

# Report of consultation on Warrington Climate Emergency Commission position paper issued in November 2021



**WARRINGTON**  
CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMISSION

# Executive Summary

"In late 2021, Warrington's Climate Emergency Commission promoted a public consultation as part of our efforts to develop a local climate emergency strategy for Warrington. The consultation was launched in the wake of the UN's COP26 climate conference.

"As part of the consultation, the commission issued a position paper to set out what the climate crisis means for Warrington.

"We issued an online survey, which found broad agreement with the issues covered in our position paper. Most disagreement came from people wanting to see more comprehensive coverage and urgent action, and only a small number of respondents expressed disagreement based on a not accepting climate change. "Areas highlighted where more detail or clarity may be needed, included acknowledging structural socio-economic influences and links between the climate emergency with the wider ecological crisis. But what was clear is the need for urgent action, which was reflected in numerous comments where people wanted to see how and when action would happen - not just the type of action needed.

"We also need to acknowledge that, to some, the work of the climate emergency commission and links to our position paper are seen as direct council initiatives, rather than action taken forward by an independent, advisory body. There is also evidence that perceptions of local powers, responsibilities and resources may not match current reality.

"The survey confirms that others are taking climate action and are interested in being involved with efforts to encourage climate action locally. There is also willingness to share experience and expertise and to be involved in a wider process.

"In the wake of the results presented, therefore, the commission needs to consider:

- How to reflect wider structural and socio economic issues in the strategy
- The scope of the strategy with respect to the ecological crisis/nature recovery and how to better address ecological issues interrelated with climate change
- Priorities when setting out strategic interventions
- Clarity in the communication of the strategy

"We will now take this work forward with partners and communities across Warrington."

**Cllr David Ellis,**

Chair Warrington Climate Emergency Commission



# Introduction

This report presents a summary of the results of a consultation exercise promoted by Warrington's Climate Emergency Commission<sup>1</sup> (The Commission). The consultation is part of efforts to help shape a new climate emergency strategy for Warrington.

The report begins by setting out the background to the consultation. It then details the consultation response. The main part presents the findings of the survey followed by an overview of additional comments received via email. The report concludes with by setting out the implications of the consultation for the further development of a local climate emergency strategy.

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<sup>1</sup>The Warrington Climate Emergency Commission was set up by Warrington Borough Council as an advisory body to assist it in responding to the climate emergency. In addition to advising the council on its response, the Commission is also tasked with leading the local public conversation to encourage a borough wide response in recognition the climate emergency is a more than council issue.

# Background

The Commission published a position paper in the wake of the UN's COP26 climate conference in November 2021 amidst heightened interest and coverage of climate matters in the media.

The intention was to set out what the climate crisis means for Warrington and in doing so to start a wider conversation to shape a new local strategy to tackle the crisis.

The position paper presented:

- The wider international and national context
- An attempt to translate what this means for the direction we need to move in locally including the main themes and the types of action anticipated
- A 'snap shot' of the local strengths and weaknesses and some of the opportunities and threats we face

The position paper was published via the Commission's webpage, currently hosted on [Warrington Borough Council's website](#). An accompanying online survey was also published to gather feedback on the paper. The consultation survey was initially planned to run to 24 December 2021, but the period was extended to Friday 7 January 2022.

# Consultation response

There were 67 responses to the online survey.

In addition two sets of comments were received by email: one from an individual who had completed the survey and wanted to make additional comments; and the other on behalf of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust providing detailed commentary on the paper.

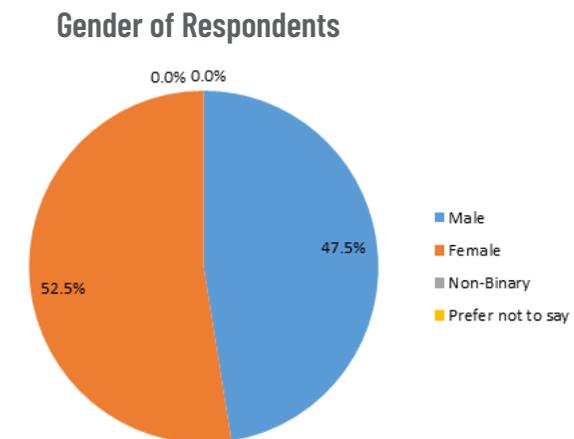
The majority (73%) answered the online survey as local residents. The balance filled it in as local councillors (town, parish or borough), people working in Warrington, or on behalf of an organisation. Organisation responses included those from the voluntary, community and education sectors.

How best describes how you are responding to this survey?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	A local resident who lives in Warrington	73.13%	49
2	A person who works in Warrington	7.46%	5
3	Local Borough, Town or Parish Councillor	8.96%	6
4	Local Business owner/Manager	0.00%	0
5	A group or organisation	7.46%	5
6	Visitor to Warrington	0.00%	0
7	Other (please specify):	2.99%	2
			answered
			67
			skipped
			0

Amongst those who shared details of their characteristics, the most well represented age category was in the 55-64 age group. No one under 16 completed the survey and only one person in the 16 to 24 age group.

Age Profile			
	Answer Choices	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Below 16	0.00%	0
2	16-24	1.69%	1
3	25-34	8.47%	5
4	35-44	15.25%	9
5	45-54	23.73%	14
6	55-64	33.90%	20
7	65-74	15.25%	9
8	75-84	1.69%	1
9	85 or over	0.00%	0
10	Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
			answered
			59
			skipped
			8

Just over half who reported their gender, identified as female and just under half male.



91% of those who answered the question on their ethnic origin reported being white; 3% mixed or multiple ethnic groups; 2% as 'other ethnic group' and 3% preferred not to say.

89% of those who answered the question identified as 'Straight/Heterosexual'; 5% as bisexual and 2% as lesbian with 4% preferring not to say.

Most who took the survey (76%) had read the paper. Those who indicated they hadn't, were asked a smaller subset of questions that did not rely upon prior reading of the report.

Have you read the position paper "developing a local strategy for Warrington in the face of the global climate emergency" produced by the Warrington Climate Change Commission?			
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	76.12%	51
2	No	23.88%	16
		answered	67
		skipped	0

# Survey findings

## Views on the position paper

### Areas for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Over two thirds (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that the main areas we need to act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were covered in the paper.

How strongly do you agree that the paper captures the main areas where we need to act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		21.57%	11
2	Agree		49.02%	25
3	Neither agree or disagree		7.84%	4
4	Disagree		13.73%	7
5	Strongly disagree		7.84%	4
			answered	51
			skipped	16

Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed about coverage of the main areas for action were invited to comment further on what was missing. Although only eleven people expressed disagreement, 13 made comments.

A handful (4 people) used the opportunity to take issue with the premise of climate change and its causes, questioning the value of a local strategy. They advanced views that climate change was natural or a hoax; questioned the focus on CO2, suggesting it was not a problem; and dismissed the notion of a local strategy as 'political posturing'.



Disagreement was more commonly associated with comments about the adequacy of the position paper to tackle the climate crisis, or concerns about the lack of progress, or the appropriateness of past actions, i.e. that more needed to be done and faster. Concerns raised on the adequacy of the paper included: the paper did not convey the scale or urgency of the issue; that it missed the root causes which were argued to be economic growth and consumption; that it was too general and non-specific; and that it didn't spell out how actions would be taken and who would take them; that there was no punch to it, it being just 'a talking shop with no teeth'.

Amongst concerns expressed about past decisions or actions, points raised included: comments about the pace of council action being too slow; more should have been done earlier; prior good work having been stopped; the limited value of smart motorways; too much new development being permitted that added to motorway congestion and general traffic; development that was in areas with poor air quality; land taken up for development that should have been used for planting trees, and the removal of solar subsidies for households.

With regard to suggested omissions, or areas where more needed to be said,

comments covered:

- The need for heavy investment in energy efficiency especially in housing (including funding for retrofitting), industry and transport
- The need for stronger energy efficiency standards
- The need for incentives and direct investment to switch to renewables, increase use of electricity and develop heat networks
- The importance of resilience in the energy system with the suggestion there should be interconnectors with overseas electricity systems, a smart grid, and a variety of energy storage systems
- The issue of affordability of public transport
- The need for better systems to manage traffic and pollution
- The requirement to reduce the need for people and goods to travel by an innovative approach to planning to place work, living, retail and leisure facilities close together
- The need to develop and deploy systems to remove greenhouse gases from the air and from the exhaust gases from industrial processes such as cement making
- The importance of education so that we better appreciate food, clothing and household goods so that we stop producing excessive waste
- The suggestion that farmers/food producers be invited to local climate discussions
- The need to include actions that Warrington Borough Council could take immediately, such as stopping alleged "indiscriminate use of herbicides", cutting down trees and mowing verges
- The need to encourage long-term ecological thinking in the finance sector with the suggestion we need to:
  - Require full disclosure of the climate-related risks on all investments
  - Require all managers of pension and investment funds to divest from fossil fuels

Some comments focused on specific points contained in the SWOT analysis, these are picked up later in the relevant discussion.



## Further comments on actions to drive local emissions reductions

All those who had read the strategy were given the opportunity to provide further comments on actions to drive local emissions reductions. Twenty nine people made comments. A number of people referred to earlier comments, these are not repeated here.

Amongst the most common points raised were:

- A greater sense of urgency – People highlighted emissions reductions are needed immediately and there is a need to act now wherever possible. It was pointed out that in some areas action should already be happening e.g. increasing bus provision, and should not be viewed as a future vision.
- The importance of communication and wider engagement – Many highlighted the importance of communication and engaging with the wider community in Warrington. Suggested tactics to get people involved were to sell the co-benefits and incentives of making the necessary changes, e.g.

reducing your heating bills as well as carbon emissions, or leading a healthier lifestyle by walking and switching to more plant-based foods. Promoting the small actions people can take and emphasising the collective power of such actions was suggested to get through to more people. In a similar manner, it was suggested that the impacts of how it will affect people in Warrington should be included in order to 'drive home' a sense of emergency. Local community groups and Parish councils were suggested as channels to communicate and support climate work in the Borough.

- Concerns about local authority action and control – Several people suggested that Warrington Borough Council is not taking enough action to change policy. This point was often made in relation to development and building standards. There was some acknowledgement of the limited control the council has over these national standards, but a suggestion that it should take more local control. People advocated that local building regulations should be reviewed and updated to meet improved energy efficiency standards, and that new builds should be required to meet the highest standard. New builds should make use of natural light, passive heating and cooling, and enhanced insulation and air tightness with controlled ventilation. It was suggested the Council require developers to 'future proof' houses, including PV installation, meeting Passivhaus standards and including green space. One suggestion was to only approve developers that embed climate change or 'eco-friendliness' into the whole development process.
- The need to learn from elsewhere – Several people suggested local authorities need to learn from one another to avoid trying to re-invent the wheel. This was raised particularly in relation to looking at cycle networks, bus provision and food waste disposal. It was similarly suggested that Warrington needs to co-ordinate efforts with neighbouring areas e.g. Manchester or Liverpool, to join up thinking and work together on tackling the climate crisis.

- The need for enforcement - Some raised the need for more stringent enforcement regarding policies to tackle climate change, the infrastructure must be put in but it also needed to be monitored and enforced in the face of resistance from some. One suggested issuing fines for carbon emitting activities e.g. properties with low energy efficiency, as a deterrent to those who are not willing to make changes.
- The need for more consistent terminology - It was proposed there should be greater consistency in terminology across published documents relating to pollution and climate work. Wider policy documents should link up to avoid confusion over the different types of pollution e.g. air quality, carbon emissions and litter. One respondent suggested a glossary could be included at the end of policy documents relating to climate change to explain any terms.
- Addressing inequality - One challenge presented was the need to address the inequality that is inherent in tackling climate change. Concern was raised for how some changes may be easier to make for certain groups and not others. As an example, the wealthy are able to purchase electric vehicles and the poor are taxed for pollution. Along similar lines, the disparity in the distribution of resources across society was flagged up. Suggestions were made for a need to use resources more effectively e.g. food waste arising amongst the more well off, while food banks struggle to feed those in need. More joined up thinking was suggested to close these gaps and it was proposed that funding should be made available for those on low income to make improvements whether that be for home efficiency improvements or basic support to assist with the higher cost of eco-friendly living, such as purchasing more sustainable products or locally grown food. Other suggestions to help lower income groups were to introduce a Universal Basic Income or increase the national minimum wage. It was emphasised that the climate emergency should not be considered in isolation from other socio-economic issues such as poverty and inequality.

Several people offered positive feedback to the position paper, stating its comprehensive nature and in particular supporting the science-based approach, the use of carbon budgets, the visions for the future, the inclusion of climate implications assessments, the inclusion of plant-based eating and a focus on tackling carbon emissions from heating.

Other points raised include:

- Improving cycle lanes across the town, creating a large, connected network that is safe for all bike users - learning from other authorities how they have done this
- Offering shared-use cycling facilities and improve cycle crossings over major bridges such as the ship canal
- Reducing single occupancy car journeys e.g. through carpooling/ride sharing
- Encouraging large destination sites to install EV chargers e.g. shopping centres, hospitals
- Use of the Fiddlers Ferry rail line for freight transport
- A need for greater focus on carbon capture
- Protection and enhancement of existing natural carbon stores
- A need to increase the number of plant-based food options in schools, suggesting the council should advocate for government policy change in food standards to reduce meat products in schools and across the hospitality industry
- Engaging with the agricultural sector to support the uptake of more plant-based diets
- Attributing actions to emissions savings so they are presented in a way people can understand the impact

One comment disagreed with the existence of climate change locally and argued the impossibility of reducing emissions.



## Areas for action to adapt to our changing local climate so Warrington is more resilient

A majority (58%) agreed or strongly agreed that the paper covered the main areas we need to act to adapt to our changing local climate. Over a fifth (22%) neither agreed nor disagreed - a greater level of ambivalence than for the previous similar question on greenhouse gas reduction. The proportion expressing disagreement (20%) was similar to the previous question on greenhouse gas reduction.

How strongly do you agree that the position paper captures the main areas we need act to adapt to our changing local climate so Warrington is more resilient?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree	20.00%	10
2	Agree	38.00%	19
3	Neither agree or disagree	22.00%	11
4	Disagree	10.00%	5
5	Strongly disagree	10.00%	5
		answered	50
		skipped	17

Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed about coverage of the main areas for action presented in the report were invited to comment further on what was missing. Although only ten people had disagreed, 14 people made comments. Four people simply referred to earlier comments.

Some of those who had previously taken issue with climate change or opposed a local strategy on this topic, took the opportunity to add further comments that questioned the necessity or suitability of actions, or to restate their beliefs.

With regard to suggested omissions, or areas where more needed to be said on adaptation, comments covered:

- The need to consider wider the national and global systemic impacts of climate change such as impacts on food security
- The need to address ecological breakdown and include bold measures to improve biodiversity, ecosystems and the natural world
- The need to address the impacts of invasive species and diseases impacting local ecosystems
- The need to increase ecological connectivity to enable species to migrate as the climate changes
- The importance of land use planning - The need to influence the local plan strategy to prioritise development within the built up area rather than the green belt. The need to demand that developers bring forward environmental considerations and reject proposals in the green belt
- The importance of dealing with surface drainage not just flood defences for rivers

Two people took the opportunity to argue that particular developments should be stopped mentioning the Six56 development.

One respondent took issue with the order in which the areas for action were presented arguing that those towards the end of the list in the report should have a higher priority<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>NB The order in which items were listed was not intended to convey priority



## Further comments on actions to adapt to our changing local climate

All those who reported reading the strategy were given the opportunity to provide further comments on actions to adapt to our changing climate. Eighteen did so, not all confined their observations to adaptation.

The following points were raised (excluding those that simply referred to earlier responses):

- The need for stronger more cohesive communities as further impacts hit us
- The importance of serious engagement with the wider public on these matters
- That people are not aware of the huge threats from climate/weather so tend not to see the need for action until 'after the event'
- The adaptation element could be expanded to map the potential impacts on services and communities

- That climate implications assessments should consider both the impact of the proposed action on climate change, as well as the impact of climate change on the proposed action
- The need for a regulatory stance to make the swift changes needed.
- The relevance of upstream land use changes and awareness on flooding not just changes to urban drainage in Warrington
- The need to spell out how action will happen
- The need for all politicians to back the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill to make it easier for councils to act
- The need to concentrate on dealing properly with river and surface water flooding
- That overheating is mentioned in the vision but should also be picked up in the action part
- That adaptation doesn't appear to feature in the SWOT analysis
- The need to cover 'Ecological Breakdown' and create a plan for the natural world that dovetails with the climate plan
- More emphasis on pollinator plants and trees
- The value of clearing drains and water courses of debris regularly
- Concern that suggesting we can adapt sends the wrong message which should be focused on 'we have to stop this happening'
- The need for a stronger push and support for solar panels on houses
- The need for grants for ground source heat pumps and alternative retro fit heating for older properties
- A question about whether emissions from fiddlers ferry power station were included in the data presented



## Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

The survey asked for any comments on, or suggested additions to, the local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats presented in the paper

### Strengths

Considering the strengths presented, 31 people made comments or suggested additions. The following strengths were highlighted:

- Broad political support for action
- Local people care about the issue - comments included the passion of young people and value of community groups, schools and faith communities
- Local natural assets (including green space and parks, trees and woodland, the Mersey and its tributaries) and work being done by rangers and volunteers to manage them
- Existing experience held by local community energy companies and

Warrington Borough Council in renewable energy (especially solar) and energy efficiency

- Warrington's geography being suited to improving public transport and active travel
- That Warrington is leading in the transition towards electrification for bus services.
- Good connections to surrounding places of work
- Education provision, including higher education, within the borough to support reskilling and training needed
- Intellectual capital

One respondent, who took issue with climate change, suggested it was a strength that a growing number see this [the climate agenda] as 'virtue signalling nonsense'.

Amongst comments made on the strengths listed in the document, some simply expressed agreement or welcomed the acknowledgment of local strengths. Others took issue with the suggested strengths or added caveats or suggested clarifications. Points raised of this nature included:

- The need to clarify terms, notably what the Hynet Project<sup>3</sup> is and what a DNO<sup>4</sup> is
- Concern about initial reliance that Hynet has on producing hydrogen from natural gas rather than renewable energy which could turn Hynet from a potential strength into a weakness

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<sup>3</sup>Hynet is the name of a programme to decarbonise industry in NW England through the production of hydrogen to replace fossil fuels, and through the capture and store carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions produced industries which cannot easily move to a low carbon fuel.

<sup>4</sup>A Distribution Network Operator (DNO) is the organisation that operates the local power grid used to distribute electrical power to connected homes and businesses

- Agreement that the borough is suited to cycling but with the caveats that there needs to be more connectivity, more provision on main routes into town and more cycle parking, e.g. at local shopping centres
- The suggestion that it is too optimistic about the suitability of the borough for cycling with their various limitations to getting about by bike including danger on roads and that Warrington is a commuter/logistics hub not some leafy suburb
- Questioning that the local transport plan is a strength
- Questioning there was high engagement with schools
- The suggestion we need more woodland cover
- Disagreement that a mild climate be seen as a strength
- Agreement that having a municipal bus company is a strength
- The suggestion that having a local bus operator used to be a strength but that that is no longer the case
- That more could be made of the role of Warrington as a transport interchange between road and rail
- That the number of motorways passing through the borough makes it strategically important for the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure with the opportunity for associated amenities

Other comments made bemoaned past planning decisions and flagged up the need for improved bus services to Lymm.



## Weaknesses

Thirty one people made comments or suggested additions on the borough's weaknesses. Beyond agreement with the list, the following weakness were highlighted:

- Poor communication and lack of engagement to make necessary changes
- Lack of political commitment and leadership when it comes to supporting action with the need for honesty with the public not party politics when it comes to difficult decisions
- Historical inaction and the lack of necessary speed in developing a response
- Limited local control over some areas, e.g. control over motorway emissions and influence over building standards
- Lack of support for businesses to change and connect with each other on this topic
- The local presence of consultancy businesses that serve the fossil fuel industry that need to diversify
- Dominant car culture with associated traffic related problems such as poor air quality

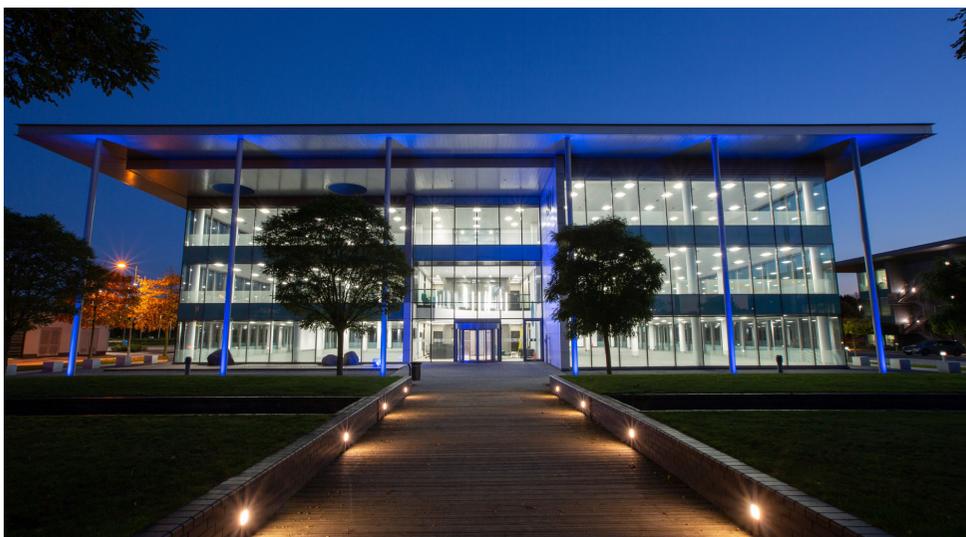
- Public transport is not good enough with the suggestion that simply electrifying existing bus services won't be enough, real time information was lacking, and disrepair was a problem
- Nature and green space is under threat from both disease and built development with limited resources to manage and improve it
- Land use planning and development issues, with too much pressure for development and green belt release, with developments built to standards that don't support the net zero ambition
- Electrical power infrastructure is inadequate to accommodate the changes needed, e.g. to support widespread electric vehicle charging
- The inadequacy of existing drainage infrastructure
- Legacy infrastructure in need of investment e.g. traffic issues associated with the swing bridges.
- Lack of provision for food waste recycling
- Poverty in parts of the borough

One person who dismissed climate change shared their opinion that the prevalence of particular ideologies and world views was a weakness and took the opportunity to make disparaging remarks about such views.

Beyond suggesting local weaknesses, people took the opportunity to make various further points about the weaknesses suggested or more general points including:

- That cycle routes in the south of the borough are poor
- The need for discounts for people to travel into the town centre by means other than cars
- That culture change is needed for everything not just in relation to car use, and that the paper didn't spell out actions in relation to this
- The nature of new development supports unsustainable lifestyles
- Commonly held aspirations are not compatible with what needs to happen

- The need to stop building on low lying land
- That the benefits of carbon offsetting through developing habitats and expanding biodiversity projects are not mentioned
- That Warrington is a commuter town not a manufacturing town
- The need to build a feeling of belonging to those who work outside the area
- The need to challenge government on planning matters
- The need to demand green infrastructure improvements (including green space, biodiversity and allotments) and protections as part of development proposals
- The potential need for more low rise flats to enable more land to be left for green infrastructure
- Questioning whether social housing has been assessed for impact
- Questioning why flooding wasn't mentioned
- That the issues have been raised repeatedly by some but are ignored
- Suggesting there is no land to plant trees 'is a joke' in the face of the Mersey Forest 25-year plans



## Opportunities

Twenty four people made comments or suggested additions on the opportunities to make progress.

Several comments were made supporting the list presented in the position paper. In addition to this list, the following opportunities to make progress were suggested:

- Local faith communities
- Other local authorities that are leading the way with successful action that can aid our own progress by learning from them
- Many large employers and businesses in the area that could work together to achieve net-zero targets e.g. Birchwood Business Park are progressing their 'zero carbon' policies
- Warrington is an attractive place to invest and develop which presents the opportunity to demand high calibre investors in terms of their green credentials

- The pandemic has provided an opportunity, as home working has become the norm for people which has reduced transport emissions, opportunity to take advantage of this and promote keeping some element of home working
- Warrington's rivers and canals present an opportunity for rewilding to act as natural carbon sinks, flood defence, habitat, wildlife buffers and water buffers, particularly at source such as Lumb Brook near Appleton Thorn
- An abundance of local knowledge and experience of climate change impacts already, and the opportunity to listen to people's stories and experiences to raise awareness
- That tools are available that highlight the impacts presenting an opportunity to educate people, such as the Climate Central interactive map ([coastal.climatecentral.org](https://coastal.climatecentral.org)) that shows the areas of land that are projected to be under water due to sea level rise in a particular year
- The opportunity to connect current cycle infrastructure already in place in Warrington to form a wider network
- Many schools in Warrington provide an opportunity for education and also to improve food provision in school canteens e.g. more plant-based options
- The opportunity to build on the work of the community energy companies in Warrington and utilise the Council's strong track record in solar projects
- The opportunity to utilise existing green verges in the residential areas of the town to enhance biodiversity through planting trees and wildflowers
- That parish councils have a strong level of influence over their communities so this is an opportunity to work with them to get community support
- That the nature of being a town offers the opportunity for more joined up, cohesive action as there is more of a community focus
- Opportunities to create green employment and the reskilling of the workforce to address the climate agenda
- The chance to utilise the UN's COP26 climate conference to raise awareness
- That's many residents of Warrington travel to Manchester, Cheshire and Liverpool for work and leisure, presenting demand for improved public transport networks

- That the council's annual budget setting process presents a regular chance to invest in action to reduce the council's carbon footprint

In addition to highlighting opportunities, there were some further comments and suggestions. These included:

- The value of setting up zero carbon advice centres in main parts of Warrington to help residents to achieve rapid change
- The value of appointing independent specialists to provide advice to households and businesses on how to reduce their carbon footprints
- That many local villages could have more high street services e.g. cafes, restaurants and banks so people don't travel to central Warrington or Manchester for these services
- That the strategy and actions should be integrated into neighbourhood plans
- That developers should be required to install solar panels on suitable roofs and install heat networks in new estates
- The need to making public transport more affordable and improve the number of services
- Using Hydrogen cell technology as a sustainable power source for vehicles
- The need to improve tendering processes to demand more climate friendly services
- Providing targeted support (what to do and how to finance it) to SMEs to help them decarbonise, thus meeting the requirements of net zero supply chains
- Creating repair/remanufacture shops that can act as community hubs, to upskill people and repair products – could be linked to FabLab, but also could help regenerate high streets if done in the same manner as Neighbourhood Hubs. [www.recyclinglives.com](http://www.recyclinglives.com) is a great example to look at in the NW
- That council members should be more transparent with local people

- The need to work with the planning department and developers on building green development

One respondent, who had previously dismissed climate change, proposed various sanctions against people or groups associated with climate action alongside calling for teaching climate science based on the views of a person associated with attacking mainstream climate science.



## Threats

Twenty nine people made comments or suggested additions on the threats to making local progress. These included:

- Poverty and social inequalities
- A danger that broad political support is undermined when it comes to specific actions/more difficult decisions e.g. from local MPs. It was suggested climate change is not a party political issue and work needs to be across parties
- Leaders not leading by example which results in a lack of trust
- Lack of government support
- Lack of funding/resources – there are substantial costs to taking action and local authorities are underfunded
- Not understanding that it takes a co-ordinated effort from the local authority and the public to make changes e.g. increasing public engagement and awareness while also increasing the public's knowledge of the power they hold to engage with councillors and MPs, which can lead

to increased pressure on national government to provide more funding and support to local councils

- Commitment by Warrington Borough Council
- A drive for economic growth e.g. in the local plan, not understanding the value of green space
- A fear that moving towards carbon neutrality will inhibit economic growth
- Policies that contradict climate objectives e.g. emphasis on road improvements in the local plan
- Planning can be a major hurdle to investment in zero carbon technologies especially in conservation areas and in the green belt
- Housing being built on green belt worsening environmental conditions e.g. increasing water runoff, loss of biodiversity, or being built in areas of flood risk
- Lack of joined-up thinking between housing plans and necessary transport provision
- Grid infrastructure may struggle to cope with the increase in electrical power needs
- Excessive vehicle ownership
- Petrol/diesel prices may reduce as people move to electric vehicles (EVs) making EVs a less attractive option
- Selfishness and willingness of people and businesses to change
- The inability of people to understand what impact this will have on them and therefore what changes they need to make
- Public perception of electric power as the solution
- Not considering the long-term durability of actions, doing things cheaply now rather than properly, which costs more in the long run
- Reliance on imported tree stock with a higher carbon cost and the risk of disease
- Rising temperature means we may no longer have a mild climate

One respondent who dismissed the existence of climate change argued that common sense and not realising this is all 'nonsense' is a threat to making progress.

Many were in agreement with the list of threats presented in the paper and offered suggestions for how to overcome the threats highlighted.

One suggested that limitations on the council's commercial investment strategy was a good thing and not a threat to progress. They questioned the validity of the approach the council had taken.

## Action in support of climate objectives

### Actions to secure support for the strategy

Those who had read the paper were invited to comment on how to secure wider action in the support of the strategy. Twenty seven did so. The points made concerned actions under the following themes:

- *Broadening engagement in the process* with suggestions to: widen representation and increase visibility of the climate commission and its work; create networks in support; make use of existing community and voluntary groups; connect with global business in the borough who are working towards net zero; create a citizen's assembly; involve Parish Councils; utilise councillors; harness the power of young people; hold meetings and events; involve local wildlife interests in the process; and connect with neighbouring areas
- *Cultivating ownership* stressing the importance of making people and local organisations see this as their strategy and that it's in their interest to act, with suggestions to encourage public pledges and the sharing of action plans in support of the strategy, and the creation of a common brand as a 'badge' for this
- *Increasing visibility* stressing the need for regular and honest communication consistent with the scale of the emergency, with suggestions to: use local 'famous' figures to help spread the message; utilise social media, local press, leaflets through doors, and posters; have a daily media schedule to highlight local stories about action; and have a local lead in each ward to disseminate information
- *Translating what it means for people and organisations and supporting them to act* stressing the need to show how climate change will impact people and provide support for change, with suggestions to: help people understand what will make an impact; give people practical local examples



that illustrate what they can do, e.g. a knowledge page with local case studies and contacts so people can learn from local good practice; make green actions the easy choice but not by taxing the poorest; and provide grants to support action

- *Demonstrating leadership* – stressing the importance of local leadership, including leadership by the council (e.g. highlighting what the council is doing, and reporting council emissions figures) and the need to for people to see the benefits of real changes in Warrington, not just ‘greenwash’.
- *Encouraging investment in local action* –with suggestions to: encourage people to bequeath support for local climate projects in their wills; encourage pension companies to invest in housing insulation projects; encourage people to invest in local carbon offsetting (‘in-setting’ projects) to deliver local benefits; ask local people if they want a local climate change levy
- *Lobbying* with suggestions to lobby the government; involve MPs, and support organisations that help make the case for local action

A few comments simply reiterated earlier points such as reducing housebuilding or expressing hostility to particular developments; or making clear new

developments should be net zero. Two people who did not believe in climate change took the opportunity to restate their opposition to action in this area.

### **Better capturing the actions from local organisation**

Those who had read the strategy were invited to comment about how to better capture what local organisations are doing to tackle the climate emergency. 21 people shared comments.

The following suggestions were made to capture the actions of local organisations:

- Gather real world case studies /action plans and information about local capabilities and resources including the suggestion to invite organisations to share experience using a simple form
- Share case studies/action plans/best practice from across the borough to inspire others and celebrate achievements, but also to highlight the challenges faced and lessons learned
- Use a website and social media
- Events - with suggestions for a Climate Commission consultation meeting for local organisations and an action focused conference with inspirational speakers
- Make direct contact – with suggestions to talk to organisations, write to them, or meet face to face.
- Develop a Borough-wide forum to share practices
- Build a local network
- Have a climate change page in the local press with a section for local organisations
- Tap into existing networks
- Promote more widely via MP surgeries, charities (Lions, Youth Centre), business parks, shopping centres etc.

In addition to suggestions about how to better capture activity, people took the opportunity to highlight the existence and work of local groups and organisations active already, including:

- Lymm Environment Action Forum (LEAF) [www.lymmenvironmentactionforum.co.uk](http://www.lymmenvironmentactionforum.co.uk)
- Warrington CEE Bill campaign group which has been speaking to residents resulting in around 350 writing to local MPs. There is also an open letter from businesses in Warrington in support of the bill

Several people made comments directed at the council:

- The importance of showing that the council is actively engaging with local organisations and business which will put a spotlight on the organisations and their climate promises
- The suggestion it was time for the council to listen to community groups not bully them into what the council wants to do
- Questioning if the council has published anything on climate change in any of the local papers
- Questioning what support, including financial support, there will be in the future from the council to support local work
- The suggestion the council can only help when it shows real leadership that others can follow

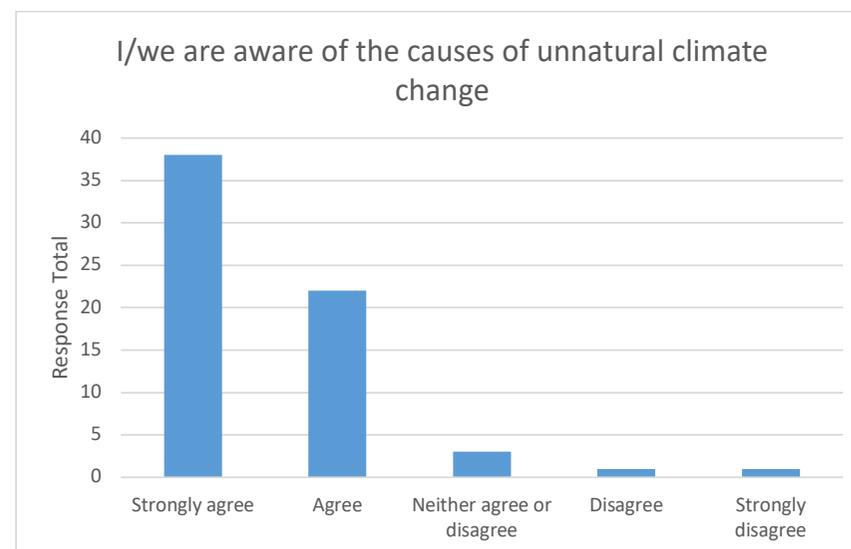
Several people referred to past comments, not repeated here. Remaining comments made, not already covered, included:

- The need to 'sell' how this will benefit people in Warrington better
- The suggestion that people have had enough of Extinction Rebellion
- The importance of what organisations do next is very important. A focus mainly on what is already being done could create the false sense that enough is being done.

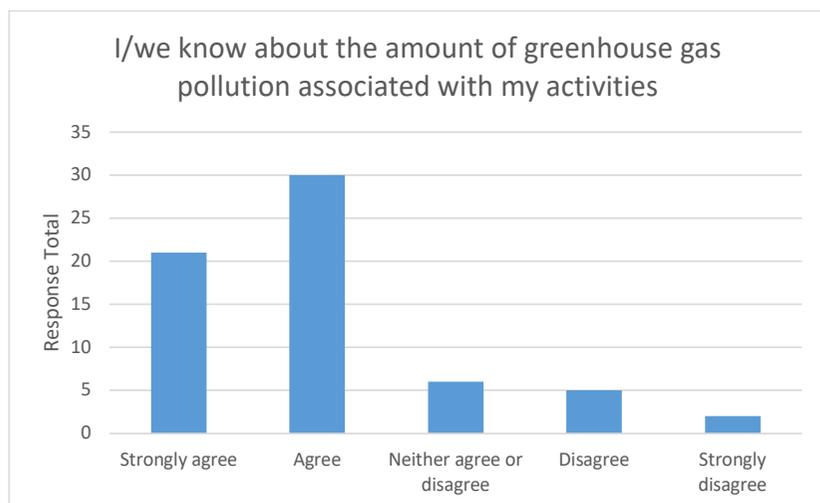
## The current position of respondents with respect to the causes climate change and actions to reduce emissions

All participants in the survey, irrespective of whether they had read the paper or not, were asked a series of questions about their current position with respect to climate change.

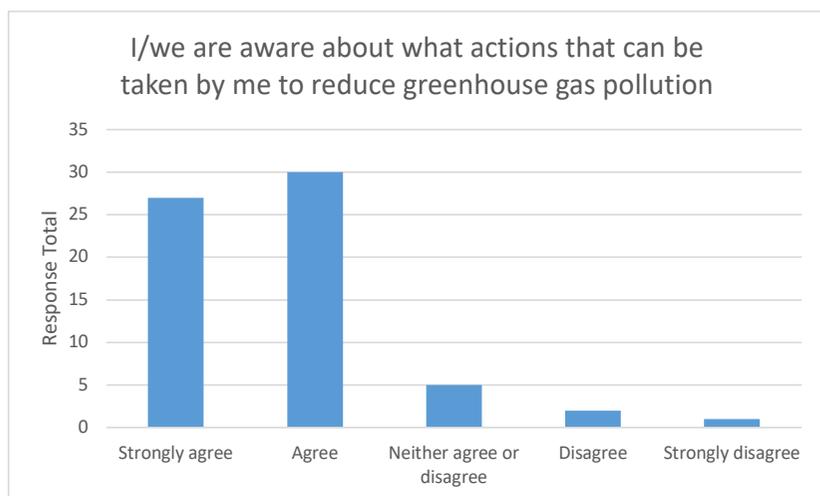
Most respondents (92%) reported being aware of the causes of unnatural climate change.



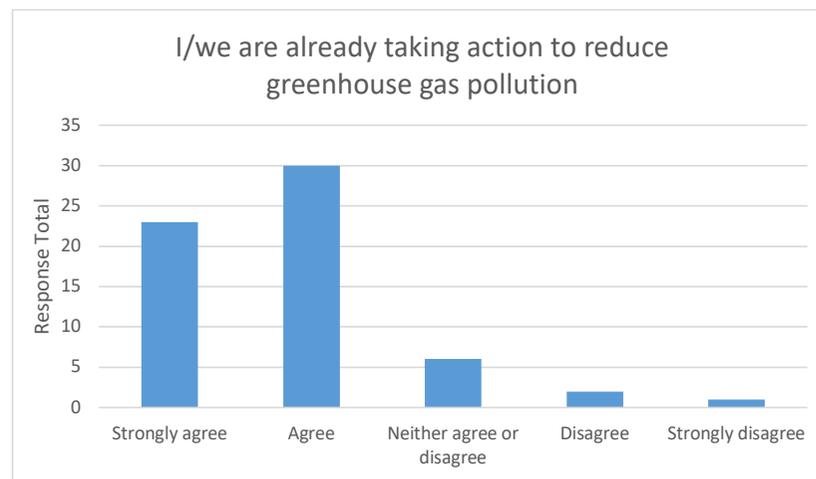
A clear majority (80%) reported that they knew about the amount of pollution associated with their own activities, although there was less certainty in this response compared to awareness of the causes of climate change.



Most (88%) reported being aware about what actions they could take to reduce greenhouse gas pollution.



Most (86%) indicated they were already taking action to reduce greenhouse gas pollution.



### Barriers to taking personal or organisation action

People were given the opportunity to flag up the main barriers to taking action to reduce their own (or their organisation's) emissions. There were 57 responses.

The majority fitted within the following categories:

- *Financial barriers*-More than half of the responses referred to financial barriers to reducing emissions. Comments on this theme largely fell under two main areas:

*The higher cost of environmental friendly choices*, like switching to alternative technologies, or using public transport. Many identified the cost of electric vehicles compared to petrol/diesel vehicles and the price of making home retrofits such as installing heat pumps and insulation as actions that are particularly costly. Many argued the higher upfront cost for alternatives such as these make them unaffordable to most. *The lack of government funding or subsidies* to support these actions. Respondents pointed to the removal of some subsidies, e.g. the loss of the Feed in Tariff (FiT) payments impacting the viability of home solar

PV installations. Others pointed out that many subsidies support environmentally damaging behaviours such as flights and that these need to be removed and used to encourage climate-friendlier activity instead

In addition, it was highlighted that inequality within society limits the ability of some groups to take up more climate-friendly behaviours.

- *Limited awareness* - Eighteen respondents highlighted that there is a lack of education and awareness around climate change and action. These concerns fell into two main areas:

*A lack of understanding about how climate change will affect people and the scale/urgency of the problem, similarly a lack of empathy for those already experiencing the effects*

*A lack of understanding of what actions citizens can take that is meaningful or that have the most impact* - People want to take action but don't feel they know enough about the alternative options e.g. for heating their home. People don't know where to go for advice for things like home retrofitting and vehicle charging point installation. One person suggested that a section in the local community papers/online publications could help point people to the right places. Several shared the view that there is a lot of misinformation in the media that leads to confusion and slows progress, some of which is echoed via local outlets. One respondent gave the example that many people think unless China takes widespread action, their actions are pointless

It was suggested that education on the causes of climate change and how our everyday actions contribute to the problem will help people understand what they can do to help. People suggested this information needs to be clear and simple. It was raised that we often overlook the embodied carbon in the goods or services we use. There is also the need to address a feeling of complacency that others will act or it is someone else's problem



- *Lack of leadership* - Six comments were made relating to a lack of adequate leadership or political backing of the climate agenda, arguing both local and national government policies need to embed climate change and sustainability throughout. It was suggested that without the CEE bill being passed into law there will not be widespread decisive action that takes the science into account. One person argued the government and media fail to convey the severity of the situation and the actions that can be taken to change, and if they did so it would encourage more widespread action. One argued that Warrington Borough Council do not do enough to contract housing developers with sustainable credentials
- *Lack of skilled workforce* - A barrier highlighted by five respondents was a lack of skilled workers to deliver the necessary changes on a broad scale. For example, several stated that they had struggled to find the right expertise to seek advice or quotes regarding heat pump installation and other home retrofits such as insulation. Others pointed out this is particularly difficult when homes are not standard builds

- *Convenience and willingness to change* - Eleven respondents argued one of the main barriers is convenience. For example, it is easier to jump in the car than wait for a bus to come with public transport perceived to be a poor option. Others attributed it simply to people's laziness to seek alternatives like walking, cycling or public transport. One stated that it takes a lot more effort to go for the green alternative, e.g., shopping at the supermarket compared to going to your local farmer, refill shops, having a milk or vegetable box delivery etc. They argued it takes more personal admin (and cost) to do it this way and many simply will not. Others gave different examples, such as the disruption caused by works to improve home insulation. Many people do not want the disruption to their home and lives and so opt to avoid it. One respondent mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic has created a barrier to reducing emissions as people are now less likely to use public transport to avoid contact with other people
- *An unsustainable system and culture* - Comments highlighted that many of the damaging behaviours that persist stem from how our culture has evolved to be 'deeply unsustainable'. It has become a habit to own a car, for example, and so it is going to take a cultural shift in behaviour to tackle this. A car prioritised road system and generally busy day-to-day life make it the easiest option. One comment stated that often we put the focus on individuals to make small changes when what is needed is a broader structural system change
- *Lack of appropriate infrastructure, services or confidence in new technology* - Another common barrier highlighted related to a lack of appropriate infrastructure to allow or encourage people to make changes. The lack of charging infrastructure was seen to limit the uptake of electric vehicles by several people. A lack of transport infrastructure was believed to be stopping many moving away from cars; both a lack of safe cycling paths and a need for improved bus services were raised. One suggested that we need to prioritise improving the resilience of electricity distribution

infrastructure ahead of the electrification of transport and heat arguing that we must have the infrastructure in place to cope with these changes first. Several people highlighted how a lack of greener choices prevented action. One person highlighted that their type of house limited their ability to make improvements and reduce emissions, with older housing stock limiting retrofit options, for example cavity wall insulation is sometimes not possible. One gave the example of how the council offer limited options to recycle and divert food waste from black bins. Two respondents identified a lack of confidence in new technologies questioning the long-term reliability of some options such as electric vehicles and their ability to deliver the necessary emissions reductions at the scale needed

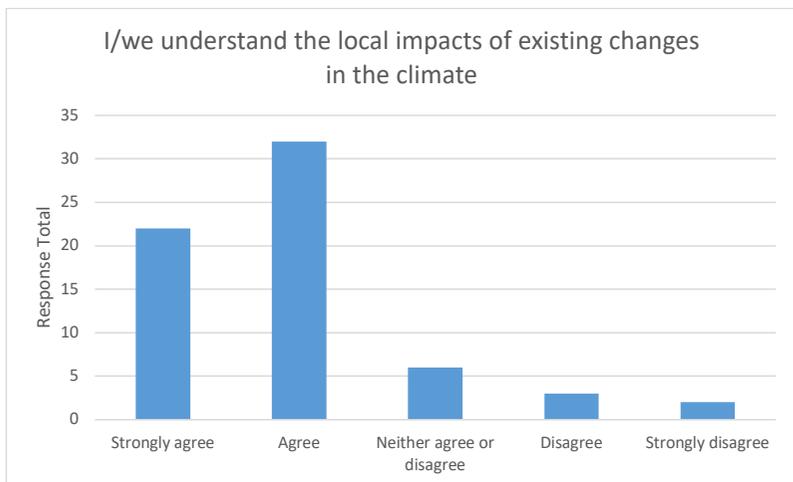
**Other comments** - In addition to the themes highlighted above, further comments picked up on:

- A feeling of helplessness from some, that the sacrifices a few make are pointless when there is indifference from so many
- A feeling that the scale of the problem is too big, it is overwhelming and disheartening, that 'buy in' to the visions is difficult when they seem so out of reach
- A lack of community drive
- Sometimes emissions are unavoidable, it is not always possible to reduce emissions, for example, increasing the heating in the winter, particularly for elderly people
- The limited availability and quality of housing

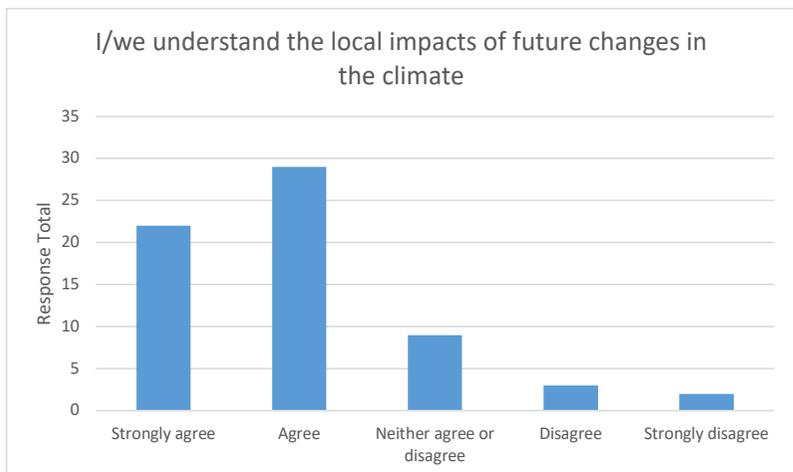
One respondent argued that there are no barriers to taking action. Another who previously argued the non-existence of climate change identified the main barrier to be a focus on CO2 as a pollutant and not as a nutrient for plant life.

## The current position of respondents with respect to the impacts of climate change and actions to adapt to them

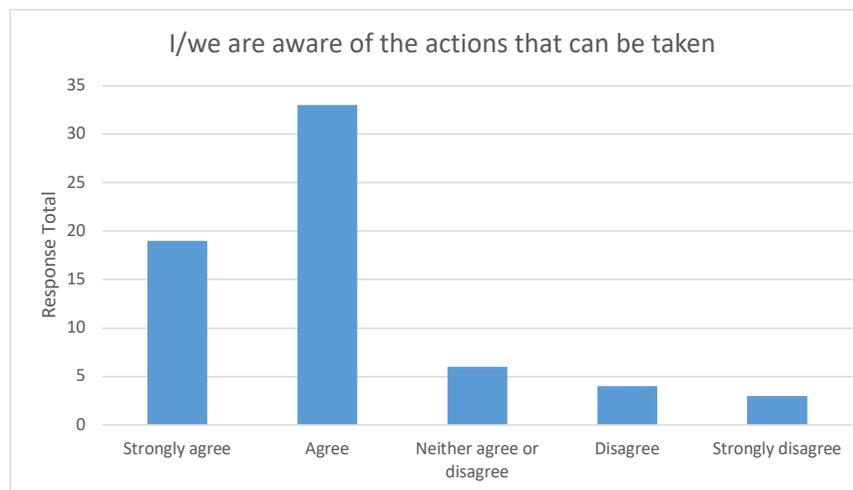
Turning to people's position with respect to the impacts of climate changes, the majority (83%) agreed that they understood the current impacts of climate change locally.



A majority (78%) reported being aware of the impact of future changes in the climate.



A majority (80%) claimed they were aware of the actions that can be taken.



## Barriers to personal/organisation action to adapt to climate change

All respondents were asked what they felt the main barriers to taking action to adapt to climate change were. 54 people responded, with a couple simply referring to earlier comments. The majority of comments fitted within the following categories:

- *Financial barriers* – The most commonly cited barrier, mentioned by just under a half of people who commented, concerned cost or funding issues. These financial barriers were perceived to limit personal or institutional action. Concerns were expressed about the lack of funding for adaptation both nationally and locally, and the lack of incentives to act
- *Limited awareness* – The next most commonly cited barrier, cited by just under a quarter, concerned limited understanding of the problems we face and actions that can be taken. The lack of knowledge not only related to poor understanding of what the impacts are, but also ignorance about actions that were exacerbating these problems such as paving over front gardens which contributes to flooding. Several people highlighted a lack of knowledge about the scale and severity of the changes we need to adapt

to, with some highlighting the failures of politicians and media in being wholly truthful or transparent about the problems we face. Misinformation was seen as a problem nationally but echoed locally too; not enough was being done, but arguments were advanced from some quarters about the cost of action which undermined progress. It was argued that climate adaptation action requires that people understand and accept that we have left it so late that there will be significant worsening probably for decades (and in some cases, for example, sea level rise, for hundreds if not thousands of years) even with rapid emissions reductions. Some argued that poor communication, consultation and engagement was a barrier to progress. Another argued that the pandemic had dominated attention which meant environment issues have not been a priority

- *Lack of leadership or political commitment* – A lack of leadership, particularly political will or commitment, was raised by several people. This lack of leadership was highlighted both at national and local level. A number called out ‘green washing’ or this being a ‘box ticking exercise’. One person argued there is a huge leadership vacuum in this country on this whole agenda when we need visionary “courageous leadership with strong storytelling and communication abilities to steer a different path for the long term”
- *The nature of the climate challenge* – Several people made comments concerning how the nature of the crisis we face could be a barrier itself. The long term temporal frame of reference was an issue. Climate impact is not always front of mind. We tend to make decisions based on relatively short time horizons and are not as good at dealing with issues over the longer term. We also tend to react to emergency situations, rather than plan to limit their impact in advance. There is also an issue with ‘certainty’, with the argument raised that probability is not well understood which makes actions on the threats we need to prepare for more difficult to ‘sell’. A final point raised relating to the nature of the problem is that some of the change might appear welcome, e.g. sunny days

- *Convenience and willingness to change* – several comments related to inertia to change. That people don’t like change. It was inconvenient to change or there was limited public support for change, or a belief that individual changes don’t make impact so aren’t worth the effort
- *Loss or damage to the natural environment* - several people raised the loss of green space, woodland or ecological assets and corridors as a barrier. Comments included criticism of the council for not managing open spaces or for allowing development on them. The limited availability of land for tree planting or habitat restoration was also highlighted with one person reporting having to travel outside the borough as a conservation volunteer
- The limits of personal agency – some people felt they had a limited role with respect to adaptation, with the feeling they had no control or say about the overdevelopment in the borough or a belief that most adaptation relies on changes in infrastructural over which individuals have little influence

Other barriers raised included:

- The lack of an overall plan
- The lack of a sense of urgency to upgrade drainage systems in the face of higher rainfall
- The tools to take action

Several additional comments were also made:

- That preventing flooding is going to be quite difficult if sea level rises end up worse than expected and that significant parts of Warrington could end up below sea level
- Adapting fully will take time so it should be encouraged as little bits at a time to get people on board
- That we should follow the national approach
- The Local plan is based on non-sustainable growth
- Transport links
- The suggestion that solutions are worse than their fossil fuel alternative.

- Criticism of the council's understanding about what the environmental challenges are

A respondent who did not believe in climate change commented that fossil fuels are needed and alternative energy won't be enough.

## Position with respect to climate action plans, net zero, sharing learning and carbon literacy

All who took the survey were asked to indicate whether they:

- Had a climate plan
- Wanted to develop a plan
- Had a net zero commitment
- Wanted to commit to net zero
- Were keen to learn from others
- Had skills, knowledge or experience to share
- Had completed carbon literacy training
- Were interested in carbon literacy training

Which of the following apply to you/your organisation.			
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Have a plan of action to address climate issues		41.07% 23
2	Want to develop a plan of action to address climate issues		41.07% 23
3	Have a commitment to net zero pollution		41.07% 23
4	Want to commit to work towards net zero		44.64% 25
5	Keen to learn from others in Warrington about taking climate action		58.93% 33
6	Have skills, knowledge or experience to share with others to help climate action in Warrington		42.86% 24
7	Have completed carbon literacy training		23.21% 13
8	Interested in undertaking carbon literacy training		37.50% 21
		answered	56
		skipped	11

41% already had a climate action plan with the same proportion wanting to develop such a plan. 41% also reported having a commitment to net zero, while 45% wanted to commit to work towards net zero. A majority of respondents (59%) were keen to learn from others locally about taking climate action, with 43% confirming they had skills, knowledge or experience to share to help climate action in Warrington. 23% reported having already completed carbon literacy training with 38% interested in undertaking it.

## Offers of help to progress local climate action

Thirty one people offered ways in which they or their organisation could help progress local climate action.

Many offered ways to improve engagement with people through volunteering to share knowledge and skills, for example by delivering presentations or workshops with local groups to help educate the community on the actions they can take and the impact they have. Some were able to share knowledge based on their qualifications e.g. on climate change or ecology and woodlands. The skillsets of some could be beneficial to the wider community, for example one engineer offered to help educate local people on the practicalities of domestic heating and ventilation. Many offered to share the work/learnings of their organisations to increase awareness and education. One organisation reported having a programme of events throughout the year where they promote action to combat climate change and offer examples of good practice.

Many already volunteer through local community groups, such as litter clearing groups, CEE bill groups and other environmental action groups. Some suggested they would step forward to volunteer for these groups to progress local action. Some are climate activists and hope to continue to raise awareness. Many local environmental groups plan to further their action, for example by helping to educate residents, offering impartial information and advice about making small changes.

An ecological community group intended to increase engagement with the community and run environmental campaigns to encourage local action, such as promoting use of water butts, food growing, reusing food waste to make compost etc. Some suggested networking with people in the community would help progress climate action, for example, by helping form a group of individuals/ organisations who are progressing this work.

One educational institution suggested encouraging student projects and work placements that provide real life application of climate action. Another individual stated that educating young people is an important way to progress action locally. A local higher education institution offered to work to progress climate action in Warrington by ensuring their policies, commitments and activities align and support the council's ambitions. This institution has begun delivering carbon literacy training to staff and students to help raise awareness of actions that can be taken to reduce carbon emissions on a personal and organisational level.

Local eco-friendly businesses are using their work to engage with other local organisations, churches, networking groups etc. about climate change and how they can help. One organisation works directly with businesses to help them identify ways to tackle the climate crisis. Another organisation hopes to engage with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on improving their energy efficiency, to decarbonise their businesses and remove the financial risk of increasing energy prices.

A local resident reported experience working on various national programmes to help businesses transition to a more circular economy and realise the impact of embedded emissions in their supply chains. They hope to bring their expertise in to their local community to progress local action.

A local community energy group intend to utilise their experience in installing renewables, LED lighting and energy audit work to offer advice to the community. They are also investigating a solar farm locally.

Two responses highlighted how they can help encourage local action through their leadership role as local Parish Councillors, such as by helping to influence policies.

One individual wrote that they will progress local climate action by taking personal action, such as changing to an electric vehicle and eating less meat and dairy. One stated by people listening to the advice and what is already out there, taking personal action will help things progress locally. There was another respondent who offered to work with the Council to manage green space and increase biodiversity.

Two respondents suggested ways to inhibit local climate action, by not supporting and actively fighting against climate work, in particular carbon literacy training.

## Contributions by email

One person who completed the survey also made an additional point by email that they felt was missing in the paper but didn't fit easily into the survey format. Notably "the psychology of what it means to live a good life". They suggested for too many people "a conspicuous consumption (and therefore high carbon) lifestyle is a key part of their identity". They argued that to address the climate emergency we also need "to find ways to talk about sufficiency and intrinsic/extrinsic reward systems" and by persuading people to think about these matters they may "eventually realise that the things that give us meaningful and lasting contentment are not material possessions". They argued that without addressing this psychological dimension "we can't hope to reach true sustainability" and as such it should form part of work to address the climate emergency.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust (The Trust) made detailed comments on the strategy via email written as if addressing the council rather than the commission. Overall, the Trust welcomed steps to develop a climate emergency strategy but argued the position paper missed a significant opportunity to address the biodiversity crisis too. It suggested the intrinsic link between these emergencies is not

acknowledged in the paper. It strongly recommended that the Council declare a Climate and Nature Emergency and amend the context and content of the position paper to address the overarching issues relating to both climate and nature holistically.

The Trust's submission bemoaned the lack of early upfront content relating to biodiversity and limited reference to the restoration of habitats that contribute to the natural storage of carbon, rather than the wider importance and benefits of bringing nature into recovery e.g. flood regulation, carbon sequestration, water quality, a bigger and better connected natural landscape, access to nature, benefits to physical and mental health, and, the role of nature based solutions in achieving net-zero. It lamented that the paper did not:

- Expand on nature recovery as a theme in the UK Government net zero strategy
- Mention of how Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) or Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) will be the key mechanism to support nature recovery and nature based solutions to climate change.
- Mention how Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and the national Nature Recovery Network (NRN) will strategically focus efforts to deploy biodiversity and carbon based creation, enhancement and restoration schemes funded by BNG and ELMS

The Trust's submission acknowledged that nature based solutions to climate change are not a substitute for the rapid phase out of fossil fuels, but argued that they are crucial to achieve both net-zero and net negative emissions while also contributing to a wide range of environmental and social functions.

To remedy the principal perceived deficiency in the paper, the Trust argued there should be an additional overarching goal to "Address the biodiversity crisis and bring nature into recovery" with detail in subsequent sections to follow up on this.

When commenting on the data presented for total CO2 pollution in Warrington, the Trust suggested that the source should be referenced. Questions were raised about in what capacity the emissions associated with land use change and borough's peatlands had been included.

The Trust's submission welcomed the commitment to adopt The Tyndall Centre local carbon budget for Warrington. It recommended regular monitoring of progress against this.

It also recommended that quantitative targets for the recovery of nature are also incorporated to be taken from agreed national and local ambitions.

Commenting on adaptation, the Trust's submission argued this was an area where a holistic approach to nature and climate would result in multifunctional benefits. It argued habitat creation, enhancement and restoration, in addition to the 'usual' nature based solutions can result in a wide range of environmental benefits that will help Warrington adapt to climate change, including: carbon sequestration, shading/cooling, flood regulation, water quality, provision of green transport links etc.

The Trust welcomed that the paper states that any difficult residual emissions should be balanced by an increase in natural or artificial carbon capture and storage, and the action to restore and develop habitats that contribute to natural storage of carbon including enhancement of soils and increases in tree cover. The Trust highlighted its support in principle for the deployment of renewable energy generation and innovative artificial carbon capture and storage schemes, but highlighted the importance of ensuring that these are tried and tested before relying on them. It also highlighted the importance of locating them in the right places. It argued that Council "should not support any unproven, unsafe or uneconomical renewable or CCS schemes, especially where impacts to the natural environment would outweigh the benefits of the scheme."

The Trust welcomed the objective to shift away from fossil fuel use for power generation, but argued that renewable generation schemes must be economically viable and located in the right place to ensure impacts to the wider environment are minimised so they do not add to the problems they are deployed to address.

The Trust welcomed the objective concerning diets and food production systems, but suggested there should be additional actions around the re-wilding of farmland, biodiversity enhancements in active farms, improvements to natural connectivity, and an uptake in sustainable farming practices as solutions to both the climate and nature crises. The submission highlighted the importance of the agricultural sector in the context of national food security. It argued that deploying more sustainable farming practices alongside biodiversity enhancements and nature based solutions will help the borough to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change while aiding the recovery of nature at the same time.

The Trust strongly supported the objective to “restore and develop habitats that contribute to natural storage of carbon” and the actions suggested to achieve it, but bemoaned that the role of nature was largely boiled down to this objective alone. The Trust highlighted some additional actions under this objective relating to peatlands. It highlighted that the loss and/or modification of peat deposits should be avoided at all costs recommending an immediate ban on the extraction of peat in all circumstances and a moratorium on the development on peatlands. It called for action relating to peatland restoration to be expanded and strengthened with a commitment to “restoring all of the borough’s peatlands back to a rewetted or near natural state to protect and increase naturally stored carbon.”

The Trust welcomed the objective to capture, transport and store carbon by artificial means, but made clear it must be safe, effective and economical. The submission argued it is imperative that the right technology is deployed in the

right place. It argued the Council must not support proposals that damage the environment.

The Trust welcomed both objectives concerning building a better understanding of the local risks and vulnerabilities and to develop resilience to the changes taking place. However, it flagged up this was another opportunity to incorporate a more holistic approach to addressing both the climate and biodiversity crises and reap the benefits that bringing nature into recovery will provide

The Trust flagged up it was keen to work as a key partner with the Council to address the linked climate and biodiversity crises.

The Trust’s submission suggested a series of additional points for the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis focused on biodiversity and nature recovery. In addition to the opportunities listed it recommended:

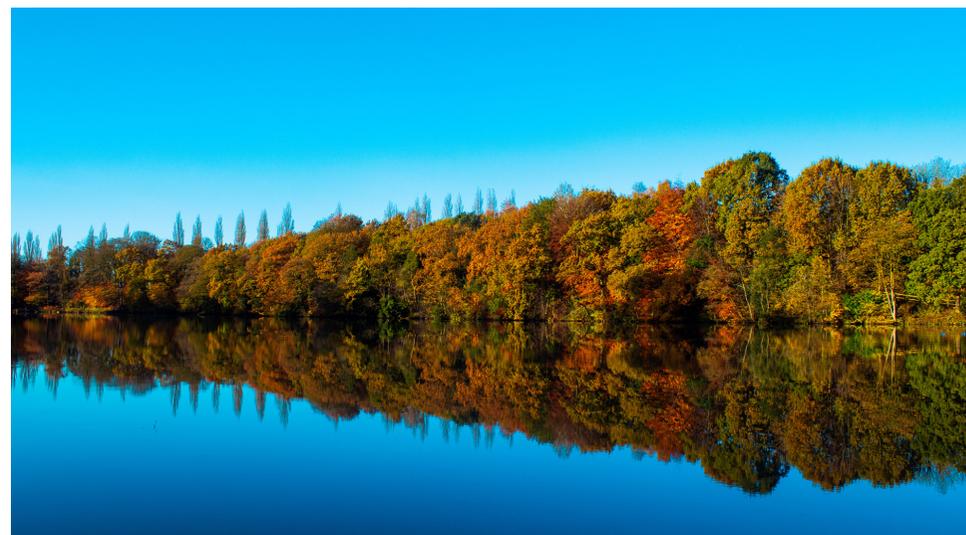
- The Council commits to embedding the actions in the position paper into the broadest range of policies and strategies across the borough and not just those related to the environment. In particular incorporating BNG and the LNRS into key planning policy such as the forthcoming Local Plan
- BNG, ELMS, LNRS and the NRN are significant opportunities to deploy strategic green infrastructure
- The Council undertake carbon accounting
- Funding opportunities are sought out to develop and implement nature based solutions to climate change and nature’s recovery, such as funding for peatland restoration and woodland planting available through the government’s nature for climate fund
- Gaps are identified in council employee, councillor and contractor knowledge with respect to the skills needed to deliver the actions outlined in the paper and training and resources are provided as appropriate

- Communication with the wider community to raise awareness and encourage and support the delivery of actions
- Encouraging, educating, and supporting communities and businesses to make better decisions and take action to tackle the climate and nature emergencies
- The recovery of nature is also added to the list of 'valuable co-benefits from climate related actions'

In addition to the threats listed, it recommended:

- Not taking advantage of the environmental benefits that bringing nature into recovery will provide (e.g. sequestration, flood risk, biodiversity, water quality etc.) could result in the objectives and actions presented in the paper being unachievable.
- Not providing adequate support to the Council's Planning Department and the interdepartmental officers (e.g. nature conservation, planning enforcement etc.) that support them in their day to day duties. Without significant support the effective implementation, delivery and monitoring of BNG (a key mechanism for delivering NBS to climate change and natures recovery) will not be possible
- Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential for the delivery of green infrastructure that delivers multiple functions

The Trust welcomed that the risk that some will promote 'Greenwash' rather than showing a real commitment is highlighted. It added this is particularly important where inappropriate offsetting schemes (i.e. purchasing unverified carbon credits or outsourcing carbon offsetting to other countries etc.) are favoured by business, rather than supporting locally led initiatives that will deliver multifunctional benefits.



## Implications of the consultation response to further development of a local strategy

The survey found broad agreement on the issues covered in the position paper. Publishing the paper has helped confirm many of the areas that the strategy should seek to address. It has also helped to highlight areas where more detail or clarity may be needed, for example, addressing structural socio-economic influences and links with the wider ecological crisis.

Where there was disagreement, most of this came from people wanting to see more comprehensive coverage and urgent action. Only a small number expressed fundamental disagreement based on not accepting climate change. The presence of a very small minority of hostile voices is not unexpected and accords with wider assessments of public opinion where most people accept climate change as a problem.

The desire for urgent action was reflected in numerous comments where people wanted to see how and when action would happen not just the type of action

needed. Some negative comments were from people who appeared to judge the paper as if it were a strategy not the first step in a wider process to develop one. The Commission has already discussed and agreed that it is important to have a strategy in place as early as possible as an initial foundation to build on. It has accepted that there is a trade-off with diminishing returns for the extra time taken to refine any particular strategy document. The survey response confirms a wider sense of urgency, though also that there are high expectations for a local strategy too.

The commission's implied approach is based on seeking to encourage wider action by underlining that we all have a role. If the commission is to cultivate a sense of wider ownership more work will be needed. A number of people responded to the consultation as if it were a direct council initiative. This was clear with some of the frustration expressed directed at the council with many critical comments concerning past council action or perceived inaction. It is not surprising that this view persists with the commission having been set up by the council, its web page being hosted within the council's website and with the online survey itself hosted and promoted by the council. Both the commission and the council will need to do more to address this perception and move towards a position where that helps cultivate a wider sense of ownership. Without making the division of responsibility and case for much wider ownership clearer, there remains a danger there will be a misplaced expectation in some quarters that this work is the council's alone with the expectation the council will deliver local climate action alone. Clearly the council will have a significant leadership role and is a major stakeholder in progressing work. If the strategy calls for supporting organisations to develop action plans in support, then it would be beneficial for the council to produce such a plan as early as possible to show leadership and to illustrate its part in helping progress this wider work.

A related point to that of narrow perceptions of ownership, is that of perceptions of powers, responsibilities and resources. It was clear in some comments that

there is an appreciation of the difficulties in progressing the local response when the powers and resources needed are not available locally and that accordingly we will need to work with and seek to influence others including the national government, agencies, regulatory and funding bodies and businesses whose decisions elsewhere impact Warrington. It was also clear that others may think a single body, usually 'the council' has the ability to do things unilaterally. The Commission will need to reflect upon how to present this dimension in a meaningful way to ensure that the strategy's development helps broaden understanding of roles, responsibilities and resources and underlines the need to influence decisions elsewhere in the wider system.

The survey confirms that others are taking climate action and are interested in being involved with efforts to encourage climate action locally. There is willingness to share experience and expertise and to be involved in a wider process. There is a need and opportunity when developing the strategy to help create and enhance mechanisms for facilitating this.

In the light of the consultation the commission should consider:

- *How to reflect wider structural and socio economic issues in the strategy.* The position paper set out many technological, infrastructure or behaviour changes needed, but did not address the impact of current socio economic disparities on agency to act, or acknowledge that there will be winners and losers from bringing about such changes. It did not delve critically into how the societal system that has developed in the context of the widespread use of abundant and relative cheap fossil fuel derived energy based on high consumption and waste, is itself a part of the problem. Instead it presents the challenge we face principally as one of technological change to transition away from the use of fossil fuels
- *The scope of the strategy with respect to the ecological crisis/nature recovery and how to better address ecological issues interrelated with*

*climate change*. The position paper focuses on the climate emergency and picks up on some issues relating to the role of the natural environment in this response. Some, in the consultation, argued it should jointly address the climate and ecological emergencies. Others flagged up the need to better reflect the role of nature in the climate strategy. The commission needs to be clear about the scope of the strategy under development. It could expand the scope of work and develop a combined climate and ecological emergency strategy. Alternatively it could opt simply to better reference interrelated ecological issues. Another approach could be to both better reference these issues and highlight the need to develop a wider ecological response to dovetail with a climate strategy

- *Priorities when setting out strategic interventions*. There are a wide range of changes needed. The position paper provides a detailed breakdown of the main types of action needed covering changes in behaviour, infrastructure and technology. However, it only provides limited commentary on interventions to help make the uptake of such actions more likely. There is a danger in setting out multiple areas for action in detail that this simply adds to the existing sense of paralysis in the face of an overwhelming challenge, rather than focusing on a smaller number of strategic steps to move things forward now. There will need to be a clear focus on some key early interventions. The mechanisms and interventions to raise awareness, extend engagement, encourage action, and assess progress received relatively brief coverage in the paper, but are areas that chimed with many comments from the consultation
- *Clarity in the communication of the strategy*. Related to the issue of clear early priorities, is the issue of clear communication of the strategy and its accessibility to different audiences. The consultation response on a traditional position paper was limited in number though rich in comments. The response is likely skewed towards an 'already engaged' or an interested audience supportive or hostile. When developing and presenting a

borough-wide strategy there is a need for the commission to consider ways to reflect the different starting points of the wider community. It also needs to consider the different means of wider engagement so the borough-wide strategy finds a home in the 'hearts and minds' of people and organisations across Warrington. There is a need to consider the strategy and the different ways it can be communicated in a meaningful way to different local audiences.