

North Herts Friends of the Earth: ideas for local climate action (August 2019)

The following is a list of suggestions for possible actions that NHDC (or HCC) could take, or investigate taking, in order to play its part in addressing the Climate Emergency. They are the result of an 'e-brainstorm' by members/contacts of North Herts Friends of the Earth in early August 2019 with additional items sourced from the Friends of the Earth briefing *33 actions that local authorities can take* (see references below).

This list is intended to be a working draft, and further work may be done to increase its content or expand on the entries. We hope it will help to inform the Panel's thinking.

The suggestions have been grouped into nine subject areas. These map reasonably well to the NHDC Cabinet portfolio positions, although two do not have clear ownership. A number of subjects map to topics listed in the Panel's proposed work programme for the current year.

NHDC portfolio	Areas below
Planning and Transport	1. Transport 2. Planning / development
Finance and IT	
Community engagement	9. Community engagement
Enterprise and Co-operative development	6. Business and retail
Environment and leisure	7. Open spaces
Housing and Environmental Health	3. Housing
Recycling and Waste Management	4. Waste management
	5. Energy* 8. Council operations**

* The entries in this category are likely to map to more than one NHDC portfolio

** Relevant to all NHDC portfolios

The work has been performed initially to facilitate engagement with NHDC. In the list below, items that are believed to be entirely within the remit of HCC are coloured grey; it may be that some other items should also have been included in this category.

1. Transport

Strategic / developing public transport

- Review car parking charges and consider workplace parking levy (to subsidise public transport)
- Consider congestion charges
- More car-free zones (or car free days) in areas in the town centres
- Maintenance and improvement of bus services (e.g. real time information screens at bus stops)
- Encourage transition to electric / biogas buses
- Look into technology to support development of hybrid bus / taxi (shared use of minibus tax with variable route depending on exact demand)
- Minimise further road-building

Cars

- Create communal 'car club' spaces (some dedicated for electric car sharing)
- More electric car charging points
- Introduce differential pricing where there are charges (e.g. car parking) to encourage transition to electric vehicles

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- Increase 20 mph zones.
- Phase in a requirement for all taxis to be electric vehicles through licensing

Cycling

- Improve cycle routes (note: there may be previous plans for which no action has been taken), especially to stations and other hubs and between towns.

Walking

- Improve walking routes (e.g. better signage and banning parking on pavements).

Aviation

- Oppose Luton airport expansion

2. Planning / development

- Review planning policy
 - Improve required building standards (latest sustainable / eco-friendly techniques and materials, and renewable energy).
 - Integrate need to reduce car usage into the local plan, for example:
 - good walking routes
 - developments that support car clubs rather than private ownership
 - provision of transport and cargo bike delivery hubs
 - resist rural and remote development
- Identify areas suitable for renewable energy and encourage applications for solar panels and wind farms
- Oppose fracking (if relevant locally)
- Review and, where appropriate and possible, re-open major planning decisions if the environmental impact has not been adequately considered.
- Use s106 agreements to charge developers for energy inefficiency in new build (to be used to support energy efficiency measures elsewhere)
- Enforce building standards

3. Housing

- Promote retrofitting (e.g. PV panels, heat pumps, better insulation)
- Licensing and inspection of the private rental sector to check homes meet minimum energy efficiency standards
- Work with Housing Associations to improve energy efficiency of housing stock; if insufficient co-operation consider building new council houses under council control

4. Waste management

- Review recycling collections (considering environmental factors as well as cost)
- Seek to increase home / local composting
- Seek to require production of biogas from non-recyclable biodegradable waste in waste contract
- Provide more water fountains (to enable bottle refills)
- Encourage re-use and repair schemes

5. Energy

- Seek private sector partners to help fund green (energy) projects¹. There might be other ways that the council could partner with local organisations, beyond just securing funding.
- Ground source heat pumps in parks to provide heat to nearby buildings.
- By providing information, help energy companies target fuel poor or vulnerable households with energy efficiency measures

6. Business and retail

- Adapt / refurbish Churchgate shopping centre rather than rebuilding (save concrete)
- Encourage development of green industries / jobs
- Create directory of, and promote, sustainable local businesses that provide services to support the climate change policy objective
- Encourage more local food production and supply (means to enable people to grow and sell or exchange food) and increase the number of allotments.
- Promote North Herts as a UK short-break leisure destination (marketed as an environmentally-friendly alternative to a European city break)

7. Open spaces

- Tree planting
 - Develop tree planting strategy (including more fruit / nut-bearing trees to increase local food supply) and encourage planting elsewhere (possibly by using a small fund to encourage schools, charities, non-profit organisations etc. to participate)
 - Plant trees on council-owned land
- Encourage insect and other wildlife habitats (e.g. wildflower verges)

8. Council operations

- Seek to reduce council's own carbon footprint (e.g. using electric or hybrid vehicles, sourcing of electricity from renewable sources, improved insulation, improved recycling facilities and various other suggestions in this list)
- Liaise with councils (such as Bristol, Nottingham and Stroud) that have already been taking action.
- Share resources with other councils locally to help develop, implement and monitor plans and pursue initiatives where there is common ground.
- Measure and publish annually the council's own carbon footprint
- Eliminate as far as possible single use plastics (e.g. ask staff to bring their own drinking vessels to work).
- Assess and take into account the impact on the area's carbon footprint when taking any major decision.
- Divest from fossil fuel companies; invest in renewable energy projects
- Where something is the responsibility of another level of government, lobby for change
- Bid for funding to support projects to tackle the climate emergency

¹ See Bristol example on page 2 of http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/A300_NB187_Climate_emergency_renewables.pdf.

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- Take into account the climate emergency in procurement decisions (e.g. require deliveries to be using electric vehicles when sourcing, specify food that is low in red meat and dairy products and, where possible, local / seasonal)

9. Community engagement

- Public information campaigns (to raise awareness of the actions individuals need to be taking – such as reducing meat consumption, more journeys on foot / bike and by public transport, minimising flying, reducing single-use plastics)
- Promote making CO₂ reduction “fun” / fostering community spirit to tackle the challenges together
- Provide an online information hub (including a link to tools such as a personal carbon footprint calculator)
- Create a local Citizens Assembly to inform policy decisions
- Coordinate a local collaborative group of organisations with the highest emissions locally, to support them in reducing their emissions²
- Various community greening projects (e.g. lower carbon footprints of schools)
- Put pressure on supermarkets to reduce plastic waste
- Seek to influence groups where the council has a connection, like Local Enterprise Partnerships, to develop plans and take action
- Seek volunteer support for council initiatives to tackle the climate emergency where the council itself does not have sufficient resources

Useful references

Ashden climate action toolkit:

<https://www.ashden.org/downloads/files/CAC-Chapters-all-FINAL.pdf>

Friends of the Earth (33 actions local authorities can take)

<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/33-actions-local-authorities-can-take-climate-change>

Bristol council action plan:

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s34127/Climate%20Emergency%20-%20The%20Mayor%20Response.pdf>

Camden Citizens Assembly recommendations (July 2019):

<http://news.camden.gov.uk/citizens-assembly-makes-recommendations-for-action-on-the-climate-crisis/>

Stroud council action plan:

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/environmental-and-carbon-management>

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<http://nhertsfoe.co.uk/>

² Currently taking place in Oxford; see page 16 of

http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/A300_NB187_Climate_emergency_renewables.pdf