



CHAPTER TWO

# **CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In February 2019, Wiltshire Council acknowledged the climate emergency and resolved to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. It also committed to make the Council itself carbon neutral by 2030.

We fully support these objectives and will work hard to implement solutions to make these commitments a reality. This is not a political choice: this is a necessity. The scale and urgency of the problem, supported by extensive scientific evidence, requires decisive and consistent action by government, local authorities and other governmental agencies, utilities, businesses, communities and, indeed, us all as individuals.

Fortunately, many of the solutions will make our county a better place to live. Investment in the green economy will create jobs and provide new opportunities for people. Alternatives to fossil fuel-based transport will provide people with more choice and improve air quality, leading to better health. Energy conservation and green energy will help to lift people out of fuel poverty. Encouraging cycling and walking will improve the health of residents. Planting new woodlands will improve biodiversity and improve the amenity value of open spaces.

## LABOUR WILL

- Provide the leadership and support that the county needs to reduce carbon emissions in the county to meet the 2030 target.
- Actively support the development of renewable energy in the county.
- Establish an accessible framework to support homeowners with improving the energy efficiency of their properties and with retrofitting green energy installations.
- Require all new homes to be zero net carbon.
- Develop public transport in Wiltshire so that it provides a real alternative to private car use.
- Upgrade the Council's transport fleet to electric vehicles and establish a county network of EV charging points.
- Invest in developing the network of cycle routes within the county.
- Set and achieve ambitious targets for waste recycling and landfill reduction.
- Put in place a strategy to reduce food miles and support local producers.
- Improve the biodiversity of Wiltshire.

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## PROVIDING LEADERSHIP TO WILTSHIRE

Wiltshire Council is uniquely placed to provide the leadership and support that the county needs to reduce carbon emissions in the county and meet the 2030 target.

By taking an evidence-led approach, based on clear data and a baseline assessment of carbon usage to assist in determining priorities, we will establish a dashboard of measures to track progress. We will also provide the support and tools to enable town and parish councils, schools, businesses and other organisations to audit their carbon emissions and develop carbon reduction strategies.

We'll strive to raise knowledge and understanding of the Climate Emergency with councillors, officers, schools, employers and the public, and raise awareness of positive action that can be undertaken. We will engage with communities, young people, employers, farmers, technology companies and environmental organisations to harness their ideas and creativity.

Above all, we will provide leadership to stress the urgency and scale of the Climate Emergency in order to motivate and empower people to take action, and to act as a catalyst for change.

## TOWARDS RENEWABLE ENERGY

Energy usage is estimated to account for over 50% of carbon emissions in Wiltshire. Reducing this through energy conservation and the development of renewable energy must form an important part of any carbon reduction strategy.

Labour will extend Wiltshire Council's investment in renewable energy, implementing energy conservation and energy generation measures on public buildings and on council houses. We will also generate renewable energy on suitable council-owned sites.

Labour will ensure that Wiltshire Council establishes a planning framework that supports renewable energy developments and works with local communities and businesses to ensure that these are located in the right places.

We'll also develop and implement a Community Energy Strategy for Wiltshire. This will provide expert advice and assistance to community groups, parish and town councils, who are seeking to develop Community Energy Initiatives. In addition to practical advice and support with grant-funding applications, this could potentially also include support with procurement, legal issues, financing and management of risk.

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## MAKING HOMES MORE ENERGY-EFFICIENT

There is enormous potential to support homeowners in reducing their carbon emissions by improving the energy efficiency of their houses (through better insulation) and by retrofitting renewable energy installations (such as solar panels or ground source heat pumps).

Labour will establish and promote an accessible framework to support homeowners implementing these measures. This framework will include technical advice, support with accessing grant funding, and links to a trusted trader scheme.

We will support communities looking to establish Community Buying Schemes (such as the one run by Zero Chippenham), and offer discounts to private households for installing approved energy efficiency and renewable energy generation materials/devices.

## BUILDING BETTER

In 2015, the Conservatives ditched legislation made in 2006 by the last Labour Government which would have required all new homes to be net zero carbon by 2016. This was short-sighted. Building better remains an important element of our commitment to address the Climate Emergency.

Labour will use planning controls to require all new developments to be net zero carbon. We'll make sure that Local Plans include robust targets for sustainable development and biodiversity (such as tree-planting), with greater transparency in the planning process to ensure that every developer delivers the environmental benefits they promised.



# CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO CAR USE

Transport is estimated to account for 40% of carbon emissions in Wiltshire. We will seek to extend and improve public transport in Wiltshire so that it offers a real alternative to car use. There are many challenges involved in making bus services economically viable in rural areas, but other councils have shown that, by taking innovative approaches in conjunction with local communities and commercial bus operators, and also by working with new technologies, these services can be made a success.

A Labour council will work closely with local communities through town and parish councils to understand demand for new or more frequent bus services. We will work with commercial bus operators to establish new routes to meet demand with both regular and demand-responsive services. We'll provide a Wiltshire Council IT platform with a mobile phone App to allow residents a simple one-stop service for finding bus routes and getting real-time information on bus movements.

Commercial bus operators are already investing in using lower emission and lower pollution vehicles and electric buses now operate the Salisbury Park-and-Ride service. We will work with commercial bus and coach operators in Wiltshire to support the transition to electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

## SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The transition to electric vehicles will be a key element of decarbonising transport. While the range of electric cars is increasing, and prices are starting to come down, take-up is hampered by a lack of an electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

We'll establish a network of Electric Vehicle Charging points throughout the county, starting with town and village car parks, and then extending to on-street parking points. We will do this by securing funding from government sources, such as the Office of Low Emission Vehicles, and establishing a partnership with an electric infrastructure provider, either through an "Own and Operate" model or through a shared revenue model, whichever offers best value.

We'll progressively upgrade the Council's own transport fleet to electric vehicles through the routine replacement programme.

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## PROMOTING CYCLING AND WALKING

Finding ways to encourage more active travel, such as cycling and walking has to be an important part of decarbonising transport.

Labour will work with town councils to ensure that all Wiltshire towns have a plan for developing pedestrian routes and safe cycle networks. We'll also work with other partners, such as Sustrans, to develop the national cycle network within Wiltshire. Crucially, we'll also focus on the development of an extensive county network of cycle routes, connecting villages with each other, and to the nearest towns.

We will increase investment in the development of this infrastructure through re-prioritisation within the overall highways budget, by accessing nationally available funds, and using planned highway maintenance programmes to build in improvements to road layouts to make cycling safer.

## TOWARDS ZERO WASTE

Wiltshire currently recycles 45% of its waste. Although improving, this is still a long way behind the leading local authorities, which are achieving up to 65%. Wiltshire still diverts 19,000 tonnes of waste to landfill each year, so clearly there is much more that can be done.

We will undertake a thorough review of Wiltshire Council's strategy for waste reduction and recycling, and we will set robust targets, with an annual scorecard, backed up by strategies based on the hierarchy of: reduce, reuse, recycle, recover energy, and regard landfill as a last resort.

**We anticipate that this strategy will include:**

- Working with local businesses to reduce packaging and utilise alternatives to plastics.
- Promote re-use and up-cycling in conjunction with local charities.
- Trial and then expand the collection of food waste.
- Utilisation of new technologies working with local firms, such as Recycling Technologies of Swindon.
- Putting more effort into raising public awareness of recycling options, including working with schools to educate and motivate future generations.

We will oppose plans for the development of a waste incinerator at Westbury. This would be a significant source of pollution and will further increase traffic congestion through Westbury and nearby villages.

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## REDUCING FOOD MILES

We will put in place a strategy to reduce food miles and support local producers.

### This will include:

- Local branding - working with partners and local enterprises to establish a “Wiltshire” brand that consumers can trust, based on product quality, environmental sustainability, animal welfare standards and responsible employment. This will also help promote and market Wiltshire produce and products.
- Establishing a Local Food Network - bringing together food producers who want to work with each other to establish a Wiltshire Local Food Network. This will be a mutually owned co-operative - sharing the costs of marketing and distribution will bring much needed scale and support to producers.
- Collaborating with town and parish councils to establish and promote more outlets for small producers, such as farmers markets.
- Sourcing local suppliers for canteens and cafes run by Wiltshire Councils, and encouraging schools and other organisations in Wiltshire to do the same.

We recognise that there is also growing demand among people for allotments. Labour will work with town and parish councils to identify and establish more sites for allotments and community orchards.

## BIODIVERSITY

Local authorities have a legal duty towards conserving biodiversity. We aim to improve biodiversity in Wiltshire by:

- Ensuring that all developments contribute towards enhancing biodiversity and habitat creation, and deliver a biodiversity net gain proportionate to their scale.
- Putting in place biodiversity management plans for each of the Council’s main sites.
- Promoting and supporting the implementation of biodiversity management plans with schools, parish and town councils, and other organisations.
- Improving management of highway verges to support biodiversity.
- Working in partnership with farmers to support their transition to more environmentally sustainable farming methods.
- Making available land for tree planting, re-wilding and other conservation initiatives.
- Supporting local environmental groups with grants and resources to deliver local improvements.