

# SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Net Zero Solihull: Action Plan Executive Summary

July 2021

#NetZeroSolihull 



# INTRODUCTION

## Action Plan Overview & Scope

This report was commissioned by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), who have an ambition to reach borough-wide net zero carbon emissions by 2041, in-line with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) ambition.

The Net Zero Action Plan Report is an exploration of the actions Solihull will need to consider to meet its ambition of a net zero borough. The Council will use this work to help inform the nature and extent of action and is a key element in planning the Council's response to the Climate Emergency.

This will help Solihull to develop a priority list of actions to take forward, understand which stakeholders in the borough will need to be engaged and focus resourcing and funding towards actions with the greatest positive impacts.

### Action Plan Objectives

1. Identify actions SMBC can take to reduce GHG emissions across the borough;
2. Estimate the carbon savings, costs or payback and co-benefits associated with implementing the actions;
3. Explore a method of prioritising actions needed to enable the net zero transition.

# TAKING ON FEEDBACK

## Solihull Climate Change Commission

Solihull Climate Change Commission, which provides independent, cross-sector and cross-party advice to the Council, conducted a review of the Green Paper and provided formal feedback. The comments received informed the Net Zero Action Plan and highlighted the importance of the Council's opportunity to lead by example, define stakeholder roles and the significant role of behaviour change in delivering action.

## Green Paper Public Consultation Responses

An online public consultation was held to gather opinions from residents and businesses across Solihull on the actions the borough needed to consider to reach its net zero ambition. The responses from the public consultation highlighted the importance of education to encourage individuals to monitor and manage energy use in buildings, the importance of public and active travel infrastructure and awareness raising on the environmental impacts of waste.

## Innovation Tournament

As part of the Net Zero Action Plan development, two Innovation Tournaments were held online to gather ideas for projects that could be implemented in Solihull to accelerate the shift to net zero. Project ideas were assessed across three rounds: location, value for money and other barriers to implementation. Key identified action opportunities included an information hub for businesses to share knowledge and best practice, a full funded energy assessment regime for all buildings and mapping of the borough's natural capital assets.

# DELIVERING CLIMATE ACTION

It will be important to consider the following 4 foundational pillars in order to climate action across Solihull:

1. **Policy and Governance** - Local and National policy changes can have a significant impact on the success of the actions outlined in the Net Zero Action Plan.
2. **Resource and Leadership** - In order to ensure there is ownership over actions and that progress is monitored, there will need to be resources dedicated to deliver and lead in all sectors.
3. **Finance** - Actions will require varying degrees of financing and SMBC will need to consider new and alternative financing models.
4. **Education and Engagement** - Maintained communication through engagement and education to support behaviour change will be crucial in ensuring that the plan is delivered for the benefit of all.



The Net Zero Action Plan contains **52 goals** and **177 actions** of which 63 have an element of communication and engagement, 58 involve implementation, 38 involve research and 18 are directly linked to policy and strategy (actions can sit within more than one category). This shows the breadth of actions required and the need to include actions that relate to all aspects of decarbonisation including behaviour change and technology.

# PRIORITISING ACTIONS

## Considering Action Impact

When planning a climate strategy, it is important to consider the sequence with which actions are addressed. This ensures the “groundwork is laid first, before undertaking actions which are more dependent on each other. For example, being able to implement engineering solutions around renewable energy supply is contingent on there being a supportive local policy context, availability of funding and appropriate local infrastructure.

Actions have been assessed and prioritised in terms of their:

1. **Cost and payback** - an indication of the relative cost and financial payback opportunities where relevant
2. **Carbon savings** - an indication of the relative carbon reduction impact
3. **Co-benefits** - with Inclusive Growth, Environment and Health selected as the priority benefit areas

## Sequencing Actions

The actions within the NZAP have also been categorised by the timeline they could be carried out in and are split by; immediate/ short term which could be carried out within the next two years, medium which could be carried out in 3-6 years and long term actions which could be addressed from 7 years onwards.

# SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

The following table summarises the actions within each emissions sector.

Sector	Description of actions	Number of goals and actions	Council's role	Example actions
Buildings	Includes actions across non-domestic and domestic building types	13 goals, 47 actions, including 26 key actions	Communication & Engagement 42% of actions	1.4a Extend Town Centre Energy Network to fulfil its maximum viability to connecting supply to non-domestic buildings in Town Centre 2.2a Support households in accessing finance for installation of heat decarbonisation measures, linked to heat opportunities assessment through Act on Energy.
Transport	Includes actions across active travel, electric vehicle uptake, public transport and commercial journeys	13 goals, 48 actions, including 23 key actions	Communication & Engagement 32% and Implementation 30% of actions	3.1e Continuous delivery of a behaviour change program on cycling and walking to encourage long-term uptake.
Waste	Includes reducing waste and increasing recycling	6 goals, 22 actions	Implementation 48% of actions	4.1a Support community groups to develop sharing/circular economy e.g., repair café, library of things, community fridges, food redistribution centres.
Industry	Includes advancing low carbon technologies and industry support	2 goals, 6 actions	Implementation 50% of actions	5.1b Develop refresh of the Borough's Economic Growth Vision and Strategy to put Solihull on the map for investment in low carbon technologies.
Natural Environments	Includes actions relating to tree coverage, land use management and offsetting	7 goals, 28 actions, including 6 key actions	Communication & Engagement 37% of actions	6.2b Engage with private landowners to identify opportunities for tree and hedge planting through Planting Our Future or Arden Free Tree Scheme.
Energy Supply	Includes actions across understanding of feasibility of renewable technologies, and increasing renewable installations	6 goals, 15 actions, including 5 key actions	Research & Design 42% of actions	7.2a Explore ways to expand on or develop opportunities around large-scale energy storage solutions.
Council Influence	Includes key actions for SMBC to deliver relating to procurement and council behaviour change	4 goals, 11 actions, including 5 key actions	Implementation 78% of actions	8.4a Deliver Carbon Literacy Training, or a similar educational programme, to all Council staff & members and incorporate this training into the onboarding process.

# COSTS, CARBON SAVINGS & CO-BENEFITS

The areas identified as key to prioritizing the actions in the Net Zero Action Plan are the cost of delivering the action, the estimated associated carbon reductions and environmental, inclusive growth and health related co-benefits. Each goal was assessed to understand their impact in these areas, summarized below.



## 1. & 2. Tackling building emissions

Focusing on energy demand buildings is a key priority for the borough. Actions across the building sector are low to medium cost with a high payback, with the exception of maximising the number of buildings connected to Solihull's Town Centre Energy Network where costs are high. The carbon savings of these actions range from medium to high savings and can result in a number of co-benefits, including cost savings for businesses and residents, the creation of new low carbon jobs encouraging inclusive growth and reducing ill-health.



## 3. Tackling transport emissions

Solihull's transport emissions make up a significant proportion of overall emissions and will need combined efforts from a variety of stakeholders. The actions detailed in the Net Zero Action Plan are typically low to medium cost, with no direct cost payback. The carbon savings are either high or medium. Reducing transport emissions will help to improve air quality and health across the Borough while saving households money if modes shift to active and public transport.



## 4. Tackling waste emissions

Waste represents a small proportion of Solihull's carbon footprint, however actions to reduce waste and increase recycling can deliver multiple benefits. Costs of actions are low and carbon savings are low-medium.



## 5. Tackling industry emissions

Emissions from industrial processes and energy intensive industries are relatively low in Solihull and will require collaboration with organisations and national government. Costs are low with no direct payback and potential carbon savings are high. Emissions reduction within industry increases productivity and competitiveness of local businesses.



## 6. Tackling natural environment emissions

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment in Solihull has the potential to deliver multiple benefits not just carbon reduction. Costs are typically medium to low with the exception of addressing residual emissions through offsetting.



## 7. Tackling energy supply emissions

There are a number of opportunities to increase local renewable energy supply and decarbonise electricity and heat across the borough. Costs vary depending on the action and carbon savings are typically medium to high. Increasing renewable energy can help to improve access to low-cost energy and improve air quality, which is especially important for low-income communities.



## 8. Tackling council emissions and using the council's influence

The Council should lead the way for the borough by demonstrating best practice. These actions have a low cost, with no direct savings and medium carbon savings. Co-benefits include staff taking internal carbon reduction lessons learnt beyond the office into their communities.

# CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

## Conclusions

Achieving Solihull's ambition of net zero by 2041 will require rapid and significant shifts from current activities across all sectors. SMBC will need to work in close collaboration with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) to deliver the ambitious changes needed to meet the region's net zero goal. While this journey will require action from all actors across the Borough, there are also huge opportunities during this transition.

## Taking forward the Net Zero Action Plan

The next steps for SMBC will include:

- **Confirming priority action areas** as the council's role and ability to influence each action varies greatly
- **Allocating and seeking funding for additional resources** needed within the council to implement the Net Zero Action Plan
- Identify areas of opportunity to **work with WMCA, GBSLEP, other local authorities and central government**
- **Define accountability and governance structures** for key actions and agree on the process to **monitor and regularly track progress**
- **Working with key to external stakeholders** such as residents and businesses to define their roles in the net zero journey.

How can I get involved?

Net Zero Solihull Website

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