

# Torbay Council Climate Change Action Plan

2024 - 2026



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# Introduction

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## Background

Our operations and services are directly, and indirectly, responsible for a range of impacts on our natural environment. From the power we use in our offices, to the fuel powering our refuse vehicles, they all have a negative impact on the environment and are responsible for emitting carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere, which are contributing to global warming and a changing climate.

In 2019 Torbay Council declared a climate emergency<sup>1</sup>. Our new Community and Corporate Plan commits us to continue to address the Climate Emergency so as to create a sustainable future. It also commits us to protect and enhance our natural environment.

Torbay (area-wide), through the Torbay Climate Partnership's Greener Way For Our Bay Framework and Action Plan, aims to become Net Zero<sup>2</sup> by 2050.

This Action Plan primarily focuses on what the Council will do reduce carbon dioxide emissions that relate to Council services and operations.

## Our Council Carbon Emissions

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Councils are responsible for carbon dioxide emissions<sup>3</sup> that arise from the operations and services within their direct and indirect control or where they have financial responsibility. The Council calculates its direct and indirect carbon emissions to create its carbon footprint. It is made up of emissions that arise from a range of assets and direct and indirect activities across the Council, including:

- All council buildings (including offices, maintained schools, other)
- Street lighting
- Council fleet
- School travel
- Staff travel (including staff using their personal cars for Council business (grey fleet), rail, taxi and other forms of travel i.e., hire cars)
- Others indirect sources (including outsourced services and SWISCo)

Torbay Council's total Carbon emissions from 2019 to 2023 have fallen by 7%. In the 2022/23<sup>4</sup> the Council was responsible for 5,011 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. The largest sources of emissions arose from the fuel

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<sup>1</sup> The climate emergency reflects the need for urgent action to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.

<sup>2</sup> 100% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. Technically this means that the total emissions (see 8 below) would be equal to or less than the emissions removed from the environment. This can include the use of offsetting to actively remove residual emissions.

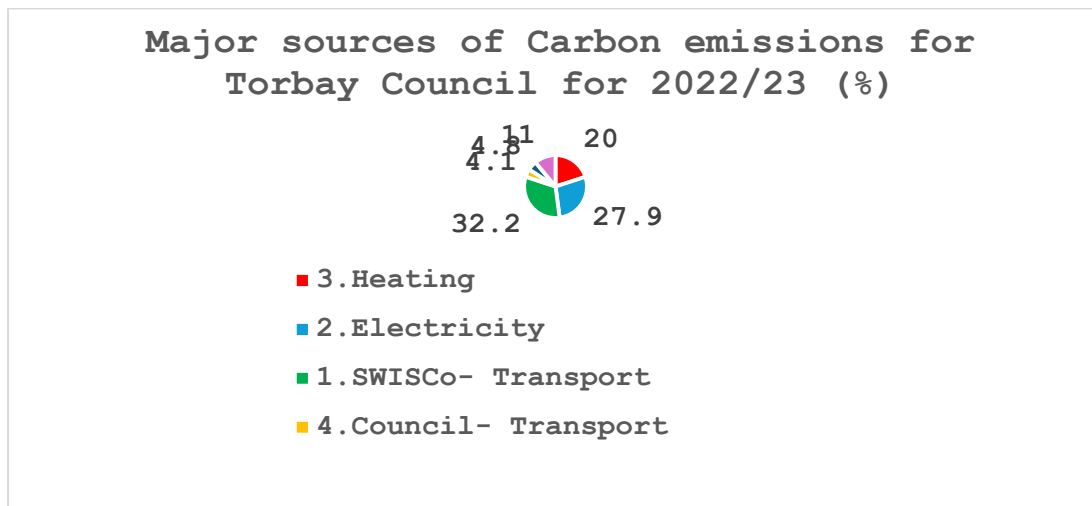
<sup>3</sup> Known collectively as Greenhouse gases but expressed as carbon dioxide equivalents. Hereon in referred to as carbon emissions

<sup>4</sup> Most up to date data set

used by the SWISCo fleet and the gas and electricity used to heat our buildings. These made up over 90% of the Council’s total carbon footprint. The remaining 10% of the carbon footprint was made up of water consumption, emissions from waste and from staff’s business travel. The following graph highlight this.

Excluding indirect emissions<sup>5</sup> including SWISCo’s fleet and outsourced services, direct carbon emissions in 2022/23 were 3,265 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

Pie Chart 1: Summary of Torbay Council’s total Carbon Footprint for 2022/23.



The data used to compile the Footprint includes gas, electricity, water, fuel and waste consumption data as well as fleet data broken down into vehicle type. Currently, some data is not readily available in a consistent and standardised format nor is it available in one place.

## Our target

To lead by example the Council is committed to working to become a net zero carbon<sup>6</sup> authority by 2030. The primary focus will be on tackling emissions that directly relate to Council operations. For example, carbon emissions that arise from heating and powering our council estate, staff travel and from our council fleet, plus others<sup>7</sup>

## Scope

This action plan aims to deliver a range of actions that reduce carbon emissions that directly arise across the council’s estate and fleet and help meet the Council’s Net Zero Carbon Target<sup>8</sup> by 2030.

However, there are also emissions that arise from indirect, outsourced services like SWISCo, that also make up the Council’s total carbon footprint (as above).

<sup>5</sup> Excluding Scope 3 emissions see 4 (and the baseline for the Council’s net zero 2030 target)

<sup>6</sup> 100% reduction in carbon emission equivalents (TCO<sub>2</sub>e) by 2030 (See 8 below). Technically this means that the total emissions would be equal to or less than the emissions removed from the environment. This can include the use of offsetting to actively remove residual emissions, only as a last resort.

<sup>7</sup> Target includes direct emissions arising from gas and electricity consumption across the council estate (including streetlighting), Torbay council staff travel and fleet (known as Scope 1 and 2 emissions ([GHG Reporting Protocol](#))). This target excludes indirect emissions arising from procurement/commissioning, capital projects and SWISCo fleet (known as Scope 3 emissions).

<sup>8</sup> See 4 above.



There are also some emissions that we currently do not have access to the data.

Therefore this action plan also addresses these indirect emissions. These procured and commissioned goods and services, all construction projects and the SWISCo fleet and estate. Whilst they don't contribute to meeting the target, some of these indirect emissions make up the largest sources of the Council's carbon footprint, so are also addressed in this action plan.

The Action Plan will run up to December 2026

There are many actions within this plan that will also help the Council save money on its energy, water and fuel bills, and through new efficient working/building procedures/practices.

The Council can use its influence to help reduce carbon emissions that arise from across the wider Torbay area in homes, businesses and transport. These actions undertaken by the Council, THA and SWISCo are part of the Torbay Climate Partnership's Greener Way for the Bay Framework and Action.

## Actions delivered from Carbon Neutral Action Plan for 2022-2024

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Under the previous Carbon Neutral Council Action Plan (2022- 2024), the following actions have been delivered:

- Installed Heat pumps at Torre Abbey Arid House which is estimated to save 100 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) over the lifetime of the project.
- Installed at Torbay Leisure Centre energy efficiency measures, air source heat pumps and solar panels estimated to save 320 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per annum.
- Through our Partnership with Devon County Council, we have received the following grants to help decarbonise homes by installing energy efficiency measures and/or low carbon heating measures. *Please note Devon County Council were the accountable body and the funding was to cover all of Devon, including Torbay.*
  - **Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme** - £1,144,200.00: Date - October 2020 (Completed)
  - **Sustainable Warmth** - £2,472,500.00 & £7,151,059.00: Date - November 2021 (Completed)
  - **Home Upgrade Grant 2** - £13,339,272.00: Date - January 2023 (Complete)
- Secured £1,895,054 worth of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding;
  - Torbay Council received a **Phase 2 Low Carbon Skills Fund** grant to carry out heat decarbonisation plans on 7 schools - £36,000: Date – October 2021 (Complete)
  - Parkwood Leisure secured for Torbay Council £1.8m from the **Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme** to install heat pumps and solar PV at Torbay Leisure Centre - £1.8m: Date - Sept 2021(Complete)
  - Torbay Council received **Phase 3b Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme** funding to install low carbon heating at Watcombe Nursery - £59,054: Date – Jan 2023 (Complete)
- Secured £723,230 in local transport schemes;

- Torbay Council received **various bus** funding to support an increase in bus usage (NB: some of this was linked to covid response and some are annual grants) - £414,246: Date – June 2020 onwards (Complete)
- Torbay Council received **Travel Demand Management** funding for travel plans and encouraging more walking and cycling - £125,000: Date – Oct and Dec 2020
- Torbay Council received **various Active Travel** funding to provide safe walking and cycling opportunities - £183,984: Date: Jan 2022 onwards (Live)
- Secured £7.1m worth of funding to deliver public EV buses, run by Stagecoach, over the next three years.
- Secured just under £900k of funding to support the rollout of electric vehicle charge points from the government's Local Electric Vehicle (LEVI) fund.
- Implemented a 3-year Salix Recycling Fund programme on energy efficiency projects.
- Completed a Green Fleet Review which detailed the requirements and routes for how the council and SWISCo fleets can transition to electric vehicle alternatives. The transition of the fleet could have an estimated 188 tCO2e savings per annum.
- Carried out a Hire Car Review and developed a fully electric programme with three EV pool cars available for staff to use for their business travel.
- Installed 30 green roofed bus stops which will over their lifetime sequester carbon emissions, reduce traffic pollution, improve air quality and support biodiversity.
- Finalised an electric charging infrastructure strategy for Torbay and begun the scaling up on the delivery of public charging points across Torbay. 13 contracts have been awarded to enable the installation of electric chargers within council owned car parks, with four car parks are having works completed to enable installation.
- As part of a successful Devon-wide Sustainable Warmth programme, Since August 2020, 547 homes have been supported, 180 homes visited and issued practical advice and 63 events and clinics attended. It is estimated that this support will help save residents £387,350 off their energy bills. With Devon County Council, and through the Local Authority Delivery Grant 2, we have helped 119 homes to save energy through installing a range of measures such as insulation and replaced old gas boilers with new low carbon heat pumps.
- Continued to work with Exeter Community Energy to provide local energy saving practical support and advice, with 109 homes helped, 53 home visits and 20 clinics held.
- Developed a Healthy Torbay Sustainability Checklist that includes the requirements of major planning applications to meet the Local Plan's current Climate Change Policies.
- Integrated climate change considerations into the Council's new Social Value Policy to ensure all procurements and commissions reduce their climate and wider environmental impacts.
- Planted over 2,000 new trees in the Torbay area, through Forestry Commission grants, which will create long-term woodland areas, support biodiversity and sequester carbon in future years.
- Supported the formation of the Torbay Climate Partnership (TCP) in 2021, bringing together various organisations and local communities to accelerate climate action in Torbay.
- Supported the development of the Greener Way for the Bay Framework and Action Plan, which is a series of actions to be implemented by the various partners in the TCP to tackle climate change within the Torbay region. The framework and action plan are currently out for consultation, with the results of the consultation due in April 2024.
- Refreshed the Carbon Neutral Impact Assessment Tool into all decision-making reports and project management processes.

- Secured UK Shared Prosperity Funding to deliver a range of decarbonisation programmes in homes, with businesses and a green skills training programme for young people.

## Torbay Council Climate Change Action Plan 2024 – 2026

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To become a net zero carbon Council by 2030 we will need to rapidly reduce carbon emissions by as much as we possibly can.

This Action Plan has been developed by many officers from across the Council, SWISCo and Torbay Harbour Authority, with support from members, and focusses on the areas of the Council where most carbon emissions arise from. These include the operation of our estate, fleet and business travel. As a wholly owned company of the Council, who deliver a range of services for the Council, actions that relate to SWISCo are also included in this action plan. Some ongoing actions from the previous iteration of the action plan are also included within this new plan.

There are many actions within this plan that will also help the Council save money on its energy, water, fuel bills, and through new efficient working/building procedures/practices.

### Phase 1 - Priority Actions

To maximise carbon savings and to help the Council save money on its energy bills, over the next 1-2 years we will focus on:

- Subject to the development and approval of the business case, installing a new streetlighting control management system and LED lighting. The installation of a control management system and more energy efficient lighting<sup>9</sup> will enable more efficient control of our streetlighting inventory and deliver significant carbon and energy savings.
- Undertake feasibility studies and whole building assessments to understand how to decarbonise ten of the council's worst energy performing buildings, including exploring the role of generating free energy from renewable energy sources such as solar power. Any propositions which provide a viable return on investment will be developed into business cases and will seek funding through business cases
  - Decarbonise Sherwell Valley Primary School (subject to a securing external funding)
  - Decarbonise the Brixham Harbour estate (subject to a positive decarbonisation study).
  - Decarbonise Tor Hill House building
- Recruit an Energy Officer to be take on the responsibility of managing the councils energy consumption, exploring quick win energy efficiency that can be enacted to reduce consumption and to lead on future decarbonisation and renewable energy projects.
  - Introduce a new environment and climate change impact assessment tool for all council-led construction projections. The tool will be used by the Council's Capital and Growth Board to understand and help reduce negative environmental and climate related impacts of the things the council builds.

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<sup>9</sup> To complete the LED bulb roll out to 100% of all streetlights in Torbay.

- Embed carbon and sustainability accounting into the early stages of procurement and commissioning. This will help reduce negative environmental and climate related impacts of the things the council buys/commission.

## Phase 2 - Priority Actions

### Travel

Staff travel and journeys made by the Council and SWISCo fleets are responsible for the production of carbon emissions and other harmful pollutants (including staff using their personal cars for Council business, travel by bus, rail, taxi and other forms of travel i.e., hire cars). In 2022/23, these emissions accounted for 35%<sup>10</sup> of the Council's carbon footprint, with the SWISCo fleet accounting for 32.2% of these emissions alone. We will explore work towards decarbonising the fleet and staff travel<sup>11</sup> through reducing the demand for travel, prioritising active, sustainable modes of transport and where journeys need to be made, make them in ultra-low/electric vehicles (EV)/car clubs where possible.

To maximise carbon savings and to help the Council and SWISCo save money on their fuel bills Over the next two years we will:

- Working with SWISCo, explore how to begin the transition of both the Council's and SWISCo's fleets to EV alternatives, whilst improving the optimisation of the fleet and improving the management of the fleet moving forward.
- Explore how council staff travel when out on council business and explore developing a series of actions to reduce the carbon emissions and costs arising from staff travel

### Other Actions

#### Council estate, energy and streetlighting

In 2022/23, the energy (gas and electricity) used in our council buildings made up around 62% of our carbon footprint. Building on the priority actions above, over the next two years we will continue to work towards decarbonising key assets across the estate, starting by evaluating and improving the worst energy performing<sup>12</sup> buildings.

Over the next two years we will:

- Based on studies completed in the priority actions above, develop a pipeline of investment ready energy efficiency, low carbon heating and solar photovoltaic (PV) projects, which subject to attractive business cases, seek internal and/or external funding to deliver these decarbonisation plans.
- Explore green electricity and gas energy tariffs to further reduce our carbon emissions and work towards net zero.

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<sup>10</sup> SWISCo fleet makes up 32% of these travel related carbon emissions

<sup>11</sup> Travel made in council employee's own vehicles or other i.e public/active transport modes to perform council duties

<sup>12</sup> Highest consumers of gas and or electricity



- Building on priority actions 2, explore the electric vehicle infrastructure, subject to the feasibility of renewable energy generation being able to power the required infrastructure, to support the roll out of electric vehicles across our fleet (including generation and storage).

## **Corporate services and processes**

The way the Council makes decisions about what we do can help reduce environmental impacts and carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. We can reduce the environmental impacts of the things we build and buy, along with the services we commission, through understanding the likely negative impacts and making more sustainable, environmentally friendly, low/zero carbon choices.

Over the next two years we will:

- Work with five contracts to pilot how to reduce their carbon emissions from their supply chain.
- Monitoring the carbon emissions related Social Value commitments in new contracts.
- Refresh the Environment and Carbon Neutral corporate policy.
- Review our core values to ensure tackling climate change and the principles within the new Environment and Carbon Neutral Policy are part of the organisation (if required).
- Review the Council's Water consumption and explore options to reduce consumption and costs.
- Provide training on the new Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and Tackling Climate Change Impact Assessment Tool and roll out staff training to support its implementation.
- Explore quantification of carbon impacts for all major schemes - including transport and housing schemes.

## **Staff Behaviour**

Through colleague engagement and empowerment, we can garner effective action from all our staff to reduce the Council's carbon emissions and help them to understand how they all have a part to play within their day-to-day duties.

To support this, we will:

- Create a mandatory climate change I-learn module for all staff and councillors, helping to create better understanding and knowledge of the difficulties we face and how our actions can overcome this.
- Train several staff as Carbon Literacy trainers so that Carbon Literacy training can be rolled out to staff, including train the trainers' opportunities.
- Develop an internal staff behavioural change campaign on how to save energy, water and waste across the estate.
- Install better recycling collections for Tor Hill House and Town Hall.

## **Climate Adaptation and Resilience**

In addition to reducing our emissions, the Council will also need to ensure that all its operations and services are resilient to a changing climate. We will need to understand where we are currently vulnerable to weather events and where we will be vulnerable in the future as our climate continues to change.

Over the next two years we will:

- Use the results of the Adaptation Strategy for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to carry out a high-level climate change risk assessment on key services. This will ensure Torbay Council understands its current and future vulnerability to a changing climate and takes actions to reduce any current risks and strengthen service's resilience.

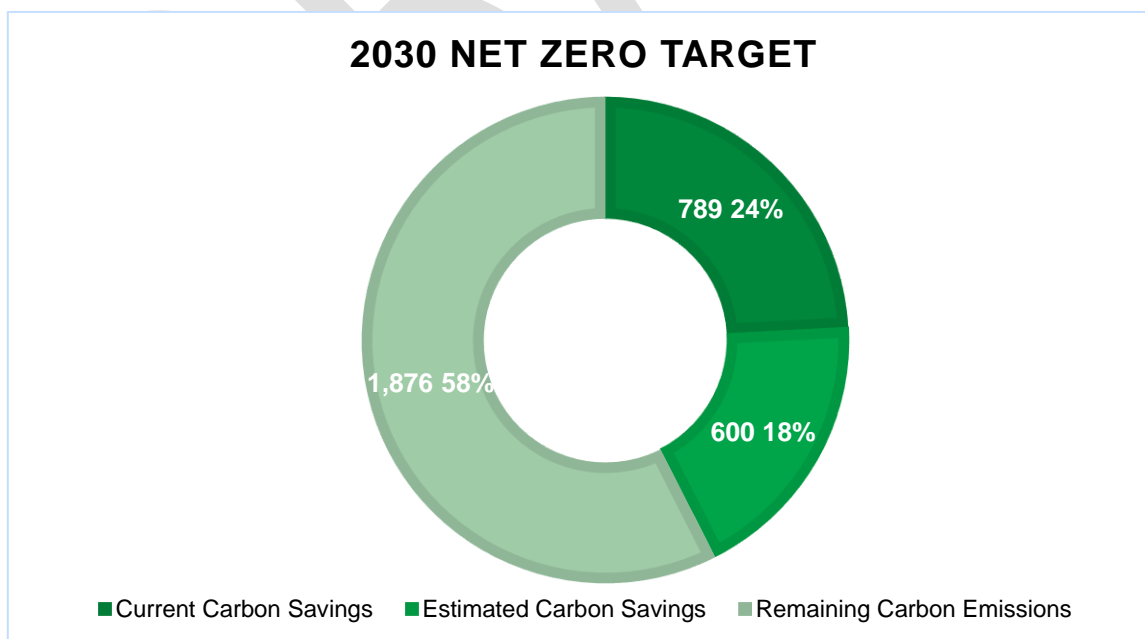
It is important to note that additional actions may be created to tackle high carbon intensity areas, such as for decarbonising the Councils estate or in the transitioning of the fleet to more sustainable alternatives. Therefore, this action plan needs to be flexible to meet changes in direction and focus during the next two years.

All large actions within this plan will be subject to having a positive and attractive business case that saves carbon emissions, and where possible, will save the council money or create a range of economic/social/wider environmental benefits.

## Carbon emission savings

This action plan will help the Council continue to work towards becoming a net zero carbon authority by 2030 and aims to tackle the largest sources of emissions that arise directly or indirectly across the Council's and SWISCo's operations. It acts as stepping stone towards meeting the target but will not result in the target being met yet.

In order to meet the proposed net zero carbon target by 2030 the Council will need to save or off set (only as last resort) just under 3,265 tonnes<sup>13</sup> of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. Since 2019, the council has saved 789 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions towards meeting the net zero carbon target.



<sup>13</sup> Scope 1 and 2 emissions only.

The priority actions within this action plan are estimated to save 600 tonnes of carbon. The other actions will also save or enable further savings to then be made towards the target, we are not able to quantify these at the moment<sup>14</sup>.

Based on the current savings and the estimated savings from the prioritised actions, the council will need to make savings of 1,876 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions by 2030 to achieve the net zero carbon target.

By annually collating and monitoring our carbon footprint we be able to see how much more the Council will need to do to achieve this target. This action plan is designed to be flexible, likely to change and, therefore, is a live document, that will be updated regularly.

## Barriers to Overcome

Between 2019 – 2023 overall our total carbon emissions have fallen by seven percent. There are a range of barriers that the Council will need to overcome if it is to really start to reduce its carbon emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Many relate to coordinated and proactive fleet and estate management, dedicated budgets and senior leadership support. The following areas were identified as key barriers to overcome within the duration of this plan;

- Continued management of council fleets and staff travel and the transition to lower/EV alternatives over time
- The TDA coming back in-house within the Council to be seen as an opportunity to jointly work with the Climate Team and others to ensure decarbonisation of the estate is improved and energy bills are reduced annually.
- Recruitment of an Energy Officer.
- Need for a pipeline of investable projects.
- Explore embedding the new impact assessment into the Capital and Growth Board business case templates/wider processes.

## Funding this Action Plan

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The Council already spends a significant amount of money on improving the environment. Some of the work outlined in this action plan can be delivered through existing budgets and through existing staff. We recognise that transitioning to net zero emission will require significant additional capital and revenue funding, but that delivering this ambition is essential and the real/social cost of inaction will be far greater.

## Cost of delivering this plan

The estimated cost to deliver the phase 1 of the priority actions within this plan is approximately £1 million. These costs are based on current estimations and are subject to finalised business cases showing attractive carbon and cost savings. These actions can deliver cost savings estimated at

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<sup>14</sup> Preparatory actions are required to develop many carbon savings projects/similar i.e. feasibility work. Until these projects are fully developed, we cannot estimate CO2 savings (and other economic or social benefits)

£240,000 annually with the potential to reduce 570 tonnes of carbon emissions annually. Phase 2 requires more work, before establishing costs.

Please note it is not possible to cost all of the other actions contained within the Plan, however, actions relating to the transition of Council and SWISCo vehicles to EV's and any viable decarbonisation propositions that are identified by the feasibility work will require business cases to see additional funding. All other actions are funded through existing or already secured external funding sources.

The Council has a £1m dedicated Climate Initiative fund. This may help to fund a range of projects within this action plan:

- Decarbonisation Plans for the worst performing buildings.
- Match funding for forthcoming Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding bids.
- See above for the limitations of this funding.

Some actions will also save money through reducing energy and water consumption or transitioning the fleet to electric vehicles which are cheaper to fuel and maintain.

Examples of external funds include the following:

- Low Carbon Skills Fund
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme
- South West Net Zero Hub - Net Zero Fund
- Workplace Charging Scheme
- ChargePoint authorisation
- On-street Residential Charge point Scheme
- Ultra Low Emission Taxi Infrastructure Scheme

Other funding sources may become available as and when they are made available, at which point we will seek to work with the relevant officers to submit bids to secure these funding sources.

## Cost of doing nothing?

Failing to reduce the Council's energy, water, waste, and transport fuel consumption is a missed opportunity to save the Council money, which could be used to support other priority services or invest in more projects to save even more money. For example, the councils total spend on electricity and gas between April 2023 to March 2024 was £3,052,015. We can reduce these operational costs through retrofitting the buildings within our estate with high levels of energy efficiency measures, renewable and low carbon heating and power. There is also the reputational risk, if as a Council, we are not seen to be taking a lead to tackle carbon emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change.

There is the environmental impact of not acting urgently to tackle climate change. With a changing climate, there will be hotter summers and wetter winters, which will cause further issues such as flooding. Under current policies, the total cost of climate change damages to the UK are projected



to increase from 1.1% of GDP at present to 3.3% by 2050 and 7.4% by 2100, with the Torbay region likely to experience a 6.5% loss in local GDP<sup>15</sup>.

Should the Council not manage to reduce carbon emissions in line with its net zero target, residual emissions remain in 2030, these will need to be offset locally/nationally, and annually, through accredited carbon offset schemes at a financial cost to the Council. It's important to note that offsetting should be seen as a last resort to reduce carbon emissions as alone they are not enough to solve the climate change crisis and can't be used as a substitute for directly reducing carbon emissions.

The current price of carbon offsetting is £10 per tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>); however, this has the potential to increase to £20-50 per tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> as more investment is required in projects that take carbon out of the atmosphere in the long-term<sup>16</sup>.

Based on the assumption that prices rise by 2030 to £50 per tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and using our current trend of carbon reduction of 7-8% a year, we can predict that offsetting will cost the council £54k to offset its remaining residual emissions in 2030, and every year after that until greater carbon reduction is achieved. This figure is based on our current estimates for our carbon footprint, which doesn't include some direct emissions and indirect emissions that relate to council operations or the things we buy, or commission are not currently included within our carbon footprint. Therefore, the amount of residual carbon emissions could be a higher, having a knock-on effect of more residual emissions to offset.

It's important to note that the potential price of offsetting credits by 2030 could rise further due to other Local Authority's and organisations also offsetting their residual emissions. This could accelerate prices due to this spike in demand, whilst also requiring the offsetting sector to keep pace with this increased demand. This highlights the need for actions to reduce our carbon emissions as much as possible without relying on offsetting to cover any residual emissions.

## Monitoring progress

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The implementation of this action plan will be overseen by the Council's Climate Change Action Group on a quarterly basis. Any delivery issues will be directed to the Divisional Director Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency who can then escalate issues to the Council's Senior Management Team.

Half yearly progress reports will be compiled by the Officers' Group and presented to the Council's Senior Leadership Team and the Council's Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Board.

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<sup>15</sup> [What will climate change cost the UK? Risks, impacts and mitigation for the net-zero transition - Grantham Research Institute on climate change and the environment \(lse.ac.uk\)](https://www.lse.ac.uk/what-will-climate-change-cost-the-uk/)

<sup>16</sup> Ten-fold increase in carbon offset cost predicted | UCL News - UCL – University College London

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For more information, please contact [future.planning@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:future.planning@torbay.gov.uk)

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