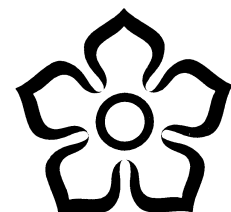**Leicester's Climate Emergency Conversation**

Conversations Packs, Emails & Dialogue: Results Report

Introduction

Among the methods used as part of Leicester's Climate Emergency Conversation, this report covers the responses from:

- Conversation Packs – These were sent to local groups and organisations, to allow them to hold community events to review and respond to the consultation.
- Dialogue – An online forum which allowed discussion of the proposals, and a way to suggest new ideas.
- Letters & Emails – Alongside the structured activities a number of people and groups chose to respond by sending in letters and emails.

As many of the responses were long and highly detailed, this report acts as a summary, and concentrates on the comments made by the largest number of respondents. We will however be using all of the responses received both now and in the future, to help shape our plans and actions.

Responses

Conversation Packs

Background

The Conversation Packs were made up of two parts; a guide about the wider consultation and how to hold an event, and a summary of the proposals and actions with space to write in a response. The pack was promoted alongside the rest of Leicester' Climate Emergency Consultation, and groups were asked to contact the Sustainability Team for a pack to be emailed to them or posted upon request.

Responses

In total 37 packs were sent out, and 9 responses received. In addition to this 3 more groups submitted responses through the online CitizenSpace questionnaire, and 1 through a number of letters and emails from its sub-groups. Whilst full numbers aren't available, we know that well over 120 people took part across the groups that responded.

The Conversation Pack was designed to allow users to respond to the set questions on the document, or to respond in whatever other way they felt was most suitable for them. As the groups chose to respond in a number of different ways, the following questions have been used to analyse the responses:

- Which aspects of the vision and suggested actions did the respondents agree with or think would have further benefits for the city?
- Was there anything respondents disagreed with or had concerns about?
- Were there any concerns about the impact the visions and actions would have on people's lives, and ideas on how these concerns should be addressed?

- What barriers might there be to implementing the vision and actions, and ideas on how these could be overcome?
- Was there anything missing from the vision and actions that should be added?

Overall Comments

In addition to the comments covering each theme, a number of the groups provided more general comments about the overall proposals. There was a lot of overall support for Leicester taking urgent action on the climate emergency, and for continuing work to consult with local residents, groups and organisations. Many of the groups requested that the council set clear, ambitious and measurable targets and timescales, both for the proposed actions and for the city's overall carbon emissions. This was linked to requests for independent annual reviews, and transparent processes. Many respondents also called for actions to be strengthened across all themes and made more urgent.

There were also a number of calls for more information and data on the proposed actions, to ensure that the correct choices are made using limited resources. In particular there were requests for an analysis of the costs and benefits of all of the actions to identify the most impactful and cost-effective. It was stated that this would need to be coupled with an assessment of any negative impacts, to make sure that no-one is unfairly disadvantaged. More information on existing sources of Leicester's carbon emissions and a carbon budget for the city was also requested.

More work by the council to collaborate with other councils including the county, and learn from other groups, cities and countries to learn and share knowledge and findings was requested. This also linked to working more with existing groups in the city to involve them in the response to the climate emergency. Providing more education on the overall issues was also widely requested, potentially through a website or apps, an advice service, or through large-scale events such as a climate week or festival. Respondents were also keen for positive messaging to be used, including highlighting the further benefits of many of the actions.

There were also a number of comments on the specific role of the council, stating that action should cut across all areas of the council's work, and be made businesses as usual. Opportunites for the council to lead by example through reducing its own emissions, educating staff, and informing service users were also highlighted. Lobbying the government for changes was also seen as an important part of the council's role. There were also numerous ideas on raising the funds for actions such as taxes, crowdfunding, issuing bonds and forming partnerships with the private sector.

At Home

Which aspects of the vision, and which of the suggested actions did the respondents agree with or think would have further benefits for the city?

There was support for all of the actions, with particularly high approval of homeowners installing insulation and replace gas heating, the council improving council homes and national government providing support and funding. Landlords making changes to the homes they owned was also widely supported, although

some concerns were raised about how this should be encouraged and enforced. The positive benefits of many actions were also pointed out, as more efficient homes would be warmer, cheaper to run and better for occupant's health.

<u>Was there anything respondents disagreed with or had concerns about?</u>

The only action that received significant disagreement was for tenants to ask landlords to make changes. There were concerns that this would make tenants vulnerable and even lead to them becoming homeless. There were also questions about the lack of timescales proposed and calls for clearer targets for delivery. More information on the impacts and details of actions were requested, and information on the state of existing housing to enable this.

Some other concerns raised included:

- Air-conditioning should not be a priority, as relatively few houses have it.
- Reducing water use in homes will have less impact than water companies improving infrastructure.
- Heat pumps are not a solution for larger buildings.
- Solar PVs should be priorities on large buildings, which is more cost effective.

<u>Were there any concerns about the impact the visions and actions would have on people's lives, and ideas on how these concerns should be addressed?</u>

The main area of concern was the impact of costs for homeowners and landlords, especially on less well-off people. Many people may not be able to afford expensive home measures, and there were concerns that too much responsibility was being placed upon them. Using grants, incentives and interest-free loans, or working through council tax and benefit payments were suggested as solutions. There was also concern about the cost to the council, considering existing budget pressures. As discussed, there were also concerns about the impact on tenants of asking their landlords for changes, such as rent rises or even eviction. A number of respondents were also worried that untrustworthy installers could take advantage of vulnerable homeowners, especially if grant schemes are not designed well enough.

<u>What barriers might there be to implementing the vision and actions, and ideas on how these could be overcome?</u>

As above, a lack of funds necessary for many measures was identified as the greatest barrier, and a variety of ideas to raise funds have been proposed. Another barrier identified was the difficulty of engaging homeowners and landlords with the actions. It was widely suggested that new legislation would be needed to make sure they are carried out. It was also stated that legislation would need to be properly monitored and enforced, and that penalties like fines may be needed for those who do not follow it. Education will also be needed so people know why and how to take action.

Some other barriers and solutions identified included:

- Actions require technologies to be widely available and reliable.
- Many landlords are hard to contact or engage.

- Older homes will be particularly hard to improve and should be a priority.
- Paying for measures through a small council tax increase over the long term

<u>Was there anything missing from the vision and actions that should be added?</u>

A number of ways to educate occupants were given including making energy efficiency data easier to use and understand, the council providing free or cheap energy audits and providing simple and trustworthy advice. Working with communities was also supported, through carrying out whole-neighbourhood improvements, encouraging communities to lead on plans and setting up purchasing groups to reduce the cost of measures. It was also suggested that more be done to encourage and make available smart and energy efficient appliances for homes.

There were a few suggestions around solar PV panels, including offering a fairer rate for excess electricity, enabling community solar schemes and preventing roofs from being shaded. Some suggestions for gardens were also made, including promoting home or community composting, planting more trees and preventing them being paved over. A number of groups also suggested encouraging grey water recycling systems. Making all new homes carbon was also popular

Some other suggestions included:

- Fitting triple-glazed windows.
- Investigating use of hydrogen fuelled boilers.
- Incentives for buying green electricity.
- Turning down heating and wearing warmer clothes.
- Promoting communal heating in large blocks.

Travel and Transport

<u>Which aspects of the vision and suggested actions did the respondents agree with or think would have further benefits for the city?</u>

There was widespread support for the proposals, especially for measures to improve walking, cycling and public transport, although actions on low emission vehicles and reducing car use were also well supported. In particular, increased investment in infrastructure and training, people making changes to how they travel and improvements to buses were very popular. A number of further benefits were also identified included health benefits from reducing air pollution and increased active travel, and the possibility of working towards a more affordable transport system.

<u>Was there anything respondents disagreed with or had concerns about?</u>

There were concerns about the effectiveness of some actions, including that measures to reduce car use will only work if the wider task of making public transport, walking and cycling easier, cheaper and safer is also accomplished. In a similar vein a concern was expressed that improved infrastructure alone may not work unless people are informed of it and are supported to use it. There were also calls for plans to take a longer-term approach, to enable the biggest changes.

Some other concerns raised included:

- A Workplace Parking Levy should be ringfenced for transport spending and should not apply to electric vehicles.
- Car sharing is impractical for many.
- The environmental impact of producing new electric vehicles to replace existing fossil fuel vehicles, and of producing batteries more generally.

<u>Were there any concerns about the impact the visions and actions would have on people's lives, and ideas on how these concerns should be addressed?</u>

The main issue raised was the impact of changes on people who might not be able to make or afford them. Buses were identified as a particular issue, as they are currently seen as too expensive for many people, or do not run often enough or to the right places and are unreliable. If people have to switch to using public transport a need was therefore identified to make sure that less well-off people are not disadvantaged by the change. Another group for whom this was stated as being particularly important is those with disabilities, who may not be able to walk, cycle or use a bus, and will need financial help to switch to electric vehicles.

Other concerns included that:

- Works could be disruptive to the city and cause congestion whilst in progress.
- Ridesharing could have personal safety issues that would need to be tackled.

<u>What barriers might there be to implementing the vision and actions, and ideas on how these could be overcome?</u>

As discussed above, the cost of actions was seen as one of the main barriers. This covered not just the cost to people and businesses of switching to different transport methods and purchasing low emission vehicles, but also the need for more funding for the council to support the actions. Issues with walking and cycling were also pointed out, including that many people do not feel safe cycling or walking, and that cycle routes are not joined up. Buses were also described as unsafe and unattractive compared to the alternatives.

Among the solutions were a number of calls for more integrated transport planning for the city, and greater collaboration with the county on these issues, including to pressure national government for funding and support. Many of the issues also tie into the difficulty identified in persuading people to make changes and the need to educate them or provide incentives. Work could also be done through existing social and community groups, for example on cycle training and engagement.

Some other barriers and solutions identified included:

- That electric vehicles are currently too slow to charge to be practical for many.
- Encouraging cycling through providing more secure bike parking.
- Conducting more research into how local people travel, to use in developing new actions.
- More use of buses will require larger bus fleets.

<u>Was there anything missing from the vision and actions that should be added?</u>

There were a number of calls for measures to reduce private vehicle use, such as congestion charging, or setting up car-free or HGV-free areas and pedestrianising more of the city. Greater support for low emission vehicles was also requested,

including promoting salary sacrifice purchase schemes and assisting public sector organisations other than the council. More work to tackle engine idling was also desired, including measures to reduce school drop-off car use, as well as promote walking and cycling to school.

Among the cycling measures suggested were an electric bike hire scheme, providing free or subsidised bikes and holding more cycle training sessions, including specifically for women. Providing cycle lanes that go across and around the outside of the city, altering traffic light priority and allowing cycling on currently pedestrian-only routes could also enable more people to cycle. Many ideas were given for improvements to public transport, including taking public ownership of the bus system, switching to all electric buses, and lowering the cost of the Park and Ride scheme, as well as providing more electric chargers at the sites.

Some other suggestions included:

- Setting up high-occupancy and electric vehicle-only road lanes.
- Developing a tram system in Leicester.
- Extending on-demand services like Arriva Click, and working with ride-sharing companies.
- More consideration of motorbikes and electric scooters where appropriate.
- A 'Park and Cycle' scheme or site.
- Reducing bike theft and making it harder to sell stolen bikes.
- Switching trains to electric models.
- Revising the local Strategic Growth Plan to promote sustainable travel.

Our Choices as Consumers

<u>Which aspects of the vision and suggested actions did the respondents agree with or think would have further benefits for the city?</u>

The most widely supported action was for schools to teach pupils more about the impacts of their consumption, who will then be able to pass on the message. A number of groups were particularly supportive of the council taking a leading role on the proposals in this area, to inspire others. It was suggested that these actions should be implemented as 'business as usual'. There was also a lot of support for working to educate the wider public on the impacts of their consumption and how to reduce them. A number of further benefits were identified, including that many of the proposals could save people money if delivered fairly and that there could be health benefits to changing diets.

<u>Was there anything respondents disagreed with or had concerns about?</u>

The was concern about some actions putting a burden on individuals, where businesses and organisations should be held accountable instead. Similarly, there was a worry that people would feel like they were being told how to live their lives and would be put off from taking action. Providing too much information to tackle these issues could be overwhelming if it's not simple and understandable enough. Individuals are also likely to struggle to take the necessary actions if more isn't done to make sustainable choices more widely available or cheaper.

Some other concerns raised included:

- Individual action like growing food and using tool banks may not have a big impact.
- There should be more focus on other public sector organisations.
- Food miles should be less of a priority, as production emissions are more important.

<u>Were there any concerns about the impact the visions and actions would have on people's lives, and ideas on how these concerns should be addressed?</u>

As in other areas, there was concern that the least well-off could be disadvantaged due to the costs of taking some actions. Again, the possibility of funding and incentives were raised as a solution. There was also a concern that consumers would feel like they were being 'guilted' into acting. Businesses could also see negative impacts if they make changes that their customers are not ready or able to support. One specific area that was a concern is that many local residents have family in other countries. Increasing flight prices or reducing flying could therefore have a disproportionate impact on their lives.

<u>What barriers might there be to implementing the vision and actions, and ideas on how these could be overcome?</u>

A lack of consumer information on the most sustainable products was highlighted as a significant barrier, alongside a lack of time to research them. Many respondents were supportive of a labelling system that would show carbon emissions and environmental information on products to help tackle this. As previously mentioned, the cost and availability of low carbon options was also raised. There was also concern that some people, and businesses especially, might be resistant to change, with changes to diets particularly difficult to encourage. The low cost of flying compared to train travel was also raised as an issue that needs to be tackled.

<u>Was there anything missing from the vision and actions that should be added?</u>

There was widespread support for finding ways to support new and existing groups and schemes offering repair services, tool banks and swap shops. This included the council providing funding or venues and lowering business rates for repair businesses. Action on local food was also popular, with a desire for more allotments, community growing schemes and food co-operatives expressed by many, and encouragement for people to get involved. Taxing meat and dairy was also suggested.

Working with local businesses was also popular, such as through a guide to sustainable local companies, and incentives for them to become more sustainable. Local, seasonal and sustainable produce could also be made more available in shops and restaurants. Helping consumers know how to approach businesses to request more sustainable products was also suggested, such as through a carbon and environmental impact labelling scheme.

Some other suggestions included:

- Allowing more local markets in Leicester.
- Work with delivery companies to make home deliveries more efficient.

- Bringing in taxes on food miles, single-use items and plastics, and reducing them for sustainable and reusable products.
- Working with farmers in the region to reduce their emissions.
- Working to reduce fast-food packaging.
- Stopping the purchase of food and products containing palm oil.

Waste

Which aspects of the vision and suggested actions did the respondents agree with or think would have further benefits for the city?

The groups generally agreed with the proposals and were supportive of an approach that prioritised reducing waste first, followed by repairing and reusing, then recycling. Some of the actions seen as the highest priority included promoting the existing home and garden waste services offered by the council, developing another re-use shop and for businesses to increase recycling and properly dispose of waste. There was also support for measures to reduce consumption and support re-use and sharing schemes.

Was there anything respondents disagreed with or had concerns about?

There were some concerns that the proposed actions are difficult to quantify, and that without clearer targets it will be hard to measure success. It was also stated that actions may be ineffective without more collaboration between the council and other local authorities, national government and organisations. It was stated that this would require enforcement to make manufacturers take the necessary action. There was also a concern that residents are sceptical of the existing waste system and need to be reassured that waste is not incorrectly landfilled or exported. There was one objection to the council setting up new re-use shops, with respondents in one group saying that supporting existing charity shops would be more effective.

Were there any concerns about the impact the visions and actions would have on people's lives, and ideas on how these concerns should be addressed?

There were relatively few concerns about the impacts of the actions. The possibility of raising waste costs for small businesses that are unable to afford it was raised though, with measures needed to make sure they are not negatively impacted. Repair of electrical goods could also present a risk, and ways to ensure that repairs are qualified were also requested.

What barriers might there be to implementing the vision and actions, and ideas on how these could be overcome?

One of the main barriers discussed was the complexity of waste and recycling systems, as people and organisations may not be aware of how to correctly dispose of various types of waste. As in other areas, education and engagement were seen as key solutions, including providing recycling guidance, more data about current waste and recycling levels and educating school pupils. Cost was also seen as an issue, including for business waste services and for green bins. The lack of a market for some recycling products was also viewed as making an increase in recycling rates less practical. Receiving government funding, reducing charges and providing incentives could help to tackle these issues.

Was there anything missing from the vision and actions that should be added?

The most popular suggestions were for food waste collections, and support for home and business composting bins or collections. There were also a number of suggestions around using surplus edible food, including from schools, to support vulnerable people. The council supporting, promoting or funding groups and businesses that provide repair and reuse services and training was also suggested by multiple groups, as was bringing in a local bottle and can deposit return scheme.

Other ideas suggested included:

- Supporting people to use their own containers and providing 'starter sets'.
- Increasing use of Energy from Waste plants.
- Providing more public clothing and textile recycling bins.
- Embedding waste requirements in council contracts.
- Providing a list of approved waste service providers for organisations.

At Work

Which aspects of the vision and suggested actions did the respondents agree with or think would have further benefits for the city?

One of the actions most widely viewed as a priority was for the council and other public sector organisations to improve the energy efficiency of their own buildings, which could also reduce costs and help budgets. This was seen as particularly important for the NHS, and the council could lead on partnership working to help deliver this. Improving the efficiency of premises the council rents out was also popular, which could be used as an example for local businesses. There was also a lot of support for solar PV panels on employers and council buildings, especially on new buildings. The need for the government to lead on many of the changes was also widely agreed with. Some of the proposals were also seen as potentially helping to develop new and innovative businesses locally and improve workplaces for employers.

Was there anything respondents disagreed with or had concerns about?

There were some concerns about the costs of the actions to businesses, particularly for small businesses and from technologies like solar PV and batteries. This could make actions impractical without further support and funding. There were also a number of comments that the proposals did not have clear or ambitious enough details or targets. It was suggested that cost-benefit analyses and projected timescales would be needed to make sure they are sufficient and practical. Some respondents also felt that more attention was needed for non-business organisations like charities, religious groups and community centres. A concern was also raised about producing more products locally, as there may not be local resources, and there are known to be issues with workplace conditions in some local business sectors. An issue with replacing working equipment and creating more waste was also pointed out.

Were there any concerns about the impact the visions and actions would have on people's lives, and ideas on how these concerns should be addressed?

Again, costs were a concern, and the possibility that they might be passed on to employees. Impacts may also be passed on to staff, for example if they had to use more expensive travel options. Working from home could also increase people's

energy bills, although it was also said that it would act as an incentive to reduce energy use. If jobs were lost due to increased costs or restrictions on businesses, it was stated that skills training would be needed to help people find new work. Many of the suggestions for mitigating these issues involved more information, support and funding from national Government.

<u>What barriers might there be to implementing the vision and actions, and ideas on how these could be overcome?</u>

Money was identified as a key barrier, as many organisations are unlikely to feel that they have the finances to make major changes. This was also linked to a lack of long-term thinking regarding the benefits and payback of many of the suggested measures. This may be something where the council or Government could help to demonstrate the benefits, as well as providing support and funding. The difficulty of engaging business and employees more generally was also raised, alongside the need for better education. This is also an area where the council is seen as having a limited level of influence. Some ways to overcome these barriers included setting up a green business certification scheme, bringing in legislation and providing more official guidance on best practise.

Other barriers and solutions identified included:

- Loss of EU funding that would previously have played a role.
- Councils needing to share limited funding among themselves.
- Many organisations do separate recycling, but some waste providers do not process it separately.

<u>Was there anything missing from the vision and actions that should be added?</u>

A number of ideas on reducing energy use in building were shared, including addressing under-occupancy of buildings, reducing heating levels and focussing on simple behaviour change actions. There was also support for employers providing opportunities to workers through subsidising bus passes, allowing flexible working and providing salary sacrifice schemes on bicycles, electric cars and even solar panels. One popular suggestion was to bring in an award scheme for sustainable businesses, as well as a wider certification scheme to grade sustainability performance. Other ways to encourage employers to change including tax incentives, penalties for environmentally unfriendly businesses working with trade unions to influence employers and connect with workers. More generally there was support for the council to work with other employers, including universities, to tackle the challenges and barriers.

Some other suggestions included:

- Widening the existing cycle to work scheme offered by the council.
- Using council buildings as exemplars.
- Encouraging businesses to reduce their use of flights.
- Employers, including the public sector, disinvesting pensions from fossil fuels.
- Delivery businesses to take recycling from previous deliveries back.
- Assisting employers with applications for funding and grants.
- Setting up a partnership to allow employers to make a pledge to take action.

Land Use, Green Space & Development

<u>Which aspects of the vision and suggested actions did the respondents agree with or think would have further benefits for the city?</u>

There was particularly widespread support for the proposed actions within this theme, and agreement that the actions need to all be done together as part of a wider strategy to maximise impact. Ensuring that the new Local Plan addresses the climate emergency was picked out as the highest priority, followed by support for more work to increase tree cover. Some of the further benefits of trees and green space were also pointed out including for air quality, flood risk reduction and leisure.

There was also a high level of support for the council, and other public sector organisations, to lead by example and make the proposals business as usual. This includes the council ensuring developers build low carbon developments on its own land. More action from the government on raising building standards was also popular. Other positives of the actions would include better quality buildings, and reduced energy bills for occupants. If new development is done well, it was also stated that this could help to build community and bring people together.

<u>Was there anything respondents disagreed with or had concerns about?</u>

The main concern was the lack of strong direct action from national Government, which will be necessary to carry out many of the actions. The only action which received direct disagreement was for prospective homebuyers to request carbon and energy efficiency information from developers. One group stated that this was unlikely to be practical, and that developers must be required by law to provide it. There were also requests for a greater focus on biodiversity and the wider benefits of green space, including reducing pesticide use and rewilding projects. There was also a suggestion that leading by example may not always be appropriate if it was done mostly for show, and that the most impactful actions should instead be prioritised.

<u>Were there any concerns about the impact the visions and actions would have on people's lives, and ideas on how these concerns should be addressed?</u>

There were relatively few concerns about the impact of the visions in this theme. It was stated though that new development will still be needed, for example to meet the need for new homes in Leicester. There was some concern measures could make this too difficult or increase house prices further if ways to carry out actions more affordably and efficiently aren't developed.

<u>What barriers might there be to implementing the vision and actions, and ideas on how these could be overcome?</u>

One of the barriers pointed out was reluctance to change among developers and construction companies due to the perception that measures could increase costs and reduce profits. Positive support such as sharing good practice and providing incentives was suggested, as well as enforcement and legislation to ensure that actions are implemented. Another barrier identified was a lack of space in Leicester, compared to the demand for development. This could increase pressure on existing green space, which is also needed for other actions such as food growing and tree planting.

<u>Was there anything missing from the vision and actions that should be added?</u>

A number of specific measures were suggested for inclusion in new developments, including rainwater and greywater collection and use systems, more bike storage, green roofs and walls and banning impermeable outdoor surfaces. It was also stated that new development should not happen on flood plains and should take place on brownfield sites. Work to bring unused buildings back into use was also popular. A greater focus on biodiversity, green space and trees was widely requested, including not removing trees for new development, planting trees along streets and making sure the most suitable tree species are used and are available to homeowners.

Other ideas suggested included:

- A tax on development based on carbon emissions.
- More trees and structures to provide shade.
- Providing more allotments and making them cheaper or free.
- Banning the paving over of gardens and green spaces.
- Educating buyers of new low carbon homes on how to use them effectively.
- Removing inefficient buildings if they are impractical to retrofit to zero carbon.

Dialogue

Background

Dialogue is an online public forum, which allows 'challenges' to be set up, concentrating on a certain issue, under which users can publicly discuss topics and ideas posted on the site and suggest their own ideas for discussion. A climate emergency 'challenge' was developed, containing separate discussion topics or each of the six themes covered in the proposals, as well as one for respondents to make pledges on actions they could take on the climate emergency.The site was open to all members of the public and was promoted alongside other consultation methods.

Responses

Throughout the Conversation period 6 comments were received, 5 in 'Travel & Transport' and one in 'Land Use, Green Space and Development'. There was also 1 new topic suggested on 'Safe and Easy Walking'. One of the reasons for the low level of engagement was that the launch of the 'challenge' was delayed due to circumstances beyond our control, which reduced the time available for responses, and the amount of promotion carried out.

Results

The comments made covered the following issues:

Travel and Transport

- Considering freight transport emissions and could create hubs for 'last mile' deliveries by low emission vehicles.

- Considering travel to schools, and its impact on air quality. This could be tackled through encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, and not allowing cars to drop children off at the school gate.
- That bus travel is too expensive, which puts potential users off. Could reduce prices at off peak times in particular to encourage use.
- Increasing the number of kerbside EV charging points.
- Having a single system to allow travel on all local buses and bus companies.

Land Use, Green Space and Development

- Building more housing, particularly for non-students. Housing should be built on brownfield sites instead of green space.

New Topics

Safe and Easy Walking
- Ending shared space scheme due to them being unsafe for pedestrians.
- Installing more zebra crossings at uncontrolled junctions.
- Reducing waiting times for pedestrian road crossings, especially when no traffic is flowing.

Letters & Emails

Background

Whilst this was not a formal part of the structure of the Climate Emergency Conversation, responses were encouraged in all forms. Responses were received both through the team's email address and via post.

Responses

Email responses were received from 13 individuals and 10 groups or organisations (of which 5 were sub-groups of a larger organisation). Posted letters were also received from 5 individuals.

Overall Comments

Overall, the responses covered many of the same areas as detailed elsewhere in this report. In general, there was a very high level of support for the actions, although many of the responses requested stronger and more urgent action and more detailed targets. However, there were also a number of specific themes about the wider proposals that were covered particularly strongly, detailed below:

Setting a target to achieve carbon neutrality across the city by 2030, using a carbon budgeting approach and independently audited annual progress reports. This links to calls for the climate emergency to be embedded into all council decision-making, including training staff on sustainability and carbon emissions, especially those at a senior level and in planning, development and transportation. More short-term actions were also requested, to start the transition to the large changes needed throughout society.

Education and engagement activities to create a wider cultural shift in attitudes and behaviours. This includes giving people the necessary information about the impacts of their choices, the wider dangers of climate change and the actions they can take. This could be done through local media or events such as a 'climate festival'.

Supporting vulnerable people and communities, both through mitigating the impacts of climate change and supporting them to carry out actions through funding and guidance. In similar vein many respondents also spoke about using local communities as an asset and taking the opportunity to improve local connections.

Lobbying national Government for the funding and legislation needed to enact the necessary actions, including changes to planning law and allowing control over public transport. There was support for this to be done alongside other councils, especially the county, local environmental groups and other relevant external organisations including charities, campaign groups and universities.

Raising funds to allow the more expensive actions to be carried out. A number of suggestions were made included selling more council assets, using crowdfunding platforms and creating a council bond for local people to pay into.

The council disinvesting its pension fund from fossil fuel industries. This would need to be done in collaboration with the county council, who are the managing authority for the fund. Additionally, several responses suggested using this as example for other local organisations.

Some other general areas that were commented on included:

- Using Leicester's links to countries most threated by climate change.
- Using the council's existing links to volunteers, who could be a key asset in helping to carry out actions.
- Expanding the council team working on the climate emergency.
- Analysing the most impactful and cost effective of the proposed actions to allow them to be prioritised.
- Preventing nuclear power plants being built locally and lobbying against them nationally.

At Home

Respondents were highly supportive of actions on all types of housing, particularly in terms of support for those unable to make changes with help. There were a number of requests for help for those in rented properties through support or a landlord licensing scheme. Solar PV was a popular measure, but there was concern that it is very expensive and could require grant funding or be done as a large-scale project by the council, potentially to create local energy networks. Similarly, there were suggestions that measures like insulation and heating should be installed on an area-wide basis, which could reduce costs. Some other measures that respondents felt should be included were water meters for all homes, pilots for hydrogen heating to reduce electricity demand and smart or energy efficient appliances.

Other comments provided included:

- A plan will be required for how to tackle historic buildings.
- Council housing should be a very high standard, and act as an example.
- More should be done to bring empty homes back into use.
- Promoting food growing and increasing biodiversity in all gardens.
- The council could act as a green estate agent for sustainable homes.

Travel and Transport

Transport received a lot of attention, with many requests for more integrated planning to encourage sustainable transport and inform residents. Reducing car use were widely popular, through a congestion charge, low emissions zone or increased car-free areas and introducing the workplace charging levy. There was also support for increasing parking charges, although some concern that this could unfairly impact people lacking practical alternatives. Other ideas included reducing city speed limits, introducing parking permits in all areas and reducing council vehicle use.

There was support for electric vehicles, although issues were identified including the high cost of purchase and need for grant support, a lack of charging points, especially in terraced housing, and the need to increase renewable energy generation and grid capacity. Switching council vehicles, buses and taxis to low emission vehicles was also popular. Vehicle and ride sharing were also raised by multiple respondents, who suggested providing more support for new and existing schemes offering these services and promoting them to the public.

Improving bus services was also popular, including through reviewing bus routes to be more efficient, run across and around the outside of the city and be more frequent and reliable. Several responses stated that the council should take control of the local bus system, whilst others suggested strengthening the existing bus alliance to provide greater influence. Many respondents also supported work to reduce bus fares including through subsidies or free passes for under 18's. Other suggestions included building more park and ride sites and improving the availability of information such as prices and timetables.

Enabling and improving cycling in the city was also seen as a key action area particularly in terms of providing more cycle lanes which are safer, segregated and connected. The importance of providing more secure bike parking was also highlighted, alongside suggestions on making electric bikes available for hire. . Comments were also received on rail travel, in particular support for re-opening the 'Ivanhoe' line, as well as investigating a tram or light rail system.

Other comments provided included:

- More work on reducing emissions from frieght, including through more rail freight and last mile sustainable delivery hubs and cycle deliveries.
- Tackling vehicle idling, including through bringing in fines.
- Better enforcement of parking rules, including to tackle car use for school drop-offs.
- Setting up a 'park and cycle' scheme

Our Choices as Consumers

There were lots of comments requesting greater support for new or existing groups, schemes or businesses which provide repair services, item swapping and libraries and skill sharing and community food growing. This included requests for the council to support these initiatives with funding, free training and access to spaces. This also ties into wider comments around working more closely with communities to both educate people and learn from them, and a need to change wider attitudes to waste, consumption and capitalism. The ideas of promoting good practices, providing incentives for taking action and setting up an award for the most sustainable groups, organisations or people were also popular.

Waste

The main comments around waste covered the need to make sure that residents knew how to properly use the existing waste system, and that it must recycle as much as possible. Some respondents also requested making it easier to order new orange bags and making the system better for people in flats. Regarding the role of businesses there was a desire for businesses to do more to reduce packaging for goods and food and to be more transparent about their waste practices. Some comments were also made around litter, including better enforcement and more litter picking, especially in green spaces prior to grass mowing.

At Work

Many of the comments on employers centered around the need for them to take a leading role in acting and making it easier for users, customers and employees to make sustainable choices. Many respondents also requested more support to help employers make these changes, such as grants and incentives, especially for charities and public sector organisations like the NHS. There was also widespread support for the council to work more closely with local organisations, for example partnering with sports clubs to tackle travel to games and working with universities on research and development of actions. Other suggestions included promoting home working, promoting and certifying the most sustainable businesses and working with unions to educate and support employees to take action.

There were also many comments that specifically covered actions and concerns for schools. Increasing their energy efficiency was viewed as a priority, including through support and funding, and through providing better ways to monitor their energy use and carbon emissions. Education of both students and staff is also seen as important, through formal training, resources and books and city-wide events. Other ideas included twinning schools with those in countries most threatened by climate change, encouraging pupils to pass information to their parents and working with the school climate strikers to support them.

Land Use, Green Space and Development Etc

One of the key areas to emerge from these responses was reviewing and redrafting the Local Plan and the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) for the city, to make tackling the climate emergency a core part of their goals. Many respondents stated that these documents currently risk locking the city into long-term carbon emissions. There were calls to bring in a new Supplementary Planning Document, to ensure that all

new development going forwards is carbon neutral, affordable, climate adapted and provides quality green space. There were also seen to be many opportunities to use the Local Plan to encourage sustainable transport, create and protect green space and embed sustainability into future development. There was concern that the SGP focuses too much on car use, and promoting the freight industry, and does not account for necessary changes that will be needed in living and working patterns.

Other comments around new development included the need for better enforcement of existing planning conditions, ensuring new homes are both low carbon and affordable and that the amount of development should be limited. There were also requests for new development to require the provision of green space and install green roofs and walls where possible. A number of comments also stated that new council projects should be used as exemplars and any learning shared with developers and construction companies.

A greater focus on biodiversity, trees and green space was also a popular area of comment. Finding sites to increasing tree cover across Leicester was one of the most widely covered areas in these responses, including suggestions ot plant food trees, better protect and maintain existing trees and engage the public in planting. Not relying on tree planting for offsetting, and not using offsetting in general, were also raised by a number of respondents, however. Increasing, protecting and enabling green space were also seen as priorities, as well as preventing the use of pesticides and other harmful products both by the council and others.

Other comments provided included:

- Enabling the installation of wind turbines in and around the city and looking for opportunities to use rivers and weirs for hydro power.
- Providing a welcome pack in all new homes with information on sustainable transport and introductory bus passes.
- Strengthening protection of the green belt.
- Working more closely with local communities on new development in their areas.