

**REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE**

DATE: 8th April 2022

**REPORT TITLE: CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY
STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

DIRECTOR: JESS LEE, HEAD OF STRATEGY & INNOVATION

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UPTON, SENIOR POLICY OFFICER**

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report provides an overview of the revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan including how it relates to the Green Recovery Fund, and outlines the intention to keep the Strategy and Action Plan under review.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Combined Authority has actively reviewed its key activities and work programme to reflect changing priorities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific issues relating to the Covid-19 situation that impact on or are addressed through this report are as follows:

- Providing a renewed ambition for addressing the climate and ecological emergency and ensuring that recovery from the pandemic is consistent with those aims.

Recommendation

- Approve a new Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan.

Background / Issues for Consideration

1. The West of England Climate and Ecological Strategy Emergency Strategy and Action Plan has been developed following agreement of the committee that the region needed a plan with increased ambition. The principles for the revised

plan were agreed by the committee in September 2021.

2. The Strategy and Action Plan sets out the scale of the challenge that we face and the actions we will take in response. In order to meet our 2030 ambitions we know that we will need to go further, faster to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. We will need to:
 - Cut 464kt of CO₂ each year (10% of today's total) to reach net zero by the end of 2030
 - Ensure that wildlife and the natural environment are in recovery, with their decline halted and (in line with the West of England Nature Partnership ambitions) the abundance of wildlife has increased by 30% by 2030
3. To do this, we will need to take action now and make hard decisions, including:
 - retrofitting 250,000 homes and 8,000 non-residential properties by 2030 in order to meet our carbon neutral ambitions.
 - Protecting wildlife – including increasing pollinator habitats and increasing the abundance of wildlife from 2020 levels by 30% by 2030
 - Drastically reduce the number of car journeys, facilitating a modal shift from private cars and reducing car mileage by 40% by 2030.
4. The Strategy & Action Plan highlights how we will:
 - Focus on taking action – we cannot afford further delays to reduce emissions and protect the environment
 - embed our goals within our policies, programmes and projects.
 - Facilitate a just transition – making sure no one gets left behind
 - support Unitary Authority partners and business and residents to take action to reduce emissions and halt the decline of wildlife
5. Since June 2021, progress has already been made including:
 - Creating a £50m Green Recovery Fund
 - Securing over £500m to help decarbonise transport through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement
 - Establishing a regional Climate Action Panel of key stakeholders and businesses across the region
 - Launching new programmes to support residents and businesses to learn new green skills.
6. The Strategy and Action Plan will inform the delivery of the Green Recovery Fund. Initial funding requests and business cases are presented to the

Committee for consideration to drive action on:

- Increasing scale & pace of retrofit within the region with the Retrofit Accelerator
 - Halting the decline of wildlife and creating more green spaces for pollinators & bees with the Community Pollinator Fund.
 - Reducing emissions from transport by increasing the amount of electric vehicle charging points.
7. However, even with this increased pace and scale of activity, we know we do not have all the levers available to us. We cannot achieve the ambitions working in isolation and the Strategy and Action Plan sets out where Government needs to step in to do more.
8. The Strategy and Action Plan is intended to support the prioritisation of our activity as a region based on the evidence available to us at this point in time. We will keep the plan under review to ensure that it is a living document that keeps pace with changes in our understanding of the challenge and is responsive to changes in the levers available to us to respond. The need to revised and adapt our response to these issues is particularly relevant in light of rising energy prices, the cost of living crisis and the impact of the situation in Ukraine.

Consultation

9. The Strategy and Action Plan has been developed in discussion with the Unitary Authorities and other stakeholders including through:
- Committee agreement of the refreshed principles (Sept committee)
 - Monthly meetings for energy action group
 - Co-production workshops with UAs
 - Climate Action Panel – full panel, bilaterals with each panel member & bespoke workshop
 - Discussion with environment officers steering group
10. In addition, the Climate workstream including the Strategy and Action Plan and associated Green Recovery Fund has been discussed at 5 committee meetings since June 2021 including agreement to the Green Recovery Fund in December 2021 and to indicative allocations January 2022.

Other Options Considered

11. Not developing a revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan has been considered. This has been discounted on the basis that a plan will enable action to be prioritised and ensure we are focused on the actions that will have most impact.

Risk Management/Assessment

12. The Climate & Ecological Strategy and Action Plan sets out how we tackle risks associated with the climate and ecological emergencies. Full risk assessments will be undertaken for each action or project outlined within the action plan as they are brought forward.

Public Sector Equality Duties

13. The public sector equality duty created under the Equality Act 2010 means that public authorities must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

14. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

15. The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

16. An Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment and Plan has been completed for the Climate & Ecological Strategy and Action Plan – see Appendix 1. It commits to carrying out more detailed Equality Impact Assessments for each individual project or programme as these are developed in detail and brought forward for approval.

Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:

17. There is no direct financial implications from this report. The strategy and plans will have financial implications that will be set out in more detail as part of the delivery reports as this progresses.

Advice given by: Selonge Russell, Head of Finance

Legal Implications:

18. Advice given by:

Climate Change Implications

19. The Climate & Ecological Strategy & Action Plan outlines the scale of the challenge caused by the climate and ecological emergencies and the actions that will be taken to reduce emissions and recover nature. The actions are the start of our work to address the emergencies.
20. Particular projects within the action plan will be subject to more detailed environmental assessment/consideration as necessary as part of their detailed project-specific management arrangements.

Land/property Implications

- 10 *Please state any land/property implications arising as a result of this report.*
- Advice given by:

Human Resources Implications:

- 11 *Please state any HR implications arising as a result of this report.*
- Advice given by:

Appendices:

List any appendices to the report:

Appendix 1 – Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment and Plan

Background papers:

Insert details (any documents listed will need to be made available for public inspection on request – where possible, insert links to documents quoted)

West of England Combined Authority Contact:

Report Author	Contact Details
Jess Lee	

Appendix 1

Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment and Plan

**Scheme - West of England Climate and Ecological Strategy and
Action Plan (CESAP)
SCHEME PROMOTER - WECA**

Step 1: What is the project / proposal?

Please briefly explain your project in Plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon. This section should explain how the project will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

1.1 What is the project?

A strategy and action plan for the West of England to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. The regional authority has set a target to achieve net zero by 2030 by drastically reducing emissions and ensuring that nature is in recovery, halting the decline of wildlife and the natural environment. The plan covers five key priority areas: low carbon transport, low carbon building and places, nature recovery, low carbon business and renewable energy. The overall ambition of the plan is to create and foster a more environmentally friendly region for all residents while contributing to the region's overall net zero ambitions. By reducing emissions and restoring and enhancing our natural environment, the Combined Authority can improve the health of our population through improved air and water quality, an increased uptake in active travel and an equitable distribution of new green funds and initiatives.

Step 2: What information is available?

Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the project.

2.1 What data or evidence is there that explains who could be affected by the project?

At the national level, the evidence is vast and clear - the climate emergency will continue to impact communities in unequal and disproportionate ways. For example, national data illustrates how:

- Rising energy prices are likely to hit lower income households disproportionately as they spend a higher proportion of their income on utility bills and are more likely to live in fuel poverty. ([ONS 2022](#))

- Ethnic communities and disadvantaged communities are hardest hit by air pollution - in England, the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods had higher air pollution levels than the least deprived neighbourhoods. ([Imperial College London 2015](#))
- People with disabilities are at great risk during power outages if they rely on electronic medical devices. Power outages could remove crisis alerts, social support and information sources to someone with communication impairments. ([Kings College 2021](#))

Similarly, local and national efforts to tackle the climate emergency often overlook the unique needs and circumstances of different communities. National level data demonstrates how by overlooking these factors, policies risk leaving already marginalised groups, further behind:

- National-level data tells us that women cycle half as much as men in the UK ([DfT 2021](#)) and 34% of women in London reported being very or quite worried when using public transport ([TFL 2018](#)).
- Black and Asian adults cycle at significantly lower levels than people from mixed ethnic backgrounds and White British people. 17% of White British people cycle at least once a week compared to 7-8% of Black and Asian adults. ([DfT 2020](#))
- Difficulty in accessing transport is the second most common barrier to work among people with disabilities - 52% of working age people with a disability stated difficulty in accessing bus services as a barrier. ([DfT 2020](#))

National level evidence is a key foundation to understand the current inequalities and inequities common across both the consequences of the climate emergency and the policies designed to mitigate it. There is a significant amount of both statistical and survey data - largely at the national level - that the Combined Authority has consulted to understand where inequalities lie.

2.2 Are there any gaps in the data?

Having access to more disaggregated data is critical when designing plans and programmes aimed at tackling problems that have disproportionate impacts on minority and disadvantaged communities. For this CESAP, the Combined Authority is aware that there is a lack of localised, disaggregated quantitative and

qualitative data which if available, could have provided a greater evidence base to support our ambitions and actions.

Ideally, the Combined Authority would have more local data on several key priority areas including but not limited to:

- Barriers to using low carbon transport for different segments of the population.
- Disaggregated data on access to green finance and green reskilling opportunities.
- Inequality in access to renewable energy sources and electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Differences in access to green space between the most advantaged and disadvantaged communities at the local level.

2.3 How have communities and groups that could be affected been involved / or will be involved?

All 5 priority areas have been developed with the principle of a just transition in mind. The Combined Authority included some specific action points in the plan to ensure different parts of the regional population have their say in the changes required to get the region to Net Zero. For example, the plan commits to:

- Launching a public consultation with a diverse sample from the population on a future transport system within the region to prioritise deliverable routes and mode by Autumn 2022.
- Working with all schools and colleges within the region to green their curriculum and ensure that skills provision is aligned to industry needs including renewable energy, biodiversity and ecology.

Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

Analysis of impacts on people with protected characteristics must be rigorous. Please demonstrate your analysis of any impacts in this section, referring to all of the equalities groups as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

3.1 Does the project / proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

Age - None identified

Disability - None identified

Gender Reassignment - None identified

Race - None identified

Religion or belief - None identified

Gender - None identified

Sexual Orientation - None identified

Marriage and Civil Partnership - None identified

Pregnancy and Maternity - None identified

3.2 Can these impacts be mitigated or justified? If so, how?

No adverse impacts were identified for any of the groups with protected characteristics.

3.3 Does the project / proposal create any benefits for people with protected characteristics?

The current CESAP is intended to be an overarching strategy and action plan for the future of the region. Our intention is to build out each of the 5 priority areas in more detail going forward with detailed Equality Impact Assessments for each individual project or programme. By doing so, we will be able to provide more detailed analysis of the impacts and benefits to those with protected characteristics as the action plan gets to a more granular, delivery stage. At this stage of the process, our commitment is to ensure the plan going forward accounts for groups with protected characteristics and ensures they are not adversely affected by any future actions. All 5 priority areas were developed with a 'just transition' in mind. The full benefits of achieving a net zero region where nature is in recovery by 2030 are only realised if the benefits reach all groups in the region. Once achieved, our priority areas of change will benefit the whole population, including people with protected characteristics. Below are some examples of how the CESAP will be inclusive, accessible and considerate of all communities and populations in the region:

Age

The action plan to follow will ensure people of all ages are not adversely affected by the actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. Examples of benefits to this population are:

- People of all ages will benefit from improved access to public transport. Young people will benefit from a new e-Bike service in Bristol and later throughout the wider region.
- Integrated and accessible ticketing options will benefit older people navigating the public transport network.

- Improved frequency and accessibility of rail and bus services will enable working-age persons to better access employment opportunities.
- Improved space on road networks will benefit older people who use wheelchairs.
- School-age children will benefit from new careers advice through the Careers Hub aimed at supporting key skills needed to support our 2030 ambitions.
- Young people at school and college will benefit from new green curriculums that aim to ensure they have access to work experience and training opportunities aligned with identified green skills gaps.

Disability

Projects and programmes that fall out of the action plan will ensure people with disabilities are not adversely affected by the actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. Examples of benefits to this population are:

- Integrated and accessible ticketing options will help people with disabilities better navigate the public transport network.
- Improved affordability of the transport network will benefit people with disabilities who often report public transport affordability concerns at a national and local level.
- Better bus shelters will benefit people with disabilities who use wheelchairs as they will include level access.
- Improved rail service accessibility (such as greater step-free access) and better transport information will benefit people with disabilities by ensuring they can gain better access to public transport.
- Improved space on road networks will benefit people with disabilities who use wheelchairs.

Gender Reassignment

Projects and programmes that fall out of the action plan will ensure the non-binary and transgender population are not adversely affected by the actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. An example of the future benefits to this population is:

- Improvements to bus stops including new real-time information displays to improve bus travel safety and security - benefitting groups who may not feel safe using public transport.

Race

Projects and programmes that fall out of the action plan will ensure people from all ethnic and racial minorities are not adversely affected by the actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. An example of the future benefits to this population is:

- Improved affordability of the transport network will benefit people from ethnic minorities who face unemployment rates at double the rate of people from white backgrounds and who are less likely to have access to a private vehicle ([DFT 2020](#)).

Religion or belief

Projects and programmes that fall out of the action plan will ensure people from all religious minorities are not adversely affected by the actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. An example of the future benefits to this population is:

- Improvements to bus stops including new real time information displays will improve bus travel safety and security - benefitting groups such as religious minorities who may not feel safe using public transport.

Gender

Projects and programmes that fall out of the action plan will ensure people of all genders - particularly women - are not adversely affected by the actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. Examples of the future benefits to this population are:

- Improved affordability of the transport network will benefit women who are more likely to work part-time, be on a lower-income and are less likely to have access to a private car ([DfT 2020](#)).
- Improvements to the road network to make space for cyclists will benefit women who often report feeling unsafe cycling on roads.

Sexual Orientation

Projects and programmes that fall out of the action plan will ensure people from all sexual minorities are not adversely affected by the

actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. An example of the future benefits to this population are:

- Improvements to bus stops including new real time information displays will improve bus travel safety and security - benefitting groups such as the LGBTQ+ population who may not feel safe using public transport.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

- No benefits identified.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Projects and programmes that fall out of the action plan will ensure new parents and pregnant people are not adversely affected by the actions we are taking and will benefit from the changes. Examples of the future benefits to this population are:

- Improved bus shelters will benefit people with pushchairs as they will include level access and will provide seating - a particularly important facility for pregnant people.
- Improved rail service accessibility (such as greater step-free access) will benefit people with pushchairs by ensuring they can gain better access to public transport.
- Improved air quality from reduced emissions will benefit pregnant people who require a healthy environment throughout pregnancy.

3.4 Can they be maximised? If so, how?

The Combined Authority's intention is to continue to deliver benefits to all groups with protected characteristics and other underserved communities by consulting with affected communities and feeding their input back into the action plan. We will continually monitor our progress and ensure the benefits are being felt across all segments of the population, and where they are lacking, we will strive to make improvements. Critically, we will seek to improve the data we have available at a disaggregated, local level to enable us to identify gaps and work to level them.

Step 4: Impact and assessment

This section asks how your understanding of impacts on people with protected characteristics has influenced your proposal, and how the findings can be measured going forward.

4.1 How has the impact assessment informed or changed the project / proposal?

The Strategy and Action Plan was developed with a clear focus on achieving a 'just transition'. The CESAP made it clear that the decisions we made would 'not adversely affect specific social groups'. As a result, all action points were formulated with both this principle in mind, and the evidence from national data that illustrate how inequities across climate policy and climate inaction remain a growing concern.

The Combined Authority intends to continue to grow our local evidence base as much as practicable, including through consultations with diverse and representative samples of the population across all priority areas while developing methods of gathering more quantitative data.

4.2 What actions have been identified going forward? Reference in Objectives and Actions table

Our detailed objectives and actions will be developed at a later stage, we are currently only setting out an overarching strategy and high-level action plan across the 5 priority themes.

4.3 How will the impact of your project / proposal and actions be measured moving forward?

Our intention is to use the indicators of progress within the CESAP to build out a more detailed understanding of whether progress has been felt equitably across different parts of the population. Where possible, we will disaggregate our metrics to better understand where our efforts are having the biggest impact. Ideally, the metrics we use will generate a more disaggregated understanding of where these changes are being made.

Based on the availability of local data and the Combined Authority's resources, we aim to improve the evidence base around communities with protected characteristics to continuously measure and monitor the distribution of benefits that will arise from climate action.

Additionally, we intend to create more detailed Equality Impact Assessments for each individual project or programme as these are developed in detail and brought forward for approval. The availability of national and regional data will inform the extent to which equality impact can be assessed at the local level.

Objectives and Actions

Our intention is to build out each of the 5 priority areas in more detail going forward with detailed Equality Impact Assessments for each individual project or programme. At this stage, we are only setting out a strategy and a high-level action plan which encompasses a commitment that future actions will benefit groups with protected characteristics and not adversely affect them.