



**TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

# **CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

January 2022

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## FOREWORD

In June 2019 the Council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency, acknowledging the real threat that climate change poses to both current and future generations. Since then, the Council has also declared a nature emergency to recognise the serious threat of declining biodiversity. Where biodiversity is at risk then so are the important services that it provides. It is these services that ultimately support life on earth. Whilst a changing climate is a major threat to nature, many of the unsustainable practices that are causing our climate to change are also impacting on biodiversity.

Already we have started to reduce our emissions and change the way we manage our natural resources, but we know that we need to accelerate our action and do much more. Responding to the climate and nature emergencies will require new ways of working and different approaches. It will require Members and officers from across the council working effectively together, creating a bold ambition and sharing capacity and expertise. Some of the changes we will need to make will be challenging, but we realise they are important to ensure the long-term resilience of our services and the communities we serve.

We won't be able to do everything all at once – we will aim to first tackle those areas where we can have the biggest impact. To do this we will take a data led approach based on understanding our carbon footprint. We will need to be both innovative and ambitious and we will also need to transform the way we do things going forward. This action plan sets out our approach to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we will protect and enhance Torfaen's precious natural resources and the biodiversity they support.

We know that both climate change and the nature emergency are of concern to our communities too and we have asked them how we can work together on these collective challenges. The key sources of emissions in the borough come from our homes, transport and businesses - so everyone has a part to play. Those that have outdoor space, a garden or allotment can manage it in a more biodiversity friendly way, and there are other opportunities for people living and working in Torfaen to support nature too, including by volunteering at a local nature reserve.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has already seen many of us travelling less miles, decreasing our use of vehicles that contribute towards carbon emissions and walking and cycling more. The way some of us work has also changed with more services moving on-line and homeworking increasing. Many of us have been shopping locally and thinking about where the goods and services that we rely on in our day to day lives come from. It has also made us appreciate the value of green spaces and re-evaluate the importance of the local environment on our doorstep.

Nature is under threat and our climate is changing, so we need to change too. These are defining challenges for the Council, and we know that taking early action is the best approach as it is always more difficult to react to a situation and often more costly. The action we take now to tackle climate change and the nature emergency will shape the legacy that we leave for future generations living in Torfaen.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 About climate change

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges that the world is facing and refers to the large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns or average temperatures<sup>1</sup>.

When fossil fuels are burnt, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is released and this along with other man-made emissions is known as a greenhouse gas. Greenhouse gases trap heat in the earth's atmosphere and are causing our climate to change. There is scientific consensus that human activity since the industrial period has been the main cause of our changing climate.

Our changing climate will have impacts on the planet and on our daily lives. It will affect many of the services we rely on, our assets and infrastructure. We will need to factor this into the way we plan for the longer term. Torfaen, like many other parts of Wales, is likely to face hotter dryer summers, warmer wetter winters and a greater frequency of extreme weather events including flooding.

A recent report from the International Panel on Climate Change sets out the importance of keeping the global temperature increase below 1.5°C so that we can avoid some extreme future climate related risks<sup>2</sup>. It also highlights that time is running out to take action.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 21st conference (COP21) resulted in the Paris Agreement - signed by 195 national governments including the UK government. This sets the context for tackling the causes and consequences of climate change and the long-term goal of decarbonisation of the global economy.

To deliver on this target, Welsh Government has introduced the [Environment Act \(Wales\) 2016](#) which sets a long-term target of reducing emissions by at least 80% by 2050 as well as interim targets and 5 yearly carbon budgets. In 2019 [Welsh Government](#) accepted the advice of the Climate Change Committee that the 80% target should be revised upwards to 95% and also set an ambition to get to net zero emissions by 2050. Therefore, Welsh Government partners, including local government can begin to see an increasing emphasis on action and that doing nothing is not an option.

Welsh Government has also set their plans for delivering these targets in [Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales 2019](#)<sup>3</sup>. This includes their ambition for carbon neutral public services by 2030. Carbon neutral means achieving a balance between the amount of emissions produced and the amount stored or offset.

If we don't act now there will be consequences for all of us and Torfaen Council has joined Welsh Government and many local authorities across Wales and the UK in responding with

urgency and purpose by declaring a climate emergency and demonstrating accountability to the next generation.

Responding to the climate emergency will require public bodies to work collaboratively. We are already working with others through Torfaen Public Services Board who have a well-being objective to *develop mitigation and adaptation responses to the impacts of climate change*. We are also working regionally through [Climate Ready Gwent](#) and the Cardiff City Region Deal to support opportunities to accelerate decarbonisation.

## *1.2 About the nature emergency*

Climate change is a major threat to nature and many of the unsustainable practices that are causing the climate to change are also having a negative impact on biodiversity.

Biodiversity means the **diversity of living organisms**, from fungi, moss and insects, to plants, birds and mammals. It is this variety of interacting life, known as an **ecosystem**, that supports the health and resilience of **natural resources** - our wetlands, soils, woodlands, grasslands and heath. Where biodiversity is threatened, then so are the important services that natural resources provide. These are known as **ecosystem services** and they are essential to supporting all life on earth.

In addition to providing the basic things that humans need, which includes food, timber and fuel, our natural resources also provide less visible services, including those that support our capacity to both adapt to climate change and to mitigate its impact.

Trees and other vegetation help to regulate the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by locking away large amounts of carbon as they grow. Soils are also very important for storing carbon. Our natural resources can also help support our capacity to adapt to climate change by managing water in the landscape and reducing the impact of temperature rise.

Many jobs and training opportunities are also linked to natural resources including agriculture, forestry, tourism. Enjoying nature through outdoor recreation also supports both physical and mental health – something that many people were reminded of during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Pressures such as climate change, habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and poor management are all threats to biodiversity and present a risk to the long-term well-being of our communities and is known as the **nature emergency**.

The [2020 Living Planet Report](#) (WWF) estimates that over the past 50 years, there has been a 68% decline in global populations of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians<sup>4</sup>. Biodiversity in Wales is also declining as highlighted in the [State of Nature Report 2019](#):

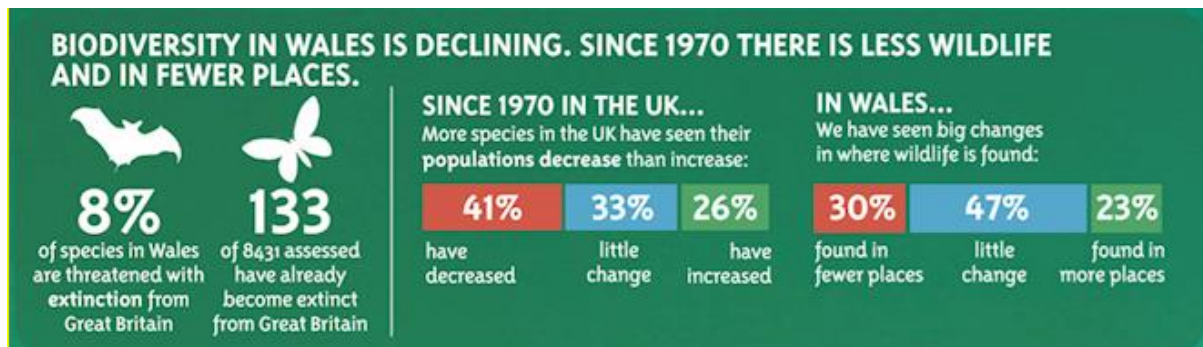


Figure 1: Biodiversity in Wales in declining. Infographic from the State of the Nature Report 2019. State of Nature Partnership<sup>5</sup>.

Welsh Government has introduced legislation and frameworks to help ensure that nature is protected, they also declared a nature emergency in 2021.

Under the Environment (Wales) Act, public bodies in Wales have a 'biodiversity duty' that is set out in legislation. This requires that we 'must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems'. We must also contribute to the six objectives of the Welsh Government's national Nature Recovery Action Plan 2020-21. Every three years public bodies must report what has been done to comply with the duty.

[Future Wales: the national plan 2040](#) is a national planning policy for how land should be developed across the nation and comprises the highest level of development plan against which all development proposals are assessed. This sets an outcome to achieve 'A Wales where people live in places with biodiverse, resilient and connected ecosystems'.

Additionally, [Planning Policy Wales](#) sets out how local development plan policies must consider the need to:

- Support the conservation of biodiversity;
- Ensure designated sites are protected and managed;
- Safeguard protected species; and
- Secure enhancement to ecosystem resilience.

Alongside Welsh Government and many other local authorities, the Torfaen Council has declared a nature emergency to help ensure that future generations living in Torfaen can benefit from biodiverse natural environment that supports their well-being.

### 1.3 Our emissions – Torfaen Council

We have done some work to understand where the Council’s carbon dioxide emissions come from so that we can better plan how to reduce them. The baseline was calculated using Welsh Government’s public sector [net zero carbon reporting methodology](#). The Figure 2 below gives an overview of our emissions in 2019-20.

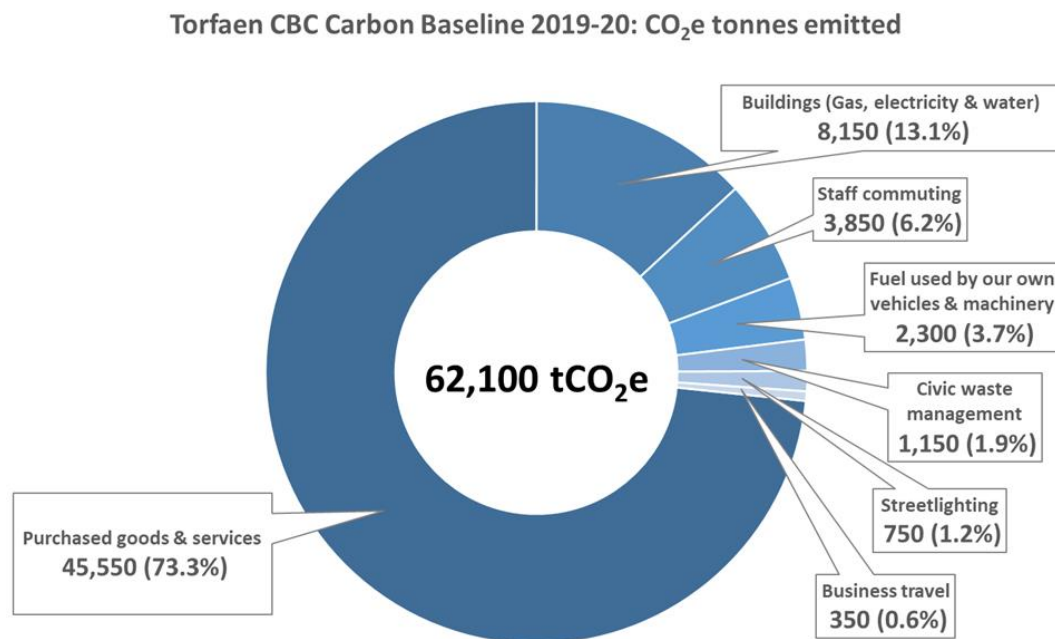


Figure 2: Summary of Torfaen Council’s emissions during 2019/20

Carbon emissions associated with the goods and services purchased by the Council are by far the largest part of the carbon footprint. These emissions are classified as indirect emissions and include all upstream emissions from the extraction, production and transportation of goods and services used in the reporting year <sup>6</sup>. However, this part of the calculation is only an indicative estimate based on industry average emissions per £ spend for categories of products rather than data for actual products or supplier specific data. A high level of uncertainty (+/-25%) has been identified with the approach and Welsh government recognise this will make it challenging to set targets and measure carbon reduction progress <sup>7</sup>.

We have also estimated how much carbon is stored in the land that we own, shown in figure 3.



Torfaen CBC Carbon Baseline 2019-20: Sequestration CO<sub>2</sub>e tonnes

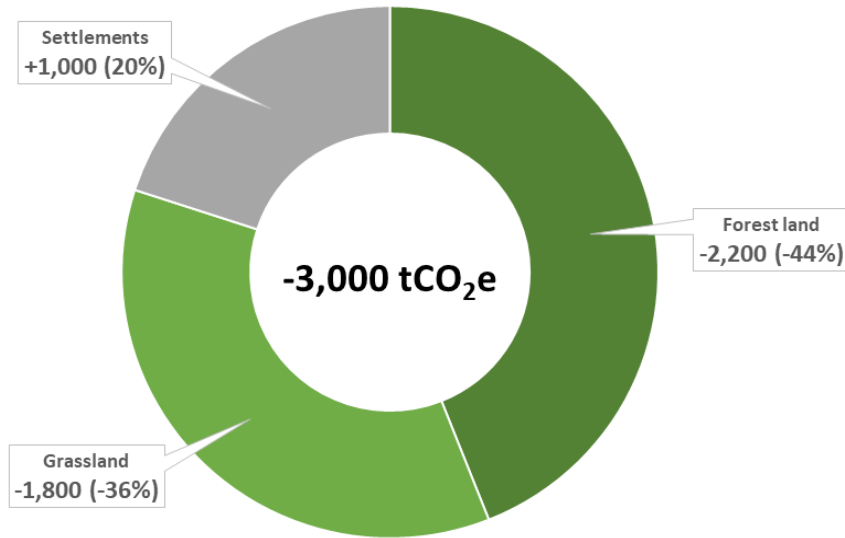


Figure 3: Estimated carbon sequestration associated with Torfaen Council's land

1.4 Emissions in the borough

Torfaen carbon dioxide emissions, kilotonnes CO<sub>2</sub>, 2019 (DECC)

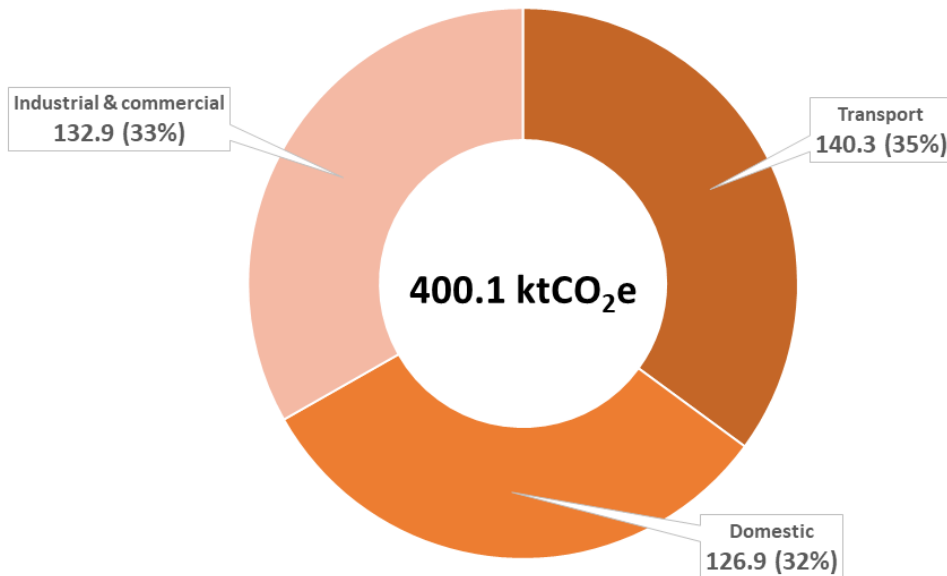


Figure 4: Carbon dioxide emissions for Torfaen, 2019

Data is published every year on the carbon dioxide emissions for each local authority area. This data has a 2-year time lag due to the complexities of pulling together this information.

The largest sources of carbon dioxide emissions in the borough come from our use of fossil fuels and relate to energy use in our homes, transport and commercial and industrial sources.

Overall carbon dioxide emissions in Torfaen decreased between 2005 and 2019 by 39.0% from 683.8 kilo-tonnes per year to 417.0 kilo-tonnes per year in 2019 <sup>8</sup>. Per capita emissions also decreased from 7.5 in 2005 to 4.4 in 2019, this is significantly lower than the Wales average of 11.2 and 7.6 tonnes respectively <sup>9</sup>.

Carbon dioxide emissions are decreasing as a result of the reduction in coal fired power stations feeding into the UK electricity grid and the significant increase in off-shore wind and solar farm electricity generation. There has also been increased use of local renewable energy, i.e. photovoltaic systems providing electricity during daylight hours rather than using grid electricity. Other factors influencing this fall could include the take up of energy efficiency measures by householders and better awareness of energy consumption. The reduction may also be affected by fuel poverty where people cannot afford to adequately warm their homes.

Although emissions are reducing, further action is still required to address the size of the challenge. The Council can influence these emissions, but other stakeholders will also need to take action to reduce them.

### *1.5 Involving our communities*

During November 2020, we asked residents, businesses and the third sector how they could help reduce carbon emissions across the borough. We want this to be an on-going conversation as we will all need to work together on this collective challenge.

***There are no bad ideas, be radical, be challenging and be random! Let's get all our ideas out in the open and see where it takes us!***

We had suggestions related to trees, generating more energy from renewable sources, investments, compostable packaging, business incentives amongst other things, using more public transport, ideas for sharing good practice and ideas relating to how the Council manages its own estate. The word cloud below is a visualisation of the ideas put forward and the conversations that followed.



We also asked residents for more ideas about actions that could be taken to support the climate emergency and we had many suggestions including zero-waste and re-use shops, draft proofing housing, more allotments and community growing areas, tree planting, lower business rates for local producers and 'futures' lessons in schools.

## 1.6 Our aims and objectives

### Our Aims

- As a Council to become net zero carbon/ carbon neutral by 2030.
- To lead, support, facilitate and encourage our communities, residents and businesses so Torfaen becomes carbon neutral by 2050.

### Our Objectives

- To be evidence and data led and continually monitor our baseline.
- To work in a manner that promotes our values:
  - **Supportive:** through leading, building capacity and understanding, training, promoting frameworks and tools to enable our services / communities to understand the importance of climate change and the impact of their decisions on emissions.
  - **Fair:** to target the areas which will have the biggest impacts and ensure there are no negative unintended consequences through our action. Ensuring actions in our communities are undertaken accompanied by robust equality impact assessments.
  - **Effective:** to prioritise actions, work collectively and seamlessly across the council to deliver our aims. Ensure the development of robust business cases and ensure robust project management for implementation. Ensure communications are clear, that we seek feedback and review the baseline and action plan to ensure it remains relevant and impactful.
  - **Innovative:** to stay abreast of thinking, research and ideas for how carbon emissions can be reduced. To be creative in our solutions and actions ensuring we are following the very best and latest advice and where no solutions are available work with partners to find new solutions and proposals whilst fully understanding the risk and benefits of such actions.
- To work collectively and inclusively with our communities. To identify a range of groups, individuals and organisations who can constructively challenge our strategy and action plan and become champions in our community.
- To work collectively and inclusively across the Council and with local, regional and national partners to identify and implement the actions we need to take to deliver our aims.

## *1.7 Our climate and nature emergency commitment*

### **The Council commits to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.**

For our assets and our activities, we will do this by:

1. Understanding our current carbon dioxide emissions so we can better direct our resources to those areas where we can have the biggest impact. The three main areas we will focus on are:
  - Our buildings
  - Our expenditure - contractors and suppliers
  - Our transport use and fleet.
2. Increasing the ambition of our Carbon Management Plan / Energy Efficiency Programme for TCBC buildings and setting interim targets to accelerate the reduction of our own emissions.
3. Developing a net zero carbon fleet replacement programme.
4. Developing, building expertise, capacity and capability to ensure carbon impact is fully embedded into our purchasing and procurement decisions.
5. Developing and investing in additional renewable energy on our own estate.
6. Training our staff and Elected Members to consider and act on the climate and nature emergency in all that they do.
7. Considering the climate in our decision-making processes.
8. Adopting ambitious local renewable energy generation targets in our replacement Local Development Plan.
9. We will work in partnership: -
  - With Welsh Government and Cardiff City Deal and Public Services Board partners to support the transition to a low carbon society.
  - To provide opportunities for organisations and individuals to contribute towards our climate and nature emergency objectives.

### **We will respond to the nature emergency and start to prepare for the inevitable impacts of a changing climate by:**

10. Improving the management of our green spaces to support biodiversity and ecological resilience; build climate change resilience and better balance land use pressures.

11. Developing a collective understanding of climate risks and work with partners to start developing effective local adaptation responses.

## 2.0 CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

The following action plan sets out how we intend to respond to the climate and nature emergencies. We will ensure the necessary resources are available to deliver this action plan and review progress on an annual basis.

### *i. Energy and water efficiency*

We use energy in lots of different ways – to heat our homes and workplaces, to cook our food, for lighting our buildings, and for powering our vehicles.

We use energy to clean and heat the water we use. By using water more efficiently and using grey water and rainwater harvesting where possible we can reduce our carbon footprint.

#### **What the Council has done already**

Through energy efficient measures undertaken between 2011 and 2019 the Council has saved 3,868 tonnes of CO2.


Since 1st April 2012 all utilities have been processed centrally by a dedicated utility management system.





We use smart meters for gas and electricity monitoring at most of our sites, this enables us to review data and identify energy reduction opportunities.

Since 2008 projects to change Streetlighting to lower energy lights have resulted in a reduction of 1,512 tonnes of CO2, avoiding an additional £450K in annual electricity costs.

In the last 3 years projects to install LED lighting, lighting sensors and replace boilers in schools have reduced emissions by 643 tonnes of CO2.

To help reduce water consumption we have installed over 40 logging units to monitor continual water use, this enables us to identify potential leaks/water wastage. In addition, we have installed a small number of rainwater harvesting systems.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
How we work 	Understand our emissions so we can better direct resources to those areas that will have the biggest impact. We will use WG's new carbon reporting toolkit to help us do this.	Data, Research GIS Manager / Energy/ SustainabilityTeam	On-going

How we work 	Update our Carbon Management Plan/Energy Efficiency Programme for TCBC buildings, including schools, and set interim targets to accelerate the reduction of our own emissions.	Energy Team / Property Services	April 2022
How we work 	Work with building managers to identify water efficiency improvements in TCBC buildings, including schools'.	Energy Team / Property Services / School's Energy Officer	On-going
 Community	Continue to work with schools on energy awareness activities.	School's Energy Officer	On-going
 Community	Continue to promote warm home schemes.	Public Protection	On-going

### How our communities can help

#### By using less energy –

- ✓ Switch lights off when rooms are empty
- ✓ Wear a jumper when it is cold

For further information about how you can save energy in your home visit the Energy Saving Trust website. <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/about-us>

#### By using less water –

- ✓ Don't leave taps running
- ✓ Only boil as much water as you need in the kettle
- ✓ Take short showers instead of baths
- ✓ Use a water butt in the garden

For tips on how to save water in your home visit the Welsh Water website.

<https://www.dwrcymru.com/en/help-advice/water-saving-tips-for-households>

### ii. Renewable energy

The more energy we can generate from renewable sources such as wind, solar, or hydro power means the less fossil fuels we need to use.



#### What the Council has done already

We have already installed assets that generate a total of 355kWh across the borough, including roof-mounted photovoltaic systems and a micro hydro-electric system in Blaenavon.



Work has also begun to develop the Council’s first solar farm, with a 3MW system planned to be built on a former waste tip.

An updated renewable and low carbon energy assessment of the borough has been undertaken to provide an evidence base to inform renewable energy targets we will set in the Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033 <sup>10</sup>. As well as estimating the potential renewable energy resource across different technologies, it identifies potential future energy demand which can inform development opportunities.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
How we work 	Increase the amount of renewable energy we generate from our assets.	Energy Team / Property Services	On-going
 Community	Increase renewable energy generation in the borough by encouraging the improvement of building quality and development of local renewable energy schemes. We will do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting ambitious but achievable local renewable energy targets in our Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP).</li> <li>• Investigating the potential of identifying specific geographical areas (Local Search Areas) in the RLDP within which renewable energy generation is likely to be acceptable (within a town planning context).</li> <li>• Encouraging District Heat Networks to be incorporated within strategic development sites identified within the RLDP.</li> <li>• Looking to increase environmental specifications for new buildings within RLDP policy if not secured by the Building Regulations.</li> <li>• Encouraging opportunities for renewable energy generation to be maximised on new development via RLDP policy.</li> <li>• Incorporating decarbonisation as a central theme of the RLDP.</li> <li>• Using RLDP policies to encourage Integrated Renewables in new buildings and low carbon heat sources.</li> </ul>	Planning	On-going

## How our communities can help

- ✓ Explore buying your energy from renewable sources.

For information about renewable energy visit the Energy Saving Trust website.

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/renewable-energy>

## iii. Mobility and transport

The UK Committee on Climate Change highlights that there is significant potential for emissions reductions through continued improvement in fuel efficiency for conventional vehicles, switching to alternatively fuelled vehicles and from changing behaviour.

### What the Council has done already


We have introduced 5 electric vehicles into the Council's fleet.




A fleet review has been undertaken to identify opportunities to decarbonise our fleet.

Much work has already been done to create, improve and promote cycling and walking links. Torfaen has approximately 22 miles of cycle routes supplemented by an extensive network of walking routes made up of public footpaths and highway footways.

In November 2020 the Council signed up to the commitments of the [Gwent public sector Healthy Travel Charter](#).

Working with the other local authorities in Gwent, we have installed [Electric Vehicle Charging Points](#) in 7 of our public car parks.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
How we work 	<p>Deliver on the commitments of Gwent public sector Healthy Travel Charter 2020-23, including to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review our travel expenses policies, to encourage uptake of sustainable travel.</li> <li>• Review the cycle to work scheme (including for e-bikes).</li> <li>• Assess and provide as appropriate secure cycle storage and showers at all main sites.</li> <li>• Improve access to bicycles at work where appropriate, e.g. pool bikes and hire bikes.</li> <li>• Increase availability and uptake of tele- and video- conferencing for meetings where appropriate.</li> </ul>	Human Resources/ Asset Management / Energy Team / Integrated Transport Unit	On-going

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve flexible working options, including home working, and develop a culture of agile working across public sector sites.</li> <li>• Review the current and future need for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure on our sites.</li> <li>• Review our fleet and procurement arrangements (where applicable) for introduction of ultra-low emission vehicles.</li> </ul>		
 Community	Maximise opportunities for active travel including providing new routes / connections as part of new development.	Planning	On-going
 Community	Ensure compliance with national planning policy regarding 10% of commercial car parking spaces to be fitted with EV charging infrastructure via Development Management.	Planning	On-going
 Community	Develop electric vehicle charging guidance for residents.	Highways	Sept 2023

### How our communities can help

Lots of carbon emissions are associated with how we move around and how far and by what means we transport goods and services.

- ✓ Avoid unnecessary journeys
- ✓ Walk and cycle more

For more information about how you can reduce your travel footprint visit: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network/the-national-cycle-network-in-wales>

### iv. Procurement




In Wales, the public sector procures £6 billion of goods and services annually and has the potential to “use procurement rules positively to help drive emissions reductions in a number of areas including ultra-low-emission vehicles and low carbon products” [3].

#### What the Council has done already

100% of the electricity the Council buys comes from renewable sources.

As part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme, we have worked with the main contractor to enable opportunities for local supply chains. We are also working on our first Passivhaus school in Cwmbran.

We have developed a business case, which considers potential carbon savings, to recommend the recycling vehicles of the future, integrated with digital modernisation of the service.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
How we work 	Develop a new corporate approach to procurement that takes into consideration the carbon impact of the goods and services we buy.	T22 Procurement Board	April 2023
 Community	Consider buying goods and services from local businesses.	T22 Procurement Board	April 2023
 Community	Support and promote the local economy.	T22 Procurement Board and Economy and Skills Team	On-going

#### How our communities can help

Think about what you are buying, how it was made and where it came from.

- Support local producers and businesses where possible.
- Eat more seasonal fruit and vegetables.

#### v. Waste

The best thing we can do is to prevent waste from being generated. Where this isn't possible, we must reduce, re-use, recycle and compost more. By reducing the amount of waste sent for disposal and by increasing recycling we can reduce the amount of carbon and other greenhouse gases.

#### What the Council has done already






We have opened a Re-use Shop next to our Household Waste Recycling Centre in New Inn to give items that would otherwise be thrown away a new home.

We have begun a plastic bag/film recycling trial.

We are working with schools to share waste awareness messages.

Our Councillors have stopped using single-use plastic cups at council meetings.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
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 Community	Increase the amount of household waste that is re-used, recycled and composted.	Waste Services	On-going
How we work 	Review our household waste management activities to identify opportunities to reduce carbon emissions.	Waste Services	March 2023
 Community	Work with residents, contractors, community groups and the third sector to maximise recycling and increase the opportunity for re-use.	Waste Services	On-going
 Community	Continue to encourage residents to minimise the amount of food waste they produce and where it is generated, to either home compost it or use the council's food caddy recycling service.	Waste Services	On-going
How we work 	Identify and record baseline for waste created internally at Torfaen offices.	Property Services	On-going
How we work 	Set up targets to reduce and monitor waste from all TCBC offices and other places of work.	Waste Services	On-going

### How our communities can help

Buy less and throw less away. Try switching to reusable items and recycling more and reduce waste.

- ✓ Choose reusable options e.g. drinking cups.
- ✓ Choose the product that uses less packaging.
- ✓ Compost food waste.
- ✓ Avoid single use plastics.

### vi. Biodiversity and ecosystem resilience

Trees and other vegetation help regulate the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by locking away large amounts of carbon as they grow. Soils are also very important for storing carbon. Our natural resources can also help support our capacity to adapt to climate change e.g. by managing water in the landscape and reducing the impact of temperature rise. To function effectively, these natural resources and the ecosystems they support need to be healthy and connected.

### What the Council has done already

We have prepared a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Plan (2019) setting out how we are contributing to the National Nature Recovery Action Plan.

We have mapped our Urban Green Infrastructure Assets and identified corridors which need protecting and enhancing to ensure ecological connectivity through the urban area.

We have developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan setting out opportunities to improve the management of our green spaces.




We manage 7 Local Nature Reserves for the benefit of nature and people. These are strategically located throughout Torfaen and are biodiversity hubs within our green infrastructure.










We are trialling a new approach to grass cutting on verges and in new meadows to improve biodiversity. So far, over 60 sites are part of the new scheme and we hope to expand this to more sites in 2021.




As part of the collaborative South East Wales Resilient Uplands project we have carried out restoration on some peatland habitats that are vitally important for both carbon and water storage.

Through the WG funded Resilient Greater Gwent and Local Places for Nature projects we have worked in partnership to deliver community-based biodiversity enhancement and well-being projects.

We have started to develop a decision making process to help give consideration to green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in the Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
Community 	Protect existing green infrastructure as far as possible and maximise opportunities for green infrastructure on new development.	Planning	On-going
Community 	Develop Green Infrastructure, and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for developers.	Natural Environment Policy Team	April 2022
Community 	Deliver on the commitments of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Plan	Climate & Nature Emergency Officer Working Group	On-going

How we work 	Map and monitor changes in tree canopy cover in Torfaen.	Natural Environment Policy Team	On-going
Community 	Develop Tree and Woodland Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). This will provide a framework for developers and others engaged in the planning process setting out what we expect in relation to trees, hedgerow and woodland.	Natural Environment Policy Team	April 2022
Community 	Develop appropriate mitigation and compensation measures for tree and woodland loss. This includes trees in urban landscape.	Natural Environment Policy Team and Planning	April 2023
How we work 	Develop a palette of climate resilient trees (e.g. disease resistant) to help inform new urban tree planting.	Natural Environment Policy Team	April 2022
How we work 	Replace all trees felled by the local authority. The number of trees to be replanted will reflect the size of the tree canopy lost.	Natural Environment & Streetscene Team	April 2023
Community 	Develop new tree planting schemes on Council owned land that is informed by a green infrastructure approach.	Natural Environment & Streetscene Team/ Asset Management	April 2023
Community 	Establish 2 new community orchards.	Natural Environment & Streetscene Team	April 2024
Community 	Where possible, offer opportunities for improving local skills through work-force planning, training, apprenticeships and volunteering related to the natural environment.	Natural Environment & Streetscene Team/ Economy and Renewal Team	On-going
Community 	Work in collaboration with the Local Nature Partnership, voluntary organisations, community councils and the public, to preserve and enhance our natural resources in a way that captures and stores carbon.	Natural Environment and Streetscene Team	On-going

Community 	Work with schools to encourage seed collecting and sapling growing within school grounds.	Local Nature Partnership Coordinator	Apr-23
Community 	Explore opportunities for introducing natural flood risk management schemes in the borough and continue to undertake activities that hold water in the upland landscape.	Natural Environment Policy Team/ Flood Risk Officer	On-going
Community 	Use the State of the Nature Report for Gwent to develop a local Nature Recovery Action Plan setting 'protect and enhance' priorities for biodiversity at the county borough level.	Local Nature Partnership Coordinator	April 2022

### How our communities can help

- ✓ Let some of your garden go a bit wilder - let some of the grass grow through the summer and introduce some wildflowers.
- ✓ Grow a hedge or small tree (possibly a fruit tree).
- ✓ Get involved with a community orchard project.
- ✓ Create a compost heap so that green waste isn't being transported and so reducing fuel use.
- ✓ Community groups can adopt and manage local green space to help enhance ecosystem resilience.
- ✓ Take part in national/local citizen science projects that measure changes in the environment e.g. the RSPBs Garden Bird Watch, the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory.
- ✓ Record wildlife in your locality and share the information via the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) online recording system.

To find out more about nature in Torfaen and how to bring more of it into your life, take a look at the [website](#) for the Local Nature Partnership or find them on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

### vii. Resilience




To ensure the long-term well-being of our communities, we need to start to prepare locally for the challenges of climate change. The [UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 17 Evidence Report - Summary for Wales](#) identifies risks and opportunities associated with the changing climate across five key areas - natural environment and natural assets; infrastructure; people and the built environment; business and industry and International dimensions.

### What the Council has done already



We have worked with Climate Ready Gwent on the Adapting to Climate Change: From Lived Experience to Strategic Action project. This has developed nine Gwent case studies, including one for Blaenavon, which provide place-based and regional recommendations for improving local climate resilience.

Already we have undertaken a supply chain mapping exercise looking at food related activity across the borough.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
How we work 	Work with PSB partners to develop collective understanding of climate risks and to develop actions that build adaptive approaches.	Climate & Nature Emergency Officer Working Group	On-going
Community 	Continue to work with local resilience partners to ensure emergency preparedness is maintained for response to incidents which could become more frequent or impactful as a result of Climate Change.	TCBC Civil Contingencies/ Gwent Local Resilience Forum	On-going
Community 	Bring together local stakeholders to support Torfaen to become a 'Sustainable Food Place' with healthy and sustainable food available for all.	Rural Development Team	March 2023








#### How our communities can help

- ✓ Valuing street trees for the services they provide to the urban setting - shade, water interception and carbon storage.
- ✓ Incorporate sustainable urban drainage / rain gardens into planting schemes that absorb and control water run-off.
- ✓ Check your risk and prepare for flooding by visiting the [Natural Resources Wales website](#). If your home or business is in an area at risk of flooding sign up to receive flood warnings by phone, email or text message.
- ✓ Avoid replacing green areas with hard surfaces that don't soak up water.
- ✓ Grow your own fruit and vegetables.
- ✓ Use water butts in your garden.

#### vii. Cross-cutting

##### What the Council has done already

Introduced e-learning modules on the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Some of our staff have undertaken Carbon Literacy Training.

Focus	What the Council will do	Who is responsible	By when
How we work 	Train our staff and Elected Members to consider and act on the climate and nature emergency in all that they do.	Environmental & Sustainability Manager	April 2022
How we work 	Consider the climate and nature emergency in our decision-making processes. We will do this by including climate change and biodiversity in our Integrated Impact Assessment.	Senior Corporate Improvement and Scrutiny Officer	April 2022
How we work 	Work with the Local Government Decarbonisation Strategy Panel to share learnings and develop collaborative approaches to achieve a net zero public sector in Wales.	Chief Officer Neighbourhoods, Planning & Public Protection	On-going
Community 	Support delivery of the Cardiff City Deal Energy Prospectus and it's regional decarbonisation priorities.	Chief Officer Neighbourhoods, Planning & Public Protection	On-going
Community 	Optimise opportunities for supporting Welsh Government's green Covid-19 recovery intent through the Council's Corporate Planning approach.	Chief Officer Neighbourhoods, Planning & Public Protection	On-going
Community 	Work with Welsh Government to Develop a Local Area Energy Plan for Torfaen.	Energy Team	Mar-24
How we work 	Establish a Cabinet sub-group to support delivery of the climate and nature emergency action plan.	Cabinet	Mar-22

### 3.0 MEASURING OUR PROGRESS


Delivery of the action plan will be co-ordinated through the Climate and Nature Emergency Officer Working Group. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the whole action plan.




### 4.0 NATIONAL WELL-BEING GOALS AND WAYS OF WORKING

The following tables show how our approach to responding to the climate and nature emergency contributes to the national well-being goals and uses the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Well-being Goal	Contribution to the goals
<p><b>A prosperous Wales</b></p>	<p>Taking action to improve the energy and water efficiency of our buildings and reduce emissions from our fleet will help support the transition to a low carbon society that uses resources efficiently and proportionately.</p> <p>Taking early action to prepare for the impacts of the changing climate will always be more cost effective than taking a reactive approach.</p> <p>Cardiff City Regions has identified energy and the environment as a priority sector that will be important to regional prosperity over the next 10 – 20 years<sup>11</sup>.</p>
<p><b>A resilient Wales</b></p>	<p>Improving the management of our natural resources will support biodiversity and ecological resilience.</p> <p>How we manage our natural resources can help support our capacity to adapt to climate change e.g. by managing water in the landscape and reducing the impact of temperature rise.</p>
<p><b>A more equal Wales</b></p>	<p>There are a range of health risks associated with a changing climate which have the potential to have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable in society – for example coping with extremes in temperature or flooding.</p> <p>The impacts of climate change have the potential to further increase inequalities within our communities and to have greater impact on vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Reducing outdoor air pollution, exposure to which can adversely affect the health of the most vulnerable in the population, will help create a more equal Wales.</p> <p>Ensuring that everyone in our communities has access to good quality green space will contribute to a more equal Torfaen.</p>

<p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b></p>	<p>Measures to support the transition to a low carbon society will help contribute towards viable, safe and well-connected communities.</p> <p>Using nature-based solutions to help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change can also foster strong, safe cohesive communities.</p> <p>Reducing anti-social behaviour and landscape crime including fly-tipping will make Torfaen’s natural resources safer for people to enjoy.</p>
<p><b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b></p>	<p>Taking action to mitigate and adapt to impacts of climate change will help support local cultural identity which is linked to the environment.</p> <p>Historically and culturally Wales has a strong links to energy generation, exploring new opportunities related to decarbonisation will pave the way for a cleaner, greener future.</p> <p>Torfaen’s natural environment is strongly influenced by its industrial past and this distinct landscape, important to our culture today, is also a significant ecological resource.</p>
<p><b>A healthier Wales</b></p>	<p>Moving away from a reliance on fossil fuels can lead to improvements in air quality and reductions in chronic health conditions associated with exposure to air pollution.</p> <p>Increased use of active travel like walking and cycling can help improve peoples’ health.</p> <p>Healthy functioning natural resources can contribute to both mental and physical well-being.</p>
<p><b>A globally responsible Wales</b></p>	<p>Taking action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions locally will help to mitigate the global impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Improving how natural resources are managed locally will help address the global nature emergency.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ways of working</b></p>	
<p><b>Collaboration</b></p> 	<p>In delivering this plan we will work together and share expertise across our organisation and beyond, including with Welsh Government, Cardiff City Deal and Public Services Board partners to support the transition to a low carbon society.</p>
<p><b>Involvement</b></p> 	<p>We will provide opportunities for organisations and individuals to contribute towards our climate and nature emergency objectives and</p>

	want our collective approach to involve an on-going conversation with our communities.
<b>Preventative</b> 	<p>Taking action to mitigate the risks of climate change will contribute to the well-being of future generations.</p> <p>Ensuring our natural assets are well managed and in good condition will mean that future generations will be able to benefit from their well-being benefits.</p>
<b>Long-term</b> 	<p>Taking action to reduce the carbon emissions and to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate will contribute to the well-being of future generations.</p>
<b>Integrated</b> 	<p>The table above demonstrates how the action plan will contribute to the national well-being goals.</p>

## 5.0 GLOSSARY

<b>Biodiversity</b>	This means the diversity of living organisms
<b>Carbon neutral / Net Zero Emissions</b>	Means achieving a balance between the amount of emissions produced and the amount stored or offset
<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>	Carbon dioxide
<b>CO<sub>2</sub>e</b>	Carbon dioxide equivalent
<b>°C</b>	Degrees Celsius - a temperature scale
<b>Ecosystem</b>	A community or group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment
<b>kilotonnes</b>	A thousand metric tonnes
<b>Per capita</b>	Per head of population
<b>tes/CO<sub>2</sub></b>	Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide

## 6.0 REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Met Office – [What is climate change?](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - [Global Warming of 1.5 °C](#)

<sup>3</sup> Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales, Welsh Government. 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Living Planet Report 2020. World Wildlife Fund for Nature. 2020. <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-us/>

<sup>5</sup> Biodiversity in Wales in declining. Infographic from the State of the Nature Report 2019. State of Nature Partnership. 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Reporting Guide Welsh Government May 2021

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Reporting Guide Welsh Government May 2021

<sup>8</sup> UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2019. DECC (Dept of Energy and Climate Change). 2019.

<sup>9</sup> UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2019. DECC (Dept of Energy and Climate Change). 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Torfaen County Borough Council Renewable and low carbon energy assessment. Non-technical summary. Carbon Trust. 2020.

<sup>11</sup> [Cardiff Capital Region Industrial and Economic Plan](#)