

## Net Zero Council

In February 2021, East Riding of Yorkshire Council declared a climate emergency and confirmed our ambition to be net zero by 2050. This target relates to reducing the emissions that are produced from our services and operations. Whilst we have set this initial target, our intention is to continually review this to reflect our ambition and ability to meet an earlier deadline.

To achieve this will require significant investment in decarbonisation projects and embedding a strong culture of climate awareness across the organisation so our staff feel empowered to make change.

Our established Environmental Policy, Environmental Management System and Carbon and Energy Management Strategy will continue to drive forward positive action to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

### **What we have done**

Over the previous decade, we have undertaken an array of carbon reduction initiatives, significantly reducing the authority's carbon footprint. These initiatives have included:

- through the award of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding we have been able to undertake a range of decarbonisation solutions on Council buildings such as Bridlington Spa and County Hall, including energy efficient lighting and windows, insulation, air source heat pumps and new air conditioning.
- the installation of photovoltaic panels (PVs) on buildings, leisure centres, offices, and social housing across the East Riding.
- lighting improvement schemes, including the replacement of inefficient lighting with LED lights across council sites.
- the installation of electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure across Council sites, including leisure centres and at over 15 Council owned car parks.
- the rollout of seven new zero-emission electric vans, three electric cars and one electric minibus for the council to use in delivering services, with charging points installed at three of our depots.
- the installation of a solar farm at the Council's South Cliff Holiday Park, in Bridlington.
- securing funding towards installing low carbon heating and making improvements to energy efficiency for a limited number of housing – so far the council has helped install over 650 air source heat pumps in Council owned homes.
- the installation of high-energy efficient boilers and ground source heat pumps at a limited number of Council maintained schools.
- the development of an environmental management e-learning package to give staff an awareness of the environmental impacts of the Council.

### **Key Challenges & Opportunities**

Challenges to Delivery

**Old building stock** – We own and manage a number of old or even historical listed buildings, which tend to have a lower energy performance than modern buildings, and for the latter, it limits options for energy efficiency improvements.

**Energy costs** – Despite reducing our overall energy consumption overtime, the total energy costs for the Council have actually risen, largely due to the increase in price of grid supplied electricity.

**Scale of council operations** – With an estimated 6,209 corporate employees, 4,955 school-based employees, services ranging from libraries to highways maintenance to social care, the scale and complexity for reaching net zero as a large unitary authority should not be underestimated.

**Homeworking** – The increase in homeworking since the Covid-19 pandemic has reduced emissions from staff commuting, but the increase in domestic energy and heating use at our staff homes will have to be factored into the Council's carbon footprint. Calculating and reducing these emissions poses a challenge.

#### Opportunities

**Business travel** – There are many potential ways to reduce emissions associated with business travel at the authority, through the use of lower emission vehicles, pool car schemes, car sharing and the transition to online events.

**Schools** – Many schools managed by the authority have an energy performance that is below the national average suggesting there are many opportunities for dedicated energy project work with our schools.

**Scope 3 emissions** – The indirect emissions that occur from our activities are estimated to make up 70-80% of our overall carbon footprint, yet we are only at the starting point for understanding and tacking action to reduce these.

**Behaviour change** - Changing how we work and live on a daily basis has an important role in reducing the further onset of climate change. Moving forward we will explore different interventions to change behaviour potentially including climate literacy training for staff, campaigns on environmentally conscious behaviour and providing supporting mechanism to encourage change.

**Agile transformation** – The Councils agile project, leading on the transition to becoming a more modern, flexible and responsive workforce brings more opportunities for staff to work digitally or from work hubs, potentially closer to their residence. This brings opportunities for reducing unnecessary travel.

#### Areas of Action

*Please note that until the final Climate Change Strategy has been approved, we have chosen to use the wording 'East Riding of Yorkshire Council can.' Once the Strategy has been fully consulted on internally and with the public we will commit to 'East Riding of Yorkshire Council will.'*

East Riding of Yorkshire Council can...

- Explore how to integrate climate change further into decision-making processes within the Council.
- Through our Carbon and Energy Management Strategy process, maximise opportunities to reduce carbon emissions across our range of assets, including:
  - Council owned buildings (e.g. offices, leisure centres, libraries)
  - Council maintained schools
  - Street lighting
  - Council fleets vehicles.
- Look to reduce scope 3 emissions by better understanding emissions that occur indirectly as a result of the Council's activity, including from procured goods and services, outsourced contracts, staff commuting and homeworking.
- Include climate change as a cross-cutting theme within the update of the Council's Environmental Policy, illustrating its linkages with the wider sustainability themes of the Policy and to raise opportunities for joint-action.
- Explore the rollout of a carbon literacy programme.
- Explore further the financial implications of meeting a target of net zero by 2050 (or sooner) to support financial planning and budgeting within the authority.
- Look to expand our sustainability and climate change section of the Council's website, providing information updates on climate action in East Riding and tips for us all to reduce our personal carbon footprint
- Continue to provide updates on our response to climate change through *Your East Riding* and on social media platforms.
- Explore options to bring people together across East Riding to discuss recommendations for climate action and partnership working, for instance, through a climate assembly, digital forum or through community groups.
- Share our experience and best practice of carbon reduction with parish councils, businesses and communities.
- Work with public sector partners (such as the Association for Public Service Excellence and the Local Government Association) to share knowledge and delivery of carbon reduction in local government.
- Collaborate with young people in East Riding to ensure they have a fundamental role in how we can respond to climate change moving forward.