biodiversity initiatives including 'Grab a Rake' (verge management), 'Action for Nature', protecting peatbogs, recording our wildlife and developing a 'Living Landscape' project, bringing together wild places and local groups to benefit nature.

Promoting sustainable, local food

We will:

- Work with partners to develop a Food Prosperity network for creating an RCT sustainable food facility.
- Develop 'park to plate' activities in Ynysangharad Park, to grow fresh vegetables for local foodbanks.
- Enable residents to be more active in their communities in community projects, community use of green space and community food growing projects.
- Increase the number of plant based meal options in our schools and offered by our community meals service.
- Work with community groups to offer Council land to be used for community gardens.
- Increase the number and the accessibility of allotments to residents to enable more people to grow their own fresh food.

Raising Climate Awareness

We will

- Provide clear, simple and practical ways to encourage everyone to play their part.
- Listen to and understand what our residents are telling us.
- Invite and encourage residents, staff and their representatives and also businesses to discuss what the Council can do to help them to reduce their carbon footprint and what they can do for themselves.
- Work with young people, including through schools and their eco councils, youth groups and Arts projects so that their voices are heard and they help shape our plans for their future.

In preparing this Climate Change Plan the Council has taken account of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Act focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It makes public bodies, such as the Council, think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven national Well-being Goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

The Council's approach to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) is to embed its requirements into the Council's business including our Climate Commitments.

This Plan sets out a vision and Climate Commitments that will continue to maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national Well-being goals. The national goals, together with the five Ways of Working, will continue to be incorporated into the detailed action plans that will deliver the Council's climate commitments.

Examples of how our plans to tackle Climate Change contribute to the seven national Well-being Goals currently include

Will be updated once strategy is finished

National Well-being Goal	RCT Climate Action will support the 7 national Well-being goals by
Prosperous Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting new green jobs in a low carbon economy with locally procured goods and services and community benefit clauses. <i>Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now, and in the future including improved low carbon public transport and active travel.</i>
Resilient Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the use of natural resources creating healthier environments for people and all forms of biodiversity. <i>Investing in and valuing our Green Spaces</i> <i>Delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, peat bogs, marshy grassland</i> <i>Promoting biodiversity by protecting existing habitats where possible</i> <i>Reducing site disturbance and material waste with shorter construction schedules.</i>
Healthier Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving air quality, access to green space and more Active Travel. <i>Ensuring new housing and commercial developments have capacity to generate, store and use reusable energy</i> <i>Make it easier for shoppers to use public transport or active travel to our town centres</i>
More Equal Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving housing conditions and warmth Addressing the inequalities faced by those who are most vulnerable to the effect of Climate Change including women and people on low incomes, allowing people to fulfil their full potential.
Wales of Cohesive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling residents being more active in their communities in community projects and community use of green space. Working with partners to develop a Food Prosperity network for creating an RCT sustainable food place. Developing ‘park to plate’ activities in Ynysangharad Park, to grow fresh vegetables for local foodbanks

National Well-being Goal	RCT Climate Action will support the 7 national Well-being goals by
A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Welsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting in place based bi lingual climate related activities, <i>using reclaimed and sustainable materials and methods in community arts, traditional crafts and trades and architecture which distinctly reflect the local area and culture.</i>
Globally Responsible Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating sustainable behaviour and use nature's resources responsibly at home to contribute to protecting the countries and people that are most at risk and vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change around the world. • <i>Home to school transport vehicles, bus operators and taxi vehicles are fit for purpose and are as environmentally friendly as possible.</i> • <i>A Council fleet that limits impact on environment.</i> • <i>Circular approach to recycling and reuse.</i> • <i>Eliminating single use plastics across the council and schools</i> • <i>Progressing the Eco Park in Bryn Pica.</i> • <i>Opportunities to create and use our own green sustainable energy such as micro hydro-electric schemes which utilise natural river and water course feature.</i> • <i>Increasing the supply of low carbon homes.</i>