

What the Royal Borough of Greenwich could do about the climate and ecological emergency

This is a draft document put together for discussion among our supporters and friends and Greenwich residents.

Please read it, talk about it, and suggest amendments.

We will propose it for approval at our

Greenwich People's Assembly on Saturday 22 June 2019.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich wishes to declare a “climate emergency”. We believe this must be addressed holistically, and not with greenwash. The priority is to move away from fossil fuel consumption and to make the borough carbon neutral.

Important decisions lie with governments and large corporations. But there are things the council can do, just as there are things that individuals can do. We believe the council should:

1. Strategy/ research

- Adopt a strategy that demands change from the corporations and government bodies most responsible for climate change. Its climate policies should be aligned with aims of social justice, and the wellbeing of people in Greenwich, rather than punish residents for the failures of governments and corporations.
- Prioritise efficiency and sustainability over growth. Its strategy should embrace all procurement and tenders, with strict zero- or near-zero carbon requirements.
- Adopt an emergency strategy based on a clear understanding of what the council can and cannot do. It should explain that clearly, and require companies in the borough to do the same.

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- Appoint a senior member of staff to research, coordinate and monitor its strategy, and
 - 1) Draw up a report on what the council can do, to then be subject to public consultation. (Note. No primary research is needed; simply consult the body of research on decarbonisation from the UK's leading universities, and work out the implications at Greenwich level)
 - 2) Coordinate the climate and ecological emergency strategy across all departments, and
 - 3) Arrange a single point of contact for residents concerned about, or affected by, this emergency.

- Seek an alliance with other local government bodies, with a view to joint action to: change government policy; share and build on models of good practice; consider how effectively the National Planning Policy Framework meets the climate emergency and if changes are needed.

2. Education / information

- Facilitate a “people’s assembly”, organised independently of the council by borough residents, in which they can gather to discuss the implications of the climate emergency, comment on council and government policies, and consider measures that they themselves can take. This should be permanent, allowing the widest and most active possible participation, to continue until the relevant climate targets are met.

- Launch a free programme of public education covering (1) the science of climate change and (2) possible measures for dealing with it, to be integrated into the school education, adult education and library services in the borough.

- Launch a public information campaign. (Note. Measures to avert climate change, to cut air pollution, to deal with other environmental hazards, and measures that cover more than one of these, should be distinguished from each other, so that people understand their purpose.)

- Provide education and information about resilience, i.e. the effect of climate change on the most vulnerable people in our society and how we can support them.

3. Transport-lite borough

- Adopt a transport-lite policy, with the primary aim of reducing steeply and permanently the level of car use (including electric cars) in the borough.

- Place a moratorium on all road and parking space projects, with a view to cancellation. This includes the Silvertown tunnel: stop it now, even at this late stage. Negotiate with adjoining boroughs to reduce traffic flows.

- Review and replace the council’s vehicle fleet, using the most fuel-efficient possible options. (Note. Swapping to electric vehicles may not be more fuel efficient, especially if the electricity is not generated 100% from renewables. This issue to be properly researched.)

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- Expand public transport, and expand the provision of free and cheaper public transport. Negotiate with TfL to achieve this. Expand and prioritise cycle and walking routes. Support cycle and walking infrastructure and cycle education.
- Announce a ban on driving non-commercial SUVs in the borough, starting after a suitable number of years. Consider an incentive scheme for residents who own SUVs to replace them with smaller cars or bicycles. Consider other incentive schemes to encourage residents not to use cars, e.g. public transport/ cycling subsidies for households with no cars registered.
- Coordinate climate policies with air pollution policies, including regulation of traffic around schools. Research the likely impact of the Ultra Low Emission Zone expansion (due in 2021), and adopt measures to ensure air pollution is reduced overall, not displaced.

4. Energy-lite buildings borough

- Place a moratorium on all building projects, a requirement for zero-carbon or near-zero carbon standards in all new buildings. Actively discourage demolition and replacement by new-build where it is unnecessary; refurbishment and renovation should be preferred to demolition.
- Ensure that all council buildings, facilities and land, (1) review energy supply, and switch to renewable energy sources as soon as possible; (2) review energy production capabilities, with a view to installing renewable energy generating sources.
- Appoint staff with relevant expertise to plan and implement retro-fitting of existing buildings, starting with the council's own, to make them zero-carbon or near-zero-carbon.
- Adopt the principle of greening the built environment (using green roofs etc), and using the built environment and public spaces to enhance biodiversity.

5. Carbon-lite borough

- Adopt integrated policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and other ecologically damaging impacts, in the borough, in at least the following areas:
 - **Energy supply.** Establish a company to generate affordable renewable energy to the local community.
 - **Materials and pollutants.** Devise measures to reduce carbon-intensive practices among council suppliers and local companies.

- End all practices by the council, and by businesses, that are ecologically harmful, e.g. the use of damaging pesticides and herbicides.
- **Nutrition and food**. Promote healthy, carbon-lite eating, supported by a public education campaign, and work towards a steep reduction in the consumption of beef, lamb and chicken in the borough. Consider the possibility of a ban on air-freighted food products. Work towards a steep reduction in food waste.
- **Waste management and recycling**. Review waste management operations to ensure the best practice in greenhouse gas emissions measurement and reduction.
- Encourage re-use and recycling of clothing, electronics and other consumer goods from industries responsible for large-volume materials flows. Launch a public education campaign, and support repair cafes.
- Campaign to reduce single-use plastic, including the installation of public water fountains to discourage the purchase of plastic water bottles.
- **Public spaces**. Encourage greening of the borough. Work out a public open space strategy. Turn brown spaces into green spaces; re-green and re-plant.

6. Divestment / fossil fuel companies

- Divest the council's pension fund, and any other relevant investments, to divest any stocks in fossil fuel companies.
- Refuse sponsorship from fossil fuel companies for any activities in the borough.