



Leadership in Climate Emergency – MJ Awards submission.

Summary

Cambridgeshire County Council 's Climate Change and Environment strategy, galvanised cross-party support and widespread consultation, and is based on evidence from a unique collaboration with PHD Students at Cambridge University.

Targets are ambitious, but the county knows it can deliver, having already invested £22m into carbon reduction schemes to benefit local people, identified £56m to work in partnership on more, and planted 25,000 trees. Friends of the Earth has paid tribute to our work.

It's such a high priority for us that it's properly funded, written into job descriptions and our strategy launch will be hosted by a Government Minister.

100 words

Main Submission

Cambridgeshire County Council has been leading the way in prioritising climate and environment issues for some time. In 2012 it won £780,000 EU grant to Mobilise Local Energy Investment. As a result the Council set up a low carbon investment fund, initially with a £30 million loan facility and built skills and capacity in the Council to understand the low carbon agenda.

Through its initial energy investments the Council has set up a self-financing unit to focus on energy project delivery.

Initially this covered schools, plus a solar farm. It has now extended to cover battery storage and smart-grid development as part of its forward thinking Corporate Energy Strategy launched in 2017.

Since then it's invested £11m into schools to improve energy efficiency and generate renewable energy to reduce carbon emissions of 3,374 tonnes of CO2 reductions and energy bill savings of £910,000 per annum.

It's delivered a 12MW solar farm on its County Farm Estate land in Soham in 2017, saving 3,570 tonnes of CO2 per annum and delivering enough renewable electricity to power 3,000 homes.

And it has been taking direct action to help rural villages in the county reduce their reliance on fossil fuels by providing project and financial support for a pilot project in the village of Swaffham Prior to reduce residents' dependence on oil fired heating.

In 2018 Cambridgeshire County Council won the British Renewable Energy Awards' pioneer category.

In 2019 the county council became a signatory to UK 100, to lead solutions for rural communities and committing to securing the shift to 100% clean energy by 2050.

It also launched a Plastics Reduction Strategy; to eliminate single use plastics to protect the biodiversity of our oceans and marine life.

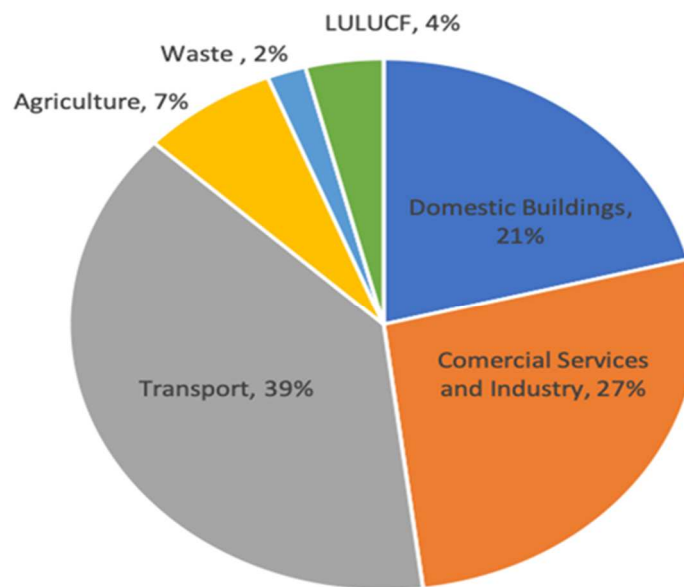
It was also named 'East of England Council of the Year' at the 2019 Energy Efficiency Awards.

And it was for these initiatives that the County Council, was recently held up as an example of good practice by Friends of the Earth, who hailed "[Cambridgeshire's Corporate Energy Strategy ...essential reading for councillors and Climate Action Groups wanting to decarbonise local energy](#)"

Cllr Steve Count, leader of Cambridgeshire County Council took a motion to Full Council in May 2019 which resulted in the council unanimously agreeing to make a declaration of a Climate Emergency and committing to bring forward a full strategy based on a strong and compelling evidence base in six months.

The council has achieved this by working with PHD researchers from Cambridge University in a unique collaboration to produce an authoritative evidence base for reducing carbon across the county.

As part of our evidence base, two carbon footprints have been developed, one for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which includes all greenhouse gas emissions that occur in the County broken down across key sectors (below), and the second for Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) alone.



For this first 'footprint' CUSPE researchers modelled two scenarios - a business as usual (baseline) for the whole of the county following current UK policy and a model to reach Net-Zero emissions by 2050 following an ambitious decarbonisation approach. This modelling identified a policy gap to move from 6.1 to 0.6 million tonnes CO₂e per annum by 2050 to which the council's strategy makes reference.

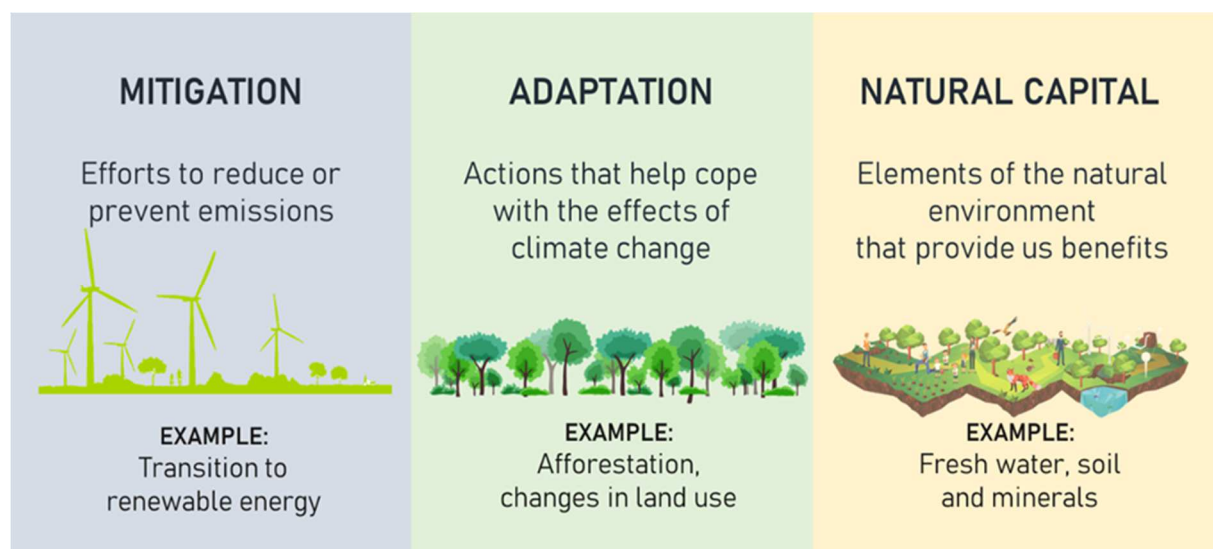
The second carbon footprint was calculated for Cambridgeshire County Council itself. This totals 94,186 tonnes gross CO₂e per annum and identifies a full list of emissions (including data gaps) for 2018-19, broken down by source and scope, following the UK government's greenhouse gas protocol.

The council has used this evidence to develop and launch its draft Climate Change and Environment Strategy with cross party support, for countywide consultation in December 2019. An ambitious consultation plan has included an online survey, presentations and meetings with parish councils, special interest groups and at school assemblies. A young people's version of the strategy is also in development.

In parallel, the Council is using its 'Place Making' collaboration with Cambridgeshire public sector services such as health, police, district councils and community voluntary sectors, to link climate action into its wider partnership approach to service delivery called 'Think Communities'. 'Think Communities' supports different provision to communities according to their needs. A key conversation now taking place is how to build social capital in communities to take action locally on climate change as part of 'place making' and what this means to service providers in both their acute and long term preventative agendas.

The strategy and associated action plan identifies the council's own actions, and where it must work with others, supporting them to take the lead where appropriate.

The vision for the strategy is **'to deliver net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050 in partnership with all stakeholders, whilst supporting our communities and Cambridgeshire's biodiversity and environmental assets to adapt and flourish as our climate changes'** .

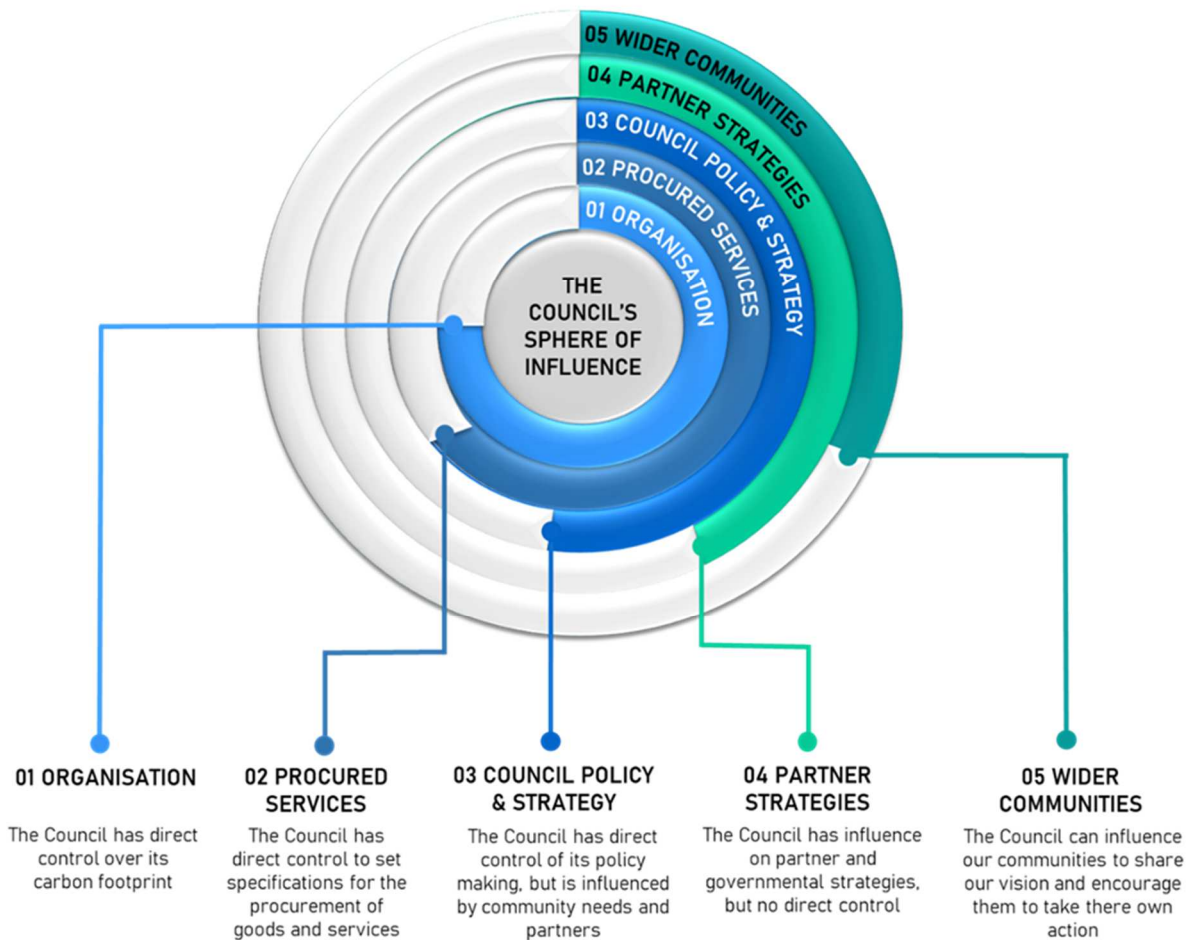


Seven provisional stretching targets have been identified in the action plan which sits alongside the strategy. These are;

- To reduce the Council's organisational net carbon footprint in areas for which the council has direct responsibility by 50% by 2023.
- All Directorates to implement measures to adapt their services to climate change in line with the National Adaptation Programme recommendations
- Deliver 20% biodiversity net gain across all Council property, land projects and wildlife sites
- To reduce the Council's emissions in areas where the council has indirect responsibility) by 50.4% by 2030
- 100% of Council strategies to include policies that tackle Climate Change and natural capital enhancement by 2023

- To sign up to a shared target with partners and the community to deliver 50.4% greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2030 in tonnes/CO2 per annum for Cambridgeshire based on 2018 baseline
- Deliver Government's net zero-carbon target for Cambridgeshire by 2050

For each of the themes, targets, priority areas and actions have been identified. These have been developed according to where the Council has control or influence set out below



The Strategy is due to be approved in March 2020 – and will be launched publically to the County’s MPs, strategic partners and local business people, whose input will be vital in turning ambition into action - at an event at the Houses of Commons, hosted by Stephen Barclay MP, Secretary of State, and MP for North East Cambridgeshire.

Cllr Steve Count, and Gillian Beasley, Cambridgeshire County Council’s Chief Executive, supported by the Programme Director for Mobilising Local Climate Action and Energy Investment, are taking personal oversight on delivering the strategy and its targets. Additional staff resources are being recruited. Senior Managers across the Council, now have climate change accountabilities in their job descriptions, to reflect the climate emergency.

The council has added a specific 4th strategic priority into its Business Plan concentrating on helping Cambridgeshire reach a net zero carbon target by 2050 – with actions that include:

- Mitigating carbon emissions from its buildings and fleet vehicles – with a commitment to take all 69 of the buildings it currently owns or occupies off fossil fuel heating by 2023 and to replace all its fleet cars and vans with electric vehicles by 2025. A £16m Environmental Fund to decarbonise Council properties is included in the administration’s proposals for the councils 2020/21 budget
- Bringing forward plans for a further 30mw solar farm – enough to power a further 8,000 homes
- Developing new business models which integrate transport, electricity generation and battery storage plus selling energy to local customers on its park and ride sites
- Earmarking £300k in the budget to install electric vehicle chargers on all its sites to support pool cars and staff vehicles
- Managing changes to infrastructure to manage the risk of significant climate change, for example, examining new road materials for greater resilience to heat and impacts of flooding
- Looking after Cambridgeshire’s air, water and soil to ensure the future health of Cambridgeshire people, flora and fauna
- Working with communities and businesses to reduce overall carbon emission across Cambridgeshire. Specifically using procurement mechanisms to influence the £450 million spend on supply chain services by setting carbon footprints in tender specifications and carbon reduction targets.
- Leading the cleantech and agritech changes to demonstrate new technologies and business models.

The Council has an enviable track record in reducing the impact of the UK’s fastest growing county on the natural environment, and this expertise and enthusiasm is being harnessed to deliver the actions it needs to achieve to meet its goals.

The council has an Adopted Minerals and Waste Plan that promotes the waste hierarchy and ensures that that all proposals take account of climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions, while exploring opportunities to use decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy.

It has also issued supplementary planning guidance on Flood and Water Management to improve land use planning practice across Cambridgeshire to minimise flood risk, reduces water consumption and improves biodiversity.

Cambridgeshire has 10,000 homes dependent on oil. In its work at Swaffham Prior it’s working in collaboration with the village of 300 homes, to develop a community renewable energy scheme which will save 46,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over the next 40 years.

Initiated by Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust who approached the council because of it’s keenness to work with communities and use its land assets to support clean energy projects. Following a series of technical studies, a Ground Source Heat Pump was agreed to pump thermal energy into homes within the village. Sixty percent of the village have signed up to the scheme, which will start next year.

The Swaffham Prior scheme is causing something of a sensation, with eco groups countrywide asking for advice on starting similar schemes. Government departments interested in combatting fuel poverty are also reviewing the project.



The project has already won £332,380 of grant funding from WREN and BEIS (The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) Heat Networks Delivery Unit (HDNU) and the council has match-funded this with a further £95,700. The council has procured professionals to design the heat network and develop the funding and commercial arrangements for the scheme

As well as investing £11million into reducing the carbon footprint of 55 schools, the council is now collaborating with a large secondary school to design a ground source heat pump to fully decarbonise its heating and hot water requiring an investment of £1million. This collaboration will develop a new business model to test with BEIS and the ESFA to allow academy schools to enter longer term heat agreements to unlock investment and further decarbonisation.

The Council is the first in the country to develop new business models to integrate decarbonisation of transport and energy projects. It has gained planning permission at the St.Ives Park and Ride site to deliver solar PV car ports, battery storage, EV infrastructure and selling energy to local businesses as an integrated project (*see below*). The council agreed £1.8million investment drawing down a further grant of £1.8 million from MHCLG . The project will save 210 tonnes of CO2 emissions pa.



As the owners of the UK's largest Farm Estate, the council agreed in October 2019 to use this major asset to plant new woodlands and to create new long term wildlife habitats.

The County Council also owns many woodlands, within farm tenancies or managed for community benefit by the Council, or community groups, and encourages tenants to enter into agri-environment schemes to improve biodiversity across the estate. Approximately 60% have either a basic or higher level scheme on land they farm.

Cambridgeshire includes one of the UK's largest areas of peatland, much of it drained and used for agriculture. It's responsible for very large GHG emissions, up to 5.5 MtCO₂e, and while not currently included in the emissions inventory, it will be from next year.

As the Council believes Peatland emissions should be tackled at both a local and a national level, prioritising restoration wherever possible - collaborations with Natural England, NFU and Cambridge University are underway to develop a pilot project and become a national exemplar in the area of peatland restoration, demonstrating how it can change from a net emissions source to a net carbon 'sink'.

1998 words.