

Rhondda Cynon Taf
Hinsawdd Ystyriol

Think Climate
Rhondda Cynon Taf



Rhondda Cynon Taf (2022- 2025)

Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030

Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 22 June 2022



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Our County Borough has many stunning and unique features which can, and will, continue to benefit the residents, businesses and visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf.

These features include a huge area of semi-natural landscape, with a high level of tree cover and a wide variety of wildlife, both common and rare, close to where we live. Even our mining heritage offers the potential to produce energy for us. We also face unique challenges. The devastating impact of the 2020 floods, Ciara, Dennis and Jorge on Rhondda Cynon Taf and the surrounding areas, is an early indication of the impact of projected warmer, wetter winters in the northern hemisphere arising from the impact of Climate Change that is also affecting plants and animals and the natural processes on which we all depend.

Welsh Government data, in its **Future Trends Report 2021**, set out that by 2050, in Wales it is predicted that

- the average summer temperature will increase by 1.34°
- rainfall precipitation will decrease by 16% in summer and to rise by 5% in winter.
- These changes in weather will, among other things, impact on the environment and ecosystems.

Across Wales, rising temperatures are already changing habitats **affecting plants and wildlife as well as soil conditions and landscapes**. Rising sea levels in coastal regions are threatening sea defences, frequent and more intense storms bring increased risk of flooding. More winter rain, too much rainfall in a short period and changes across the seasons will contribute to both flood and drought conditions. We are already seeing increasing numbers of heavy rainfall events, and expect this increase to continue, with greater risk of river and flash flooding. Rising temperatures will also impact on species and ecosystems, soils, agriculture and forestry with more invasive species, pests and diseases.

More extreme weather events also include more frequent heat waves which will affect our health, livelihoods and for many older and vulnerable people, life expectancy. For the ageing population in Rhondda Cynon Taf, this is one of the significant risks that need to be managed. Other risks include the supply of food, goods and vital services due to climate-related collapse of supply chains and distribution networks.

People, communities and countries are already being affected by climate change. These affects are not equal: gender, age and economic status affect our ability to respond. Poorer people suffer most as they are least able to relocate their home, afford to protect themselves or to pay more for food, transport and housing. We know that planetary health affects public health and each tonne of carbon emitted increases these affects. Closer to home, the Welsh Government's **Future Trends Report** also indicates that lower-skilled or routine jobs are at greater risk of future automation than high skilled occupations and younger people and women are more likely to be employed within jobs that have a high probability of being automated in the future.

However, there are also opportunities to create economic, social, environmental and cultural opportunities in how we deliver, commission and procure services.

Wales has declared both **Climate** and **Nature** emergencies and the Welsh Government's Programme for Government **updated in December 2021**, aims to tackle these climate and nature emergencies. As a Council, we are committed to playing our part. This means reducing our emissions, i.e. climate mitigation and better understanding local risks so that we can adapt to the changes that will, and are already happening i.e. climate adaptation.

Over the last few years, within the Council we have put in place energy efficiency measures in our buildings, schools and street lighting and increased the amount of residents' waste recycled. As a result of this work, between 2014/15 and 2018/19 we reduced the amount of carbon emitted across the Council by 15,884 tonnes, a reduction of 45.24%. Our positive progress in waste recycling has led us to increase our recycling target for 2024/25 to 80%, which exceeds the national target set by Welsh Government.

In 2021, the Welsh Government published the **Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Reporting Guide**. Which provides a consistent national calculation to “estimate baseline emissions, identify priority sources and to monitor progress towards meeting the target collective ambition of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030”. Using this guide for our calculations we can show that our ‘net’ emissions across services and operations in 2020/21 were 67,610 tCO₂e, 32% less than 2019/20. However, we also know that this reduction reflected the exceptional and essential service and operational changes put in place during the pandemic and the consistent national calculation is currently being refined.

We have also increased the amount of renewable energy we generate by investing in solar and wind power plants, using the energy produced to deliver Council services. In 2020/21 we generated 2MW of energy from solar panels on our schools and Council buildings.

More widely, we know from data reported by UK Government in 2021, that in 2019, **1042.6** kilotonnes of CO₂e was emitted across the County Borough, 33.7% or 529 kilotonnes, less than in 2005.

We are making progress to tackle Climate Change, but we all need to do more, and faster, if we are to reduce our carbon emissions, help to reverse the damage to our

planet and adapt to the changes already happening, both within the Council and within the County Borough. As a Council we will continue to lead by example, particularly in those areas where we have the greatest impact and work with our partners to make sure that we make the best use of our collective resources.

This is our plan to meet our commitments to reduce the carbon emissions across the Council and the County Borough and in doing so play our part to tackle Climate Change.

By 2030:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will be carbon neutral and
- the whole County Borough will be as close as possible to carbon neutral
- our work with partners will have ensured that all public and private organisations that operate in the County Borough will be carbon neutral by 2040.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf will have contributed to the Welsh Government’s ambition of a Net Zero public sector by 2030.

In order to deliver our Vision, the Council will continue to provide strong community leadership and create a cleaner, greener environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous and for natural eco systems to thrive. We will play our part in tackling climate change and protecting the planet and also adapting our services and operations so that we are able to meet the climate challenges ahead.



In our Corporate Plan 2020-24, **Making A Difference**, the Council acknowledged that delivering our Climate Change commitment is our greatest challenge. In our plan we committed to delivering three main priorities, all of which will contribute to and benefit from tackling climate change:

Ensuring **People**

are independent, healthy and successful;

Creating **Places**

where people are proud to live, work and play;

Enabling **Prosperity**

creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

The Climate Commitments set out below underpin each of our priorities. These commitments have been developed using the best information available at a time of significant and competing local, regional, national and global priorities with new and fast-moving opportunities being presented by governments and businesses alike. The pace of change is also being accelerated by the growing pressure of people both locally and across the world to take climate action. The Climate Commitments also show that we also want to unlock economic, social, cultural and environmental value by delivering a low carbon infrastructure.

No single plan can set out the many and varied ways in which we are working to reduce carbon emissions to achieve our commitments. This plan is a framework to guide us and shape what we do to and how we allocate our resources to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and that of the County Borough, learning from best practice, eliminating barriers and strengthening our data arrangements so that we are better able to challenge and demonstrate our progress. Much of the work in this plan is reflected and aligned to other Council plans, strategies and policies, those that are most relevant are included on page 21 for information.

We will be working within the Welsh Government's Delivery Plan for a **Low Carbon Wales**, the **Net Zero Wales Carbon Wales budget** (2) and its 'Route Map' to decarbonise the public sector in Wales.



Our commitments to reduce carbon within the Council include:

- 1 Reducing the **Council's Carbon Footprint** across all the Council's activities, with particular emphasis on procured goods and services and built assets, which comprises the largest proportion of our Carbon Footprint.
- 2 Reducing the demand for energy, improving energy efficiency of assets and services and embedding carbon reduction into everything we do.
- 3 Using public sector land for green energy generation/carbon storage, managing flood risk, increasing biodiversity and community growing.
- 4 Continuing to invest in solar energy installations on Council buildings and making sure that all new schools, offices, homes and commercial buildings within the County Borough are built to a Net Zero standard.
- 5 Supplying all our buildings and offices with low carbon heat and/or generating our own electricity.
- 6 Further developing the use of hydrogen for fuel cells in Council vehicles and buildings.
- 7 Ensuring we recycle or reuse 80% of all municipal waste by 2025.
- 8 Ensuring we understand the sequestration potential of land in our ownership by March 2023 and commit to taking action to realise this potential by March 2030.
- 9 Ensuring all the Council's building estate, including schools, being built or refurbished achieve a Net Zero standard by 2030.
- 10 Aiming to meet the Wales' target for public sector organisations to have all our new cars and light goods vehicles ultra-low emission vehicles by 2025 and where practicably possible, our Heavy Goods Vehicles are ultra-low emission by 2030.
- 11 We will seek to only procure supplies and services from businesses that are striving to reduce their carbon emissions and in doing so we will actively support low carbon and local suppliers as part of our wider transition to Net Zero.
- 12 Developing staff awareness, knowledge, skills and expertise to enable the Council to meet our targets and respond to the Welsh Government's declared **Climate** and **Nature** emergencies.
- 13 Continuing to locate services closer to the people that use, work and visit them.
- 14 Reducing staff travel by car by continuing to maximise the use of technology, encouraging active travel and greater use of public transport significantly reducing car commutes and business travel.
- 15 Putting in place climate change and carbon reduction awareness raising for all staff.
- 16 Strengthening data quality, accessibility, collection, and reporting arrangements to track our progress towards meeting the Council's carbon reduction targets and our contribution to Welsh Government ambitions and targets.
- 17 Working with:
 - local, regional and national partners to maximise resources.
 - Welsh Government to put in place a detailed local energy plan by the end of the 2023–24 financial year.

The Council is one of the largest employers in the Cardiff Capital Region, and around 80% of staff live in the County Borough. As of May 2022, the Council's property portfolio included 448 Council sites and 936 individual buildings of varying sizes located throughout the County Borough and our work within the Council can make a big difference. Through councillors representing their communities, the Council playing its part in providing strong community leadership, support and scrutiny and with Council staff trained, aware and encouraged to support climate initiatives, there is much that we can do locally to be part of the global climate solution.

Our approach



Across the wider County Borough, our success will be dependent on the Council playing its part to protect the planet for future generations and working with other public bodies and organisations to maximise the impact of this work.

This includes encouraging and facilitating changes in lifestyle and choices in all staff and their representatives, elected Members, residents, local business as well as our visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf. The involvement of younger people will be key to creating, developing and delivering this plan over the long term and we will be continuing to progress this involvement through school eco councils, our Youth Fora and through other community organisations. Plans to progress our work, particularly in engaging with people face to face have been affected by restrictions arising from the pandemic but we are keen to accelerate our plans safely, now that restrictions are lifted.



As well as listening to what people, communities and businesses are telling us, we also need to support and challenge the Welsh Government to do better and to break down any national barriers that mitigate against local action.

Our Climate Change Strategy and commitments align directly with our Corporate Plan and its ambitions are being embedded across all our plans and processes so that in Rhondda Cynon Taf, 'green' becomes mainstream.

Think Climate – PLACES



Using RCT's resources to generate green energy for use in local buildings, homes and to power electric vehicles.

Among other things, residents told us they would like to see us generate energy from renewable sources.

Our plans include:

- 1** Exploring and delivering opportunities to develop micro hydro-electric schemes on rivers and streams, e.g. Taffs Well Thermal Spring.
- 2** Progressing wind, hydro and solar energy schemes to reduce the cost of meeting our energy needs and generate income, whilst reducing our carbon footprint.
- 3** Working with partners including Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, Natural Resources Wales, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend County Borough Councils to maximise the collective resources to generate green energy across the region.
- 4** Exploring community cooperative energy projects to provide inexpensive, green energy for residents and businesses to purchase, including energy for electric vehicle recharging on publicly owned land.
- 5** Exploring potential options to utilise existing energy sources including:
 - a. waste heat generated at Bryn Pica.
 - b. geothermal energy from abandoned coal mines.
- 6** Contributing to actions within the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to explore options for a hydrogen economy and to generate green energy to fuel our industrial and commercial businesses.



Measures/targets:

- Increase local renewable energy generated from Council land or buildings from 2021/22 baseline (2MW) to 20MW by 2025.
- Baseline data on completion of Taffs Well Spring in mid 2022 and put in place arrangements for subsequent energy data collection and monitoring.



Making Waste Work for RCT

Among other things, residents told us that they wanted to see better information and a wider range of opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle different items e.g. school uniforms and ‘Tetrapak’. Also, making it easier to reduce, reuse and recycle locally through reuse and repair facilities.

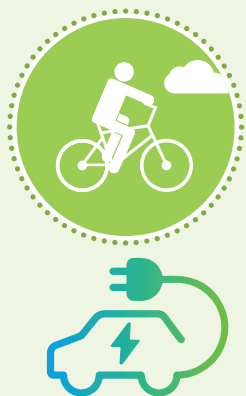
Our plans include:

- 1 Increasing the amount of waste we reuse and recycle locally by investing in technology and supporting businesses and residents to recycle more.
- 2 Continuing to deliver innovative recycling solutions for new and difficult to recycle waste, such as absorbent hygiene products (AHP), mattresses and other household products.
- 3 Providing more opportunities for residents to reuse, reduce and recycle items by:
 - increasing the range and number of reuse, recycle and repair facilities throughout the County Borough.
 - making it easier for residents to recycle waste at the kerb side and in our Community Recycling Centres.
- 4 Making sure that the methods of disposal for materials recovered from our waste are environmentally and ethically sustainable.
- 5 Working with partners to:
 - develop a local solution for the recycling of rigid plastics.
 - find more ways to recover energy from our waste.
 - optimise the recycling of unwanted reusable items at our Community Recycling Centres (CRC) and Reuse Outlets.
- 6 Working with Welsh Government to maximise funding opportunities that will grow the circular economy within RCT, including an investment in new industrial units and high tech recycling facilities at our planned Eco Park at Bryn Pica.
- 7 Decarbonising our waste transportation services where cost effective, technical solutions are available and investigating opportunities to generate green energy that will support a sustainable and cost-effective energy source for vehicles and waste processing activities.



Measures/targets:

- 80% of all RCT municipal waste will be reused or recycled by 2025.
- 80% of the energy used at our Bryn Pica Materials Recycling Facility will come from renewable sources by 2025.
- increase the tonnage of unwanted items kept out of landfill through our **Reuse Outlets** to at least 1,000 tonnes by 2025 (2021 Baseline 800 tonnes).



Putting in place low carbon infrastructure and promoting Active Travel

By 2030, we need to ensure that over half of all journeys are taken by public transport, bike or walking, with journeys using electric vehicles where this is not possible.

Among other things, residents told us that they wanted to see more sustainable, regular and accessible public transport options, including supporting people to switch to electric vehicles by making more public charging points available. They also want to see more and better integration of safe active travel making it easier to cycle, with the provision of secure cycle racks and bike hire at key locations e.g. town centres and transport hubs.

Our plans include:

- 1 Investing in alternative transport options including:
 - Improved public transport through the development of the South Wales Metro.
 - Investing at least £1.5M per annum for the 3 years to 2025 in Active Travel initiatives that encourage walking and cycling.
 - Investing in Safe Routes to schools across the County Borough.
 - Investing in Park and Ride facilities across the County Borough, including key metro sites and transport hub sites.
- 2 Exploring opportunities to further develop the Active Travel network to major destinations, and public transport hubs in the County Borough, including cycle storage and hire and considering Active Travel in all major transport projects.
- 3 Implementing our **Electric Vehicle Charging (EVC)** Strategy and supporting Implementation Plan, that will accommodate the transport needs of existing and future electric vehicle users.
- 4 Working with the private sector to put in place and invest in an accessible County Borough Wide network of electric vehicle (EV) charging opportunities, to stimulate the market and widen EV charging opportunities.
- 5 Supporting public transport providers to become more sustainable and to make the switch from diesel to electric taxis and buses.
- 6 Working with Cardiff Capital Region and Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (CCRTA), Transport for Wales and Welsh Government to develop public transport infrastructure and services to enable sustainable travel across the region that will meet future demand.
- 7 Ensuring that the transport services we commission, inc. Home to School, are zero or low carbon where possible.

- 8 Contributing to safer roads and improvements in air quality by introducing default 20 mph speed as required by Welsh Government's commitment to support Active Travel as well as provisions that emerge from the proposed Clean Air legislation in Wales, including measures to tackle idling vehicles.
- 9 Working with the Cardiff Capital Region to develop a Regional Transport Plan by 2024.

Measures/targets:

- *No of EV charging points installed at Council premises over next 5 years.*
- *Increase in number of charging devices per 100,000 population by 2025.*
- *By 2030, 90% of RCT residents without access to EV charging at home, will be within one mile of a publicly accessible EV charging point.*
- *% shift to zero emission passenger vehicles by 2030, WG target imminent.*
- *25% of journeys on foot, bike or public transport by 2025.*
- *20% more passengers using public transport by 2025 compared to baseline year 2009.*
- *5% of bays in council owned car parks will be charging bays by 2028, subject to funding.*
- *Increased kms of active travel routes within County Borough.*
- *Establish a baseline of number of pupils walking, cycling or using public transport of to travel to school and increase by 10% by 2025.*



Protecting and enhancing our wild spaces and working with nature to tackle both the Climate and Nature emergencies and benefit our communities

Among other things, residents told us they would like to see the Council create woodland to prevent flooding, soil erosion and improve carbon capture. They also want to see improved biodiversity across wildlife sites as well as in their local communities.

Our plans include:

- 1 Protecting and enhancing our most valuable carbon stores, in undisturbed soils and semi-natural vegetation in woods, heathland and grasslands across the County Borough.
- 2 Rewet and appropriately manage peatbogs in Council ownership to reduce carbon emissions and where possible restore biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- 3 Managing our land and green spaces so they are better able to cope with a changing climate and enhance the benefits they provide to communities.
- 4 Continuing to investigate and promote opportunities to use natural processes, green infrastructure and management techniques in RCT's countryside to reduce environmental risks such as flooding and wildfire, for example, **The Healthy Hillside Project**.
- 5 Sharing knowledge and skills to protect, value, enhance and manage our trees, hedgerows and woodlands, helping to address the **Climate** and **Nature** emergencies declared by the Welsh Government for Wales and launching the final **Local Nature Partnership Website**.
- 6 Working with partners to map and review the land we own to best manage our land, including identifying natural woodland regeneration, sites suitable for food production and where tree planting is appropriate; the potential for carbon sequestration and restoration of peatbogs.
- 7 Working with partners to expand green infrastructure and agroforestry to limit deforestation which in turn will significantly increase flood defences.
- 8 Minimising flood risk by promoting nature-based solutions in appropriate locations as well as traditional engineering works, for example Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- 9 Continuing to develop a 'Living Landscape' bringing together existing wildlife sites, local communities, wildlife organisations and ancient woodland.

- 10 Contributing to the Queens Green Canopy initiative and the **National Forest for Wales** through sustainable tree planting by investing £200,000 per annum until 2030 in planting and encouraging new trees and hedgerows.
- 11 Attracting private sector investment to increase areas of woodland regeneration and creation, ensuring that we protect and store carbon and reduce the risk of flooding.

Measures/targets:

- Increase the number of Council and partner sites actively managed for nature to 100 by 2030
- Increase the RCT wildflower management area by a minimum of 3% per year from 2021/22 baseline.
- Increase the area of tree cover in the five urban areas with the lowest cover (as at baseline year 2013)
- Rewet and appropriately manage all peatbogs in Council ownership by 2030.
- Reduce the consequences of flood risk on properties at risk of flooding
- Increase the number of flood risk alleviation projects that include a nature-based approach to managing the risk.
- Identify an accurate baseline of RCT woodland cover to inform future management by
 - Producing a whole RCT woodland cover map by 2024, including identification of all Council owned woodland.
 - Identifying the rate of natural woodland regeneration on Council owned woodland sites over 10 hectares in size which have been identified in the carbon footprint reduction project.
- By 2025, set a target for sustainable increase of woodland cover through natural regeneration.

Think Climate – PROSPERITY



Setting out Zero carbon ambitions for new homes and future developments in our Local Development Plan.

Among other things, residents told us they would like to see us reduce the need for travel by supporting the development of '15 minute neighbourhoods' with amenities close to where people live, providing wildlife corridors at new developments and protecting and creating green spaces close to communities.

Our plans include:

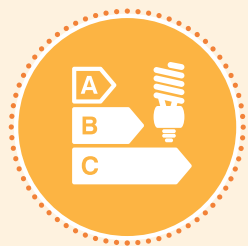
- 1 Putting climate change at the centre of our Local Development Plan, which is currently being renewed.
- 2 Addressing carbon reduction in development and planning including the proximity of all development to public spaces and facilities.
- 3 Supporting development on existing brownfield sites, in particular Town Centres, rather than building on 'greenfield' sites where possible.
- 4 Increasing the opportunity and land supply for new Zero carbon homes through our local development plan and ensuring they are located in places that reduce the need for car use.
- 5 Ensure all new housing and commercial developments are easily accessible by active travel and/or public transport.
- 6 Introducing standards for new house building.
- 7 Protecting RCT uplands and important habitats, including peatbogs.
- 8 Where appropriate, using planning conditions to deliver habitat restoration as part of new developments.
- 9 Minimising flood risk by promoting nature-based solutions in appropriate locations as well as traditional engineering works, for example Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- 10 Ensuring that new housing and commercial developments include solar, where feasible, and have the capability to generate, store and use renewable energy onsite and offer EV charging points.



Measures/targets:

- *By 2025 all new socially rented housing developments will not be connected to the gas grid and will use other renewable sources of heating.*
- *By 2030 all new housing developments will be carbon neutral, and our ambition is that from 2026 all new housing developments in RCT will be carbon neutral*.*
- *No. of sustainable/zero carbon homes in RCT*
- *Close and suitable proximity of new developments to public transport routes/hubs and/or active travel.*

By 2025 all new affordable homes in Wales will be built to net zero carbon, and our ambition is that our net zero standards are adopted by developers of all new homes regardless of tenure by this date **WG Net Zero Wales Carbon budget 2.*



Making existing homes more energy efficient

Making RCT’s traditional valley homes more energy efficient will be a significant challenge. 73% of homes are D rated on Energy Performance. Among other things, residents told us they would like to see us providing support including grants and information to help people make their homes more energy efficient and fit new technologies like solar panels and heat pumps in their homes. They would also like us to investigate new solutions like community heating.

Our plans include:

- 1 Working with landlords and homeowners to reduce the amount of energy used in existing homes, reaching Zero carbon where this is feasible to do so, by 2050, in line with **Better Homes, Better Wales, Better World**.
- 2 Investigating innovative ways of decarbonising all the housing stock, exploring the Heat Pump systems and hydrogen opportunities.
- 3 Increasing the energy efficiency of privately owned and rented homes through our **Warmer Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy 2019-2023** through supporting improvements to insulation and using more efficient low carbon appliances.
- 4 Working with Registered Social Landlords to make their existing housing more energy efficient.



Measures/targets:

- *No. of energy saving measures installed in RCT homes*



Supporting local businesses to become more sustainable and capitalise on the new opportunities offered by the green and emerging economies

Among other things, residents told us they would like to see us encourage more Reuse and Repair shops on our high streets and encourage businesses to be more sustainable, for example through reducing single use plastic items and running deposit return schemes for bottles and containers.

Our plans include:

- 1** Considering how our business grants can support local businesses to become more sustainable.
- 2** Working with Welsh Government to help businesses eliminate waste and implement circular economy principles such as reducing pollution and extending the life of products and materials.
- 3** Working with local businesses to help them source more sustainable products locally, and sell to local markets
- 4** Supporting the development of 'Green Tourism', promoting the sustainable growth of the visitor economy in Rhondda Cynon Taf, growing the local economy whilst protecting our green spaces and natural assets.
- 5** Supporting local businesses, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, by helping them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be better prepared to tender for suitable opportunities for Council contracts as they arise
- 6** Bringing together public and third sector, business and academia to maximise our work so that we can all meet our carbon reduction targets.
- 7** Using natural planting in public areas of our town centres to improve air quality and well-being, reduce flood risk, provide cooling during heatwaves and other climate benefits for residents.



Measures/targets:

- *Develop a suite of measures on support for businesses to become more sustainable.*



Supporting opportunities for people of all ages to gain the skills they need to work in the developing green economy and to live more sustainably

Getting to ‘Net Zero’ will involve people having new skills to carry out new and different jobs in emerging technologies. It will also involve resurrecting ‘traditional’ skills that have been lost. Among other things, residents told us that they wanted to see gardening in schools and more opportunities to swap skills.

Our plans include:

- 1 Working with Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, universities, colleges, and education providers to provide opportunities for people to acquire the skills they need for jobs in the green economy and emerging technologies.
- 2 Working with local businesses, partners and our schools to promote career paths and opportunities in emerging sectors, helping young people make decisions about their future study and careers.
- 3 Identifying job opportunities in new and emerging sectors, working with employers to understand their requirements and supporting people to take advantage of the options available through training, reskilling and in work support.
- 4 Promoting the development of horticulture and other technical skills within the community to support the growth of a sustainable food industry.
- 5 Expanding our range of Adult Education courses to widen opportunities for people to develop skills they can use to contribute towards a carbon neutral County Borough e.g. zero waste workshops, organic/wildlife friendly gardening, heritage crafts and local conservation.
- 6 Promoting Carbon and Eco-Literacy in our schools and across the Council.

- 7 Continuing to work in partnership with schools to deliver and encourage the use of ecology areas on 21st Century School sites for learning.
- 8 Create innovative projects aimed at connecting the new school curriculum developments with the work of this strategy



Measures/targets:

- *Develop a suite of measures to include:*
 - *training opportunities/jobs in green and emerging technologies .*
 - *the no. of people benefitting and*
 - *school engagement with green initiatives.*

Think Climate – PEOPLE



Supporting and encouraging different lifestyle choices

We will work with residents to develop the Council's plans to tackle Climate Change and also encourage and support them to make changes to their lifestyles and make the choices that will help RCT to get as close as possible to Carbon Neutral by 2030.

Among other things, residents told us they would like to see us lead by example e.g. eliminating our use of single use plastics and encouraging our staff to travel sustainably to and for work; encouraging people to think about reducing their consumption e.g. promoting 'use less, use better, recycle more' and purchasing more local products.

Our plans include:

- 1** Leading by example, e.g., eliminating our use of single use plastics, installing solar panels on our Council buildings etc. and encouraging our staff to make sustainable travel choices.
- 2** Encouraging residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, which will also help us to achieve our ambitious recycling target of 80% by 2025.
- 3** Encouraging residents to reduce food waste at home by providing education resources, recipes and practical tips.
- 4** Working with communities and residents to encourage people to eat climate friendly meals including eating less meat
- 5** Encouraging people to move away from carbon fuelled transport so that half of journeys are walking, cycling or made by public transport by 2030.
- 6** Encourage children and families to walk to school, including through supporting the **School Streets** initiative to reduce traffic around school gates and tackle air pollution.
- 7** Encouraging people to support improvements in air quality by promoting good driving behaviours including implementing no idling zones and reduced speed limits.
- 8** Encouraging and supporting homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes aiming for Zero Carbon homes by 2050.
- 9** Developing a facility at **Ynysangharad War Memorial Park** that will engage people in their local environment and contribute to activities with positive climate impact, increasing expertise and a love of nature.
- 10** Involving and working with residents and community groups to develop biodiversity initiatives including 'Grab a Rake', verge management; '**Action for Nature Partnership**', protecting peatbogs, recording our wildlife and developing a 'Living Landscape' project, bringing together wild places and local groups to benefit nature.
- 11** Encouraging women and girls to consider using reusable and sustainable sanitary products by providing education and access to sustainable products in the community and schools and also lobby Welsh Government to raise the profile of these initiatives across Wales.

Measures/targets:

- *Increasing the number of campaigns to inform and encourage residents to make positive climate choices.*
- *% of sanitary products provided in communities and schools that are reusable or plastic free and the number of information sessions held to promote their use.*



Working with Third Sector organisations, Neighbourhood Networks and other partners to maximise our collective resources to achieve a Carbon Neutral County Borough

Among other things, residents told us they would like to see us work with existing community groups and networks to promote and expand initiatives that already operate in the County Borough e.g. repair cafes.

Our plans include:

- 1 Working with third sector organisations to ensure the sustainability of community facilities/venues in RCT, reduce the impact of rising energy prices and improve energy efficiency. This includes Council buildings leased to third sector groups.
- 2 Promoting existing repair cafes in the County Borough and encouraging new enterprises and locations to safely extend the life of products and materials and encourage a reduction in consumption of new products.
- 3 Ensuring that climate impacts are considered when assessing and approving Community Asset Transfers.
- 4 Working with our Community Voluntary Council, Interlink RCT and third sector organisations, including Welsh language groups, to provide and promote opportunities for volunteering which will engage people in supporting the local environment and help them develop relevant skills to support the ambition of a Carbon Neutral County Borough.
- 5 Working with community partners to maximise available resources to ensure RCT land is appropriately managed and utilised for the benefit of our communities.
- 6 Identifying and understanding resources and services that are already available in the community in third sector organisations, community groups and volunteer experts.



Measures/targets:

- Develop a suite of measures to evidence how we are maximising our resources.
- Establish baseline data for the number of repair cafes or similar across the County Borough.





Promoting sustainable, local food in services and communities

Among other things, residents told us they would like to see us help people to grow food closer to home, encourage and inform people about the benefits of eating more plant based meals and support community growing and sharing fruit and vegetables.

Our plans include:

- 1** Working with partners to develop a Food Prosperity Network for creating an RCT sustainable food facility with the ambition of achieving the **Sustainable Food places Gold Award** with Bronze Award achieved by June 2023.
- 2** Developing ‘park to plate’ activities in Ynysangharad Park, to grow fresh vegetables for local use and pilot how this model can be applied to Council parks and land for community food production.
- 3** Reducing the environmental impact of food provided by the Council through more climate friendly meals choices and procurement.
- 4** Continuing to work with community groups to transfer Council assets, when available, for sustainable food activities.
- 5** Providing more opportunities for residents to grow their own fresh food e.g., by increasing the number of allotments throughout the County Borough, exploring use of micro plots, co-working and volunteering and also developing a package of support to new plot holders.
- 6** Working with partners to map the land we own to better understand the food growing potential of our land.
- 7** Contributing to the discussion with Welsh Government on developing a Wales Community Food Strategy.



Measures/targets:

- *Establish a baseline of food growing activities across RCT.*
- *Increase the number of climate friendly meal options offered by the Council in our schools, offices and offered by our community meals service from a baseline that will be established in 2022/23.*



Raising Climate Awareness

Among other things, residents and staff told us they would like to see us increase awareness of climate change and provide opportunities for residents and communities to become involved in developing solutions that will contribute to the County Borough becoming Carbon Neutral.

Our plans include:

- 1** Providing clear, simple and practical ways to encourage everyone to play their part to reduce carbon at home, in work and getting about.
- 2** Listening to and understanding what our residents of all ages are telling us.
- 3** Inviting and encouraging residents, businesses, staff and their representatives to discuss what the Council can do to help them to reduce their carbon footprint and what they can do for themselves.
- 4** Working with young people, including through schools and their eco councils, youth groups and Arts projects in ways they can help shape our plans for their future.
- 5** Working with Community Groups, including Older Persons Advisory Group and those that are seldom heard so that they can contribute to and shape our plans for the future.
- 6** Developing intergenerational projects that enhance the skills and lives of people in our communities.
- 7** Providing opportunities for communities to become involved in developing local solutions through Neighbourhood Networks.



Measures/targets:

- *Increase the number of opportunities for residents and communities to be involved in the ongoing Climate Change conversation.*



WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

Future Generations

In preparing this Climate Change Strategy the Council has taken account of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, making decisions and taking action today that are not at the expense of the generations that follow us.

The Act focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It makes public bodies, such as the Council, think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven national Well-being Goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

The Council's approach to the **Well-being of Future Generations Act** is to embed its requirements into the Council's business including our Climate Commitments.

This plan sets out a vision and Climate Commitments that will continue to maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national Well-being Goals. The national goals, together with the five Ways of Working, will continue to be incorporated into the detailed action plans that will deliver the Council's Climate Commitments.



Examples of how our plans to tackle Climate Change contribute to the seven national Well-being Goals.

RCT Climate Action

NATIONAL WELL-BEING GOAL	PROSPEROUS WALES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting new green jobs in a low carbon economy with locally procured goods and services and community benefit clauses. • Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now, and in the future including improved low carbon public transport and active travel. • Considering how our business grants can support local businesses to become more sustainable. • Working with local businesses to help them source more sustainable products locally, and sell to local markets. • Working with local businesses, partners and our schools to promote career paths and opportunities in emerging sectors, helping young people make decisions about their future study and careers.
	RESILIENT WALES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and enhancing our most valuable carbon stores, in undisturbed soils and semi-natural vegetation in woods, heathland and grasslands. • Minimising flood risk by promoting nature-based solutions. • Protecting RCT uplands and important habitats through our Local Development Plan. • Leading by example, e.g., eliminating the Council’s use of single use plastics, installing solar panels on our Council buildings etc. and encouraging our staff to make sustainable travel choices. • Using public sector land for green energy generation/carbon storage, managing flood risk, increasing biodiversity and community growing. • Continuing to develop a ‘Living Landscape’ bringing together existing wildlife sites, local communities, wildlife organisations and ancient woodland.
	HEALTHIER WALES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing traffic speed limitations to improve air quality in our communities. • Using natural planting in public areas of our town centres to improve air quality and well-being, reduce flood risk, provide cooling during heatwaves and other climate benefits for residents. • Ensure all new housing and commercial developments are easily accessible by active travel and/or public transport. • Encouraging people to move away from carbon fuelled transport so that half of journeys are walking, cycling or made by public transport by 2030. • Encourage children and families to walk to school, including through supporting the School Streets initiative to reduce traffic around school gates and tackle air pollution.
	MORE EQUAL WALES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the inequalities faced by those who are most vulnerable to the effect of Climate Change including women and people on low incomes, allowing people to fulfil their full potential. • Increasing the energy efficiency of privately owned and rented homes through our Warmer Homes Fuel Poverty strategy 2019-2023. • Identifying job opportunities in new and emerging sectors, working with employers to understand their requirements and supporting people to take advantage of the options available through training, reskilling and in work support. • Encouraging women and girls to consider using reusable and sustainable sanitary products by providing education and access to sustainable products in the community and schools.
	WALES OF COHESIVE COMMUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling residents being more active in their communities in community projects and community use of green space. • Exploring opportunities to further develop the Active Travel network to major destinations, and public transport hubs in the County Borough, including cycle storage and hire and considering Active Travel in all major transport projects. • Working with partners to develop a Food Prosperity network for creating an RCT sustainable food facility. • Developing ‘park to plate’ activities in Ynysangharad Park, to grow fresh vegetables for local use and pilot how this model can be applied to Council parks and land for community food production. • Involving and working with residents and community groups to develop biodiversity initiatives including ‘Grab a Rake’, verge management; ‘Action for Nature’ Partnership protecting peatbogs, recording our wildlife and developing a ‘Living Landscape’ project, bringing together wild places and local groups to benefit nature.

RCT Climate Action

NATIONAL WELL-BEING GOAL

A WALES OF VIBRANT CULTURE
& WELSH LANGUAGE

- Expanding our range of Adult Education courses to widen opportunities for people to develop skills they can use to contribute towards a carbon neutral County Borough e.g. zero waste workshops, organic/wildlife friendly gardening, heritage crafts and local conservation.
- Working with our Community Voluntary Council, Interlink RCT and third sector organisations, including Welsh language groups, to provide and promote opportunities for volunteering which will engage people in supporting the local environment and help them develop relevant skills to support the ambition of a Carbon Neutral County Borough.
- Working with young people, including through schools and their eco councils, youth groups and Arts projects in ways they can help shape our plans for their future.

GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE WALES

- Facilitating sustainable behaviour and using nature's resources responsibly at home to contribute to protecting the countries and people that are most at risk and vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change around the world.
- Working with communities and residents to encourage people to eat climate friendly meals.
- help businesses eliminate waste and implement circular economy principles such as reducing pollution and extending the life of products and materials.
- Encouraging residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle waste.
- Eliminating single use plastics across the council and schools.
- Decarbonising our waste transportation services where cost effective, technical solutions are available, and investigating opportunities to generate green energy that will support a sustainable and cost-effective energy source for vehicles and waste processing activities.
- Progressing the Eco Park in Bryn Pica.
- Opportunities to create and use our own green sustainable energy such as micro hydro-electric schemes which utilise natural river and water course feature.
- Increasing the opportunity and land supply for new Zero carbon homes.

Relevant Council Plans, Policies and Strategies:

Making A Difference Corporate Plan 2020-24	The Council's Corporate Plan Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)
Corporate Performance Report 2021-22	CorporatePerformanceReport202122.pdf (rctcbc.gov.uk)
Local Development Plan	Revised Local Development Plan (LDP) 2020 - 2030
Active Travel	Active Travel Annual Report 2018
Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy	RCT Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2021-2030
Local Transport Plan	South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan 2015
Biodiversity Duty	Biodiversity Report 2019
Local Nature Partnership	RCT Local Nature Partnership
Flood Risk	Flood Risk Management Plan Volume 1 2015
Tourism Strategy	Tourism Strategy 2021
Air Quality Management Plan	Progress Report October 2021
Sustainable Communities for Learning formerly 21st Century Schools	School Investment Projects
Cwm Taf Well-being Plan	Cwm Taf Well-being Plan 2018-23
Asset Management Plan	Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2018- 23
Procurement Strategy	Procurement Strategy 2022
Tree and Woodland Strategy	currently in development



Rhondda Cynon Taf
Hinsawdd Ystyriol

Think Climate
Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf (2022- 2025)

Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030

August 2022 • JN: 51525-41

If you have any questions about the plans and work described in this strategy please contact: climatechange@rctcbc.gov.uk.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF