

Review of Leicester City Council's Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan (2023-2028)

Produced by the Leicester Climate Commission
October 2023

1 Introduction

1.1 This short report by members of the Leicester Climate Commission has been produced as a response to viewing and discussing an October 2023 draft of Leicester City Council's 2023-2028 Climate Emergency Action Plan.

1.2 The report comprises a summary offering overall feedback, a small number of specific *Recommendations* for enhancements to the Action Plan and a list of *Issues to Consider* which were raised by Commission members as feedback.

2 Summary

2.1 The Climate Commission commends Leicester City Council for their ongoing commitments to addressing the climate emergency and the production of a renewed strategy and action plan.

2.2 The revised strategy and action plan is generally grounded in strong evidence, including a recent 'Roadmap' study which identifies priority actions across the city to achieve Net Zero emissions.

2.3 The document has also commendably adopted a broad focus incorporating emissions reductions, adaptation and resilience measures. The *co-benefits* of climate action, such as addressing health inequalities, are focussed on throughout, which we see as an appropriate and pragmatic approach to addressing the climate emergency in the context of other challenges citizens face in Leicester.

2.4 Similarly a *just transition* ethos is highlighted, which again is a commendable principle to inform decision making on climate action across the city.

2.5 The initial Strategy section of the document offers a very strong account of the key climate-related issues faced by the city and does so in clear plain English.

2.6 The action plan builds upon the strategic overview by addressing key areas for action and demonstrating ownership of actions by teams across the City Council and indicating a broader partnership-based and external advocacy approach.

2.7 The scale and pace of action put forward in the Council's Roadmap report to address the climate emergency is very significant and the actions that the Council can instigate will inevitably lag behind this without greater policy and financial support at a national level. However the gap between the scale of intended actions and pledged actions is often not made clear to the reader and the plan would be stronger if it sought to bridge this gap, such as through explanatory narrative or quantitative measures of impacts of actions (where feasible).

2.8 Linked to point 2.7, the action plan is understandably focussed on what can be funded and delivered in the coming 1-2 years, but a gap exists in putting forward strategic priorities for action (where resources are not yet secured) for each thematic area over the coming 5 years or beyond. This would indicate to the reader and to council teams and departments the priorities for external funding, policy change to support action or otherwise.

2.9 There are few significant thematic gaps in the action plan, but some areas would benefit from greater ambition and attention, particularly supporting local businesses to develop circular economy approaches, and leading such actions through the Council's Economic Development team.

3 Recommendations.

3.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: Put forward medium-term strategic priorities for each thematic area, to offer a bridge between pledged actions in the plan and the long-term strategic vision.

- For each thematic area, offer some indication (quantitatively where possible) on the gap that exists between pledged actions and the extent of action required to meet the aspirations laid out in the City Council's Roadmap document. Some specific issues (e.g public charging point infrastructure) could be used as quantitative examples on this point.
- Add or clarify medium-term strategic priorities for each thematic area that might be pursued by the Council or through partnership to bridge this gap should circumstances allow (e.g. increased funding, UK government policy change).

3.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CO-BENEFITS: Go further to systematically identify co-benefits linked to the Sustainable Development agenda, in particular health and addressing inequalities.

- There is already strong discussion of co-benefits and the UN Sustainable Development Goals are mentioned in the plan. However, many issues and opportunities might warrant further attention and provide stronger opportunities for securing funding and achieving impacts, such as addressing unequal access to green space or considering the impacts of climate action on the city's economic development.
- One potential action would be to map potential actions bringing climate co-benefits against the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (and 169 associated objectives); another could be to evaluate the extent to which teams/departments/contractors for the City Council have embedded actions addressing the climate emergency in their planning.

3.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Develop a strategic approach to engaging businesses, organisations and citizens to support achievement of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

- LCC's Climate Emergency Roadmap report highlights demand reduction as an urgent priority to achieve the City's climate goals, which makes community engagement a vital approach. The extent of actions put forward lags a significant way behind the level of communication and active engagement required across all stakeholder groups, including citizens, businesses and other organisations.
- The proposed Climate Ready brand is a positive step. The Action Plan would be stronger if it put forward (or pledged to develop) a specific strategic approach to communication and engagement, which clarified what successful stakeholder engagement looks like in terms of measurable outcomes and the actions planned to achieve them.
- Further actions could include campaigns/projects targeting specific behavioural changes, widespread use of the Climate Ready brand by LCC and partners and incentivising actions by businesses, harnessing LCC's existing procurement, partnerships and other trigger points.

3.4 CAPACITY BUILDING: Ensure LCC staff and partner organisations are aware of the Climate Action Plan and have appropriate knowledge on how to support this.

- The success of the Action Plan relies on LCC staff and partner finding different ways of working, drawing upon awareness of the City's climate goals, issue-specific knowledge of actions in their own area of operation and requirements to take these steps via their role.
- This is captured in the Action Plan via a one-hour training offer and an offer of expert input from the Energy and Sustainability Team into decision making. Given that the team has few staff members, there is a potential risk to successfully offering expert input to all relevant decisions across the whole council, so identifying further actions to strengthen capacity

building is worth consideration. This might include supporting or requiring LCC teams/departments to identify relevant externally provided issue-specific training to deepen their knowledge; providing full one-day Carbon Literacy training to selected staff/teams; or taking part in knowledge exchange activity/events with other local authorities that have innovated successfully in relation to a particular area of work.

3.5 CIRCULAR ECONOMY: Increase the strategic ambition and pledged actions to promote Circular Economy approaches amongst Leicester businesses

- Engage with local businesses to pilot, promote and support the circular economy concept, impacting upon approaches to manufacturing, resource use and re-use of waste. By doing so, 'scope 3' indirect carbon emissions will also be addressed, alongside those produced in the city.
- Potential actions could include training, engagement and mentoring of businesses, repair projects (working with businesses and/or the voluntary sector), piloting business to business and business-to-voluntary sector re-use or joint purchase of resources on city council owned business parks or industrial estates.
- This action would be likely best owned and led by the Economic Development team in the City Council and/or the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). The City Council's influence via procurement and other trading relationships could be used to influence actions in this area.

4 Issues to Consider

Below a further list of issues to consider are introduced, reflecting comments made by commission members on the draft Action Plan document.

4.1 Supply Chain Engagement: The City Council has opportunities to influence action by businesses through supply chain engagement (linked to procurement, contracts or otherwise). An action to at least pilot this could have value, for example by engaging with suppliers with high-value contracts or high carbon intensity of activities, requiring them to report emissions or to pledge to support climate action locally.

4.2 Communication: Leicester Climate Partnership Communications group to consider framing actions more often as a positive vision, with climate action meaning doing things differently rather than being an add-on.

4.3 Adaptation: Remove reference to the dated 2008 Climate Risk Assessment and look to conduct a new one. This could potentially be achieved by replicating an approach used by Leicestershire County Council to translate national level impacts (identified by the Committee on Climate Change) to the local setting. Analysis should include those risks for which governance or management implications cross city and county boundaries.

4.4 Climate Partnership: The partnership is introduced but its intended or past activities or actions are unclear. Consider clarifying this with a further one or two sentences of discussion.

4.5 Fuel Poverty Programme: A fuel poverty engagement programme is mentioned. This could be enhanced by incorporate behavioural and low-cost tips for keeping cool in the summer – see previous DMU report for Leicester City Council listing appropriate actions to signpost.

4.6 Offsetting: Future work to consider the role of carbon offsetting is mentioned. It is worth considering here adopting the 'Oxford Principles' for offsetting policy, which draw a crucial

distinction between long-term carbon *removal* and shorter-term carbon reduction – only the former can be part of a systematic achievement of net zero.

4.7 Cycling: The actions put forward make very little mention of cycling. Consider including more of those actions which are already planned across the city and making mention, if possible, any strategic view on a future replacement shared bicycle scheme across the city.

4.8 Emissions from Goods and Services: Update the document to reflect recent analysis by DMU of the City's emissions from good and services and potential approaches to calculating these emissions due to Council operations. Consider adding an action to estimate LCC's carbon footprint of goods and services using a spend-based approach, as recommended in the recent DMU report.

4.9 Implementation Risk: If not planned already, consider conducting a Risk Analysis (internally) on issues affecting successful implementation of the Action Plan within the ongoing management structure. This should include review of resources (staffing, budget) and external factors.

4.10 Carbon Literacy: An action specifies 'generic carbon literacy' training, comprising a one-hour course. This cannot be called 'Carbon Literacy', which is an externally accredited one-day training programme – 'Carbon Reduction' is a possible alternative for the 1-hour course, used in a recent project by DMU and UoL.

5 About the Leicester Climate Commission.

The Commission is a task-and-finish group, convened from members of the Leicester Environmental Experts Reference Group, chaired by De Montfort University (DMU) working with University of Leicester (UoL) and other local professionals with climate and energy-related expertise.

The Commission members reviewed a draft of LCC's Climate Action Plan in October 2023, discussed the report and offered feedback to LCC Officers in an online meeting. This document is a summary of key points made in that feedback meeting and from notes compiled by reviewers. City Council staff have also been provided with the compiled annotations on the draft action plan document captured by Commission members. These notes include suggested minor amendments, such as addition of hyperlinks or queries of specific data presented which are not included here.

This report has been drafted by Dr Andrew Reeves (DMU), drawing on inputs from: Dr Sandra Lee (UoL), Prof Heiko Balzter (UoL), Prof Ljiljana Marjanovic-Halburd (UoL), James O'Brien (Leicestershire County Council), Jose Hernandez (Pick Everard, Chair of Leicester Climate Partnership), Dr Andrew Mitchell (DMU), Prof Raffaella Villa (DMU) and Karl Letten (DMU).