

This report is public	
Climate Action Update	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	6 January 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities, Councillor Tom Beckett
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	4 December 2025
Report of	Climate Change Programme Manager, Hitesh Mahawar

## Purpose of report

To update Executive on progress made across Council and District Climate Programmes, including delivery against the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Performance KPIs, and Annual Development Plan (ADP) targets.

## 1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To note the progress achieved against the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Performance KPIs, and Annual Development Plan (ADP) targets between April 2024 and September 2025. As a part of periodic updates climate team is intending to bring this report annually.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the Council's Climate Action Programme covering the period April 2024 to September 2025. It summarises progress against the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Performance KPIs, and Annual Development Plan (ADP) targets, highlighting key achievements, and strategic developments.

- 2.2 Key achievements include:

- Securing over £1 million through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) Phase 4 bid for energy efficiency upgrades.
- Completion of Phase 1 of the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) and mobilisation of Phase 2.
- Development of the Carbon Impact Assessment tool (Carbon Budget tool) and its pilot use in capital project planning.
- Establishment of the Climate Change Programme Board (CCPB) as the governing body for strategic climate oversight and LAEP Phase 2.

- Executive approval for transitioning CDC's fleet to HVO fuels, replacing diesel with a renewable fuel source for 90 heavy goods vehicles used in waste collection and other services across north Oxfordshire.
  - This change, agreed by the Executive on 2 September 2025, will reduce fleet emissions around 80%, cutting overall council emissions by 25–30% and saving an estimated 1,150 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over two years.
  - HVO fuel is produced from vegetable and waste oils, primarily used cooking oils, offering a cleaner and more sustainable alternative to fossil diesel.
- Through recycling initiatives, council collected and recycled 64 tonnes of Small Waste Electricals, around 50 tonnes of coffee pods, and 16 tonnes of consumer batteries, supporting circular economy principles.
- Current recycling rate stands at 53.2%, consistently improving year-on-year and 10% higher than England's average.
- CDC Executive (4 November 2025) agreed to award contract for Lot 2 (CDC package) under OxLEVI (Oxfordshire Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) enabling EV charging provision in CDC-owned car parks.
  - Preferred bidder committed to deliver minimum 136 lower-power chargers and 10 higher-power chargers across 19 sites (Banbury: 10, Bicester: 7, Kidlington: 2) subject to feasibility.
  - Target completion for programme: end of 2027.
- Biodiversity & Nature Recovery
  - Ells Farm Habitat Bank (Bloxxham): Cherwell's first-ever habitat bank launched in partnership with Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE). A Section 106 agreement signed, enabling creation of new habitats such as native woodlands, ponds, and wildflower meadows, supporting biodiversity net gain locally.
  - Otmoor Habitat Bank: Second habitat bank established with RSPB, creating a 21-hectare wetland reserve to support rare wading birds (lapwing, redshank, curlew, snipe) and ecologically valuable plant and invertebrate species.

Both initiatives increase the opportunity for developers' off-site biodiversity contributions to remain within Cherwell, delivering long-term nature recovery aligned with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

- CDC has strengthened its environmental stewardship through the Local Plan Review 2042, embedding climate actions and sustainability principles across development policies.
- Appointment of Flood Risk Officer to enhance climate resilience and flood response.
- Commissioning, finalising, and review of multiple studies including net zero pathways for Council's and District emissions, and Solar Strategy.
- Expanding climate team from a one (permanent) to a four (2 permanent, 2 temporary) member team.
- Raising the profile of Climate Team and internal and external visibility through extensive stakeholder engagement.

2.3 The Climate Change Strategy is under development and will integrate both organisational and district-wide emissions. A draft is expected to be presented to the Executive in early Q4, 2025-2026.

## Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications		Commentary		
<b>Finance</b>		<p>There are no finance implications arising directly from this report. However, if the individual measures required to achieve the Climate Change Strategy and the Climate Action Plan as adopted cannot be funded from existing budgets or new external grants, a business case will need to be prepared for consideration by the Executive.</p> <p>Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), 12 December 2025</p>		
<b>Legal</b>		<p>There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The Climate Change Act 2008 set a national target for the UK to reduce its emissions by 80% by 2050 compared to its 1990 levels. While there is no statutory duty placed on Local Authorities under this legislation it is generally understood that local government plays a critical role in achieving these targets.</p> <p>Cherwell declared a climate emergency in 2019 looking to do its part to support the district in becoming carbon net zero, and ensuring that its own operations and activities are carbon net zero by 2030.</p> <p>Climate emergency declarations hold a legally ambiguous position but it is important to note they are a potential mechanism to challenge decisions taken by a local authority who has made one. The Council also has a duty to report its greenhouse gas emissions and this report helps it to achieve that duty.</p> <p>The report indicates that despite significant investment in renewable technologies the Council's emissions have increased slightly rather than decreased. The report does provide some explanatory points in relation to why this is.</p> <p>It is important to interrogate our spending in line with our duties of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and to ensure that we are complying with our fiduciary duty towards spending public money.</p> <p>Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal, 19 December 2025</p>		
<b>Risk Management</b>		<p>This is an information report, as such there are no risk implications arising as a direct consequence of it.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 11 December 2025</p>		
<b>Impact Assessments</b>	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
<b>Equality Impact</b>				N/A
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could				N/A

impact on inequality?				
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				N/A
<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>	x			This report supports the Council's climate agenda and demonstrates progress toward efforts in reducing carbon emissions and achieving net zero targets.
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>				N/A
<b>Data Impact</b>				N/A
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>				N/A
<b>Council Priorities</b>	The report aligns with the Council's strategic priority of Environmental Stewardship and supports its vision of enabling positive, lasting change.			
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A			
<b>Property</b>	N/A			
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>	The Climate Team has actively engaged with key internal and external stakeholders to advance actions under the Climate Action Plan and broader climate agenda.			

## Supporting Information

### 3. Background

- 3.1 Cherwell District Council's Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a key strategic framework supporting the Council's ambition to become a net zero organisation and district. The CAP is monitored quarterly through updates aligned with the Performance KPIs and Annual Development Plan (ADP) targets.
- 3.2 Over the past 18 months, the Climate Action Team has significantly expanded its scope and delivery capacity, growing from one to four core members and establishing the Climate Change Programme Board (CCPB) to oversee strategic governance.
- 3.3 Multiple studies have been commissioned to inform future strategy and delivery, including net zero pathways, natural capital assessments, and the Solar Strategy, including:
  - Net Zero Pathways for

- Council's emissions (excluding fleet)
- Council's Fleet
- Council's Scope 3 emissions
- District emissions
- Detailed Business and Industrial emissions
- Natural Capital
  - Inventory of carbon stored and sequestered by habitat in Cherwell District
  - Burnehyll Community Woodland / Ecological baseline assessment
  - Burnehyll Community Woodland: Carbon Sequestration forecast
  - Banbury CP cost analysis report for habitat creation / enhancement
- Solar Strategy

3.4 The Council has also contributed to regional and national consultations on climate adaptation and energy planning, including the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map, Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and strategic energy planning initiatives such as transitional Regional Energy Strategic Plan (tRESP) by National Energy System Operator (NESO), Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES) by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) by central govt.

## 4. Details

### **CDC's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions**

- 4.1 CDC has commissioned the production of the GHG 2024/25 report, which is expected to be completed next year.
- 4.2 Total Emissions Change: CDC's emissions rose by around 1% (+49 tCO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2023/24, from 4,071 to 4,119 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- 4.3 Drivers of Change: The increased emissions were caused by increases in Corporate Electricity, Leisure Electricity, Leisure Gas, Business Travel and Water emissions (+155 tCO<sub>2</sub>e), with roughly one-third of the rise (52.4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e) linked to a 5% higher carbon intensity of the UK electricity grid compared to 2022/23. Additionally, a significant increase in leisure centre visitors (25,000+) contributed to higher electricity and gas usage in the leisure portfolio. These were not outweighed by Corporate Gas, Fleet & Landscape, and Corporate PV (-106 tCO<sub>2</sub>e) and unfortunately decarbonisation equipment installed in 2022/23 did not deliver expected gas savings in the leisure portfolio. This requires review and corrective action, which is under way and incorporated into the property capital programme alongside the PSDS4 programme.

### **Programme Delivery and Performance**

- 4.4 The CAP currently (Q2 2025-2026) includes 115 actions, with quarterly RAG ratings showing consistent delivery progress. As of Q2 2025–2026, 71 actions are rated Green, 35 Amber, and 9 Red.

### **Strategic Governance and Partnerships**

- 4.5 The CCPB was formally established in Q1 2025–2026. It endorsed progression to LAEP Phase 2 (Cherwell LAEP) and confirmed its role as the governing board for Cherwell LAEP.
- 4.6 CDC has also joined the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership (ZCOP), enhancing collaboration with businesses, academia, and local authorities.
- 4.7 In October 2025, the Council implemented a major internal restructuring, creating the Directorate for Place and Regeneration, which now brings together Planning, Development Management, Regeneration and Growth, Climate Resilience, and Property under one umbrella.
- 4.8 This new structure reflects members' ambition to enable good growth, strengthen town centre resilience, and use Council assets effectively.
- 4.9 For the Climate Team, this change provides greater capacity, stronger internal relationships, and improved alignment with planning and regeneration priorities, empowering the service to deliver more impactful climate action.
- 4.10 Additional funding and resources committed by Members for climate resilience and flood response further strengthen the Council's ability to address changing weather patterns and infrastructure challenges.
- 4.11 The new directorate structure also enhances opportunities for cross-service collaboration, ensuring climate considerations are embedded in development, regeneration, and property strategies.

### **Next Steps**

- 4.12 The next steps are:
- Finalisation of the Climate Change Strategy and submitting it for Executive approval.
  - Production of Climate Action Plan 2026 – 2027.
  - Production of Cherwell LAEP and continued stakeholder engagement.
  - Production of CDC's Greenhouse Gas 2024-2025 report.
  - Implementation of fleet decarbonisation measures.
  - Full rollout of the Carbon Impact Assessment tool (Carbon Budget Tool) in Gate 1 forms for capital projects.
  - Continued refinement of commissioned studies and integration into strategic planning.
  - Finalise HVO supply tender by Dec 2025; rollout fleet transition, Implement fleet decarbonisation measures.
  - From January 2026, Blue Bin collections will include glass bottles, boosting recycling by ~1% and removing one HGV from fleet.
  - Advance OxLEVI EV charger rollout: Award tender, complete site feasibilities and start installations.
  - Continue to facilitate the development of habitat banks to support biodiversity net gain.

## 5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option1: Do not note the report. This option is not applicable as this is an update report.

Option 2: Delay consideration of report. This option is not applicable as this is an update report.

## 6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Executive is recommended to acknowledge the progress outlined in this report and accept the update as part of ongoing climate programme governance.

### Decision Information

<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Subject to Call in</b>	Yes
<b>If not, why not subject to call in</b>	N/A
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All

### Document Information

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Climate Action Plan Nov'24 – Apr'26
<b>Appendix 3</b>	None
<b>Background Papers</b>	None
<b>Reference Papers</b>	None
<b>Report Author</b>	Hitesh Mahawar, Climate Change Programme Manager
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<b>Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)</b>	Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration