

Warrington Climate Emergency Commission

Teams Meeting – Friday 21 July 2023 2-4pm



Organisations Present:

- Warrington Borough Council
- Business Declares
- Warrington Chamber of Commerce
- Natural England
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Schools Representative
- Warrington Vale & Royal College
- University of Chester
- LEP/North West Net-Zero Hub
- Ecospheric (*presenting on item 2*)

Items Discussed on the Agenda:

- **Cheshire & Warrington LEP / NW Net Zero Hub Update – presentation**
 - A presentation on the activities of the LEP and the Hub were presented to the group
 - There are a number of potential pipeline projects among the Cheshire and Warrington authorities with funding support from the Hub
 - The Hub are currently providing some support to WBC on a framework for public sector building decarbonisation
 - The LEP are currently consulting on a new economic plan for the sub-region. The process is influenced by the Sustainable & Inclusive Growth Commission's report
 - A Natural Capital Audit & Investment Plan was published in 2021, feasibility to deliver strategic projects are now being investigated
 - The Net-Zero North West Industrial Cluster Plan outlines potential for industrial decarbonisation in NW England and N Wales cluster area, a £30billion investment pipeline is estimated to decarbonise region by 2040
- **Developing a local Building Retrofit Network – presentation from Ecospheric**
 - Ecospheric is a sustainability consultancy now based in Lymm
 - They support planners, developers and architects to deliver low carbon buildings and retrofit
 - A summary of their work was presented to the group, including ongoing efforts to retrofit and decarbonise Lymm Hall
 - A proposal was presented to the group to build and support a local Warrington building retrofit network, which would help accelerate local retrofit in line with the objectives of the climate strategy, e.g. mapping out local opportunities and identifying challenges, by bringing people together to co-ordinate activity
 - The Commission agreed to a separate task group to explore and develop this proposal

- **Warrington Climate Emergency Forum 2023**
 - The Commission plan to organise a climate emergency forum, involving a series of events spanning several dates and locations later this year
 - An update was given on progress so far
 - Emphasis was placed on the need to secure venues as soon as possible in order to confirm which content will take place where and when
 - Some options and expected costings for Culture Warrington venues were shared ahead of the meeting
 - Other options include the University site and the College, though both will have busy schedules in September as students return after summer break
 - Some discussion took place on possible funding routes for individual events
 - It is expected that there will be a mix of in-person and online events
 - Efforts are ongoing to confirm plans for the Greener Schools Conference, which will tie into the event programme if possible

- **Communications Update**
 - Communications priorities moving forwards will focus on the climate forum event, once the details have been confirmed
 - There will be a scoping exercise undertaken soon to scope out a local climate action website
 - It is anticipated that invitations to the proposed 'Climate Action Network' will be issued in coming weeks
 - Efforts are ongoing to promote the strategy and the new e-bulletin via the Commission's social media channels and new Linked In account

- **Council Updates**
 - The council's climate team are due to attend the environmentally themed events taking place in Warrington at the end of July, hosted by Culture Warrington. The Commission were invited to also come along to promote the strategy and climate pledges.
 - The council's climate action plan, developed in support of the Commission's strategy, has now been approved by Cabinet and has also been presented to Scrutiny committee and full council. Designed versions of the full plan and a summary version are now being developed and will be shared with the Commission when available.
 - The council has formally been accepted onto the Innovate UK Fast Followers programme, with funding support confirmed for the Warrington Carbon Culture project. It is proposed that a more detailed overview be given at a future meeting. The project will help deliver some of the aims of the strategy and will build a foundation to accelerate wider action and innovation.
 - The procurement process for the Walton Hall and Town Hall heat pump projects has now concluded and the contract awards have been approved by Cabinet. The winning contractors will soon be appointed.

- Funding has been secured via the Low Carbon Skills Fund to deliver energy audits across a portion of the council's building estate, to prepare for future decarbonisation proposals. The NW Net Zero Hub are also supporting with decarbonisation of the council's portfolio using data to help prioritise action.
- The council has collaborated with other Cheshire authorities to promote a group-buying solar opportunity across the sub-region. The scheme is being led by independent specialists iChoosr who will facilitate the offer to Warrington and Cheshire residents. Promotional materials are being prepared and the scheme is expected to launch later in the summer. The Commission's support was welcomed in helping to promote the offer where relevant.
- The ZEBRA electric bus project is progressing following completion of a public procurement process and associated subsidy review. Orders for the buses and chargers have now been placed and are expected in 2024. Low bus fares have been extended beyond original government dates.
- **Commission Annual Report**
 - The Commission is due to prepare an annual report on progress against the climate strategy since it was published in 2022
 - This should capture local activity to progress the strategy including steps taken by the Commission
 - Commissioners were invited to share any information on local climate action which should be captured in this report
- **Any other business**
 - In the interests of transparency, a membership list is to be added to the webpage so it is clear who is on the Commission. Future meeting notes would capture more detail too.
 - The Annual Business Conference will take place on the 15th September at Cineworld, which the Commission are invited to attend

Main Actions:

- An in-person or hybrid climate change workshop is to be arranged to aid further discussion
- Further discussion to take place with Ecospheric to build on the proposal for developing a local retrofit network
- Commissioners are to help to identify content and venues to support planning of the climate forum
- WBC to share their newly adopted Climate Action Plan
- Commissioners to share information on any local climate action in support of the strategy to aid development of the annual report

Next Meeting: Friday 1 September 2023 10am-12pm, to include presentation on doughnut economics