



Climate Action briefing on Leicestershire's Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan consultation.

July 2022

This consultation closes 26th July '22, at midnight.

Leicestershire County Council has published its strategy for achieving a net zero county by 2045. The plan covers a wide range of the county council's operations and policies including co-operation with other councils and bodies. It contains many good ideas, but they are very general which makes them unlikely to be effective – or even acted on in many cases. Climate Action Leicester and Leicestershire believes that the County Council's action points should be much stronger and that this is a unique chance for the complete reset that is needed locally in Leicestershire. It's also an opportunity for the county to play its part in action across the UK.

This consultation is our chance to push for an action plan which would result in both more carbon reduction and support County residents to survive climate change much better.

This briefing tells you the key things we think the Council can do in order to reduce the County's carbon emissions which should be in this plan.

Please respond to this consultation if you live or work in the County, or if you visit it.

Please use your own words – form responses are not typically given much weight.

It's probably easiest to respond using the online consultation survey (see the link in the box below). We have specified which question the points below relate to in order to make this easier for you. Do make sure you fill in the questions at the start about who you are and what your links are to Leicestershire. **You need to tick boxes in question 21 in order to access questions 24 onwards. You don't need to answer all the questions, just the ones you want to. Just pick the points you want to make and answer those questions. You could put all your comments in the additional comments section, question 52.**

If you don't want to use the survey, you can send your response via email to netzero@leics.gov.uk. However, you need to link your points to the questions in the survey for them to be counted. We have specified in the points below which survey questions they relate to. Do make it clear in the subject line that it is your response to the Net Zero consultation. **Make sure you include your name, address and postcode with your response – and say if you live or work in the County.**

You can find the strategy and action plan here, as well as a summary of it and **the online consultation survey** which you can use to respond:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/have-your-say/current-engagement/net-zero-strategy-and-action-plan-2045>

Here are the points Climate Action suggests making in our consultation responses.

Don't get overwhelmed. Just make the points which matter to you. Please use your own words.

[Suggested places to put your comments in the survey are in square brackets]

1. **[Survey question 25] Transport.**
 - a. The County Council sets highway design standards. They should **redesign these requirements to ensure compact housing developments, and streets which prioritise cycling, walking and buses over car use.**
 - b. The County is essential in financing rural transport. Many bus routes have shrunk and been cut in recent years. A public transport alternative for rural residents is a key part of a sustainable countryside for the future. **This action plan should**
 - i. **commit to funding at least 2 new and frequent bus routes each year for the next 5 years with 6-month free bus passes for everyone who lives along the routes,**
 - ii. **ensure existing bus routes are expanded to include all new and recent housing developments of over 20 homes,**
 - iii. **develop and promote car sharing clubs in all the villages.**
 - c. Leicestershire is a central area for the logistics industry and needs to take a leading role in changing it. **The County should be working closely with businesses, government and most importantly District Councils to develop and implement a plan to shift freight haulage from road to train. This means using planning requirements, lobbying and educating.**

2. **[Survey question 30 and 35] The council's buying power:** The council should have **policies in place requiring it to systematically choose low carbon products** for its own operations including products such as those building materials that have low embodied energy and heat pumps rather than fossil fuel heating, It should also **encourage the District Councils, local suppliers and businesses to do the same**, and prioritise buying from them where they offer low carbon options. Council should lobby EPSO to follow similar policies in their bulk-buying.

3. **[Survey question 35] Divestment.** **The council should commit to ending all investment in fossil fuel companies within 3 years in its own commercial activities. This includes the millions of pounds currently invested by the Leicestershire pension fund in oil and gas companies.**

4. **[Survey questions 9 and 52 and also the specific ones below] Lobbying government and other organisations.** The County council should **systematically lobby central government to achieve much more powerful policies and actions in line with a net zero strategy.** They should also lobby and influence any other group, with which they have influence to change plans and policies. Specifically:
 - a. **[Survey question 35]** ESPO, the bulk buying group they are part of, to systematically choose low carbon options where they exist.
 - b. **[Survey question 45]** Water companies concerning the need for more water reservoirs given the increasingly hot dry Summers which climate change is causing.
 - c. **[Survey question 30]** District Councils – many County Councillors are also District Councillors – **to only site new housing developments close to public transport and cycle infrastructure**, encouraging a move away from car use. Also to **use planning regulations to shift freight from road to rail, and allocate land for windfarms.**

6. [\[Survey question 40\]](#) Cultural change. Systematically support and promote changes which promote a low-carbon future. Also **discourage the behaviours and assumptions which result in high carbon activities**, for example:
 - a. Changing negative public perceptions of renewable energy developments, especially windfarms
 - b. Facilitating home insulation and heat pumps through financial support systems, training builders and construction workers, informing and supporting households, and buying schemes such as Solar Together.

7. [\[Survey question 40\]](#) Windfarms. Work to change public perceptions of wind farms, using community group mechanisms to allow local people to benefit directly from schemes; they should use their influence to encourage district councils along the same lines, particularly as many County councillors are also District councillors.

8. [\[Survey question 45\]](#) The county council's land holdings. The county council is an important landowner. It should develop a clear policy regarding the land it owns, including
 - a. Council agricultural land should be leased, not sold, and leases should include contractual requirements to manage soils to capture rather than release carbon and to avoid overgrazing. It should work with tenants and managers to move swiftly to sustainable methods of food production and crops adapted to a hotter climate. This means moving away from monocropping, nitrogen fertilizer and over grazing. It also means clearly opposing the growth and use of biofuels as crops.
 - b. All new buildings on council land should be required to be carbon negative (generate more energy than they use) and be insulated to the highest level; they should be higher density and well served by public transport.
 - c. The council should prioritise renewable energy generation developments – both wind and solar - on its land and buildings. Wind and solar farms should be linked to local communities and new housing developments in ways which reduce the cost of energy to local people.All these considerations apply to the future of the County Hall site in Glenfield as and when the council's needs for office space change.

9. [\[Survey question 45\]](#) Trees. The tree planting target needs to be greatly increased. Species should be mixed, prioritise species which are resilient to climate change especially drier hotter Summers, and food trees such as sweet chestnuts. When planting, soil disturbance should be avoided and natural regeneration used where possible to minimise the release of stored carbon from the soil.

10. [\[Survey question 52\]](#) Overall. The strategy and action plan lists a wide range of activities and actions relevant to the county council's work which are important. **These need to be much more specific/clearly defined** so it is clear exactly what will be done and by when, enabling action to be measured and monitored.

11. [\[Survey question 52\]](#) Carbon budgeting. Just as the Council has a financial budget, it should be **using a carbon budget** too. In order to ensure that climate action is embedded in the council's decision-making process, the council should **develop a system enabling every decision, policy and action to be benchmarked against clear climate objectives**. Similarly, the carbon footprint of decisions, policies and actions should be calculated and these decisions then made with the carbon budget in mind.