

THINK GLOBAL ACT LOCAL

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
LOCAL ACTION FOR
OUR ENVIRONMENT

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The LGA Liberal Democrat Group represents over 1,800 Liberal Democrat councillors across England and Wales. We are very active within the LGA in helping shape the organisation's lobbying and media work, we offer advice and support to Liberal Democrat Council Groups across the country; and work with ALDC and the wider Liberal Democrat family to promote local government and to identify and highlight best practice.

www.local.gov.uk/lga-lib-dem-group

Local Government Association
Liberal Democrat Group

Green Liberal Democrats are working to help candidates by supporting them with advice and help for campaigning ideas and briefings for media interviews. Please let us know if you would like to become an accredited Green Liberal Democrat candidate.

www.greenliberaldemocrats.org.uk

Green Liberal Democrats

THE NATURAL PARTY OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Since its inception, the Liberal Democrats have cherished the natural world, from realising the value of threatened species to campaigning against single use plastics.

A key tenet of Liberalism is the protection of the planet for future generations. Sustainabilty is becoming more politically relevant, as we become better educated about the natural world, and the impact we are having on it. Perhaps because we have such an affinity for the environment, it's easy to take our values for granted. We need to be wary of assuming that the wider public understand our commitment to protecting our planet, and our health. This booklet offers many endearing case studies of our environmental safeguarding, and, like a second wave of community politics, our commitment to a healthy planet can help us deliver a message of empowerment and radical change. Our task then, is to use these examples to win wider support.

Reading the articles in this booklet made me proud to be a Liberal Democrat councillor. Of course we punch above our weight, of course we are leading the way, and we are not constrained by wealthy donors, nor are we the serfs of organised labour. As a political party free from those dinosaurs of vested interests, we can embrace change, and make that change work for our communities and our planet.

As local councillors in power, in coalition, and even in opposition we can make, influence and demand change for the better. This booklet demonstrates exactly how our colleagues are doing just that.

The wealth of articles here represent a snap shot of a fast moving situation. Being in local government enables us to try new things, indeed requires that we try new things to mitigate environmental damage, and build a sustainable future. The great achievements listed here are also useful, to help our future candidates campaign on our environmental commitments, and take a strong and confident stance on the doorstep. Even cynical voters will support us when we demonstrate that with the use of technology, saving the planet can help them save money.

Local government is the bedrock of Liberal Democracy in the UK. The community and activist base which elects all our politicians starts with localism and a local base. From plastics to power, and planning to pollinators there are many examples for focus leaflets and council motions. Some of the achievements listed in this booklet are groundbreaking, while others appear to be common sense responses to everyday problems. It's the Liberal Democrat touch of pragmatism and vision that sets us apart, and can win us support.

We're not just going to change the world – we're going to save it!

Thanks to our colleagues across the country for the work they are doing, and for writing about their work, thanks also to Rob Banks and the team at the Local Government Association (LGA) for putting this together.

Councillor Graham Neale is the Chair of the Green Liberal Democrats

Mayor Peter Taylor

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IN WATFORD



League tables! I know they provoke a mixed reaction but I remember as a child spending ages going through the football league tables in my parent's copy of the Independent on Sunday. I'm still very keen to see where 'my team' is whenever there is a presentation.

I was recently at a meeting were we looked at growth in Hertfordshire. Watford came top of the league, having seen the biggest population rise and increase in jobs. Between 2012 and 2016 the number of jobs in Watford increased by over 30 per cent and from 2007 to 2016 the population of the town increased by over 16 per cent. Of course this didn't happen by chance and our location, national factors and not least very effective local leadership from my predecessor Dorothy Thornhill all played their part.

But with this growth come serious challenges. Right at the top of list of issues raised with the local Liberal Democrat team when we are chatting with residents is the need to improve our transport infrastructure. This was raised at every hustings during my mayoral election campaign and was a key theme in my manifesto. We welcome and have supported the growth and vibrancy of our town but know that this must be done in a sustainable way.

Over several years, many partners worked on a high profile scheme to extend the Metropolitan tube line to Watford Junction train station. This would have resulted in the creation of two new tube stations in Watford, a much improved east – west connection in the town and the linking of the tube network to the busiest train station in Hertfordshire. The costs of the project rose but we did manage to secure the additional funding needed.

In one of my first meetings as Mayor, Transport for London stated that the scheme was 'dead'. Although they had calculated the costs, included a 20 per cent contingency and would have benefited from the additional revenues, they were not prepared to take any of the risks associated with the project. However, they did give a commitment to look into the feasibility of alternative schemes and that work is now taking place.

With the Metropolitan line extension stalled, it was more important than ever for the Liberal Democrat council to secure transport improvements. In my first year as Mayor I have made significant progress towards enhancing cycling and bus provision in the town.

Bus travel is too often forgotten about in our discussions about travel.

For every journey by train in the UK there are 20 by bus. A report published this year by the Campaign for Better Transport showed that between 2010 and 2018 funding for buses was cut by about £182 million in England and Wales with 3,347 services reduced, altered or withdrawn.

I want to see new passengers choosing to travel by bus in Watford. Later this year we will be introducing new on-demand bus services. This fleet of mini buses will provide passengers with a service that is flexible and high quality. Using an app, residents will be able to order buses to the nearest street corner and will be dropped as close as possible to their destination. They will be charged a per mile fee and the journey will be no longer than 20 per cent further than if they were driving themselves, as the bus picks up other passengers. Similar schemes in Liverpool, Oxford and Sittingbourne in Kent have proved successful and I am determined to make sure that we get a scheme up and running in Watford this year.

Regrettably at our recent Budget Council, our local Labour Party group moved an amendment to remove all funding for this scheme and then abstained on the vote for our budget as a whole.

Cycling figures in Watford have mirrored those seen across the country; an increase in the number of people travelling by bike a few years ago, with the figures then plateauing and falling slightly last year. I am determined to reverse that trend.

We are working with the county council to enhance the local cycling infrastructure, increasing the amount of cycle hoops in the town, especially at our train stations, and investing in new facilities for our local Cycle Hub which revamps bikes and provides training and support for cyclists of all types. On top of that, we will be introducing a bike hire scheme in the town later this year.

The Cycle Forum we have established brings together representatives from cycling groups, local businesses and our councils. At our first meeting over 40 people came forward with a range of suggestions. We will work together on these plans to make Watford a more cycle-friendly place.

The need for more sustainable transport has never been more urgent. In towns and cities across the country we know that poor air quality, congestion and obesity are significant and growing problems. Liberal Democrat councils recognise this and are taking practical action to improve the transport options in their communities. The work we have started in Watford will take years but I am determined that in the future we will be top of this particular league and known as the town with the most sustainable transport in the UK.

Peter Taylor is the directly elected Mayor of Watford
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Councillor Adele Morris

ARE WE REALLY BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE?



Much has been said about the destruction of our environment caused by plastics, and we have grasped that we need to do something about it. Similarly we are starting to understand the effects of poor air quality on health.

Much has also been said about the chronic shortage of housing across the country, and that we need a massive home building programme. But we must think about the impact this will have on the environment. I'm not talking about protecting the Green Belt or biodiversity here; I'm talking about the physical impact of creating new buildings.

Zero carbon

Although the Government scrapped its zero carbon homes policy in 2016, both London and Southwark have policies requiring zero-carbon homes on major developments.

Yet time and time again we sit at planning committee meetings deciding on major developments where the applicant has failed to meet this target.

When I ask them why, excuses given include lack of space for photovoltaic panels, constrained sites (proximity to other buildings/railway lines etc) and viability.

In Southwark we collect money from developments to offset their carbon emissions when they fail to meet the target. So far we have around £250,000 in the kitty, with much more to come – just one approved scheme will contribute around £850,000, with many others due to make substantial payments once they are built. But what will the money be spent on? I have discussed with officers that if we do accept money in lieu, it must be spent on projects that genuinely provide the additional carbon savings that should have been achieved in the development. It makes a mockery of the system if it is simply used on generic 'environmental improvements' across the borough. But more importantly, surely its better if the developments meet the target in the first place?

Which brings us to the question – why have we got a target that is not being achieved? Is passive house development (where a home is designed to maintain a comfortable temperature using sunlight, human and minimal mechanical heating and cooling systems) too expensive?

Is it that the building industry hasn't caught up with new technology yet, or that they choose not to because they think it is too difficult or too expensive? Is it simply an unrealistic expectation when the construction sector itself is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions? A recent report by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit claims that not achieving zero-carbon development is costing occupants of new-build homes more than £200 per year on their energy bills. We really need to be more robust at challenging developers if we are going to address climate change.

Sustainable transport and infrastructure solutions

It is no good building a huge development in an area when there is little or no transport infrastructure to get people where they need to go to work, shop and socialise. Yet a recently published report from the National Audit Office shows that councils are not collecting enough money from developers to do this. In Southwark we collect both S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy payments, which can be used towards local transport improvements.

Liberal Democrats in Southwark are campaigning to stop the Mayor of London removing a hydrogen bus route; urging the Mayor and the council to roll out the docking station cycle hire scheme across the borough; and proposing a walking and cycling bridge across the Thames. We also support car free developments and encourage schemes to provide car club memberships for new residents.

Major development is happening across the country, and we need to put pressure on developers, local and national government to be more creative in their approach to building. We need to make sure that we are creating sustainable communities that are fit for the future.

Adele Morris is the LGA Liberal Democrat Spokesperson on environmental issues

Councillor Keith House

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE IN EASTLEIGH



Renewable energy in Eastleigh

Tackling climate change has been a strap-line at Eastleigh Borough Council for well over a decade. We have clear ambition to reduce our environmental footprint with zero-carbon targets, planning to reduce energy and water consumption, managing down waste, and achieving modal shift to more sustainable travel.

We are proud of our record promoting and delivering renewable energy systems. We have focused on renewables for a number of reasons: it is important that there is a strong financial case for all our installations; but more than this we strive to be a community leader. With energy prices constantly rising, it is critical to our residents and business owners that we help keep their bills down. Energy is a poverty as well as environmental issue.

We have nearly 20 solar photovoltaic (PV) installations on our own sites and other community locations, including at an Academy school site, alongside a range of other technologies including solar thermal, heat pumps and even a wind turbine. At our £28 million new leisure centre, completed in 2017, we have installed a combined heat and power plant as an integral part of one of the south east's largest and busiest leisure centres.

Innovating

We are not afraid to showcase the latest technology and all our renewable installations include live counters and educational material to help visitors understand the technology and the benefits of renewable energy.

Fourteen years ago we installed a wind turbine at one of our country parks. This turbine is still in operation and provides a clear example of our commitment to transitioning to a low carbon energy system. We would like to do more with wind but are shielded by the South Downs National Park and the Isle of Wight.

The council has a strong history of supporting businesses and residents who are trialling new renewable energy systems.

Most renewable systems can be installed via permitted development, but if planning is required we have a policy whereby the council covers planning fees for residential and small, innovative installations. Green planning is free!

A community building one of our country parks was one of the first to host solar thermal, an indication of how we have moved along technological developments; 18 months ago we replaced this building with state-of-the-art BREEAM Excellent facilities, which now features the latest PV utilises and a geothermal heat pump.

One of our recent community facilities includes vertical bore heat pump. It is a unique approach that dramatically improves the cost-effectiveness of the system for the tenants.

Democratising energy

There is a misconception that the Deregulation Act removed the ability for local authorities to ensure that developments achieve higher than building regulation standards: this was never enacted. Eastleigh still has progressive policies which require housing developments to achieve 15 per cent greater efficiency than building regulations; in reality this is easily achieved and, through good design, renewable energy can cost effectively be built into all new homes.

Several sites have passivhaus homes; we will only influence markets to change by demonstrating leadership.

Eastleigh Borough Council is industry leading in its approach to master-planning, our local planning policies require development sites to utilise BREEAM communities. This approach helps to create sustainable communities that are good for the environment, its people and are also economically successful, by embedding sustainable principles and goals within the masterplan from the outset. This has helped us create places where people want to live and work, even enhancing employee satisfaction. Indeed, our Pylands Lane development was so well designed that it achieved what is to this date the highest score in the world for BREEAM communities. We need to all be trying to raise the bar.

As we take forward more active intervention in the housing market by acquiring major sites for mixed tenure housing schemes, so our direct role in master-planning grows, working directly with utilities for example on lower water-use planning, and reinvesting site profits into higher quality design and environmental standards.

Ambition moving forward

Each year our solar panels alone generate over 300,000 kilowatt hours of electricity, the equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of 250 households in our borough. By now we had hoped to have built a large solar farm, but aging national utility infrastructure has held us back. However, we haven't given up on this vision just yet, so watch this space.

Looking to the future we are planning for more electric-car charging points, already deployed in our main car park, and for a world with driverless cars. The era of the internal combustion engine for domestic travel is coming to an end. We can encourage that transition.

Tackling climate change has to be a shared ambition. It requires leadership and a commitment to challenge assumption. 'Too difficult' has been the answer for too many for too long. The clock is ticking.

Keith House is Leader of Eastleigh Borough Council

Councillor Andrew Waller

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY IN YORK



Liberal Democrats on the City of York Council have a great track record on environmental issues including significant work being achieved from 2003 to 2011 through the first Carbon Management Plan which delivered a 25 per cent reduction measured through specific schemes including the Eco Depot (at the time the largest timbered straw baled building in the country).

Since returning to power in 2015 as part of a coalition, Liberal Democrats have been keen to build on that record.

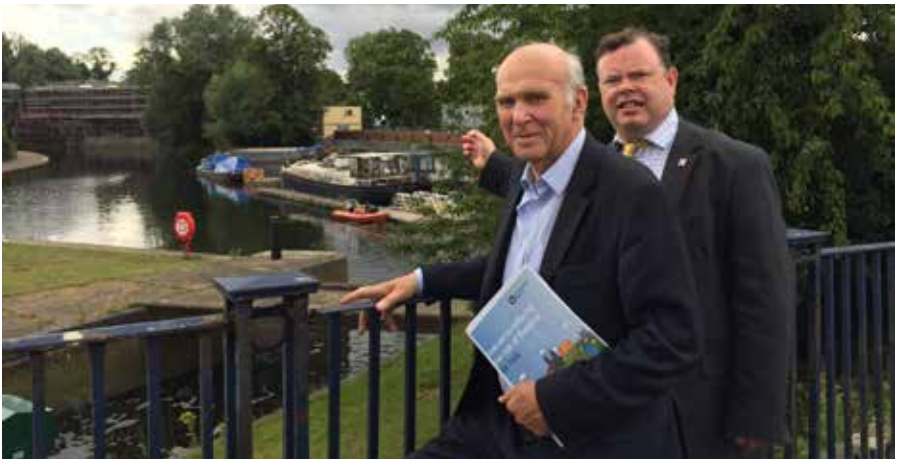
The council has now agreed to implement the first voluntary Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in the country from January 2020; requiring buses coming into the city centre more than five times a day to be low emission Euro 6 or electric – backed up with a £1.6 million programme to assist the retrofitting of buses. Whilst other larger cities have been required by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to introduce CAZs we have introduced this ourselves as we recognise the need to tackle our hotspots and virtually all bus routes come through the city centre.

Whilst a city of our size would not be expected to have air quality issues one of the consequences of lack of 'future proofing' of urban design by the Romans, Vikings and Wall builders is that we have locations where traffic fumes are held by tall narrow roads or earth banks leading to the walls.

A network of real-time monitoring has provided us with the information to go to government to demonstrate the need for investment in low emission vehicles.

Although buses are three per cent of the road fleet our analysis attributes 27 per cent of emissions to them. This has helped to deliver a £3 million grant for the electrification of all park and ride routes (currently two are electric and the Liberal Democrat group have put pressure on the council to appeal for funds to deliver the whole fleet). The information is available to the public at http://jorair.co.uk/

We were amongst the first 30 authorities to take part in Clean Air Day in 2017, and did so again in 2018 which has led to the development of an anti-idling fine programme so that from June 2019 if vehicles are observed by uniformed officers to have left their engine idling for over two minutes and refuse when asked to turn off then a fine of £20 can be levied.



The city has two air quality management areas which have been slightly enlarged this summer, but one area was removed last year as air quality had improved consistently (although monitoring continues).

The council now includes the data on World Health Organisation guidelines for PM 10 and PM 2.5. We had the world's first electric tour buses, and we are in the process of delivering the scheme to retrofit 29 school buses.

We're supporting a low emission taxi fleet which we have now required as a standard for new vehicles (although Uber is causing concern). This policy, in addition to our earlier support for local taxi drivers through the Low Emission Taxi Incentive Scheme, has resulted in 16 per cent of local taxis being upgraded to petrol hybrid or electric vehicles.

Liberal Democrats have supported the expansion of the electric charging point network – and this will be expanded further utilising money for which EU match funding has been applied.

Defra has commented that 'the [air monitoring] report is of an excellent standard and clearly communicates all key information. It is clear that the council are taking exceptional steps and effort to actively tackle air quality within the city and the success of this approach is reflected in their results'.

Key completed measures and progress include:

- Introduction of electric buses on two of York's park and ride services at Poppleton Bar and Monks Cross. Additional electric and low emission Euro 6 diesel buses are proposed as



part of the new park and ride contract.

- Retrofitting the world's first electric double-decker sightseeing bus. Three additional sightseeing buses were converted in 2017. Transdev is currently working in partnership with the council to convert the remaining two vehicles to full electric drive.
- The council has been involved in a number of events promoting clean air days and anti-idling practices with bus operators, taxis, LGVs and private motorists. Photographs of activities undertaken for National Clean Air Day 2017 and 2018 are available online at: http://jorair.co.uk/air-quality-in-york/photos/
- Continued delivery of the Strategic Electric Vehicle fast charge network in the city. The number of charging sessions per month is currently just over 1500 (this figure includes charging session by electric buses). Additional publically accessible fast chargers are currently being installed at Foss Bank Car Park.
- City of York Council was awarded 'Go Ultra Low' city status and awarded funding from the Office of Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV). The money will be used to fund a city-wide network of hubs, providing ultra-fast, reliable and convenient electrical charging. The first hyper-hub is due to be installed at Monks Cross Park and Ride site later in 2018. This will consist of 4 x double rapid-charge units. Once completed, further hubs are proposed for other park and ride sites.

We were also awarded £2.85 million funding from the government's national Productivity Investment Fund. The Smarter Travel Evolution Programme (STEP) takes advantage of York's ultra-fast fibre optic connectivity and the cutting edge transport research already being undertaken in the city. Detectors located on traffic lights, bollards and other street furniture will track vehicle movements by anonymous signatures collected from people using mobile data services. This will allow the council to better understand the impact of changes and demands on the network such as the impacts of new development sites, and to help manage and improve air quality in the city.

Bus use is growing in York !

Figures compiled by the Department for Transport (DfT) show that improvements made to York's buses helped to take 460,000 car trips off the city's roads last year. DfT's annual statistics on public transport use show that the number of people using York's buses has increased for the fourth year in a row. Last year there were 16.8 million passengers on York's buses, compared with 15 million in 2012/13. This growth in passengers of 12 per cent is in contrast with the rest of Yorkshire and Humber region which has fallen by four per cent.

Passenger satisfaction information also suggests that 90 per cent of York's bus passengers are satisfied with the service they receive – above the national average of 87 per cent, and above the rates for West and South Yorkshire.

Real-time monitoring of nitrogen dioxide and other pollutants takes place at nine locations in the city, along with 233 sites for diffusion tubes to measure nitrogen dioxide levels.

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Councillor David Tutt

HARVESTING THE SUNSHINE IN EASTBOURNE



Solarbourne was an initiative set up by Liberal Democrat Eastbourne Council in 2011 to invest in solar energy so that we could collectively:

- utilise our microclimate and position of being a sunshine capital of the UK
- help to reduce people's electricity bills, especially those in most need
- lower the town's carbon footprint
- provide a significant additional income that can be recycled back into the community
- help Eastbourne move towards becoming a green town.

Solarbourne has already had two phases of investment and has seen the installation of solar panels across our property portfolio – houses, flats and commercial buildings, including the council offices. Capital funds were used to pay for the panels and installation and they will be in place for at least 25 years – the period of time that the Government will give a cashback for the clean energy being generated.

In the last five financial years Solarbourne has contributed £1.7 million to the council's general funds as a result of collecting the Government cashback incentive, which has enabled front line services and the support of community services to be maintained. Last year alone, Solarbourne generated over one million kilowatt hours of clean energy which is enough to power 245 homes[1].

Solarbourne was the council's first income generation scheme and has been a platform to invest in other initiatives. As Solarbourne was a 25 year investment, it was subject to prudent assessments, due diligence and working in partnership with our residents and Eastbourne Homes.

The council was also one of the first local authorities to invest in large scale renewable energy and it continues to be a pioneer in this field with the creation of Clear Sustainable Futures – a joint venture with Robertson Construction and AECOM.

This aims to transform Eastbourne into a sustainable town that meets the challenges of climate change and helps its residents to invest in a cleaner and greener future.

1 Based on mid TDCV of 4200 kwh per home www.ofgem.gov.uk/gas/retail-market/monitoring-data-and-statistics/typical-domestic-consumption-values

You can find more information on this scheme (which could also help your authority) at www.clearsustainablefutures.co.uk

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Councillors Dyan Jones and Giles Archibald

RECYCLING AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH LAKELAND



South Lakeland District Council covers a vast 600 square miles in the south of Cumbria; including parts of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

Serving residents in a predominantly rural and hilly area presents many challenges. The population density is just 172 people per square mile. With a focus on the environment, the Liberal Democrat Council has been taking steps to boost the kerbside recycling service and to champion tackling climate change.

Recycling

Each household receives a fortnightly kerbside collection of paper, glass, cans, plastic and cardboard, and a free green waste collection service, along with collection of residual waste. During 2018 the service was externally reviewed by the Association for Public Service Excellence, and was found to provide excellent, value for money services.

Customer satisfaction rating with the waste collection service has increased by nine per cent to 82 per cent following the changes.

The introduction of additional recycling streams also encouraged householders to increase the quantity of paper, glass and cans recycled. Tonnages for the period from 2014/15 to 2017/18 show that the amount of recycling collected has increased, with a fall in the amount of residual waste.

The collection method of kerbside sorting provides for a very high quality of material. This helps the council get the best available value for the sale of these materials. We are keen to improve this by introducing district-wide food waste and textile collections from all properties.

The council has a contract with a local social enterprise, Right2Work, for the on-site collection of bulky waste such as furniture and domestic appliances. Right2Work use the waste collected as a training resource for people with learning disabilities and in need of help to move into further full-time employment. Around 70 per cent of all waste collected is re-used or recycled. This approach has been recognised as excellent practice and has been nominated for two national awards.

We are seeking to secure lasting improvements in our environment through extending the range of materials that can be recycled. Examples include a Waste Less Project in the village of Staveley during 2017/18; and work with James Cropper Ltd, Cumbria Waste Recycling, Cumbria Council and the Westmorland Agricultural Society to provide trial coffee cup recycling schemes at two major outdoor events attended by 50,000 people. These were the first such events in the country to provide such facilities for visitors.

Climate change

Local authorities have an important role to play in tackling climate change. In the past few years, Cumbria has been severely affected by violent weather leading to flooding such as Storm Desmond. We have both an obligation and a high level of self interest in being at the forefront of climate change mitigation. Given our geographic size we have an opportunity to contribute to the solution.

The council is in the process of adopting a climate change policy. We will be declaring a climate emergency. We have a list of action items that will result in energy conservation and green energy generation, and we have embarked on a campaign of engaging and influencing others to take action.

For example on our social media we put out weekly tips on how to reduce carbon emissions. One of our towns, Kendal, is actively investigating how to go towards carbon neutral and we hope to add another community to that project shortly.

As part of our work to both tackle climate change and help vulnerable households who are suffering financial hardship, we refer households who we feel are at risk of fuel poverty to the Local Energy Advice Partnership https://applyforleap.org.uk. Around 4,810 households in the district are 'fuel poor' or unable to heat their homes adequately. The campaign group Cumbria Action for Sustainability, which is helping to tackle the effects of climate change, is the LEAP service provider in South Lakeland and the district council is a key stakeholder.

Those who are eligible get a free home visit to check if they are on the cheapest energy tariff, have energy saving measures installed and receive energy efficiency tips. LEAP will also refer households for further energy efficiency improvements, such as loft insulation or a new boiler.

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Councillor Lynda Murphy

WORKING FOR A PLASTIC-FREE WINCHESTER



Winchester's current recycling rates are shockingly poor. In the 2016/17 local authority recycling league table published by letsrecycle.com, we came 282nd with a recycling rate of 34.2 per cent. As the main opposition party (and with a very good chance to take control of the council in May), Winchester Liberal Democrats have developed a two-pronged approach in trying to increase that figure.

From a city council perspective, we are definitely pushing a 'green' theme in our manifesto. We have chosen to be bold – we want to have the highest recycling rate in the country! We believe this is achievable – here is a list of initiatives we could introduce and the effect they would have on our recycling rates.

Kerbside glass collection	**+3 per cent**
Accepting cartons in recycling collection	**+1 per cent**
Accepting mixed plastics in recycling collection	**+3 per cent**
Enforcement/education to ensure the right things are in the right bins	**+7 per cent**
Weekly food waste collections	**+20-30 per cent**

The evidence is that food waste tends to reduce when there is a weekly collection. People are horrified by how much they are wasting and so they modify their behaviour. But even using the lower figure, introducing all these changes would bring our recycling rate toward the best in the UK.

Our success locally has been a mix of eye-catching campaigns and a lot of hard work in the background. I was elected at my first attempt at standing for the city council last May, and a big part of that was my local kerbside glass campaign. My initial petition on the council's own website gathered over 1,200 signatures and it was popular on the doorstep with people of all political leanings. By working with a local non-political group, Winchester Action on Climate Change – Waste Action Group (the WAGs), we now have a promise from the Conservative administration that this service will start in the autumn.

Another pet topic of mine: I have been pushing for water fountains to be installed in the city centre. I hope there will be one in place before the summer to help reduce some of the 17.5 million plastic bottles that get used in Winchester every year.

Our current focus is to introduce a food waste collection. In a recent survey of Winchester's waste, a staggering 15 per cent of rubbish collected was usable food! In a time when food poverty is increasing, this is something

we must change. Again, working with the WAGs, we hope to get the statistics out soon and build popular support for action by the council.

We also need an education/ enforcement system. Not only do people contaminate their recycling, but they put recyclables in their refuse bin which in our case then get incinerated. We are literally burning money.

Accepting mixed plastics and cartons is a trickier issue. Ideally we want retailers to only produce plastics that can be easily recycled. And that brings me onto the other flank of attack: Plastic Free Winchester. This is a non-political community group we have set up to encourage consumers to drive retailers (and the council) to reduce plastic packaging. We also encourage them to share ideas about how to reduce their plastic use (eg using shampoo bars, beeswax wraps, reusable water bottles etc). Having a strong social media presence is a key factor to our success. We are currently working towards Winchester getting plastic free status from Surfers against Sewage. That group is helping us create links with other like-minded communities.

One of my co-founders of Plastic Free Winchester, Hannah Williams, has been touring round our local primary schools, talking to the children in their assemblies about plastic free schools. The children are so motivated, and we keep hearing stories of them going back home and educating their parents. It's fantastic! They are really keen to make real environmental change. Hannah has also met our local secondary schools, sixth-form colleges and universities to start a Sustainable Schools Hub. It's still early days but they are very keen to make it work.

Only yesterday, we received an email from the environmental officer at the University of Winchester saying, "the University is embarking on an ambitious plan to eliminate single-use plastics by 2022. We would like to link up with Plastic Free Winchester to share details and look at where we might be able to work together." The enthusiasm is there and we, as Liberal Democrat activists, can help convert that to action.

Working in partnership will be the key to reducing our plastic use in the future and improving our recycling rates. We need to do this for our children's future and the sake of our planet. Recently, it has been so satisfying seeing children feeling empowered by our work and now telling their communities how we all need to change.

Lynda Murphy is a Councillor on Winchester City Council
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Mayor Dave Hodgson

OUR CARBON-CUTTING JOURNEY: 40 PER CENT AND BEYOND



We don't lack ambition here at Liberal Democrat led Bedford Borough Council. However, in respect of energy and climate change there was a time when we wondered if we'd been a bit too ambitious about what we could achieve.

Back in 2011, we announced our target to reduce our carbon emissions by 40 per cent, via our bold Carbon Management Plan. We sometimes referred to it as an 'aspirational' target, and certainly if felt daunting at the time. But action on carbon reduction and climate change had been a priority from day one, and we had already taken radical steps such as the creation of the Mayor's Climate Change Fund. Through this we awarded dozens of grants to a wide range of energy-saving, carbon-cutting projects from solar panels on village hall roofs to insulated doors at a church to upgraded heating systems in schools.

It kick-started a vast array of schemes across the borough that otherwise would simply not have taken place. But the Carbon Management Plan and our 40 per cent target was all about making sure we got our own house in order.

If we were going to achieve the transformation that would enable us to achieve our own target, we had to demonstrate to ourselves, to our staff and to the community that reducing our environmental impact was necessary and important at all levels.

Every carbon cutting measure would count. And with government funding cuts biting, reducing energy consumption was also a necessity for financial as well as environmental reasons. So we took small but vital actions such as scrapping all bottled water for meetings, replacing the use of hand towels in the toilets with efficient dryers and introducing motion-sensored lighting in council offices.

All of these measures had both practical and symbolic value in demonstrating that we could and would make changes throughout the organisation to reduce our impact on the climate, but our plan to achieve the 40 per cent cut obviously required more wide-reaching action. Early examples of our larger energy saving projects included a new heat exchanger system at the local crematorium. One local media outlet sought to make a scandal out of this, but the public at large recognised this as the common sense measure it is.

Another early scheme was our evaporative cooling project, which won best IT/e-commerce at the 2012 Public Sector Awards.

Such schemes are more commonplace now, but we won recognition at that time for this successful measure to save a significant degree of both energy and money by not using air conditioning in the council's data centre.

We also pressed ahead with our hydro power facility on the River Great Ouse in Bedford. This is an Archimedes-screw system which uses the renewable power available via the drop between the upper and lower river in Bedford. It was actually opposed fiercely in certain quarters, with local Conservatives making a wild array of claims and dire warnings about draining the river and the aesthetics of the location, none of which proved true.

Seeing as there were once as many as 17 mills harnessing the power of the river in and around Bedford, you might think that 'conservatives' would approve of reconnecting with our history, but sadly they couldn't seem to see past the fact that we were carrying it out and therefore it had to be opposed. The project has gone on to generate income for the council, and is also a model in the heart of Bedford which provides a living demonstration of the purpose and practicality of renewable energy. It's been the inspiration for many a school project!

The Archimedes screws were certainly one of our more eye-catching projects, but there was a wide array of different measures included in our RE:FIT scheme, which was the backbone of our drive to slash energy usage across the council's estate. This scheme saw us appoint a contractor to deliver energy savings to council buildings, and we took a very hands-on role alongside the contractors in identifying, evaluating and approving those projects that would make the real difference we needed.

Projects included installing solar panels at council car parks and leisure centres, improving insulation, upgrading lighting and heating controls as well as converting the main borough hall building from oil-fired heating to natural gas and biomass. Since then we have continued delivering projects such as replacing all streetlights with LEDs, upgrading the lighting at town centre multistorey car parks to LEDs and with motion/daylight sensors, and replacing office lighting to Smart LED light fittings.

So where has all this got us to? Over 40 per cent, I'm pleased (and relieved) to report. We are well beyond that 'ambitious' target and have cut our carbon emissions by around half. And we know we have a lot more to do. I have asked officers to examine how we can get to carbon neutrality, and we'll be looking closely at plans to go further and faster in cutting our carbon emissions.

In the meantime, our carbon cutting measures continue, both within the council and outside via support for carbon-cutting practices in the community. Internally, for instance, we have just switched from diesel to liquid-to-gas fuel in the council fleet, a measure we are trialling and which has required no engine modifications or new infrastructure, as it can be used as a direct replacement for conventional diesel. We will be monitoring it closely in the coming months to see if it really can achieve the cut in harmful emissions some trials have reported. Looking outside the council itself, we've also signed a deal for the installation of around 300 new electric vehicle charging points at 150 sites across the borough at public car parks and on-street parking.

So we've come a long way from scrapping bottled water and hand towels. But just as the enthusiasm and ambition that started there allowed us to get to our 40 per cent target and beyond, we know we have to retain that zeal for carbon-cutting if we're going to get where we need to go in the future.

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Councillor David Carter

OADBY AND WIGSTON'S PRACTICAL APPROACH TO GREENING OUR BOROUGH



Liberal Democrat Oadby and Wigston Borough Council have been working hard on a long term plan for sustainability since 2013. The main aim was to involve more residents in helping our local environment and develop a sustainable approach. Three outcomes are outlined below.

The first is the 'Pride of the Borough' group which supported environmental improvements. It was established in 2003 by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (OWBC) to support the borough's entry into East Midlands in Bloom. The group was made up of individuals, Friends of Parks, Civic Societies, neighbourhood groups, elected members and officers who all worked together to encourage people to take a pride in the borough and to help our local environment.

The council was invited to represent East Midlands in the national Britain in Bloom competition in 2006; 2011 and 2017. Since 2010 it has been awarded nine consecutive gold medals in the regional competition.

The group now gets an annual grant from the council and has:

- Established a membership card scheme which, for an annual fee of £5, gives members discounts at over 50 local businesses. This has generated funds for a number of projects, including a bench, a planted trough and information panel to mark the location of the Wigston Pinfold; various planters which are maintained by local businesses and the refurbishment and replanting of flower beds at one of the municipal parks.
- Continued to organise an annual floral display competition.
- Bid for additional project funding.
- Organised working mornings, both on a monthly and ad hoc basis to tackle projects around the borough. The delivery of these activities reflect the continuing partnership between the group and the council. When the group organise a weekend litter pick, the council's 'Clean and Green' team collect and process the bags of waste. If the council workforce undertake tree work and generate wood chippings, they make the material available to neighbourhood groups to use as mulch in the areas which they have adopted.

The second is our commitment to volunteers and our country park. To build on our successful Brocks Hill Country Park, our Greening Steering Group looked at its development and sustainability.

An application was made to Heritage Lottery Fund in 2014/2015 to support the Natural Discovery Volunteer Development Programme which sought to:

- create friends groups for key sites/ green spaces
- engage new volunteers through taster days, challenge days and volunteer fairs, with a focus on expanding age ranges and diversity
- support the development of lead volunteers who could support officers in leading and delivering volunteering sessions.

The legacy of this project is a group of five lead volunteers who have received training in task management, risk assessment and first aid. They have also been trained in the safe use of brush cutters, strimmers and manually fed wood chippers, to enable them to assist the council officers in woodland management tasks. These volunteers run sessions on a weekly basis at our country park and throughout the borough.

Finally we invested in our staff. At the insistence of Liberal Democrat members a dedicated tree officer was appointed – the only district council in Leicestershire to do so. The role included supporting our tree wardens and working with both Oadby and Wigston Lions and all three local rotary groups to plant trees in the borough. The groups have funded the trees and provided the manpower to plant them. The tree officer has provided technical advice and identified suitable pieces of council owned land to locate the trees. This is all in addition to protecting existing trees through development control.

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Councillor Peter Thornton

DELIVERING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN COALITION



It's not easy running a county council in coalition. Funding is very tight and social care, plus children's services overspends just seem to swallow up every saving we make.

We are in coalition with Labour and in the happy position of facing Tory challenges in most of our seats, which means that we get on well with our partners but we need to make a distinctive pitch for votes and this is where we need to push the green agenda harder. That and the fact that we believe in it, of course!

What can we do in such a cash strapped situation? Well actually, the answer is that we can do plenty. Here are some of the things we are working on at the moment.

Potholes: that constant topic on the doorsteps, wonderful when you are in opposition but not so great when in power! Cumbria is taking part in a trial using a plastic filling for the potholes in order to get better bonding and a stronger repair. The great news is that it uses waste recycled plastic – so there is a strong green message about reusing plastic.

Cycling: Cumbria is a mecca for cycling of all kinds. We had two stages of the Tour of Britain here last year and we are restoring the round Cumbria cycle route, working with those great people at Sustrans. It helps that I represent the LGA on the Sustrans 'Paths For Everyone' Steering Group, but wherever you are it's worth contacting your local group who are bound to be able to find some low cost improvements to your local network. Our Liberal Democrat group is developing a manifesto pledge around every child being able to cycle to school safely, we think that will be a vote winner. Which leads naturally on to re-cycling...

We have several zero waste groups hosting 'repair clinics' in which retired engineers in brown smocks wield screwdrivers and soldering irons to great effect. A great message when branded with the council logo. Our voters seem to have an insatiable appetite for recycling and if we receive criticism it's invariably aimed at us not doing enough.

Buses: Cumbria spends many millions on school transport and a large proportion of that with high needs children. We have started to buy our own minibuses and small coaches in order to bring these services back in house.

This saves money but also means that we will be able to offer lifts to adults, piggybacking on the school buses, and the transport will also be available in the middle of the day. We've just begun this trial but so far the results are looking good, helping reduce car journeys.

What do you do with old closed landfill sites? How about a solar farm? I'm challenging our officers to examine every piece of unusable land along every roof that we own. The money won't be huge but 'every little helps' and there's a visible and important Liberal Democrat green message.

Cumbria needs to be a carbon neutral county. Work is underway to identify how far we are away and what needs to be done to get there. It's not entirely straightforward – Sellafield services our nuclear industry, how does that play into the calculations? Is nuclear power 'green', or not? Answers on a postcard please.

And finally, we have the subject of climate change. A very real subject in our towns which flooded during Storm Desmond. In this we stand beside Giles Archibald, Liberal Democrat Leader of South Lakeland District Council, who is a powerful voice on this subject.

In conclusion: most green measures save money, many are low cost and Liberal Democrat green policies can all be used to give us a distinctive voice. What's not to like?

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Councillor Katie Mansfield

WORKING FOR A GREENER BOROUGH



During the 2018 election, Twickenham and Richmond Liberal Democrats stood on a manifesto pledge to make our borough one of the greenest in London, and in our first nine months of administration we've been pulling out all the stops to make that a reality.

Good air quality has a knock on effect – better air quality means better health. When we ran the borough prior to 2010, we were the greenest local authority in London.

Since retaking control from the Tories last year – a party that had eight years of rule and oversaw the green credentials of Richmond borough slip behind – we have pushed forward with significant initiatives such as:

- fighting the expansion of Heathrow's third runway (which would mean an extra 25000 flights a year) – backing a legal challenge (along with surrounding boroughs)
- consulting on the implementation of 20mph borough wide limit, (which is now about to go to scrutiny with the hopes of starting implementation in summer 2019 if passed)
- fines for car idling across the borough of up to £40 (from 1st March 2019) – to be implemented by parking and traffic officers
- installing recycling units for small electrical items in libraries
- shelving the previous Conservative administration's air quality action plan, as many key stakeholders debated that it was not fit for purpose – we are now writing a 'fit for purpose' replacement that works for modern day Richmond
- trialling alternatives to herbicides to deal with weeds on public footpath.

We've also used the council communications team to launch borough wide campaigns on these issues, concentrating on the use of videos on social media.

Air quality is not the sexiest of subjects – poor air quality often can't be seen, and the effects of it are often felt more in the longer term. But it's an issue that is causing more deaths each year and more cases of asthma which in turn is putting huge pressures on our NHS.

And there is our work on a 20mph wide limit on the borough's roads, (with the exception of a small number of A roads). At the launch of the consultation on the limits in Richmond, Councillor Alex Ehmann said: "If we can reduce the speeds at which motorists travel, then we reduce the risk of accidents

and the risk and severity of injury. This borough-wide 20mph limit will also make our roads more accessible for cyclists and pedestrians, encouraging greener methods of transport and helping to cut pollution, which will in turn make our streets cleaner and more enjoyable places to be".

In the future, our team plan to push forward with policies such as reducing the use of single use plastics in the borough by 2022. At the same time, our large-scale initiatives will be teamed with: supporting the creation of and any existing friends' groups; working with residents to improve and protect biodiversity and access to our green spaces; ensuring that council owned offices and buildings are energy efficient and tackling lights being left on at night; planting more trees and replacing damaged and dying trees.

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Councillor Adam Paynter, Council Leader

SUPPORTING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY IN CORNWALL



Liberal Democrat led Cornwall Council has recently declared a 'climate emergency', committing to become carbon neutral by 2030. The motion is a positive step forward in building on the work done by the council to date on issues contributing to tackling climate change, ranging from supporting renewable energy to reducing waste, improving public transport to reduce traffic congestion, flood mitigation, rolling out energy saving LED street lighting and more.

An example of work already underway is supporting deep geothermal energy, as we look to develop more renewable energy sources. The potential for exploiting geothermal in the UK on a commercial basis is nothing new of course. It was initially examined in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis, when trials were undertaken at Rosemanowes Quarry, near Penryn, Cornwall in 1977. However, interest in developing them was lost as petrol prices fell.

Cornwall's extensive granite means it has been seen as the most promising part of the UK for combined heat and power from geothermal sources.

Geothermal Engineering announced the plans for the United Downs geothermal power station in October 2009 and in August 2010 the United Downs plant was granted planning permission by Cornwall Council in a unanimous vote with the drilling of the first well beginning in early 2011, however at the time, developers were unable to secure funding to drill the exploratory wells necessary to prove the resource existed in the UK.

Through the Cornwall Devolution Deal agreed in 2015, Cornwall Council is working with the government to see how the development of geothermal energy can be supported. As part of its commitments, the Liberal Democrat led council agreed to appoint a dedicated geothermal policy officer to co-ordinate projects in Cornwall. This included proving that geothermal energy can be provided through locally driven investment.

Through the European Regional Development Fund process, Geothermal Engineering Limited successfully secured funding to enable the £18 million United Downs Deep Geothermal Power project (UDGPP), including £2.4 million match funding from Cornwall Council. It then secured an additional £5 million of match funding through a successful crowdfunding campaign.

In the first project of its kind in the UK, the project will explore the geothermal resources at depth and hopes to use the energy to drive a demonstration power plant supplying electricity to the local grid. When complete, the plant will pump cool water down a 2500 metre injection well and the water will then return to the surface at 175°C through a 4500 metre production well. The steam turbine at the surface will generate up to 3MWe net power, with up to 15MWth renewable heat being created.

This project seeks to prove to investors, researchers and the global geothermal community that deep geothermal power can be produced in Cornwall, acting as a catalyst for other projects in the area and abroad. Whilst there are similar working examples in Europe and others are planned in the US and Australia, this is the first of its kind in the UK.

To this end, in May 2018, Cornwall Council agreed to provide a £1.4 million grant as match funding to unlock a second site located within the Eden Project, subject to them achieving funding from other sources. This is a proposed partnership between EGS Energy and the Eden Project in Bodelva near St Austell, which involves drilling a well to gain access to the hot rocks below, creating enough heat and electricity to potentially power the Eden Project and surrounding homes.

Through the Cornwall Deal, the Liberal Democrat led council will have an essential role in helping to evidence the viability of the technology to ensure investment into subsequent projects. This will include the facilitation of a higher value unit price for the electricity and enabling a market for the 'waste' heat.

Cornwall Council also worked closely to facilitate the £1.8 million geothermal heat project at Jubilee Pool, Penzance, which will provide heated water to a section of the Art Deco lido. The world renowned tourist attraction was recently devolved by the council into local control with the creation of Jubilee Pool Penzance Ltd, the heated section will improve the visitor experience and extend opening times to improve the viability and sustainability of the beloved community facility.

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Councillor Manuel Abellan

FOR A GREENER SUTTON



Sutton, with over 1,146 hectares of protected green space, 34 allotment sites, 57 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and 11 nature reserves, is one of the leafiest boroughs in London. But away from the physical amenities of the borough, the Liberal Democrat actions in Sutton over the last three decades have given us a well-earned reputation for our green credentials.

In the early 2000s, we helped pioneer the award-winning Beddington Zero Energy Development (BedZed) as the first construction project where a local authority[2] sold land at below market value to make sustainable development economically viable. Designed to create zero-carbon emissions, the iconic Bedzed village was the first large scale community to do so and continues to be today an inspiration for zero-carbon homes worldwide. And out of the 82 properties, one-third are being rented out to tenants nominated by the council.

In 2011, and after extensive restoration works in close collaboration with the Wandle Trust, the Environment Agency and local community groups, the 11 miles long River Wandle, which passes through South London to join the Thames, was included in a list of the 10 most-improved rivers in England and Wales released by the Environment Agency. This was an impressive achievement considering that the river was officially declared a sewer in the 1960s. Today, the river has even seen the return of the river's once famous brown trout!

The last decade of austerity has been, like for every part of the UK, a massive challenge for Sutton – we've had to find over £100 million worth of savings, or almost 50 per cent of our annual budget. And the reality is that our environmental services, despite our very best efforts, have not been exempt from painful cuts. Despite this dire financial outlook, our ambition to be London's most sustainable borough has not wavered and was still front and centre in our 2018 local election manifesto.

Since our successful election, we've passed a motion and started the process of removing all single use plastics from council operations and contracts.

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government_in_the_United_Kingdom

We've also planted nearly 2,000 trees across the borough since the election and for the first time ever, achieved a recycling rate of over 50 per cent, two years ahead of schedule. This massive increase of 13.5 per cent in recycling in one year now ranks us in the top three best recycling boroughs in London and in the top quartile in the UK.

We are proud that in a recent letter to our council leader Ruth Dombey, the Government praised Sutton and asked for details on how the rates were achieved so that they can be shared as best practice across the UK.

This was achieved by working closely with Merton, Croydon and Kingston via the South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) to jointly procure one of the biggest waste contracts in Europe and agree to drastically restructure our waste policy. The first step, after realising that residents were generating excessive amounts of waste, was to introduce a one bin policy for general waste. This was followed some months later by the introduction of a new kerbside collection service that included a weekly food waste collection service, a fortnightly collection for general (residual) waste and the introduction of a two stream recycling collection service, moving from a fortnightly commingled service to a separate paper and card, and plastics and dry mixed collection, collected on alternate weeks.

Our challenge moving forward is to increase our recycling rates but more importantly to reduce the overall amount of waste that we produce. At the present moment, the SLWP will still be left with 170,000 tonnes of residual waste every year that has not been sorted and placed out for recycling by residents.

The majority of this 'residual waste' is currently sent to a 92-hectare landfill site in Sutton that is nearing full capacity so in 2009 we embarked on a major procurement process to secure a contract for residual waste treatment. After a decade of preparation, the SLWP will this year start sending 95 per cent of their residual household waste to be treated in a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable new state-of-the art Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) instead of being buried in the ground.

The new facility is located right next to the existing landfill site, which will now close. These will be capped and restored into high quality habitats for wildlife. Once the site is fully restored and the habitats established, the landfill site will be incorporated into the Beddington Farmlands, a site that has already recorded 258 species of bird, 476 species of moth, nine species of bat and over 300 species of plants and hundreds of invertebrates.

We're proud that thanks to our efforts we're merging a former landfill site with an existing farmland to create one of the largest contiguous green spaces in south London.

The ERF will also help cut carbon emissions by 128,000 tonnes per year, when compared to the existing landfill operation. The energy generated from the ERF will also produce 26MW of electricity each year, enough to power the facility itself plus 30,000 homes.

In 2016, Sutton Council created a sustainable energy supplier company called Sutton Decentralised Energy Network Limited (SDEN). The company, fully-owned by the council, is using the energy generated by the new ERF to provide low-carbon energy in the form of hot water, meeting the heating and hot water needs of thousands of homes and businesses in Sutton and neighbouring boroughs. SDEN will reduce fossil fuel use, contributing towards our goal of becoming a zero-carbon borough by 2025.

We have ambitious plans for Sutton and are ready to tackle some of the immediate challenges we face. We want cleaner air for our residents, healthier streets, to reduce our dependence on cars, improve transport links and get more people to walk and cycle.

These challenges cannot be fixed by the Council alone and we'll need to work closely with our neighbours, the Mayor and Government to make this happen. In true Lib Dem fashion, we'll embark our residents, local businesses and key partners from across the borough on this journey with us.

Manuel Abellan is a Councillor in the London Borough of Sutton and chairs the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee

Councillor Val Keitch

SOUTH SOMERSET DELIVERS GROUND-BREAKING ENERGY STORAGE



Innovative work which will see Liberal Democrat South Somerset District Council at the cutting-edge of renewable energy technology is being delivered. The council, in partnership with Somerset-based Opium Power Limited, is creating a new 25MW energy storage facility near Taunton to provide essential power management assistance to the National Grid. It will be the largest council-owned battery storage system in the UK and comes as a result of £9.8 million of South Somerset District Council investment.

Cllr Henry Hobhouse, the council's portfolio holder for property and income generation, said: "I am extraordinarily proud and excited to be able to deliver such an important project. We have a vital role to play in caring for our environment and to be able to combine this with our new commercial approach which will see us protect services and become more financially self-sufficient is a great achievement."

The idea of battery energy storage is simple – batteries store excess energy production during periods of low usage periods and resupply it to the grid when needed at peak times. A significant proportion of electricity generated from solar and wind is wasted because during windy and sunny periods there can be a large oversupply and there is no ability to store this energy. By storing excess energy in batteries, it can be resupplied to the grid when required.

The facility being created will provide 25MW of instantly available electrical power on demand to the National Grid. This facility is extremely significant as it represents one of the larger energy storage facilities in the country. The power produced for the grid for one hour's duration which is the equivalent to powering more than 30,000 homes.

This will be used to balance out fluctuating demands on the local Somerset power grid. Peaks and troughs in demand cause under and over supply if not correctly managed - this can result in frequency fluctuations that can damage electrical infrastructure.

Since the council purchased the site in May, a fast-moving programme of delivery began including preparing the site following negotiations with local and international suppliers.

This includes our partners in this project – Opium Power Ltd working with National Grid, Western Power Distribution (WPD), Kiwi Power, BYD and BSR Connect amongst others.

During this time, the new containerised battery units have been delivered. Final connections and operational testing are taking place as this booklet is being produced for a 'go-live' operational date in March 2019.

The project will not only assist the council's income generation needs and contribute towards the objectives of our commercial strategy, it also meets its council plan commitment to promote the use of green technology. It will additionally aid development in the region in the future by removing some of the electricity supply constraints which can be a barrier to further investment.

The council is additionally working with the award-winning Kiwi Power Ltd to gain advice on the energy auction markets and prepare it for further bids for energy contracts into the future.

Councillor Hobhouse added: "This investment project will bring regular revenue into the council to help continue to provide services to our communities as well as help the region to supply a consistent supply of green energy through the national grid for the future."

South Somerset District Council is the investor and co-owner of the facility, Opium Power Limited will be the project manager and co-owner, BYD Europe BV will be the battery supplier and BSR Connect is the project roll out connection contractor. Western Power Distribution will be the local distribution network operator. All of our project partners are incredibly excited about the opportunity.

David Owen of Opium Power Limited said: "The launch of this state of the art Battery Energy Storage System at Taunton is perfectly timed. It will coincide with the National Grid preparing to launch a number of new services in the emerging markets created by the System Needs and Product Strategy Consultation.

"These services will require almost instant response times, and will therefore not be achievable by other generating sources such as diesel and gas power that currently compete with battery in the marketplace."

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BEST PRACTICE CHALLENGES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- Improving bus transport is a great way of reducing car use. What is your council doing to support this and have you investigated the option of 'on demand' bus services for some areas?
- What steps is your council taking to reduce its own carbon emissions and does it have an aim to become carbon neutral?
- How is your council monitoring developer's promises over their carbon emission targets?
- What is your council doing with its buildings to promote and use renewable energy?
- Is your council asking for a greater energy efficiency rating on new housing developments than the national building regulations allow?
- What steps are you taking to support the roll out of charging points for electric vehicles? Some authorities have incorporated the need for electric charging points into their planning policy. Is your authority also looking at making good use of resources such as council car parks to install these?
- Look at what steps your council can take to improve air quality in its area. How is any monitoring being carried out?
- Don't forget that recycling and energy conservation schemes can also involve a strong element of social justice and community involvement, such as working with social enterprises to refurbish bulky waste or helping vulnerable households at risk of fuel poverty.
- Does your area have a 'plastic free' campaign to involve local residents in cutting back on single use plastics and are local Liberal Democrats involved with it?
- How are you involving residents in supporting local parks and green open spaces? And does your authority have a tree planting programme?
- Look at different ways of recycling and re-use – for instance trials are now underway using recycled plastic to repair roads.
- Be imaginative in finding and supporting the development of new carbon neutral sources of energy, including battery storage, hydro power and geothermal.
- What is your council doing to increase recycling – or is it sitting back and resting on its laurels?

This booklet contains just some good practice examples from Liberal Democrats around the country. For further information or if you have a good story that you think we should hear about please contact us at **libdem@lga.gov.uk**

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