

**Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network**

February 2022

# Co-operative Approaches to Reaching Net Zero



## About CCIN and the Policy Labs

The Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN) is a collaboration between local authorities who are committed to finding better ways of working for, and with, local people for the benefit of their local community. The Network recognises the need to define a new model for local government built on civic leadership, with councils working in equal partnership with local people to shape and strengthen communities. The network is open to all UK councils regardless of political affiliation who can demonstrate innovation and a willingness to drive forward the Co-operative Councils agenda. At the time of writing, it has 33 full member councils as well as additional associated and affiliated members.

**For more information visit [www.councils.coop](http://www.councils.coop).**

The CCIN Policy Lab Programme was established in 2016 and provides funding for collaboration between CCIN members to fund co-operative solutions to the challenges facing local government. The Green Recovery, Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Policy Lab was led by Kirklees Council and facilitated by Collaborate CIC. The steering group consists of nine CCIN members, Birmingham City Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Oldham Council, Oxford City Council, Plymouth City Council, South Tyneside Council, Sunderland City Council, Tameside Council and Torbay Council. In addition, the following councils participated in the policy lab, Telford and Wrekin Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Newcastle City Council, Preston City Council and Rochdale Borough Council.

**Kirklees Council** declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019 and is proud to have led this Policy Lab. The Council and its partners are dedicated to delivering high quality services with people, working in partnership, and reflecting the different needs of each of the places that make up our fantastic borough in the heart of the North of England. Never could this approach be of greater importance than on this issue, which needs urgent action across all homes, organisations, and communities to face the scale of this challenge and not leave anybody behind.

**For more information visit [www.kirklees.gov.uk](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk).**

**Collaborate CIC** is a social change agency that helps people, organisations, services, and systems to work together to tackle complex social challenges. This involves working closely with communities, local authorities, health agencies, and civil society, across the UK to help them develop the relationships, behaviours, leadership, and infrastructure that enables collaboration. We produce practical tools and frameworks that influence the debate about social change, build a movement for collaboration and help people to collaborate in their own contexts.

**For more information visit [www.collaboratecic.com](http://www.collaboratecic.com).**

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## Foreword

Reaching net zero is the biggest and most important shared challenge we face both globally and locally.

Local authorities, public services, private sector businesses and voluntary organisations have all now reached consensus that we must act and do so urgently. However, no one individual, organisation or country can solve the challenge and if I do but my neighbour does not, I will still face the consequences.

We must work together in co-operation empowering and equipping, allowing all our residents and partners to take up the mantle of self-responsibility. This report describes some excellent examples of how Co-operative Councils are putting this into action while the toolkit allows others to rapidly replicate similar initiatives in their communities. The only way to reach net zero is through co-operation.



**Councillor Sharon Taylor OBE**  
Leader Stevenage Borough Council  
and Chair of the Co-operative Councils'  
Innovation Network



**Cllr Shabir Pandor**  
Leader of Kirklees Council and Member of  
the CCIN Executive Oversight Committee

# 1. Introduction



## Green recovery, climate change, and carbon reduction

The UK Government has set a target of Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050<sup>1</sup>. Local councils and communities have an important role to play in meeting targets including by rapidly reducing carbon emissions and dangerous pollutants, protecting nature in a just and equitable way, and supporting their local population and environment.

Since 2019, the majority of UK councils have declared a climate and ecological emergency (300 of the 404 District, County, Unitary & Metropolitan Councils<sup>2</sup>) and a third have developed strategies and action plans to deliver on their ambitious targets. More than half of these councils have a Net Zero target date of 2030.

These local authority climate change action plans highlight the complex challenges councils face to tackle the climate crisis and protect, maintain, and enhance the natural environment while continuing

to meet their other commitments to residents. The COVID-19 crisis has slowed progress on addressing the climate emergency. However, as we emerge, there is strong demand for a resilient recovery which delivers on Net Zero. Many local authorities are considering how to accelerate progress on climate action in tandem with their COVID-19 recovery.

As host of the UN Climate Conference COP26 November 2021<sup>3</sup>, the UK is in the spotlight. This report showcases the co-operative actions that Co-operative Councils (members of CCIN) across the country are already undertaking, with the aim of mobilising faster progress and sharing practical examples of how to overcome the challenges of tackling climate change at a local level<sup>4</sup>. The next section explores why taking a co-operative approach to climate change is particularly important.

**“Since 2019, the majority of UK councils have declared a climate and ecological emergency.”**

1. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksl/2019/1056/contents/made>

2. <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/list-of-councils/>

3. <https://ukcop26.org/>

4. In the report published on 9 December 2020, Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget, the Climate Change Committee highlighted that more than half of the emissions cuts needed, rely on people and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions. They estimate that local authorities have powers or influence over roughly a third of emissions in their local areas. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

## Climate change and co-operation

Many of the emerging local authority climate action plans and policies recognise that climate change is a challenge affecting everyone and for which a shared solution is required. Councils must change their own policies and practices, but that is only part of the solution. The action required goes beyond the councils' direct control and requires them to lead change outside their traditional reach.

Fortunately, many people and organisations are motivated to do something to reduce their impact on the climate, but it can be hard work and there is not always a clear path to workable solutions. By acting together, coordinating activity, and finding collective bravery, people can find a way to make their contribution to the solution. This is why a co-operative approach is key.

Acting together locally requires us to build collaboration and genuine partnership approaches between local government, experts, businesses, local organisations, communities, and individuals from a range of backgrounds and experiences. To work together to harness and share expertise; to grow our collective scale and reach; to build mutual understanding; to forge compromise; and to make collective decisions and experiences.

This is not an easy undertaking, however over the last 18 months we have seen solidarity and cooperation across and within local authorities and with wider partners to tackle the pandemic and support our most vulnerable residents by working with people and communities to deliver on shared priorities. This shared understanding and sense of community as well as the formal and informal networks which developed can be used as a jumping-off point.

Co-operative Councils have a great opportunity to be strong role models of the co-operative values and principles through their climate change practice and policy. For them community action, community engagement and civic empowerment are key drivers to delivering social change in their places. These councils have an opportunity to consciously develop climate interventions with their communities and proactively deliver them in partnership to ensure that residents remain supported and are a part of the journey rather than having policies seemingly imposed upon them. In doing so they could also seek to use what they learn to inform national thinking on local government policy.

**“Many of the emerging local authority climate action plans and policies recognise that climate change is a challenge affecting everyone and for which a shared solution is required.”**

## The Values of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network

Below are the **ten values** of CCIN, they provide a helpful framework to guide the approach local places can take to jointly tackle climate change.

- 1** **Social partnership:** We will strengthen the co-operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises, and Councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit
- 2** **Democratic engagement:** We will support the active engagement of the full range of residents in decision making and priority setting
- 3** **Co-production:** We will develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources
- 4** **Enterprise and social economy:** We will promote community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises and other businesses and providing an environment for co-operative and mutual enterprises to thrive
- 5** **Maximising social value:** We will support the development of a framework and criteria for social value, giving substance to the concept and supporting Councils with the tools to ensure better local social and economic outcomes
- 6** **Community leadership and a new role for councillors:** We will explore ways for councils to act as a platform for helping the community to contribute to local outcomes, and to re-think the role of councillors as community connectors, brokers and leaders
- 7** **New models of meeting priority needs:** In exploring new ways of meeting the priority needs of our communities we will encourage models, such as co-operatives and mutuals, which give greater influence and voice to staff and users

8

**Innovation:** We will embrace innovation in how we work with local communities to drive positive change

9

**Learning:** We will capture and 'expand' the experience and learning from individual projects and approaches in order to encourage broader application of co-operative principles within individual member Councils and across the Network

10

**Walking the talk:** As a membership organisation we will make this statement of our principles operational by: co-operation among members, openness of membership: co-production of the Network's work, being action-focused, being membership-based, being non-party-political

## This report

This report is aimed at local councils who are seeking to take a more co-operative approach to responding to the climate emergency. It explores the links between climate change and the co-operative values, highlights examples of co-operative actions across the broad climate change agenda and stimulates the sharing of practice from across the network.

The report builds on the work of Co-operative Councils across the country who are already taking a co-operative approach to their climate emergency work. It is informed by workshops conducted in the summer of 2021 with representatives from 11 CCIN member councils and extensive desk research.

It takes the first five co-operative values (social partnerships, democratic engagement, co-production, enterprise and social economy, and maximising social value) and explores why they are important for climate change work and how they can help support councils' climate goals. The report illustrates each value with case studies of how councils are already

putting it into action, including practical measures and resources that have helped to make their initiatives successful. Finally, it provides advice and inspiration for ways to further build cooperation into climate plans and actions, including by strengthening implementation of the values about community leaderships and learning.

**The report builds on the work of Co-operative Councils across the country who are already taking a co-operative approach to their climate emergency work**

## 2. Putting co-operative values into climate action

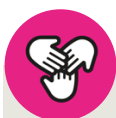




**Social partnership:** We will strengthen the co-operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises, and Councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit

Tackling the climate crisis requires many different actors to take action. Within their place, councils have a key role in bringing these actors together to maximise their collective impact. Developing and nurturing a cross-sector co-operative partnership helps generate ambition and coordinate activity towards shared goals. Working together builds trust, encourages people to see the challenge from different perspectives, and helps to identify new opportunities or approaches. This is particularly important regarding the climate emergency because of the scale and pace of change required <sup>5</sup>.

As the following case studies demonstrate, social partnership work can come in different shapes and forms, from formal partnership boards to cross-sector collaborations around an initiative. Many councils already have multi-stakeholder boards and local partnerships that can be used as a model for this sort of work, with appropriate adaptations to membership. The action plans themselves can serve as a foundational document for the collective efforts, to be built upon and strengthened as the capability of the partnership grows.



**GMCA** GREATER  
MANCHESTER  
COMBINED  
AUTHORITY

## The Green Summit

In 2019, Greater Manchester Combined Authority agreed a target to become carbon neutral by 2038. To spur collective action and provide an opportunity to showcase progress, they decided to host an annual Green Summit <sup>6</sup>, with organisations and individuals from across the region. Over 1,700 people attended the second Summit in 2019. The virtual Summit in 2020 aimed to address the challenges set out in the Five-Year Environmental Plan for Greater Manchester, with each day focusing on one of the issues highlighted in the Plan.

The Summit culminated in a day discussing opportunities to accelerate change and 'build

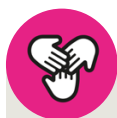
back better'. In 2021 the Summit sought to inspire behaviour change and a call to action. There was a greater focus on community groups, schools, businesses, and residents as well as the action people and organisations need to take to reach the 2038 target. Regular annual summits like this one bring together a diverse range of people to forge new connections, grow collective knowledge, and develop fairer solutions to critical issues. They create milestones for collective momentum and an opportunity to take stock of progress. They also help to raise broader awareness of the importance of climate change and the roles that different actors can play.

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5. <https://economy2030.resolutionfoundation.org/reports/the-carbon-crunch/>

6. <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/green-summit/>



## Collaboration for a Green Mindset

In 2020 Plymouth received EU funding to create the three-year Green Minds <sup>7</sup> initiative. This innovative project is led by Plymouth City Council's Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Department and in collaboration with a range of local partners including the University of Plymouth, Real Ideas Organisation, Plymouth College of Art, Devon Wildlife Trust, The Data Place and National Trust. It aims to improve the quality and condition of green and blue infrastructure. It also aims to positively enhance people's interaction and involvement in these spaces, recognising that spending time in nature has positive health and wellbeing benefits.

The partnership has for example undertaken rewilding projects and produces useful resources such as the knowledge hub <sup>8</sup>. In short, the project intends to create 'Green Mindsets' and will:

- Experiment with different delivery and management approaches, taking a co-stewardship approach with communities, landowners, and social enterprises
- Communicate what they learn in innovative and creative ways
- Use science and creative digital tools to make nature visible and exciting
- Inspire people and organisations to change their behaviour and attitude to nature through inclusive engagement and visible rewilding projects
- Capture social value through a new model to demonstrate social return on investment.

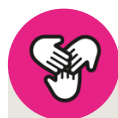
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## A Climate Change Partnership

In 2020, Telford and Wrekin Council and partners established their Climate Change Partnership. They invited local organisations and representatives of the community to gather, develop, and implement a plan to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030. The partnership meets on a bi-monthly basis and currently consists of over 30 organisations, for example University of Wolverhampton, Midlands Energy Hub, the Inter-faith Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Ricoh, Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and others <sup>9</sup>. Some of the activities that partnership members are encouraged to do include championing climate change initiatives within their organisations, working together to share best practice and to look for opportunities to develop joint initiatives, contributing to the development of and ownership of a carbon baseline for the Borough, promote and support climate change initiatives and community events. In addition to this the Council supports the partnership in three ways: it provides policy advice, including leading the drafting of the action plan <sup>10</sup>; it facilitates consultation and engagement, particularly with residents and schools; it provides administrative support to the group and its meetings. The final action plan was agreed in November 2021.

This partnership approach is well suited to collaborating with a core group of partners. The size makes it easier to develop the trusting relationships needed to tackle tricky issues and to meet frequently enough to make speedy progress. It is important to get the right people around the table who can reflect all relevant perspectives and bring a diversity of skills, knowledge, and experience.

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7. <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/>

8. <https://greenmindsplymouth.com/knowledge-hub>

9. [www.sustainabletelfordandwrekin.com/what-the-borough-is-doing/telford-and-wrekin-borough-climate-change-partnership](http://www.sustainabletelfordandwrekin.com/what-the-borough-is-doing/telford-and-wrekin-borough-climate-change-partnership)

10. [www.sustainabletelfordandwrekin.com/media/1228/borough-climate-change-partnership-draft-action-plan-2021.pdf](http://www.sustainabletelfordandwrekin.com/media/1228/borough-climate-change-partnership-draft-action-plan-2021.pdf)



**Democratic engagement:** We will support the active engagement of the full range of residents in decision making and priority setting

The path out of the climate crisis requires making difficult choices and politically challenging trade-offs. Residents' lives will have to change, from the way they travel and heat their homes, to what they eat and drink. Successful transition requires councils to work with people to develop shared visions and prioritise action. Sharing this decision-making process with residents helps to build residents' knowledge and understanding of the issues, manage the political risk, and secure buy-in to the eventual decisions.

The case studies of assemblies below showcase how two Co-operative Councils have used deliberative forms of engagement to encourage participation in priority setting and policy design. This type of engagement should seek to provide an opportunity for people to share and test ideas through inclusive and respectful conversations and needs to be done with demographically representative groups of the public.



## A Climate Assembly

In 2019, Birmingham City Council established a cross-sector, cross-party taskforce to help realise Birmingham's ambition of being net carbon zero by 2030. The Route to Zero Taskforce brought together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss, debate, and make recommendations. The members of the group co-developed the city's climate emergency action plan <sup>11</sup>.

Following the endorsement of the action plan in January 2021 <sup>12</sup> it was decided that the taskforce should become a Climate Assembly. The membership of the assembly now consists of

councillors, Council officers and representatives from across the city, including the West Midlands Combined Authority, the NHS, higher education, the business community, faith communities, climate activists and campaigners, and other key partners and stakeholders. The Climate Assembly will provide a forum for the City Council and partners to update members and the wider community on the work being undertaken to achieve net zero carbon. The Assembly will provide an open and inclusive platform for the sharing of information which is relevant to the City's journey to net zero carbon.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/18618/route\\_to\\_zero\\_action\\_plan\\_-\\_call\\_to\\_action](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/18618/route_to_zero_action_plan_-_call_to_action)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/20045/r20\\_climate\\_assembly\\_terms\\_of\\_reference](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/20045/r20_climate_assembly_terms_of_reference)



## A Citizen's Assembly

In 2019, Oxford City Council hosted the UK's first city-based Citizen's Assembly<sup>13</sup> on Climate Change to consider how to reduce Oxford's carbon emissions to net zero. In preparation the City Council established an independent advisory group, made up of a representative from each of the political parties, local environment and democracy experts, and representatives from local industry to provide governance and oversee the creation and direction of the Citizen's Assembly.

The assembly was held over two full weekends<sup>14</sup> during which participants learnt about climate change and explored different options to cut carbon emissions through a combination of presentations from experts and facilitated workshops.

In response to the assembly, the Council was able to make ambitious commitments including to become net zero by 2030, and to provide additional operational funding and capital investment. It also made commitments to strengthening collaboration and engagement across the city including holding a yearly Zero Carbon Oxford Summit<sup>15</sup>, involving the major organisations responsible for the majority of emissions in the city to see how to work together to develop a shared vision. Since 2019 they have continued to make progress and at the 2021 Summit signed the Zero Carbon Oxford Charter and created a new Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership<sup>16</sup>.

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13. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcci4Yc8ywU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcci4Yc8ywU)

14. [www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/1101/citizens\\_assembly\\_weekend\\_one\\_schedule](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/1101/citizens_assembly_weekend_one_schedule)

15. [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20291/climate\\_emergency/1431/zero\\_carbon\\_oxford\\_summit](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20291/climate_emergency/1431/zero_carbon_oxford_summit)

16. <https://zerocarbonoxford.com/>



**Co-production:** We will develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources

Responding to climate change requires that we both start new, unfamiliar things, and carefully stop doing activities we have long relied on. Figuring out how to continue to meet residents' needs through this transition is difficult. Co-design and co-production enable councils to harness the knowledge and skills of residents and service users to solve problems together. It is about taking a value-based approach that involves putting people at the centre in public services, acknowledging that those who are affected by a service are best-placed to help design it. The

difference between co-design and co-production is that co-design addresses the problem, and a solution is identified, whereas co-production embeds the solution into reality.

The case studies below highlight that adopting a co-production approach enables officers and residents to work together to shape new spending and services as well as to help to manage down old activities in the least disruptive way.



## Dalton Together: Community-led Initiatives

In 2020, Kirklees Council's councillors and officers worked with local partners and community groups to create Dalton Together, a community-led partnership that aims to co-ordinate, develop, and provide support to local food, financial wellbeing, and other community projects across the Dalton Ward.

The Council has played a key role in facilitating and co-ordinating the partnership as well as securing funding. The partnership has developed a joint action plan to capture shared priorities and activities based on needs and desires from residents in the ward. This includes the creation of three food sharing cupboards across the ward; enhancing the

food bank to enable it to be more sustainable in the future; support to residents to provide food growing and sharing opportunities in their neighbourhood; the development of a cooking project targeted at low-income families to help build confidence and skills in creating healthy affordable one pot family meals.

Although the key focus of these collaborative community-led activities is to tackle poverty it provides an opportunity to also address climate change, acknowledging that both are embedded within the same complex and interconnected socio-economic system.

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17. <https://daltontogether.co.uk/>



## A Co-produced Housing Strategy

In 2019, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) developed a new place-based and green housing strategy<sup>18</sup> that both seeks to tackle the housing crisis and to address GMCA's goal of becoming a carbon neutral city region by 2038. The Council worked with local housing providers and the ten district councils to organise a series of open-door thematic workshops across the region that involved residents and local stakeholders in the strategy's development.

The approach included relatively unstructured thematic discussions where those who were interested from local authorities, social housing providers, VCSE sector, private sector, and academia could self-select the workshops they

attended. This meant that sessions were more productive than those where 'everyone' attends all sessions. The learning from the thematic workshops was subsequently shared and discussed at place-based events with a comprehensive set of local partners to generate buy-in and local tailoring of ideas and good practice learning from around GM and beyond.

This was a process of co-production that intended to bring the process beyond the hands of the small group of Council officers who would normally engage with and control the process. It generated workstreams and actions that have the buy-in of the key partners and residents.

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18. <https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/housing-strategy/>



**Enterprise and social economy:** We will promote community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises and other businesses and providing an environment for co-operative and mutual enterprises to thrive

The climate crisis requires a shift in the structure of our economy away from carbon intensive industries and towards a net-zero economy. This will be challenging for traditionally high carbon sectors, associated trades and professions, and the communities where they are located, many of which already have high rates of deprivation. However, it will also create opportunities for new industries, new trades, and new jobs to respond to changed demand. This in turn will create opportunities for new co-operative and mutual enterprises, small and local businesses, and for green jobs. Part of the challenge for local councils

is managing these dynamics and ensuring that all citizens are able to survive and thrive during the transition.

As the case studies below show, by partnering with local businesses and social enterprises, councils can support their economy and find new ways to reduce their climate impact. Councils can both utilise their ability to influence practice and policies in the sector and provide useful support enabling socially purposed businesses to thrive.



## A Circular Economy Approach to Manufacturing

Kirklees Council wanted to raise awareness of the circular economy concept with local small businesses primarily within the manufacturing industry and for them to be able to identify new, resource-efficient processes or to develop new services and products that could lead to decreased waste and increased business competitiveness, and new green jobs. They worked with Dr Anne Velenturf, a leading circular economy academic from Leeds University, on a jointly funded project. The project included collaborative webinars for businesses, including tools like the Circle City Scan

Tool<sup>19</sup>, follow up one-to-one support delivered by the University and referrals to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's business support Resource Efficient Business Programme<sup>20</sup>.

Starting small, and building strong relationships between the Council, University, and Combined Authority, was key to the success. Kirklees Council are now taking a prominent role in the development of a Yorkshire Circular Economy Living Lab and the Combined Authority are pursuing a Circular Business Park in the borough.

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19. [www.circle-economy.com/digital/circle-city-scan-tool](http://www.circle-economy.com/digital/circle-city-scan-tool)

20. [www.the-lep.com/business-support/growth-support/resource-efficiency/](http://www.the-lep.com/business-support/growth-support/resource-efficiency/)



## Socially Conscious Waste Management

Oldham Council wanted to find a provider to collect bulky household waste in the Oldham area and to maximise reuse of that waste wherever possible, including providing items suitable for reuse to people in crisis situations. Bulky Bob's<sup>21</sup> a social enterprise, was commissioned by the Council to provide the service. Bulky Bob's has ensured that they are building links with the community, including referral agencies and other bodies, to be able to sell items at low price or donate much of this furniture to people on relatively low income. The Council have worked with Bulky Bob's to run marketing campaigns to raise general awareness of the service and promote furniture recycling.

The enterprise has a 12-month salaried training programme called Driving Change<sup>22</sup> which offers previously long-term unemployed people a fixed term employment contract, and the chance to achieve a range of qualifications to prime them for work in the logistics industry. In addition, they also have a Volunteers, Interns, Placements, and Students team that run workshops as part of their volunteering programme<sup>23</sup> enabling people to work towards their own goals or give to charity by volunteering time and skills.

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## A Community-led eCargo Scheme

In 2020, Birmingham City Council engaged with local stakeholders to assess the appetite and options for an eCargo scheme. The Council engaged with the Cycle Stakeholder Group, Business Improvement District, universities, local couriers, and community groups to establish their requirements and potential uses for the e-cargo vehicles in their day-to-day work.

Following this engagement process the Council was able to secure funding for 20 e-cargo vehicles for a pilot scheme, feeding into a broader plan to support sustainable freight vehicles and practices in the city. Meetings were set up in April 2021 to facilitate the transfer of the vehicles. The Council worked with the local partners to set out the immediate needs of the partner organisations, review the training requirements, and to sign the partnership agreement.

One of the key partners is The Active Wellbeing Society<sup>24</sup> (TAWS), a community benefit society operating on mutual and co-operative principles. TAWS currently have four of the bikes and use them as part of their work to engage the community in physical activity. During the pandemic TAWS has been able to use the bikes to deliver emergency food parcels while the Council has led training, maintenance, and had project oversight. They have worked closely with TAWS to track engagement and to facilitate the growing number of organisations accessing the bikes. The organisations involved in the network are now able to identify and train others to be involved. In addition to TAWS, the bikes are currently also used by other local partner organisations, such as Aston University, the University of Birmingham, West Side BID, West Midlands Fire Service, JQ BID and Sustrans.

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**Maximising social value:** We will support the development of a framework and criteria for social value, giving substance to the concept and supporting Councils with the tools to ensure better local social and economic outcomes

Tackling the climate emergency requires us to think about all parts of the supply chain to ensure that genuine green and sustainable services and products are being delivered in a place. For councils an important lever is maximising social value in their commissioning and procurement practices. This is about identifying the wider benefits of public decisions and activities for people, the economy, and the environment. It therefore provides a great platform for councils to create a socially purposed supply chain that seeks to decarbonise and safeguard our world.

The case studies below emphasise two different ways in which councils have approached tackling the climate emergency in their social value work. To truly embed social value principles in their way of working councils need to involve stakeholders in the process, seeking their input to identify what social value looks and feels like, how to gather insights to understand change and thereafter being transparent about the result.



**Telford & Wrekin**  
**COUNCIL**

## Increasing Climate Change Awareness Through Schools

Since 2016, Telford and Wrekin Council has, as part of the waste management contract with Veolia, delivered an educational workshop programme<sup>25</sup> in schools across the borough. Veolia have developed workshops that can be delivered by Council community and engagement officers as well as by teachers. The Council also assists with promotion to schools to encourage participation. This is an ongoing initiative, and so far, approximately 243 workshops have been

delivered across the borough, with an average of 1,200 contacts per year.

The programme seeks to inform children and young people about climate change and the importance of managing waste, and to subsequently encourage children and young people to share the knowledge with their wider family. It is designed to be accessible, relatable, to encourage action, and increase knowledge.

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21. <https://frcgroup.co.uk/Bulky-Bobs/bulky-bobs-household-collections/oldham/>

22. <https://frcgroup.co.uk/jobs/paid-training-opportunities/>

23. <https://frcgroup.co.uk/Bulky-Bobs/furniture-world/our-training-programme/>

24. <https://theaws.co.uk/>

25. [www.veolia.co.uk/telford-and-wrekin/veolia-telford-wrekin/education-and-schools](http://www.veolia.co.uk/telford-and-wrekin/veolia-telford-wrekin/education-and-schools)



Cheshire West  
and Chester



## A Network of Anchor Institutions

In 2021, as part of Cheshire West and Chester Council's work on community wealth building, they published a new social value policy<sup>26</sup>.

In it, the Council sets out key priorities around tackling climate change and reducing waste, as well as improving supplier diversity, innovation, and resilience. The Council also identified that there is a significant opportunity to join up this approach with others in the borough. Together with key organisations such as the university, further education providers, the NHS, colleagues in Police and Fire, Chester Zoo, the Grosvenor Estate, and

voluntary sector organisations a new network is being developed.

The institutions involved are anchored in the borough and have a vested interest in ensuring public money meets social and environmental goals locally and that procurement is used to support a strong local economy and a fairer, greener society. During their first meeting in 2021 maximising social value was one of the points considered by the new network.

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26. [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-performance/council-plans-and-strategies/social-value/documents/social-value-policy-2021-25.pdf](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-performance/council-plans-and-strategies/social-value/documents/social-value-policy-2021-25.pdf)

# 3. Increasing momentum



## Increasing momentum

As we can see from the examples in this report, councils across the country are adopting diverse co-operative approaches to tackle the climate crisis. By collaborating with others in their place, and creating a culture for co-operative practices to thrive, they can achieve much more than they could alone. This concluding section looks at the different ways that councils have partnered with others in the place, and the different types of activities councils have undertaken. It also draws on the early plans, initial ideas, and ambitions for the future that we heard when preparing this report, to provide inspiration for increasing momentum.

The work of the waste management approaches in Telford and Wrekin and Oldham, as well as the eCargo scheme in Birmingham demonstrate how councils are working differently to reduce the climate impact of their own delivery and of their directly commissioned services. Through their policy, commissioning and procurement choices councils can have a direct impact on reducing carbon emissions in their place. And while the challenge of working across organisational silos remains, in many ways it is the easiest area for councils to increase their efforts in. But ultimately, the emissions under councils' direct control are a comparatively small share of the total emissions in their place.

To have a bigger impact, councils need to shape, facilitate, and incentivise the actions of others in their place, and create the enabling environment for their actions to be a success. The work of Greater Manchester Combined Authority on their housing strategy, the Dalton Together project in Kirklees, and the anchor network in Cheshire West and Chester demonstrate how partnership can deliver more than the council could alone, nurturing and listening to local insights to develop climate-friendly initiatives and sustainable strategies. In the workshops we also heard of councils exploring approaches like the Transition Town Model<sup>27</sup> to help bring communities onboard and

several councils stressed the importance of increasing staff communication and engagement capacity and skills to support work on climate change as it can be a complicated and polarising topic.

The work of Kirklees Council on promoting circular economy approaches and initiatives such as the Climate Assembly in Birmingham also show the important role the council can play in supporting other organisations to build the foundations, knowledge, and skills to shift into new ways of working. We heard from one council who are looking to work with their primary and secondary schools to educate pupils, and their parents, on lower carbon lifestyles.

But creating the enabling environment for radical action goes deeper than what you can deliver, it is about shifting the priorities, culture, and how people and organisations in the place think. As we saw in the example of the Green Mindset Programme in Plymouth. The more that councils can shift the underlying conditions that prevent people, organisations, and businesses from taking action, the more rapidly they will be able to make progress together.

In our rich discussions of climate change and co-operatives, the co-operative value of innovation was recurrent. Many of the examples in this report highlight the innovations that are being brought about to tackle the climate emergency, such as the Citizen Assembly in Oxford. This assembly approach had not been trialled in other policy areas but was innovated specifically to enable collective learning, dialogue, and deliberation, and to build the trust needed to tackle climate change. Those things are also vital for other complex areas of council policy, and councils should also consider how they can harness and apply the innovations happening within the climate change to other policy areas.

27. <https://transitionnetwork.org/>

However, there were also several co-operative values that felt notably absent. The first area was community leadership, in particular the role of councillors as connectors and system activists. Councillors are a vital asset to mobilising the community; they can set the ambition and direction, drawing people together, connecting them to each other and to the resources that the council can offer. By working closely with council officers, they can amplify collective efforts.

The second area was learning. When navigating uncertain, complex situations such as tackling climate change it is important to learn as you go, to work under the assumption that there are few 'right' answers and to create spaces for reflection. Councils can put more emphasis on learning and spreading good practice both within their own organisations and to broaden the involvement not only from local environmental organisations, but from other statutory services, voluntary and community organisations and businesses.

The workshops that fed into this report were a great foundation for future cross council learning – sharing of challenges, ideas, and practical advice. We hope this report serves as a springboard for more learning, sharing and reflection as councils accelerate their co-operative efforts to combat the climate emergency.



Find out more about the UK local authorities who are driving global municipal co-operative policy development with a common belief in the Co-operative Values and Principles.

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