



CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL CHANGE STRATEGY 2021/22-2019/30

Draft document for public consultation



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Welcome

to Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy

Climate and ecological change is the globally defining challenge of our time. It impacts all living things on Earth, including you and me.

In this document, we explain what it means to be 'net carbon zero' and 'ecologically positive', and how we aim to achieve these goals by 2030.

By doing this, we believe Denbighshire County Council can contribute to:

- tackling the climate and ecological emergency we all face;
- cutting emissions by at least 95% in Wales by 2050 and delivering on our statutory duty as a local authority to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote resilience of ecosystems as outlined in [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#);

- making the public sector in Wales net carbon zero by 2030, as outlined in Welsh Government's [Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales](#) delivery plan.

We are proud to be one of the first councils in Wales to make tackling climate and ecological change a guiding principle in our decision-making. In October 2020, we formally changed our Constitution – the set of rules and principles that the Council follows – to reflect this. We also aim to build on our strong track record of reducing carbon and improving biodiversity, most recently delivered under our [Corporate Plan \(2017-2022\)](#) priority for the Environment.

We've made a positive start and we look forward to working closely with our communities, staff, partners and funders to continue our collective efforts to secure the well-being of future generations.



Cllr Brian Jones
(Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment)



Cllr Tony Thomas
(Lead Member for Housing and Communities)



Judith Greenhalgh
(Chief Executive)

What is this document?

Denbighshire County Council declared a [Climate Change and Ecological Emergency](#) in July 2019.

By 31st March 2030 the Council aims to become a **Net Carbon Zero Council** and **Ecologically Positive Council**

This document tells you more about these two goals and how we aim to achieve them.

This document is also available in Welsh and in other formats on request.

For more information on anything in this booklet please contact the Climate Change Team:

Email: climatechange@denbighshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01824 706000 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm).

Write to us: Climate Change Team, Denbighshire County Council, PO Box 62, Ruthin, LL15 9AZ.

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How we have developed this strategy

Denbighshire County Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in July 2019 which committed the Council to become 'net carbon zero' (to absorb as much carbon as we emit) by 2030 and improve biodiversity.

In January and February 2020, the Council asked for the public's feedback on our proposed net carbon zero and ecologically positive goals and for ideas to help us achieve them by 2030.

Building on the ideas we received, we worked throughout 2020 with councillors and officers to develop our Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30). This included calculating the Council's carbon footprint and the biodiversity of Council land, exploring our pathway to 2030 through scenario-planning and holding workshops with all our service areas to identify what we could do to help achieve these goals.

This work was guided by the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency task and finish group which was set up as part of the emergency declaration. This group was made up of two representatives from each political party represented in the Council including the lead members on Cabinet covering climate and ecological change.

Our calculations for the net carbon zero baseline and ambitions have followed the methodology in Welsh Government's new Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regime for the Welsh Public Sector.

Our calculations for the ecological positive baseline and ambitions have been guided by established methodologies from the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. But because of its complexity, any measure for biodiversity value is only a pointer.

In November 2020 we asked Council staff and the public for their feedback on the draft document. This feedback helped to shape the Council's final Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30) which was then presented to the elected members of Denbighshire in January 2021 and.... [TBC].

Other Council strategies

Other Council strategies and areas of work support our goal of tackling climate and ecological change. These include:

- [Corporate Plan](#)
- The decarbonisation of social housing
- [Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#)
- Air Quality Management Plan
- Woodland and Tree Strategy (in development)
- Biodiversity Duty Delivery Plan
- [Local Development Plan](#)
- [Economic and Community Ambition Strategy](#)
- Fleet Strategy
- Single Use Plastics Action Plan
- Ash Die Back Strategy (in development with Conwy County Borough Council)
- County Allotment Strategy (in development) • Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Management Plan
- [Asset Management Strategy 2017-2021](#)

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Net Carbon Zero Council by 2030

What is our goal?

Our goal is to become 'net carbon zero' by 31st March 2030. This means all the carbon the Council emits, minus all the carbon absorbed from Council owned and operated land¹, would equal zero.

The following sources of emissions will count towards our net carbon zero goal and together will be known as our net carbon zero footprint:

Buildings	We will reduce emissions from the electricity, gas, LPG, oil, biomass and water we use at Council-owned buildings ² .
Waste	We will reduce emissions from the waste generated by the Council and collected at the kerbside.
Fleet	We will reduce emissions from the fuel we use in Council-owned vehicles.
Staff commuting	We will reduce the emissions from staff and councillors' travel to and from work.
Street lighting	We will reduce emissions from the electricity used by Council-owned lamp posts, traffic signs and signals.
Business travel	We will reduce the emissions from staff and councillors' travel for work.

The following sources of carbon absorption will count towards our carbon zero goal:

Grassland	We will maintain the amount of grassland the Council owns and operates.
Forest / Woodland	We will increase the amount of forestland and woodland the Council owns and operates.

We also aim to reduce the total carbon emitted from the Council's supply chain by 35%³ by 31st March 2030.

Supply Chain	We will reduce emissions from all the goods and services the Council buys from others.
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¹ Land that the Council owns but rents out to others is not included.

² Council-owned building refer to buildings such as offices, depots, schools and leisure centres that the Council owns. Council housing is not included.

³ Compared to 2019/20 baseline

What is our starting point?

The total carbon emitted from Denbighshire County Council's (DCC's) net carbon zero footprint in 2019/20 was 18,915 tCO₂e⁴.

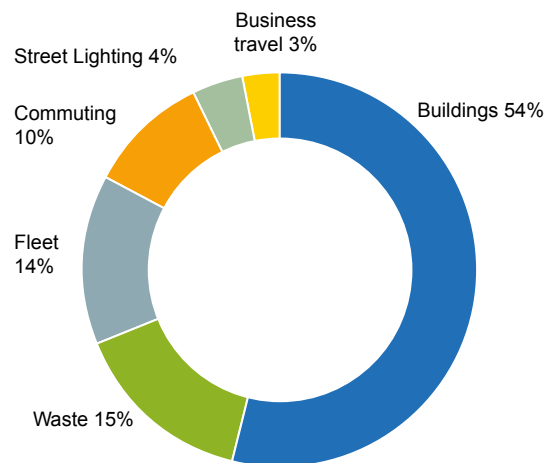
The total carbon absorbed from DCC-owned and -operated land in 2019/20 was 2,147 tCO₂e.

Therefore, the Council's net carbon zero position in 2019/20 was +16,498⁵ tCO₂e.

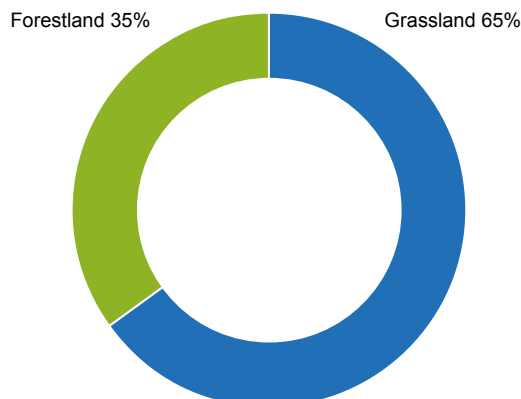
The Net Carbon Zero Council goal is to get that 16,498 tCO₂e figure down to zero by 31st March 2030.

The tables and graphs below show how much the Council emitted from each source of emissions and how much was absorbed by each source of absorption in 2019/20.

Source of carbon emissions	Amount of carbon emitted in 2019/20
Buildings	10,151 tCO ₂ e
Waste	2,886 tCO ₂ e
Fleet	2,693 tCO ₂ e
Staff Commuting	1,848 tCO ₂ e
Street Lighting	788 tCO ₂ e
Business Travel	550 tCO ₂ e
Total	18,915 tCO₂e



Source of carbon absorption	Amount of carbon absorbed in 2019/20
Grassland	1,564 tCO ₂ e
Forest / Woodland	854 tCO ₂ e
Total	2,417 tCO₂e



In addition, the Council emitted 22,710 tonnes of CO₂e from its supply chain in 2019/20.

⁴ tCO₂e is short for 'tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent' which is used for describing different greenhouse gases in a common unit - carbon.

⁵ This is calculated by subtracting carbon absorbed from carbon emitted, i.e. subtracting 2,147 from 18,915

Where do we want to get to?

To achieve our net carbon zero goal, we need to reduce the amount of carbon the Council emits and increase the amount of carbon it absorbs.

The table below shows how much we aim to reduce for each source of emission by 31st March 2030.

Our efforts will combine with progress nationally to decarbonise fuel and energy networks. We will respond to new opportunities that may arise so we can go further in reducing our carbon emissions⁶. A postcard from the future brings these figures to life.

Source of carbon emissions	How much we aim to reduce this by compared to 2019/20	Amount of carbon emitted in 2029/30 if we achieve this reduction
Buildings	50%	5,112 tCO ₂ e
Waste	35%	1,876 tCO ₂ e
Fleet	60%	1,077 tCO ₂ e
Staff Commuting	55%	832 tCO ₂ e
Street Lighting	45%	433 tCO ₂ e
Business Travel	80%	110 tCO ₂ e
Total		9,440 tCO₂e

⁶ For example, the introduction of a readily accessible new technology or a major development in ways to generate energy.

Dear 2020 Council, Year 2030 here! What a challenging but rewarding Net Carbon Zero Council journey you have been on. Apologies for the spoilers, but here are some of the headlines on how you've reduced your carbon...

In Council buildings, we have reduced energy for heating, anything that uses electricity and the use of water through increasing the air tightness of buildings and efficiency of their systems and equipment. All our new buildings are low carbon in operation. We have increased onsite generation of renewable electricity and converted more site heating systems to low carbon and renewable options. We use rainwater harvesting more widely for the water used in our buildings.

We have increasingly avoided excess Council fleet travel by making service delivery even more accessible and efficient. We own a lot more electric vehicles and we've installed charging points across our buildings and car parks. We've also piloted ultra-low emission options for our larger fleet vehicles such as bin lorries and gritters.

Our recycling rates have improved even more, with less contamination now waste is segregated at source. A focus on waste prevention in the county has reduced the amount of waste we produce and collect, with more items used and reused instead of being thrown away.

Many of our staff now work from home, so we have fewer offices. When staff do come in, they use the nearest office to home - which reduces mileage and means more staff walking, cycling or catching the bus to work. Business travel is very rare now as virtual meetings have become the norm. When officers do meet, it is often closer to their respective homes and not necessarily in a Council main office. Officers who have to travel for their work have access to an electric vehicle.



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The table below shows how much we aim to increase the amount of carbon absorbed for each source of absorption by 31st March 2030. Our direct intervention will help deliver this increase in carbon absorption as well as

getting a better understanding of the carbon absorption capacity of some of our more established landscapes. Again, a postcard from the future shows how we might have reached our target in 2030.

Source of carbon absorption	How much we aim to increase this by compared to 2019/20	Amount of carbon absorbed in 2029/30 if we achieve this increase
Grassland	0%	1,564 tCO ₂ e
Forest / Woodland	822%	7,876 tCO ₂ e
Total		9,440 tCO₂e

Dear 2020 Council, Year 2030 here! What a challenging but rewarding Net Carbon Zero Council journey you have been on. Sorry for the spoilers, but we thought you'd want to see some of the headlines on how you've increased your carbon absorption...

We have held on to the grassland we own to safeguard the carbon absorption benefit, and we've delivered projects to improve the species richness of our grassland habitats to increase biodiversity.

We've made big efforts in increasing the amount of forest and woodland we own and operate. Over the nine years. We have converted existing, and bought new land, turning it into carbon sinks and wildlife havens with carefully selected tree-planting including species-rich grassland.

This delivered additional benefits for our communities, with trees planted in upland from river catchments to reduce the risk of flooding and allowing us to open these spaces to the public for leisure, tourism and improved well-being.

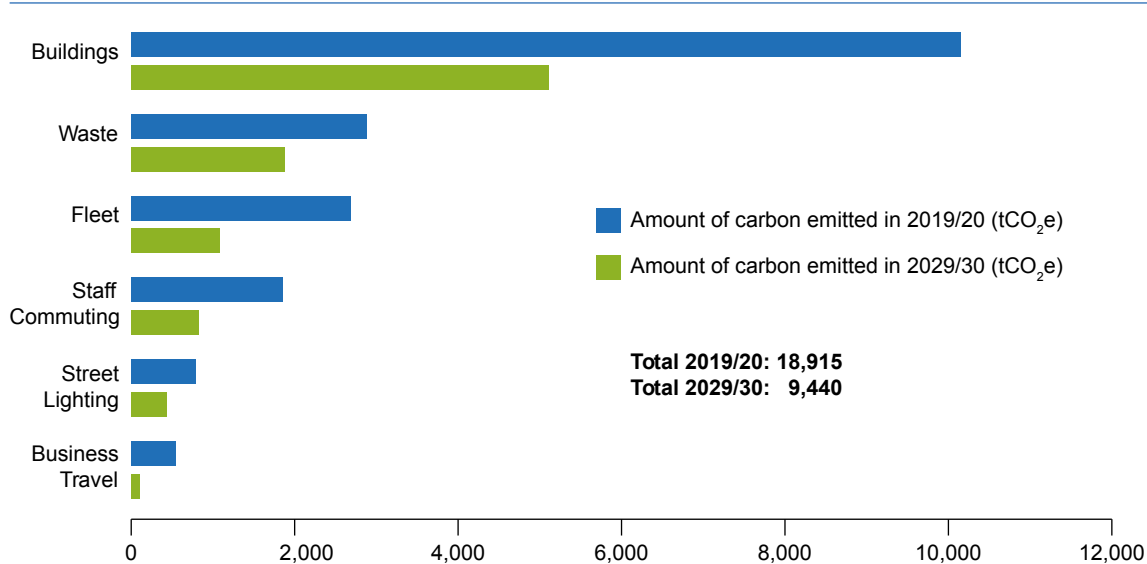


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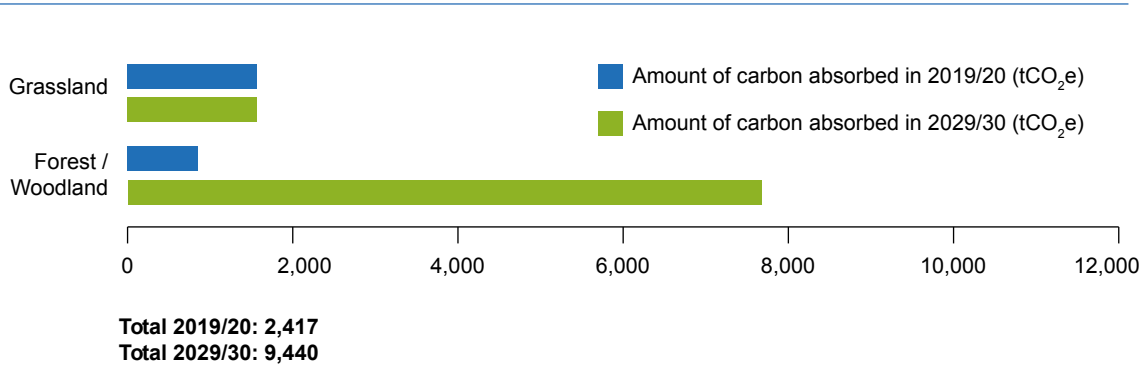
If the Council achieves its targets as outlined in the above tables, in 2029/30 our total carbon emissions minus total carbon absorption will equal zero. We will have become net carbon zero.

The graphs below show the change in each source of carbon emissions and in each source of carbon absorption comparing the totals in 2019/20 to those in 2029/30 if we achieve our targets.

Amount of carbon emitted by the Council in 2019/20 compared to forecast emissions in 2029/30



Amount of carbon absorbed by the Council in 2019/20 compared to forecast absorption in 2029/30



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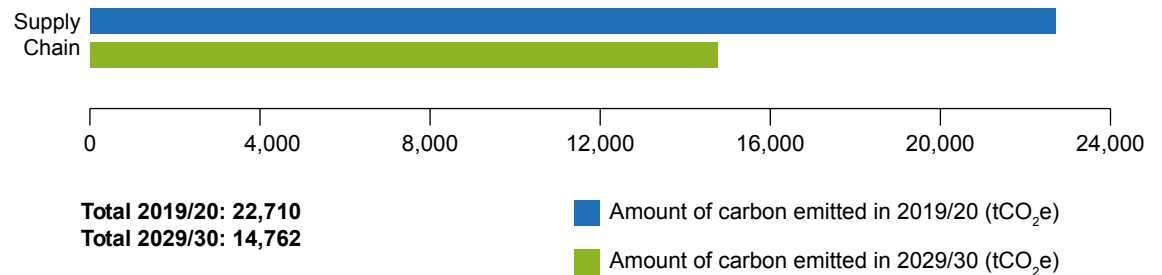
We also aim to reduce the carbon emitted from our supply chain by 35%. We will work with businesses to reduce the carbon intensity of what we buy from them and how we deliver services, and also to increase the local community benefit from those contracts.

The table below shows how much we aim to reduce the amount of carbon emitted from our supply chain by 31st March 2030. The graph below shows the change in the total carbon emissions from our supply chain by comparing

2019/20 totals to 2029/30 totals if the Council achieves its reduction target. Another postcard from the future shows how we might have gone about achieving our 2030 targets.

Source of carbon emissions	How much we aim to reduce this by compared to 2019/20	Amount of carbon emitted in 2029/30 if we achieve this reduction
Supply Chain	35%	14,762 tCO ₂ e

Amount of supply chain carbon emissions in 2019/20 compared to forecast emissions in 2029/30



Dear 2020 Council, Year 2030 here! Sorry about the spoilers, but we thought you'd like to see some of the headlines on how you've reduced your supply chain carbon emissions...

We've reduced spending wherever possible, most notably in paper, as the Council in 2030 is now practically paperless. Since introducing a whole-life costing approach to procurement early in the programme, we have bought higher quality items less often.

Construction has become much less carbon-intensive, helped by the public sector in Wales emphasising to suppliers the importance of low carbon delivery for new-build projects.

We seek additional value from every Council contract over £25,000, and together with our communities, we have identified the environmental benefits which communities value most, whether for reducing carbon, absorbing carbon or improving biodiversity.



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What changes and actions will help us get there?

Changes to Council processes and policies

To achieve our net carbon zero goal by 2030, we will have to change how we deliver the wide range of work required of us by Welsh Government, our partners and our communities.

In summer 2020, we held virtual workshops with the management teams of all our service areas to start identifying the ways we could change how we do things to help reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon absorption. This built on ideas generated by the public during the public engagement in early 2020.

There were over 100 suggestions for changes to processes and policies, and we aim to implement as many of these as we can over the nine years.

The graphic below highlights some of the priority changes to processes and policies that we hope to make in Years 1 to 3 (2021/22-2023/24).

This is a dynamic and flexible list – we may implement other things that aren't in the graphic below, as we respond to new opportunities.

Through engagement and communication, ensure service-based objectives align with the ambition to become net carbon zero and reduce supply chain emissions.	Implement the Council's change in constitution to have regard to tackling climate and ecological change, including changing business case templates and introducing whole-life costing.	Include in all staff job descriptions their responsibility around climate and ecological change, in consultation with staff and the unions.
Support new ways of working – learning from experience of operating under COVID-19 restrictions, including working from home and virtual meetings.	Continue to implement the EV first vehicle replacement policy.	Progress as fast as possible in going paperless, e.g. electronic case bundling, electronic signing and sealing of contracts, electronic paper packs for democratic meetings.

<p>Ensure carbon reduction is appropriately considered in Council procurement – policy and strategy documents, commissioning templates, tender evaluations.</p>	<p>Identify community benefits in Council contracts that reduce carbon and increase carbon absorption.</p>	<p>Standardise the recycling and waste approach across all schools and Council-owned sites; include provision of wide range of recycling.</p>
<p>Consider policy to design and build Council owned buildings to high carbon reduction/low carbon in-use standards (e.g. passivhaus)</p>	<p>Ensure an enhanced eco-build option is always presented in business cases when deciding on major capital projects.</p>	<p>Align the new Asset Management Strategy 2021 onwards with the ambition to become net carbon zero and introduce a new asset disposal and acquisition policy which supports retaining or/ and buying land for carbon absorption and ecological improvement.</p>
<p>Review 21st century schools redundant site policy to build in the option of DCC retaining the site for conversion to community woodland/ orchards.</p>	<p>Investigate the potential for better land use to achieve multiple objectives e.g. natural flood risk management via tree planting etc.</p>	<p>Ensure ash die-back policies around replacement support increasing native tree stock.</p>
<p>Promote existing planning policies in the Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006-2021 and existing supplementary planning guidance which contribute to environmentally responsible development.</p>	<p>Deliver the replacement LDP which enhances national planning policy and includes policies and supplementary planning guidance to help reduce climate change.</p>	<p>Alter monitoring indicators in the replacement Local Development Plan to align with climate change agenda.</p>

16 Actions and projects

To achieve net carbon zero, we will have to build on what we already do under the environment priority of our Corporate Plan, as well as doing new things.

Over 90 ideas to reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon absorption were identified in the summer 2020 virtual workshops, and we aim to implement as many as we can, as well as other actions to respond to new opportunities.

The table below shows the priority actions and projects that we've identified so far to reduce

carbon emissions and increase carbon absorption. We can be more specific for Years 1 to 3, but not for later years because of the uncertain and complex context local authorities operate in.

Delivering the projects and actions is subject to securing the necessary funding.

Action / Project	When		
	Years 1-3 2021/22- 2023/24	Years 4-6 2024/25- 2026/27	Years 7-9 2027/28- 2029/30
Actions to reduce Council's carbon from buildings and street lighting			
Complete our 7-year LED street lighting project	●		
Review and rationalise how many buildings we own and operate	●		
Improve energy efficiency of existing building including measures to improve air tightness (e.g. loft insulation, cavity wall insulation), reducing electricity use (e.g. LED lighting, power management) and increase efficiency of heating (e.g. upgrade heating control and building management systems)	●	●	●
Ensure new Council buildings are low carbon in operation including the integration of renewable energy and heat technologies as well as rainwater harvesting (e.g. 21st Century Schools Band B)	●	●	●
Deploy renewable energy schemes for electricity including working with schools to submit funding applications to wind-farm funds to install renewable energy (e.g. wind turbines and photovoltaic panels) and install solar car ports at Council office car parks.	●	●	●
Convert heating systems in existing Council buildings to renewable heat (e.g. air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps)	●	●	●
Undertake major refurbishments of existing Council buildings to be low carbon in operation (e.g. Greening County Hall Project)	●	●	●

Action / Project	When		
	Years 1-3 2021/22- 2023/24	Years 4-6 2024/25- 2026/27	Years 7-9 2027/28- 2029/30
Introduce rainwater harvesting across the Council estate, particularly in depots with high water usage	●	●	●
Actions to reduce the Council's carbon from fleet, staff commuting and business travel			
Install electric vehicle (EV) charging in 9 Council-owned car parks	●		
Introduce EV pool cars at Council offices	●		
Convert 3 waste vehicles to EVs	●		
Introduce EV home-charging for staff who start and end their day at home but use Council-owned fleet vehicle	●		
Convert all Council-owned light commercial (up to 3.5 tonnes) vehicles to EVs.	●	●	
Install EV charging in Council buildings, including offices, depots, libraries, and tourist attractions	●	●	
Extend public charging across Denbighshire which can also service DCC electric fleet vehicles	●	●	●
Introduce a car-sharing platform for staff		●	●
Convert most larger Council-owned vehicles to ultra-low emission options		●	●
Trial large vehicles powered by hydrogen (e.g. bin lorries)		●	●
Actions to reduce the Council's carbon from waste			
Re-launch recycling in civic buildings and replace bins at Council sites to become a source-segregated recycled waste collection		●	
Work with the third sector to introduce accommodation at Rhyl and Ruthin Household Recycling Centres for reuse and repair activity to divert items from becoming waste.		●	
Deliver the new waste transfer station to enable greater source-segregation of recyclates		●	

Action / Project	When		
	Years 1-3 2021/22- 2023/24	Years 4-6 2024/25- 2026/27	Years 7-9 2027/28- 2029/30
Reduce plastics in school catering and Council offices	●		
Support Welsh Government in delivering a new facility to recycle nappies in Denbighshire, diverting absorbent hygiene products from across North West Wales away from residual waste and into recycling	●	●	
Deliver improvement project for more waste to be re-used or recycled from delivering the various Highways and Street Scene frontline service functions	●	●	●
Actions to reduce the Council's carbon from the goods and services we buy			
Create carbon-related questions to use in the tender evaluation process, to be scored and weighted as part of the quality assessment of tenders	●		
Create an online portal to capture and report on the community benefit of contracts including measures around this agenda	●		
Identify the Council officers who procure most regularly to target communication and training on the climate and ecological change agenda and the contribution of environmentally responsible procurement	●	●	●
Re-visit regional contracts as they expire with the aim to reduce carbon in future	●	●	●
Pursue personalised grants for care and stimulating microenterprise work – enabling personalised purchasing of care from providers ultra-local to the citizen to reduce carbon footprint.	●	●	●
Work with businesses and suppliers in Denbighshire to encourage lower carbon practice.		●	●

Action / Project	When		
	Years 1-3 2021/22- 2023/24	Years 4-6 2024/25- 2026/27	Years 7-9 2027/28- 2029/30

Actions to increase the Council's carbon absorption

Complete the PLANT Project – planting 18,000 urban trees.	●		
Establish a county tree nursery, growing 5,000 trees a year to plant across the county.	●		
Work with schools to identify planting opportunities on school grounds	●		
Convert new Council land purchased for carbon sequestration and biodiversity through natural regeneration and targeted tree planting, enabling public access wherever possible	●	●	●

Other Supporting Actions

Train all councillors and managers in carbon literacy and create e-learn module	●		
Progression of a replacement Local Development Plan to ensure local climate change and biodiversity priorities are reflected in local planning policy and decision making.	●		
Deliver Supplementary Planning Guidance resulting from the new LDP to support the climate change agenda	●	●	
Raise staff awareness of their role in reducing our carbon emissions, and help them change their behaviour	●	●	●
Share learning and resources on this agenda with schools across the county and encourage positive changes in behaviour	●	●	●
Work with landowners in Denbighshire to encourage carbon absorption.	●	●	●

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Ecologically Positive Council by 2030

What is our goal?

Our goal is to protect, manage and restore our land as well as create new spaces for nature so that the ecosystems⁷ in Denbighshire are diverse, connected, big in scale and extent, healthy and adaptable, so it not only maintains biodiversity but enhances it. This is our Ecologically Positive Council goal.

The work we do towards this goal will also help our drive towards our Net Carbon Zero Council goal and vice versa.

What is our starting point?

We have mapped data for species richness across Denbighshire onto Council-owned and -operated land to give us our starting point for the Council's 'biodiversity value'.







Because biodiversity is vast, complex and interconnected, any measure for biodiversity value is only a pointer.

The table below shows the different habitats in order of species-richness:

⁷ An ecosystem is all the plants and animals that live in a particular area together with the complex relationship that exists between them and their environment.

Habitat Name	Species Richness Score ⁸	Photo example
Calcareous grassland – unimproved and semi-improved	43.02	
Broadleaved and yew woodland – mixed, part and part montane habitats	20.91	
Neutral grassland – unimproved and semi-improved	20.44	
Acid grassland – unimproved and semi-improved	19.58	
Bracken	19.29	

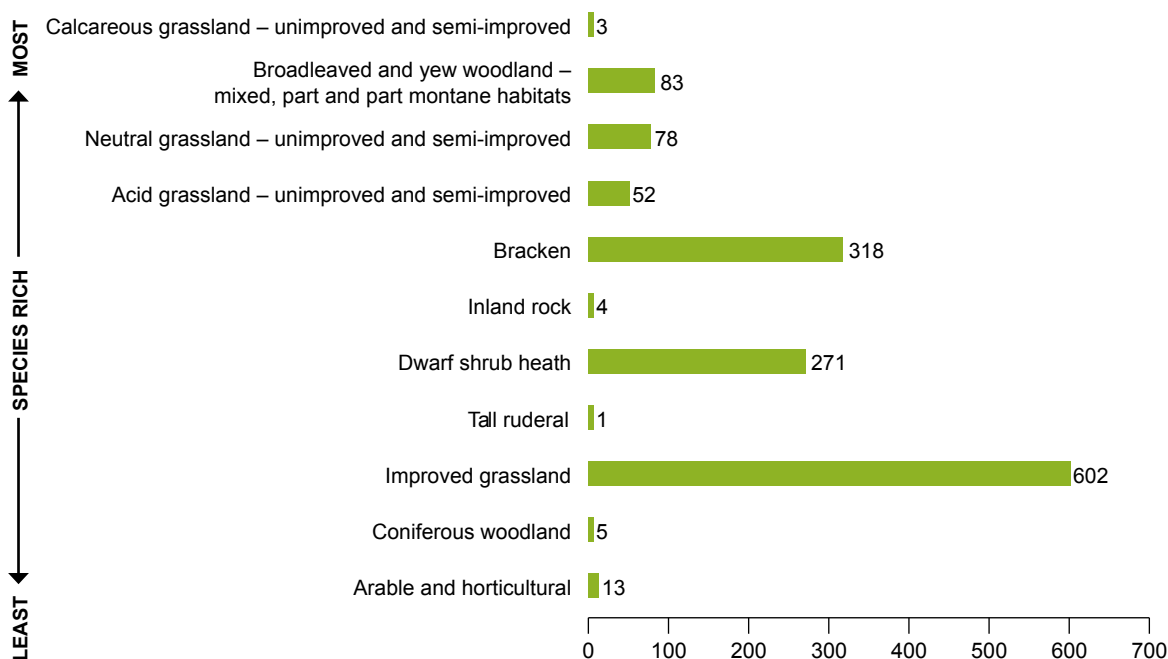
⁸ This score is the average total number of plant species per 200m² plot normally present in that habitat type. Scientific analysis has shown that the diversity of animal species increases in areas of land with greater plant species diversity.

Habitat Name	Species Richness Score ⁸	Photo example
Inland rock	16.74	
Dwarf shrub heath	15.87	
Tall ruderal	15.87	
Improved grassland	14.28	
Coniferous woodland	14.05	
Arable and horticultural	10.25	

The graph below shows the amount of land the Council owns and operates in each habitat type of varying species richness.

62% of Council-owned and -operated land is in the lowest categories of species richness, and 38% in the highest categories.

Amount of land DCC own and operate in each habitat type of varying species richness



We also own a lot of other important habitats, but they are not included in our species richness baseline because the habitat categories available in the measurement methodology are limited. They include rivers, streams, and the important dune systems and shingle habitats on Denbighshire’s coastline which are home to various rare plants and animals, such as the last colony of little tern (species of bird) in Wales, along with sand lizard and natterjack toad, which were reintroduced here after becoming extinct in Wales.

We produce a report every three years on what we have done to comply with the Environment (Wales) Action 2016 statutory duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems⁹. [The latest report](#), for 2016-19, gives additional detail about our ecologically positive starting point¹⁰.

9 The full title of this duty is ‘The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty’ but is often referred to as the Environment (Wales) Action 2016 Section 6 duty.

10 You can read Denbighshire County Council’s report here: <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/File/763/en-GB>

Where do we want to get to?

To achieve our ecologically positive goal, we need to increase the percentage of our owned and operated land that has a higher species richness.

We can do this by restoring and changing how we manage land that we currently own to increase species diversity, and by owning more land and creating new spaces (ecological niches) for nature.

To achieve our ecologically positive goal, the percentage of land we own and operate in the lowest categories of species richness should be lower than in the highest categories of species richness. The table below shows the percentage change expected by 2030.

Species richness categories	Starting Point	2030 end goal
Lowest categories of species richness	62%	Reduce to below 49%
Highest categories of species richness	8%	Increase to above 51%

We will continue to protect, restore and increase the extent of the other important habitats we own, but which are not included in this baseline due to limitation of the measurement methodology.

We own and manage specific habitats which are of cultural historical importance and/or managed to support and conserve rare species which we may choose to continue to

manage in a focused way. These habitats may support a lower species diversity, but their plant and animal communities are often rare – for example, heather moorland, an important feature of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

A postcard from the future shows how the Council might have gone about achieving its 2030 target.

Dear 2020 Council, Year 2030 here! Sorry about the spoilers, but we thought you'd like to see how you've achieved ecological positivity...

It's now second nature for officers to review the biodiversity value and impact of everything the Council does and to do it in a way that provides a positive impact for ecology. We always try to do no harm to biodiversity, but where harm is unavoidable, we make sure we leave biodiversity in a better state than when we started.

Through collaboration across departments, we've increased biodiversity by converting improved grassland habitats (supporting a lower species richness) into neutral grassland (supporting a higher species richness). We've done this by changing cutting regimes to allow for natural regeneration and by sowing meadow and wildflower seeds.

For the greatest combined benefit, we now own more broadleaf and mixed woodland. We converted existing land of low species richness, and bought new land, turning it into carbon sinks and wildlife havens by carefully selected tree planting including species-rich grassland.

We have actively made space for nature, adopting a natural regeneration approach, without mechanical intervention, developing sites into ecological exemplars. We have reconnected people with nature through opportunities for recreational access, and this has inspired a new generation of naturalists who understand the importance of our natural environment, and how to protect it.



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Denbighshire
North Wales

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What changes and actions will help us get there?

Changes to Council processes and policies

To achieve our ecologically positive goal by 2030, we will have to change how we deliver the wide range of work and tasks required of us by Welsh Government, by our partners and by our communities.

In summer 2020, we held virtual workshops with the management teams of all the Council's service areas to start identifying the ways we could change how we do things to help protect and improve biodiversity. This built on ideas generated by the public during the public engagement event held in early 2020.

There were over 25 suggestions for changes to processes and policies, and we aim to implement as many as we can over the nine years.

The graphic below highlights some of the priority changes that we hope to make in Years 1 to 3 (2021/22 - 2023/24) of delivering this strategy.

This is a dynamic and flexible list – we may implement other things that aren't in the graphic below, as we respond to new opportunities.

Through engagement and communication, ensure service-based objectives align with the corporate ambition to become ecologically positive.	Implement the Council's change in constitution to have regard to tackling climate and ecological change, including changes to business case templates.	Include responsibility around climate and ecological change in all staff job descriptions, in consultation with staff and the unions.
Review our volunteering policy to promote opportunities for environmental improvement placements.	Continue and expand to more roads the Denbighshire County Council Highway rural verge/grass cutting policy (A, B and unclassified roads).	Develop a pollinator policy.

<p>Introduce a new outdoor light replacement policy to protect bats and insects – a warm white spectrum (<2700Kelvin) and luminaires feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm</p>	<p>Review environmental standards for grounds maintenance to focus on more tree planting, less grounds maintenance to support biodiversity. Avoid removal of green space.</p>	<p>Develop a tree & woodland strategy.</p>
<p>Ensure the new asset management strategy 2021 onwards aligns with our ambition to become net carbon zero and introduce a new asset disposal and acquisition policy which supports retaining or/and buying land for carbon absorption and ecological improvement.</p>	<p>Investigate the potential for better land use across the county to achieve multiple objectives e.g. natural flood risk management providing space for nature.</p>	<p>Ensure biodiversity protection and improvement is being appropriately considered in Council procurement – policy and strategy documents, commissioning templates, tender evaluations.</p>
<p>Identify community benefits in Council contracts that improve the environment and ecology.</p>	<p>Give clear guidance to developers to retain important ecological features on sites, building their designs around them.</p>	<p>Use an ecological compliance audit for planning applications to ensure mitigation, compensation and enhancement is actually installed.</p>
<p>Promote existing planning policies in the Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006-2021 and existing supplementary planning guidance which contribute to ecologically responsible development.</p>	<p>Deliver the replacement LDP that includes policies and supplementary planning guidance to contribute to ecologically responsible development (e.g. policy on external lighting to protect bats, requirement for integrated nest boxes in buildings)</p>	<p>Alter monitoring indicators in the replacement Local Development Plan to align with the ecological improvement agenda.</p>

28 Actions and projects

To achieve net carbon zero, we will have to build on what we already do under the environment priority of our Corporate Plan, as well as doing new things.

To become ecologically positive, we will have to build on what we already do under the environment priority of our Corporate Plan, as well as doing new things.

Over 40 ideas to protect and improve biodiversity were identified in the summer 2020 virtual workshops, and we aim to implement as many as we can, as well as other actions to respond to new opportunities.

The table below shows the priority actions and projects that we've identified so far to protect and improve biodiversity. We can be more specific for Years 1 to 3, but not for later years because of the uncertain and complex context local authorities operate in.

Delivering the projects and actions is subject to securing the necessary funding.

Action / Project	When		
	Years 1-3 2021/22- 2023/24	Years 4-6 2024/25- 2026/27	Years 7-9 2027/28- 2029/30
Direct action			
Complete the PLANT project – planting 18,000 urban trees	●		
Complete the Living Assets project – To maintain, enhance, protect and preserve Denbighshire's living assets for future generations	●		
Establish a county tree nursery, growing 5,000 trees a year for planting projects across the county	●		
Complete the Moorland Management and Wildfire Prevention Project.	●	●	●
Complete the Improving Biodiversity Project – funded from Well Connected Communities and Opportunities for All grant			
Deliver improvement and expansion projects for allotments	●		
Tender grounds maintenance contract for housing estates using specifications which improve biodiversity e.g. leaving areas of long grass for species diversity. .	●		
Deliver Supplementary Planning Guidance resulting from the new LDP to support the climate change agenda	●		
Identify land to plant trees and introduce wildflowers in school grounds	●	●	●

Action / Project	When		
	Years 1-3 2021/22- 2023/24	Years 4-6 2024/25- 2026/27	Years 7-9 2027/28- 2029/30
Deliver the Ash Dieback Project to limit the impact of the disease.	●	●	●
Convert new Council land through natural regeneration and targeted tree planting, enabling public access wherever possible	●	●	●
Deliver coastal zone management and in particular our natural sea defences at Gronant Special Protection Area	●	●	●
Expand annually the wildflower (deliberate non-cut) pilot conducted in 2020 to more areas the Council owns or manages e.g. community housing sites, care home sites	●	●	●
Deliver the Picturesque Landscape Project to fence off areas and promote the return of woodland		●	
Install green roofs on Council-owned garages		●	
Introduce wildflower planting around car parks	●		
Supporting action .			
Create an online portal to capture and report on the community benefit of contracts including measures around this agenda	●		
Identify the Council officers who procure most regularly to target communication and training on the climate and ecological change agenda and the contribution of environmentally responsible procurement.	●		
Create a bank of specific carbon and ecologically-related questions to use in the tender evaluation process. These should be scored and weighted appropriately as part of the quality assessment of tenders	●		
Engage with city, town and community councils on improving biodiversity by reviewing and updating their charter.	●		
Progression of replacement LDP to ensure climate change and biodiversity priorities are reflected in local planning policy and decision making.	●		

Action / Project	When		
	Years 1-3 2021/22- 2023/24	Years 4-6 2024/25- 2026/27	Years 7-9 2027/28- 2029/30

Direct action

Deliver supplementary planning guidance resulting from the new Local Development Plan in support of this agenda ●

Embed this agenda and goals when updating the Flood Risk Management Strategy (2014) e.g. emphasise natural flood risk management methods which also improve biodiversity ●

Carry out two volunteer programmes per year in countryside services for the public to contribute to this agenda ●

Develop environment away days to provide team-building and deliver biodiversity improvement ●

Complete the Improving Biodiversity Project – funded from Well Connected Communities and Opportunities for All grant

Engage with schools across the county to share learning and resources on this agenda and encourage positive behaviour change. ●

Work with landowners in Denbighshire to encourage the management and use of land for ecological improvement and biodiversity ●

Financial strategy to support strategy and action plan

Funding cuts over recent years mean we have a lot less money to invest in services now than we had in the past.

Financial pressures are likely to continue in areas such as social care, and on top of this the Council is committed to supporting our communities and businesses to recover from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the difficulties we face, this Council has a clear ambition to make our contribution to tackle the climate change and ecological emergency.

This document sets out the ambitions to become net carbon zero and ecologically positive and the changes and actions we could take to achieve those goals. Some will need capital investment, others revenue funding, and some won't involve any additional cost.

We think it will cost in the region of £9 million pounds to deliver the projects needed to achieve all that we'd like over the next three years. We suspect we will need to invest a similar figure in future years leading up to 2030.

But the council won't have to provide all of this money itself. We expect that grants from the Welsh Government, UK Government and supporting bodies will be available to help fund the work, and we aim to make the most of these opportunities.

To pay for the capital investment, we will need to commit revenue budget and cash. In the current financial climate, this will mean there is less money available for other things the Council may want to deliver, and we expect to raise some of the money through prudential borrowing.

We have measures in place to ensure all our capital investment decisions are based on robust business cases and that the overall debt financing position is carefully monitored and remains affordable and sustainable.

Our well-established revenue budget plans and processes will enable us to manage affordability, and this will be vital because achieving our net carbon zero and ecologically positive goals will depend on being able to afford to take all the necessary actions.

However, we remain committed to implementing the changes and actions needed to make our contribution to tackling climate and ecological change wherever and whenever we can. We are well aware that the cost of failing to do so will be even greater.

How we will monitor progress

We will deliver this strategy as a programme of activity, coordinated centrally with input and effort by officers from across our service areas working with our partners where applicable.

The person accountable for achieving these goals is the Council's Chief Executive as operational sponsor for the programme of work. The Lead Member/s in Cabinet with the areas of responsibility (known as 'portfolios') covering Climate and Ecological Change will provide the political steer.

The Council will calculate its carbon emissions, its carbon absorption and the species richness on its land in April-June each year to see how we performed on these net carbon zero and ecologically positive metrics in the previous financial year (April-March). The Council will submit its carbon emissions and carbon adsorption data to Welsh Government each year, starting in 2021, as part of the new Welsh Public Sector Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regime.

A committee called the Corporate Plan Board will monitor our progress. The Board is made up of all the Councillors who are members of Cabinet and all Heads of Service, Directors and the Chief Executive.

We will integrate key performance measures and programme highlights into the Corporate Plan performance report which is scrutinised quarterly through the Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee, and annually by Council.

Our progress can also be scrutinised by Internal Audit and Scrutiny Committees at appropriate points over the nine years and at the discretion of the Chief Internal Auditor and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs.

How we will share our learning

Climate and ecological change is the globally defining challenge of our time. It will require everyone to contribute to its solution – pooling effort, knowledge and resources.

Our approach to becoming a net carbon zero and ecologically positive Council is open and collaborative. We look forward to learning from others, maximising on opportunities together, and sharing our experience over the nine years to 2030.

Denbighshire County Council will continue to work with our public sector partners through the Public Service Board¹¹ on our collective 'Environmental Resilience' priority, sharing learning from our efforts in achieving net carbon zero and ecologically positive Council goals and seeking advice from others.

We will post the latest news, advice and opportunities to get involved on the [Council's corporate website](#) and the Council Consultation portal. We will issue an e-newsletter every six months updating on our work on this agenda, and we aim to host a public engagement event once a year.

As part of our community, you can register for the climate and ecological change sub-group of the Council's [Y Panel](#) and take part in online discussion forum on climate and ecological change themes.

¹¹ The Public Service Board (PSB) is a partnership of public service agencies who work together to improve local services. A list of current Conwy and Denbighshire PSB partners can be found here: <https://conwyanddenbighshirelsb.org.uk/members/>

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