

Chester Cycling & North Cheshire Cycling campaign group's - Joint response to the CWaC draft Climate Emergency Response Plan.

Introduction

We commend the Council's ambitious bid for the borough to become carbon neutral by 2045. We also recognise the determined & extensive programme of work that the CEFT team of Councillors, Officers & the consultants have put into assimilating and presenting the views of residents and various organisations in the preparation of this draft report.

We understand that this 58 page document has been drafted by the consultants, Anthesis, who have a high level of expertise and understanding of matters relating to energy use and the impact that differing levels of intervention will have on the CWaC goal of the borough becoming carbon neutral by 2045.

However our contention is that this report will not inspire residents to read it, as whilst it appears to be technically well informed, its sheer volume, technical complexity, use of unexplained jargon & abbreviations and absence of specific clarity will make it inaccessible for the majority of residents.

Critically the consultants' knowledge of the extensive range of existing initiatives, which will have a direct effect on encouraging Active Travel, appears to be so low that they have not been integrated into this draft. These initiatives are the Active Travel/LCWIP programme, the 'Walk Ride Thrive' initiative, the Chester Air Quality Action Plan, Cheshire Police's Speed Watch & Safe distance schemes, the DfT's 'Gear Change'¹ and the revised Highway Code, each of which:

- i) are within the control of the Council or Cheshire Police and could have a direct benefit in reducing carbon usage.
- ii) CCC & CNC are actively engaged with and are supporting their development.

A surprising but very important point is that the draft states, in several places, that it is unfinished. e.g.

- i) Two tables are waiting for data. i.e. 6.8 & 8.13 and Figure 4 is missing.
- ii) it states this in the 'Next Steps' on pp. 56. i.e.

The next steps for the development of the Climate Emergency Response Plan are:

- *Review changes proposed by the Climate Emergency Taskforce and Cabinet and publish the first draft of the Climate Emergency Response Plan.*

Recommendations .

1. Each of the gaps in the draft should be completed before it is approved by the Council.
2. Each section of the report should be approved by the appropriate Cabinet member and CWaC officer, as the technical detail in the draft will require their expert review.

We also appreciate that finances will restrict the rate at which the Council will be able to act on projects within its control but the acute Covid emergency has shown that finances can be found when evidence of a pressing need is well presented.

Specific recommendations of a general nature

1. Communication to residents.

Overall we feel the consultants, who drafted it, have done a good job of covering a vast amount of technically detailed ground but it is not always easy to understand what they mean in what is a dauntingly long document.

Recommendation :

A highly précised version should be created which is much easier for residents to follow & understand.

We believe that the draft does not say strongly enough that 'Business cannot continue as usual'. This is illustrated in the 'Travel' section 4.7, 'How residents can play their part', where each of the suggestions is 'soft' and no expectation has been expressed stating that everyone needs to change at least some of their habits.

Recommendation :

Under the header for each section 'How residents can play their part', insert a phrase such as :

"We all need to change our habits and here are some suggestions to help make a difference".

2. The 'Numbers'.

The consultants have used mixed units within the Baseline measures of success. e.g. table 9.7. M19 : kT of CO₂ ; M20 58%. Noting that only a few of the 'Measures' e.g. M1, have a direct impact on reducing or capturing carbon and most are important 'Enablers' (e.g. M2-4). We could not find a clear table or diagram in the draft which shows how the sum of the various direct impact 'Measures' proposed meets net zero by 2045.

Recommendations :

- i) Create clear diagrams separately summarising those 'Measures' which have direct impact and those which are 'Enablers'.
- ii) Use these diagrams to track progress & communicate with residents regularly in a way which 'inspires' them and shows that collectively we are making progress.

At this time the costs of the 'Measure' & 'Enablers' is not known. This will prevent the Council from understanding the Return on Investment (ROI) on each of them and so that they will not be able to set priorities with confidence. Our view is that there are probably too many 'Measures' for the Council to be able to manage effectively and they will need to be prioritised, so that officers can focus on the primary ones.

Recommendation : Each 'Measure' & 'Enabler' should be costed and prioritised.

3. Air quality.

The draft alludes to a reduction in toxic emissions in 8.6 but makes no reference to the draft Chester Air Quality Plan published a year ago and makes no attempt to quantify the potential reduction in carbon emissions that could be achieved by introducing Clean Air Zone schemes. Such schemes have been shown to reduce such vehicle usage significantly (approx. 10%). The results of the consultation are still awaited and should be integrated with this Plan.

Recommendations :

- i) CWaC should publish the outcome of the consultation of the 2019 Chester Air Quality Plan.
- ii) The beneficial CO₂ reducing impact of introducing Clean Air Zones in polluted urban zones should be estimated in kT CO₂ p.a.
- iii) Introduce voluntary Clean Air Zones (CAZ) in all areas of the where levels of toxic emissions are above WHO limits.
- iv) CWaC should plan to introduce mandatory CAZs after taking advice from the London experience.

4. Extinction Rebellion response

We have reviewed this response and endorse its overall content.

5. Specific recommendations relating to Active Travel.

The recommendations described in this section builds on the submission the Chester Cycling Campaign made to the Council in October 2019 and recent feedback from residents which shows a very strong demand for safer cycling & walking infrastructure.

The Council's active engagement with the DfT's LCWIP scheme is mentioned in section 4.2 (Transport). However we do not understand how there is no inclusion of the extensive set of other 'Enablers' that are encompassed within CWAC's Active Travel scheme, its 'Walk Ride Thrive' initiative, the Chester Air Quality Action Plan, Cheshire Police's Speed Watch & Safe distance schemes and the DfT's revised Highway Code/ Safe Distance campaign.

It is our contention is that the conclusion shown in Table 4.8, that the Council has only 'Indirect influence' on reducing vehicle mileage by 17% by 2024, is not valid.

If left unchanged, this would show a crucial lack of leadership, when a radical behavioural change is required towards the adoption of much more Active Travel by every resident in the borough.

Officers & Cllrs within CWaC will be aware that work on seven direct 'Enablers' listed in Appendix 1 is currently in progress. We have also listed in Appendix 1 eight proven additional 'Enablers' which should be evaluated for the CO₂ reducing potential & ROI.

Recommendations.

1. The CO₂ reducing potential of each of the existing and potential 'Enablers' should be estimated and included in the draft.
2. We offer to support the Council & its Officers in helping prioritise this set of 'Enablers'.

The Transport section of the report does mention DfT's 'Gear Change'¹ (4.5.1) but provides no detail & critically states that '*streets should be rebalanced towards equal prioritisation of pedestrians, cyclists and cars*'. The use of the word 'equal' in this context is inconsistent with long term Dutch experience and revisions to the Highway Code, which will require drivers of vehicles to show the greatest level of responsibility and empathy towards pedestrians and cyclists.

There is also no mention of the excellent DfT Guidance, LTN1/20² on Cycling Infrastructure which has major implications for Planning approvals and updating of the Residential Design Guide.

Recommendations.

1. Change the wording in 4.5.1 to reflect the hierarchy of responsibility required in the revised Highway Code.
2. When the Residential Design Guide is developed ensure it takes account of the major cultural shift required in behaviours and the DfT Guidance, LTN1/20² on Cycling Infrastructure.

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Appendix 1

This table illustrates 'Enablers' which the Council is either already taking or could take to encourage less use of motor vehicles and more Active Travel.

No.	Enablers in progress	Background/description	Benefits
1	Pedestrianisation of urban roads.	Accelerate the rate in urban shopping locations. Learn from the benefits achieved with the 'Shared space' scheme introduced in Poynton in 2013 ⁴ which slows traffic down by increasing space for pedestrians.	Waltham Forest's ³ , radical mini-Holland scheme shows pedestrianisation works with <i>'overall vehicle usage down 36%, the retail economy up 30% and air pollution collapsed'</i> .
2	Introduce lanes which restrict motor vehicles.	Be more ambitious in the introduction of more bus/cycle lanes on major commuter routes and 2-way cycle routes on minor roads that have been converted to 'one way'. e.g. Leave the 'Clockwise Chester' system in place. Use the 'Walk, Ride, Thrive' feedback to identify suitable locations. Note : this feedback showed that many hundreds of people would support change & a wide variety of improvements.	It will encourage more residents to either share car space, walk, use bikes or public transport.
3	Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan	This is the current government led project which has been adopted energetically by CWaC with active support from CNC & CCC.	This is targeted to make selected urban routes safer mainly for cyclists and will increase their use.
4	Speed Watch	Encourage more residents to be volunteer an hour a week to support the Police. Use the 'Walk Ride Thrive' feedback which has identified many suitable locations.	It reduces speeds in unsafe locations. e.g. outside schools & dangerous bends.
5	Park & Ride	Improve the service so that it becomes a preferred alternative to driving into urban centres.	Reduces car use and toxic emissions in polluted zones.
6	Cheshire Police's Safe distance campaign	Energetically support the work of Cheshire Police with the scheme which was introduced by Cycling UK	Will encourage more residents to use bikes as motorist's empathy towards cyclists improves
7	Vehicle engine idling	Energetically communicate the need to avoid stationary idling by all vehicles.	Will reduce carbon usage and pollution in congested urban areas
Proven Enablers not yet in place			
1	Divert and 'ring fence', a defined a much higher % of the Highways budget to Active Travel.	Poor quality unsafe pavements & roads consistently show in resident's feedback as one of their top causes of dissatisfaction. Accelerate the creation of safer pedestrian & cycling infrastructure and maintain poor quality roads, pavements, SUP cycle tracks, hedges and grass verges better. Make the current 'Report a highways fault' process, open so residents can see if a problem has already been reported and when. Improve this system so that the Highways Department states what they intend to do and when.	Extra funds will complement the limited government funds available and provide CWAC with greater control. Much improved openness in the 'Report a highways fault' system will improve confidence.
2	Community Infrastructure Levy	Gradually increase this levy annually to provide more funds for improvements in cycling and walking infrastructure across the borough.	As above
4	Introduce a levy on all	Be as bold as in Nottingham CC where this	It will encourage more car sharing

	companies which provide parking for employees	scheme operates successfully	and provide funds for LCWIP infrastructure
5	Introduce Voluntary Clean Air Zones in Chester and Ellesmere Port & Frodsham.	Begin to catch up with London which has been actively working at this for many years & gradually tightens controls. Follow up with a mandatory scheme later	It will encourage more car-sharing in cleaner cars, reduce toxic emissions and improve health of residents.
6	Slowly increase fees in car parks that are controlled by CWaC.	When fees were introduced in Frodsham, residents were able to access local retail outlets more easily.	It will encourage more car-sharing, Active Travel, local shopping, shorter journeys and provide funds for LCWIP infrastructure.
7	eBikes : charging Points	Whilst charging points for motor vehicles are a positive Measure, no Measure is included for eBikes. Deloitte's ⁵ predicts that <i>"the number of eBikes will easily outpace other eVehicles in 2021"</i> .	Will encourage many more residents to purchase eBikes which extend easy cycling range by at least twice which will remove 'Range fear'.
8	Mini Holland Scheme	Apply for funds to introduce a Mini-Holland scheme as detailed in DfT's Gear Change ¹ pp. 19. DfT quote : <i>"We will choose up to 12 willing local authority areas (outside London), to benefit from intensive investment in mini-Holland schemes."</i> Note : Outside London.	DfT quote <i>"Schemes can reduce the number of people driving their children to school by up to a third and reduce casualties"</i> .

References :

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3. "Sustrans & Waltham Forest's mini-Holland scheme, the evidence."
<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/infrastructure/an-introductory-guide-to-low-traffic-neighbourhood-design/an-introductory-guide-to-low-traffic-neighbourhood-design-contents/design-guide/all/1-making-the-case-for-a-low-traffic-neighbourhood/>
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5. "Forget electric cars — e-bikes will be the top selling EV in the next decade."
<https://www.theverge.com/2019/12/16/21016306/electric-bike-ebike-sales-us-numbers-deloitte-cars>