



**CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL
EMERGENCY - WHAT CAMDEN
COUNCIL CAN DO**

ACTION PLAN | **JUNE 2019**

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Humans have caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO₂ levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). This far exceeds the 350ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity and the natural world.

Our current plans and actions are not enough; the world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit before 2050.¹ The IPCC's Special Report on the impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C described the enormous harm that a 2°C rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. The report says that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible if extremely ambitious action is taken by 2030, by national governments, local authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities.

To reduce the high risk of runaway global warming and limit the effects of climate and ecological breakdown, it is imperative that we as a species reduce our CO₂ eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from the current average of 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible.² Individuals cannot be expected to make this reduction on their own. Society needs to change its laws, taxation, infrastructure, agriculture and its economic system which is based on perpetual growth, in order to make low carbon living feasible and the new norm.

At the same time, the world is facing a biodiversity crisis. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services recently concluded that the world faces the loss of one million species.³ This mass extinction is driven in significant part by climate breakdown, but is worsened by unsustainable agriculture and commodity practices, use of highly toxic pesticides, unplanned urbanisation and pollution.

Carbon emissions and environmental destruction result from both production and consumption, in other words CO₂ eq gases produced directly by our cars, homes and businesses and indirectly by our energy use (Scope 1 and 2 emissions⁷) plus the embodied carbon (Scope 3 emissions) and

environmental damage embedded in our choice of consumer goods. The latter ranges from the massive loss of carbon-absorbing rainforests to grow palm oil for food production, to wasting food and replacing household goods and personal items before it is necessary. Taking into account Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, the carbon footprint of London's inhabitants is one of the highest in the world. We have to reduce our consumption.

The 10 warmest years in the UK have all occurred since 1990. Climate breakdown will result in major changes in water supply, increase the risk of flooding and coastal erosion.⁴ Loss of biodiversity is higher in the UK than in most European countries.⁵ Urban centres can play a vital role in protecting biodiversity, but here too nature is under threat as a result of mismanagement of green spaces, pollution and poor development and planning policies.

Local authorities have an important role in CO₂ eq emissions reduction. They have direct control over policies that affect planning, transport, and waste, which together account for 40% of UK emissions.⁶ They are also in a unique position to influence the manner and pace at which communities and businesses move toward a zero-carbon way of life.

Recognising their vital role in tackling the dual climate and biodiversity crises, city councils around the world, including 112 councils, cities and parishes in the UK, have declared a Climate Emergency. Camden has indicated that it will follow suit and formally declare a climate emergency by October 2019.

Camden council has already shown foresight and leadership when it comes to addressing the issue of climate breakdown by reducing Scope 1 and 2 emissions, for example through installing solar energy panels and low-energy lighting at Swiss Cottage Library and borough-wide systematic replacement of obsolete high-pressure sodium street lighting with LED.

These and other measures have delivered reductions in CO₂ eq emissions within the Borough, but much more radical action is required to further reduce Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions and to deliver much more difficult reductions in Scope 3.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY CAMDEN BELIEVES:

The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5°C and of the cataclysmic loss of flora and fauna are so severe, that it is the primary duty of national, regional and local government to take the necessary steps to halt and reverse climate breakdown and mass extinction of species. Local authorities, including Camden, should not wait for national government to change their policies, they should act now in partnership with the communities they serve. It is vital to those living and working in Camden for the Council to commit to Zero Carbon by 2030.

Bold action to address the twin emergencies can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs and financial savings; this must be undertaken in ways that are redistributive, that protect the most vulnerable in society and tackle social injustice around the world.

We would like the Council to commit to the following actions:

- 01.** Formally declare a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency as a matter of urgency and announce this on the Camden website.
- 02.** Take a leadership role and pledge to make Camden Zero Carbon by 2030.
- 03.** Initiate a major programme of community engagement alerting all sections of the community to the seriousness of the crisis and the need for urgent action by individuals, businesses, community groups and the Council. This should seek to explain both the causes and scale of the climate and ecological crises, and what can be done to address them.
- 04.** Develop an ambitious, costed plan to guide the Borough's transition to Zero Carbon, to be informed by:
 - A structured consultation with Camden residents and business - for example a people's or citizens' assembly;
 - Input from community groups, including Climate Emergency Camden,
 - Input from members of diaspora communities in Camden whose ancestral homes are at the forefront of climate impacts;
 - Input from business and other large public institutions based in the Borough.
- 05.** Take immediate steps to reduce Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions⁷ resulting from the Council's direct activities, ensuring a coordinated approach across all departments, and accelerate existing programmes that already do this. Adopt a holistic approach to carbon auditing by including Scope 3 emissions, which are not currently accounted for and are 2- 5 times as large as Scope 1 and 2.
- 06.** Establish a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Working Group. Expand the Council's Sustainability Department to ensure that it has the remit and resources to support the work of the Working Group. Seek legal advice with regard to the powers that the Council could use to accelerate delivery of ambitious climate and environmental targets.
- 07.** Develop a dashboard of indicators (carbon and biodiversity) and establish a baseline against which the Council should report progress publicly every 3 months. Regular reports on progress should be provided to full Council and to Camden residents through its website, Commonplace platform and Camden magazine.
- 08.** The Leader of the Council must ensure that every department, cabinet member and executive officer has explicit objectives designed to tackle the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, and that they and their staff are supported through adequate training. A commitment to the transition towards a zero-carbon economy should be written into all council job descriptions, performance management systems and contracts. Create new work roles in order to address the challenges, eg. retrofitting experts within Building Control department.
- 09.** Convene key stakeholders, including businesses, to ensure that the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency is reflected in the development and implementation of their strategic plans, and consider what incentives the Council can provide to support those committed to delivering Camden's carbon and ecological targets.
- 10.** Call on the UK Government and Mayor of London to provide Camden with the necessary funding, powers, resources and technical support to meet the 2030 target and reverse the trend towards mass extinction.
- 11.** Work with neighbouring councils, and others in the UK and internationally, to determine and implement best practice methods to address climate and ecological breakdown.
- 12.** Consider the following priority actions, many of which can be made quickly, easily, and at low/no cost pending delivery of Camden's new Environment Plan in March 2020.

Energy

- Commit to all electricity purchased by the Council to be from a renewable source (additional cost for leaseholders to be covered by the Council).
- Reduce energy consumption by all Council buildings by improving their energy performance, use and the equipment within them.
- Commit to all Council-owned buildings generating renewable energy wherever technically possible.
- End the use of fossil fuel-based heating and hot water in all Council-owned buildings.
- Set up a municipal energy company, possibly with neighbouring boroughs, with a focus on the development of district heating systems.
- Use technology to cut carbon, eg. public lighting sensors, traffic flow sensors, point-to-point energy sharing, heat trading between buildings and the use of large public buildings as energy storage and distribution centres.
- Make approval of planning applications for solar panels the default position, with restrictions only in the most exceptional cases.
- Speed up the replacement of conventional lighting to LEDs in Council buildings and on the streets.

Transport

- Accelerate Camden's move away from fossil-fuel powered vehicles in its fleet.
- Prioritise road use for low carbon transport.
- Reduce parking fees for all-electric vehicles and abolish them for car clubs.
- Rapidly expand the infrastructure of EV charging points around the Borough.
- Incentivise non-car ownership through Council tax reductions and higher tariffs for parking, including resident and business permits.
- Create a comprehensive network of safe cycling and walking routes on traffic-calmed streets.
- Give priority to pedestrians and cyclists to promote uptake in walking and cycling.
- Close selected streets to traffic at certain times of the week and have wider car-free days across Borough on a regular basis.
- End all air travel for council business other than in exceptional circumstances.

Economy

- Divest the Council's pension fund away from stocks, bonds and companies which extract fossil fuels and reinvest them into sustainable alternatives, within the lifespan of the current Council.
- Give preference to use of contractors that have divested from fossil fuels.
- In-source Council services wherever possible to reduce the carbon emissions implicit in the use of large companies located far from the Borough.
- Employ local contractors even if tenders/ costings are up to 10 per cent higher.
- Provide incentives for green businesses to set up in the Borough, for example with reduced rent on council-owned buildings and/or reduced business rates.

Construction

- Oppose infrastructure projects where the massive carbon emissions caused are not justified by the benefits, eg. continued opposition to High Speed 2.
- Seek to refurbish and upgrade Camden's existing buildings, rather than demolish and build new ones (the embodied energy of new buildings can take 50-60 years to offset by energy savings in use).
- Ensure that all Council developments and regeneration projects consider the whole-life carbon footprint of buildings, are zero carbon, sustainable and increase community resilience to climate change.
- Carry out construction work using low-carbon, sustainable building materials.
- Use powers as the planning authority to require higher environmental provisions than national building standards.
- Enforce planning conditions and Building Regulation requirements to ensure all new builds are meeting the targets they were granted permission for.
- Enforce minimum energy efficiency standards in private rented sector.
- Run a conference to look at the challenges of retrofitting the Borough's existing housing stock.

Agriculture

- Set up more allotments and enable local food production on Council-owned land.
- Reduce meat and dairy for in-house catering to a minimum and explain to employees why this is important.
- Provide incentives for low carbon, vegetarian/vegan cafes and restaurants.

Nature

- In consideration of global deforestation, commit to adherence to Government procurement guidelines that support deforestation-free supply chains.
- The default should be to protect all mature trees, in order to avoid significant carbon emissions and to protect biodiversity. Where felling is deemed necessary, written permission should have to be given by the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden, who should also provide an annual report on tree cover in the Borough, including the loss of any mature trees.
- Change the current practice of harsh and frequent tree pollarding in Camden to protect and enhance tree canopies, which provide valuable ecological services.
- Identifying areas where there is scope to radically improve the opportunities for flora and fauna to flourish.
- Plant a minimum 800 native trees per year to enhance biodiversity.
- Introduce green screening/ planting on all Council buildings where this is possible.
- Change the Council's mowing regimes; leave more areas unmown and mow less frequently on all estates and parks.
- Discontinue the use of imported soil and take steps to prevent spread of plant diseases and alien species.
- End the use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides.⁸ Become a pesticide-free borough and eliminate the Council's use of these.

Waste & Resources

- Remove single-use plastics from all Council and public buildings, including schools.
- Stop selling/ using bottled water; manufacture 'Camden reusable bottles' and keep cups to sell in its place.
- Install public water fountains on streets and roads with heavy pedestrian use.
- Reduce generation of waste in Council facilities.
- Invest in low-carbon means of dealing with waste.
- Review waste management, particularly in businesses and schools.
- Provide financial support for local repair and restart initiatives for consumer goods and support them to expand, including training schemes and apprenticeships.
- Make variations to existing Council contracts to prevent unnecessary use of material resources, eg. routine re-paving with bitumen macadam when the condition of the existing road does not require it.
- Use less water in council buildings through education and installation of low water use appliances.

Council engagement with residents, schools and community groups

- Establish a residents' board from members of the Citizens' Assembly to which the Council must give progress reports every 3 months at Council Meetings. This board should include, in addition to Citizen's Assembly members, members of diaspora Camden communities whose ancestral homes are located on the front lines of climate impacts. Involvement on the board should be continuously and directly supported by the Council.
- Encourage, support and enable people to take their own actions to reduce their carbon emissions, including lifestyle changes in relation to diet, travel, waste and use of resources.
- Provide on-line and print literature (such as a regular monthly item in Camden magazine) about how residents can make a difference, including advice on buying goods for the long term and the carbon associated with buying cheap consumer goods which are transported around the world.
- Introduce monthly forums in the town hall in order for residents to share and receive tips and discuss challenges on reducing their own carbon footprints and share the findings more widely via Camden website.
- Establish local Eco-Action information, advice and drop-in centres in empty high street shop premises.
- Enable better recycling and re-use of existing goods.
- Put up posters with tips and targets.
- Encourage and support the greening up of front gardens and tree pits.
- Require learning in schools about climate change, earth systems, ecology and sustainable resource use.
- Encourage schools to reduce meat and dairy-based foods in school meals, with at least three meat-free days per week.
- Stop charging educational institutions business rates for recycling
- Encourage reduced use of water.
- Recognise there may be an increase in depression and anxiety as people- especially young people- learn the truth about the climate and ecological breakdown, and make provision for this, not least by creating a narrative of hope and opportunity

Council engagement with businesses and institutions

- Convene the leadership of Camden-based major cultural and educational institutions and businesses (British Museum, Wellcome Trust, Central Saint Martins, UCL, UCLH, the Tavistock Institute, TUC, Google, Ted Baker, etc) to understand what they are doing to address the emergency and share good practice.
- Incentivise businesses to replace fossil fuel-based heating, hot water and industrial processes with sustainable alternatives.
- Incentivise businesses to reduce their carbon and environmental footprint, for example launching a green business campaign to keep shop doors closed to reduce energy loss.
- Incentivise businesses to use collective schemes for standardised supplies to reduce transport emissions.
- Request businesses to introduce at least 3 meat-free days per week in on-site catering facilities and among their workforces generally.
- Ensure that all businesses recycle, if they are not signed up to recycle through the council, then they must provide proof of contracted recycling company.
- Explore the potential for establishing an electric car club social business in Camden to provide a low-cost alternative to private vehicle ownership for businesses and residents.
- Encourage and aid businesses to set up cycle to work/ cycle delivery schemes and add bike racks across Borough.
- Encourage businesses to provide green screening/ planting to buildings.

Measures Camden Council can require from its contractors

- Require carbon reductions from contractors, e.g. move to using only electric vehicles, use of renewable energy systems in their buildings, business-wide recycling and ban of single-use plastics.
- Require that contractors and suppliers adopt an ethical procurement framework to ensure that they reduce their carbon footprint, use renewable materials, etc.
- Ban use of Glyphosate and toxic pesticides.

Council engagement with partners

- Convene a group of senior officials and political leaders from the GLA and neighbouring boroughs to identify areas where collective action is needed to deliver the requisite changes in energy, transport and procurement practices, including changes in the legal framework.
- Work with the GLA and neighbouring boroughs to develop innovative ways of financing and managing locally produced renewable energy projects, including the use of waste to generate bio-gas and municipal heating systems.
- Work with local further education colleges to develop new training courses for people to fill new work roles (e.g. insulation experts and inspectors for retrofitting housing stock, renewable energy engineers, etc).
- Lobby the City of London Corporation to immediately replace all fossil fuel service vehicles on Hampstead Heath with electric vehicles and to increase free biodiversity educational programmes for Camden school children and other residents.

NOTE: Climate Emergency Camden will review and update this Action Plan on a six monthly basis to take into account good practice and innovation across the UK and internationally as public bodies and the private sector increasingly address the global climate and environmental crisis.

References:

- 1 The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, 2018: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>
- 2 Fossil CO₂ & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017: <http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc>
- 3 The IPBES's Global Biodiversity Assessment, 2019: <https://www.ipbes.net/news/ipbes-global-assessment-preview>
- 4 Environment Agency's Climate Change and Adaptation, 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-impacts-and-adaptation>
- 5 RSPB's State of Nature, 2016: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/ state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf>
- 6 How Local Authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risk, Committee on Climate Change 2012: https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LA-Report_final.pdf
- 7 Scope 1, 2 and 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol explained: <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions>
- 8 Pesticide Action Network UK: <http://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free>