

**Minutes of the Climate Emergency Taskforce
(virtual teleconference)**

06 October 2021 (6.00pm – 8.00pm)

Present: Councillor Matt Bryan, Councillor Paul Bowers, Councillor Gillian Edwards, Councillor Simon Eardley, Councillor Bob Cernik, Councillor Karen Shore, Steve Hughes, Julian Brooks, Alistair Jeffs, Simon Dowell, Niall Macfadyen, Charlotte Harris, Adam Briggs, Isabelle Rayner, Rebecca Collins, Ashley Rogers, David Brown, Melissa Crellin, Anja Miller, Eliza Doran, Charlie Seward, Stephanie Anderson, Will Pearson

Apologies: Cllr Gina Lewis, Cllr Christine Warner, Cllr Jill Houlbrook, Andrew Lewis, Gemma Davies, Ged Barlow, Charlie Steer, Mark Thompson, Phil McCabe.

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the teleconference meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gina Lewis, Cllr Christine Warner, Cllr Jill Houlbrook, Andrew Lewis, Gemma Davies, Ged Barlow, Charlie Steer, Mark Thompson, Phil McCabe.

3 Declarations of interest

- No new interests were declared.

4 MINUTES

DECIDED: That

(1) the minutes of the Climate Emergency Taskforce held on 26 July be approved. Cllr Paul Bowers proposed the minutes, and Cllr Simon Eardley seconded the minutes.

5 Public Questions

There were no requests for public speaking time submitted.

6 Business Engagement – Julian Brooks, Ashley Rogers

Julian Brooks, Regional Director of Commercial Banking at Natwest, described the work that the bank is doing to tackle climate change. He noted that Natwest is a sponsor of COP26 and has embedded net-zero as a key corporate driver, achieving net zero for its own direct carbon emissions last year. The bank is working with a range of partners, including with Microsoft to launch a carbon calculator for SMEs, which is currently in the pilot stage, planned to be launched early next year. Natwest have previously launched a carbon calculator for retail customers. Julian noted that Natwest had a goal of providing £20bn in climate finance which has been exceeded. Focusing on SME clients, Julian noted the capabilities they were seeking to give to customers. Senior managers within the bank have been accredited via courses from the University of Edinburgh and Cambridge University, and this training is continuing with relationship managers in specific sectors, e.g. agriculture, receiving accredited training. This forms the basis of Natwest's proposition. Julian described that he managed 450 SME clients, and noted that clients were split into a range of notional categories. Some clients are

highly engaged, many are on the journey to monitor their emissions, some do not understand how to measure their footprint. There are clients who do not view climate change and carbon reduction as a priority, and then finally, a very small proportion who will not engage until legislation forces them to do so. It was described that Natwest's responsibility was to understand what is going on in the geography, and provide effective signposting to the support that can be provided to clients by a wide range of partners, including LEPs, Local authorities, Universities and others.

Niall McFadyen noted that at the COP26 event in Thornton Science Park, there was an organisation encouraging businesses to pledge to achieve carbon neutrality through offsets. Julian described that Natwest did not direct clients to specific offsets, but if clients want to understand offsets then they had an active offer to raise awareness of the offset market/offset opportunities.

Charlotte Harris discussed that there were locally available offsets, such as via the Wildlife Trust, and asked how to get on the signposting list. Julian offered to have a follow-up conversation with Charlotte to understand this in more detail.

Adam Briggs, from the National Farmers Union, asked how agricultural and farming clients could tap into the offsetting market. Julian discussed that this was a great question, but that he did not look after the agricultural clients, this sat within a separate team. He described that broadly, they were committed to supporting farmers via a range of means, both funding but importantly education as well. Mike Hogg noted the potential of anaerobic digestion of dairy farming within Cheshire West and Chester.

Ashley Rogers, Commercial Director, North Wales and Mersey Dee Business Council, presented the next element of the presentation. Ashley described that NWMD's work fell into three primary areas, awareness, information and inspiration. These were linked to campaigning for and promoting major investments, secondly, pushing for extra business support for businesses to decarbonise, and finally information sharing with members.

Ashley noted that an example of information sharing was the NWMD summit event on 24 February, which was attended by 300 business representatives. NWMD are also central to developing and promoting Growth Track 360, and the Mersey Dee Alliance Fiscal Stimulus package bid. Ashley also described that the NWMD business Council also had a major net zero event at the end of May. Ashley set out that future work would involve publication of a basic guide for business support on the journey to net zero, a net zero report for north wales, the set-up of a net zero network for the NWMD business Council, and ongoing support for public and private sector investment. Jane Harrad-Roberts asked whether the event would go-ahead next year, and Ashley confirmed that this was the case. Simon Dowell asked how biodiversity and natural capital were addressed with SMEs. Ashley acknowledged the need to recognise biodiversity and natural capital, and noted that the journey to net zero was used as a proxy for environmental impact. He agreed that there was a need to produce an environmental impact score via which projects could be assessed. Ashley described that the Mersey Dee fiscal stimulus package included provision of environmental advice for businesses. Simon Dowell also noted the importance of COP15 – the biodiversity COP, and outlined the importance of having shared targets for biodiversity and natural capital.

7 Chester Sustainability Forum Update

Steve Hughes presented an update on the work of the Chester Sustainability Forum, and discussed that the group were hosting an event on 6 November 2021 at Chester Cathedral, from 10-5pm. There will be 25 speakers, in the cloisters of the cathedral, covering a wide range of topics, including transport, energy, waste, land use, education and climate action. Steve also described that there will be an expert panel and a dance performance, which will close the expo. Cllr Bryan asked if there are any other speakers that the Council could facilitate for the expo. Will Pearson asked Steve how the Council could best support the forum. Steve discussed that there was still an opportunity to broaden the forum, and invited anyone interested in getting involved to contact him. Niall Macfadyen asked regarding whether there was any potential to expand the forum to be Cheshire-west wide. Steve discussed that this was of interest, and was something that had been explored but the interest in expanding had not been overwhelming in other localities, but it was discussed that this could be an area of renewed focus.

8 Cheshire Sustainability Expo

Mike Hogg and Jane Harrad-Roberts, introduced the work of the Cheshire Sustainability Expo group, Cheshire Heritage and Sustainability Enterprises. There are two particular focuses, bringing the disused pumping station on the River Dee back into use as an educational centre, and the second focus is the Green Expo. There is a plan to hold this event annually, the first event will be held between the 16th-19th June 2022. It will have a number of components, a four-day exhibition in Castle Drive, looking at 40-50 stands in Castle Drive. The second component is a Green Heart of England conference, inviting speakers to talk about green investment and green initiatives, including an inward investment seminar. The final component will be an awards dinner to offer the opportunity to celebrate individual and team efforts in green energy. Mike discussed that significant progress had been made so far, including setting up a CIC, securing support from the Council, LEP, Zoo and University. The event's locations have been informally secured, and the group are in discussion with the Zoo and Eaton hall regarding the event. Plans and budgets are in place, with further detail to be refined. Jane noted that it was important that there was an educational aspect to the conference, so this will be built in, and collateral will be shared with the group. Niall noted that the thing that would make the inward investment conference successful was if Cheshire West was selected as a Phase 1 Cluster sequencing site.

9 Green Pledges and COP26 Communications:

Alistair Jeffs, Will Pearson and Stephanie Anderson presented on the approach to the Green Pledges campaign, and COP26 communications. Alistair set out that the Green Pledges was a campaign started by Cheshire West Voluntary Action in partnership with the Chester Sustainability Forum. The campaign has been supported by over 30 organisations to date. Will Pearson described that the Council has supported the Green Pledges since their inception, discussing that the Council had supported the pledges in February 2021. Will discussed that the recommendation was for the Taskforce to review the proposed pledges. The pledges were as follows:

Pledge	Existing Work
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<p>1. Flying – The Council will continue to minimise personal and business air flights;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the pre-pandemic data for 2018-19, the Council utilised 7 return flights for non-service users. On the basis of the most recent data, from March 2021, no flights have been utilised. The Council's use of flying is therefore minimal, and the use of low carbon methods is encouraged via the Council's climate communications.
<p>2. Car emissions – The Council will continue to reduce business mileage and change to electric and renewably fuelled vehicles;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a key consideration in the Council's carbon management plan. The Council claimed 1,896,894.11 less business miles in 20/21 compared with 19/20 and 474,343.00 less rail miles saving 458 tCO₂e.
<p>3. Consumption – The Council will proactively attempt to reduce its resource consumption;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has adopted a new Social Value procurement policy which embeds emission reduction and resource efficiency as a core consideration.
<p>4. Reuse and recycle – The Council will support residents to increase reuse and recycling of resources;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is one of the UK's leading waste and recycling authorities, topping Eunomia's carbon table in 2020, and the Climate Emergency Response plan includes actions and targets relating to increasing recycling rates.
<p>5. 100 per cent renewable energy – The Council will move towards using 100 per cent renewable energy sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council purchases 100% renewable electricity and is decarbonising heat across its corporate estate via switching to Air Source Heat Pumps.
<p>6. Low Carbon Industry - The Council will ensure its resources contribute to achieving a rapid transition to decarbonised industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is working intensively with businesses through partnerships such as the Cheshire Energy Hub and Net Zero North West to promote the decarbonisation of industry.
<p>7. Eat healthy, eat local – the Council will promote the role of local food producers, to reduce transport emissions associated with imported food, and promote healthy eating and lifestyles in-line with the Council's Healthy Weight pledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of eating locally is an element of the Council's communications approach to residents, and the Council has signed up to the Healthy Weight pledge to encourage healthy eating and lifestyle choices.
<p>8. Food waste – The Council will seek to reduce food waste.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council works with its suppliers and companies, such as Edsential, to ensure that food waste is minimised and the environmental impacts of food are minimised. Edsential became the world's first certified sustainable palm oil catering company in 2019.
<p>9. Protecting our trees – The Council will continue to commit to planting and maintaining more trees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has set a target within the Climate Emergency Response Plan of

	delivering 60/ha year of new tree planting by 2024.
10. Single Use Plastics – The Council will continue to work to reduce the use of single use plastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 13 December 2018 we pledged to become a single-use plastic free authority, this was re-iterated in the Climate Emergency Response Plan, which further reinforces the Council's requirement to reduce single use plastics.

Will discussed that the Council would produce a series of press releases over the next month, linked to the Pledges and COP26. Will asked the Taskforce whether they supported the pledges. Mike Hogg noted that Chester was the first city in the world to be palm oil zero and recommended that the green pledges campaign should be linked to this, recommended that CHALC be utilised as a network, and recommended that there could be a competition. Alistair discussed that this would be taken forward. Arnold Wilkes asked a question regarding the suitability of installing heat pumps in terraced housing. Cllr Bryan discussed that a response would be provided to Arnold outside the meeting on how these technical challenges were being addressed. Adam Briggs, National Farmers Union discussed the benefits of supporting local food production, expressed concerns regarding meat-free days and discussed the presentation of tree planting figures such as 60 hectares as this can seem a daunting amount, however if the opportunity is framed around the potential of planting trees that are ancillary to agriculture on the edges of fields, this can seem much more attainable. Ashley Rogers noted that Compass group have started putting environmental labels on meals served, and recommended that this should be reviewed. Cllr Eardley noted the pledge on single use plastics, and asked that we should demonstrate clear and demonstrable change in our use of single use plastic. He recommended that Giki could be a very positive opportunity to explore both individually and corporately. Will assured Cllr Eardley that Giki was being reviewed at a corporate level for adoption. Niall Macfadyen recommended that representatives read the national food strategy which calls for 30% less meat over 10 years. He also discussed that his perspective was that Cheshire dairy was the most efficient in the world, therefore supporting the 30% target was not incongruous with supporting Cheshire farming, as it should be less efficient and effective producers whose business models are affected. Jane Harrad-Roberts noted the risk of "Cop-out" with people getting saturated with COP/climate related news, so advocated that news should be kept simple and clear. Simon Dowell, Science Director of Chester Zoo thanked colleagues for their recognition of the Zoo's work in leading the Sustainable Palm Oil city campaign, and recommended that a further Green Pledge be added to reflect the need to eliminate un-sustainable palm oil from supply chains. Will agreed to work with Simon on this.

Stephanie Anderson reviewed the Council's approach to COP26 communications, noting that the main objectives of COP were mitigation, adaptation, finance and collaboration. Stephanie reviewed the stakeholders, goals, channels, key challenges and tactics in the Council's climate communications campaign. The local engagement campaign was described as leading in to COP26, including case studies and the launch of the Climate Emergency Inspire site for people and communities to share their stories. Stephanie provided a demonstration of the Climate Emergency Inspire site and its functionality, and outlined the timeline of

COP climate communications. Rebecca Collins noted the importance of ensuring that youth senate members contributed to the discussions, and Cllr Bryan discussed that he would ensure that youth senate members feel able to contribute to the discussions.

Cllr Bryan thanked all attendees for their contributions.

9 Next Steps:

Cllr Bryan discussed that the next meeting will take place in November focused on housing and land use.