

Nottingham Friends of the Earth – Background Briefing

Consultation on Nottingham's Carbon Neutral Target

PLEASE LET THE COUNCIL HAVE YOUR IDEAS AND COMMENTS BEFORE 15 MARCH 2020

In January 2019, Nottingham City Council declared a target for the whole city to be carbon neutral by 2028. In November, a Carbon Neutral Charter was produced and, in December, an Action Plan. These can be downloaded from www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/cn2028 - which also now has an online survey open to 15 March 2020.

The survey asks for detailed comments on the Action Plan. So it is helpful to look at the survey questions in advance. (A copy is on our website at www.nottfoe.gn.apc.org/CN2028consultationsurvey-screengrab.doc)

The main subjects covered in the survey are:

1. Transport
2. Built environment
3. Energy Generation
4. Waste & Water
5. Consumption
6. Offsetting
7. Resilience & Adaptation

There are no questions on Governance and Monitoring. The Action Plan says that progress towards “annual milestones and carbon neutral pathway targets” will be reported quarterly – but does not include any milestones or targets!

There is no acknowledgment that even if all actions in the Action Plan are implemented this will fall well short of being carbon neutral by 2028. The Plan does say that total emissions from the City were 1.17 million tonnes CO₂ in 2017 and will require a 22.3% reduction each year. Unfortunately, no attempt has been made in the Action Plan to quantify what contribution each proposed action might make to this target.

For example, the Plan claims that tree planting can ‘offset’ residual carbon emissions – without any attempt to quantify how many trees would be necessary.

Calculating the offset contribution from trees

Estimates of carbon capture by trees vary. For a single tree, perhaps something in the range of 5kg CO₂ per year for a young tree and 20kg CO₂ per year after 10 years. If we take 10kg per year as a ball park figure, a million trees would absorb 10,000 tonnes CO₂ each year – around 1% of the CO₂ currently produced in Nottingham. City Council plans to plant 50,000 trees by 2024 would account for less than 0.1% of Nottingham's annual CO₂ production.

Other questionable claims in the Action Plan include:

- Robin Hood Energy sells 'renewable energy'.
(Which? says that only 2.6% of its energy is renewable:
www.which.co.uk/news/2019/09/how-green-is-your-energy-tariff)
- Energy from waste at the Eastcroft Incinerator is 'low carbon'.
(Our calculation is that it is worse than a coal-fired power station:
www.nottfoe.gn.apc.org/oldfoe/667NottinghamEnergyStatistics.html)

Survey questions

The survey asks how much you agree or disagree with their proposed actions (HINT: they are all important). In summary, these are:

Transport

- 1.1 Reduce the need to travel (e.g. by policies in the Local Plan)
- 1.2 Encourage walking and cycling
- 1.3 Improve quality and availability of public transport
- 1.4 Reduce impact of freight – encouraging electric vehicles in the city with a Clear Zone in the city centre to keep the most polluting vehicles out
- 1.5 Manage traffic demand (e.g. consider road user charging)
- 1.6 Improve low carbon infrastructure (e.g. electric charge points)
- 1.7 Promote ultra low emission vehicles

Built environment

- 2.1 Promote low-carbon and/or renewable heat sources
- 2.2 Enforce energy efficiency standards
- 2.3 Promote energy efficiency retrofits (commercial and domestic)
- 2.4 Reduce energy demand and fuel poverty [THIS IS MISSING IN THE SURVEY]
- 2.5 Maximise uptake of low cost technologies (e.g. LED lighting) [MISSING]
- 2.6 Minimise emissions in construction of new buildings

Energy generation

- 3.1 Vision for the energy system (maximising local generation)
- 3.2 Expand local low carbon sources of energy
- 3.3 Improve local storage of energy
- 3.4 Coordinate demand and supply of a local diverse mix of low carbon sources
- 3.5 Be a test bed for new technologies
- 3.6 Ensure low carbon energy is affordable and accessible to all

Waste & Water

- 4.1 Reduce volume of waste
- 4.2 Improve collection of recyclable waste, with separate collection of food waste for anaerobic digestion
- 4.3 Better waste management
- 4.4 Improve efficiency of water supply (e.g. rainwater harvesting, grey water systems, etc)
- 4.5 Reduce water demand

Consumption

- 5.1 Increase local and low carbon food production
- 5.2 Reduce consumption of food with high carbon impact
- 5.3 Reduce food waste and use food waste for composting or anaerobic digestion
- 5.4 Encourage low carbon cooking
- 5.5 Reduce carbon emissions of city events
- 5.6 Develop sustainable tourism
- 5.7 Buy sustainably and make effective use of resources

Carbon offsetting

- 6.1 Offset residual citywide emissions
- 6.2 Encourage national research
- 6.3 Improve land management to better retain carbon (e.g. soil management, biodiversity, tree planting)

Resilience & Adaptation

- 7.1 Include adaption policies in Land and Planning policies
- 7.2 Reduce risk of flooding
- 7.3 Ensure council services are adaptable to a changing climate
- 7.4 Understand the impacts of extreme weather events and protect vulnerable citizens
- 7.5 Create resilience in communities and business

An electronic copy of this Briefing Note is available on our website at www.nottfoe.gn.apc.org/about.html under Newsletter No 89

Trees Campaign

In the summer of 2019, Friends of the Earth launched their Double Tree Cover campaign, asking the UK to double its tree cover by 2045. The best way it is seen to accomplish this ambitious but necessary target, working towards carbon neutrality, is to work with district and local councils to double the tree cover within their areas on council owned land, or the council giving assistance to initiatives on privately and communally owned land to plant more trees- fast!

According to Friends of the Earth's assessment of Nottingham's Climate Friendliness, Nottingham City's tree cover ranges from 10-20%, with 5% of the tree cover in the city comprising of woodland. See:

www.takeclimateaction.uk/climate-action/
(click on "How climate friendly is your area?")

At the lowest estimates, this means Nottingham has the potential to increase its tree cover in total to 20%. This will include planting trees in new places, and expanding tree growth in currently maintained areas, parks, cemeteries and woodland.

During Tree Week 2019 (the last week of October), Nottingham Friends of the Earth did exactly this by collaborating with Nottingham City's Women's Institute to plant 300+ native

saplings in Barker Gate Rest Gardens in the centre of the City. The gardens are maintained and developed by the WI group, who are the official friends of the gardens. The saplings for the event were donated by Friends of the Earth's tree team. Several dozen volunteers came to the day to plant the saplings- and in only 2+ hours 300+ saplings were planted until no more room was left! This action was a demonstration of the ability to plant hundreds of the trees in the city effectively, through community engagement - when you have the right trees, the right time, and the right place (and with some lovely people!).

Nottingham City Council has announced an ambitious target to be the first Carbon Neutral City in England by 2028. One of the steps which is actioned to achieve this, is to plant 50,000 more trees by 2024. Trees can make a real impact towards carbon sinking, cleaning the air of the city, and preventing future flooding in the area. But many more will be needed. The question remains as to where these trees will be planted, when by and by whom. Nottingham Friends of the Earth will continue to pay attention to the council's plans to reaching this ambitious target in the coming year and challenge the council to stick to its commitment with continued action.

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