

Briefing note- Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener

Purpose:

In the build up to COP26 the government has released a new addendum with additional funding to the 10-point plan to become carbon neutral by 2050. A summary of the key talking points are presented below.

Background information:

If net zero targets of CO2 emissions are not reached by 2050 there will be serious ramifications for society as extreme weather events will become more frequent. Evidence from The International Panel on Climate Change shows that this is not an issue for tomorrow and action must be taken now as we are starting to see the impacts today.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the build up to COP26 the government has identified now as the time to 'build back greener'. This means that there will be a £90 billion investment into the green sector over the next decade and the creation of 440,000 jobs, most of which will be funded by the private sector. The main areas that this money is being invested in are:

- Electric vehicles and electric vehicle infrastructure
- Sustainable aviation fuels
- Industrial and hydrogen support scheme
- Green technology innovation
- Decarbonising heating in buildings
- Nature restoration
- Nuclear power projects

Current actions being taken:

The council currently has a number ongoing projects regarding the new areas of focus that have been identified by the governments strategy for achieving net zero. In terms of decarbonising heating in building the council is involved in the running of multiple schemes such as Warm Safe and Well, Help to Heat, Green Homes, Warm Homes and Flexible Home Improvement Loans that help residents make their homes more energy efficient and thus lower CO2 emissions. Another policy that will contribute the decarbonising of buildings, is after April 2022 all electricity used in commercial buildings run by the council will be sustainably generated. Also, in line with the government's targets for decarbonising buildings, the council's Properties team secured Public Sector Decarbonisation Funds for the estate. There was an original £775,000 for improvement works to schools of which £350,000 went on specific measures at Sandhurst School. Recently the council has secured Salix funding worth £154,000 to help prepare building decarbonisation plans for the estate. The council is also working to increase the amount of green infrastructure in the borough, working with OZEV to introduce 32 electric car charging points at 11 car parks. The council is also replacing conventional cars in its fleet with electric vehicles and another two will be added this Winter. Regarding actions that the council is already taking in nature restoration there is a policy to plant more trees specifically around Crowthorne Road and in the parks and open spaces in the borough.

Key considerations:

Much of the new funding announced by the government does not directly affect the council's sphere of influence, however over the next decade as part of this updated plan there will be additional funding over the next decade including:

- £3.9 billion of new funding for decarbonising heat and buildings, including the new £450 million 3-year Boiler Upgrade Scheme, so homes and buildings are warmer, cheaper to heat and cleaner to run.
- An extra £350 million of up to £1 billion commitment to support the electrification of UK vehicles and their supply chains and another £620 million for targeted electric vehicle grants and infrastructure, particularly local on-street residential charge points, with plans to put thousands more zero emission cars and vans onto UK roads through a zero-emission vehicle mandate.
- £124 million boost to the Nature for Climate Fund helping to meet commitments to restore approximately 280,000 hectares of peat in England by 2050 and treble woodland creation in England to meet commitments to create at least 30,000 hectares of woodland per year across the UK by the end of this parliament.

The Carbon Neutral Build Back Greener Strategy does not contain many additional streams of funding but lays out where it will exist over the next decade. It does state that the government is looking at how to simplify the bidding process and give certainty to funding for long term plans. One possible new income stream that could be bid for is the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to Prospering from the Energy Revolution the government has committed up to £102.5 million of funding. This programme develops smart local energy systems to provide investable, scalable local business models to deliver cleaner energy. This scheme is currently operating in 3 places but could be expanded to a further 10.

Recommended actions:

This report is relevant to Bracknell Forest as the government plans to set clearer targets for what local authorities should be doing to counter climate change in their area. The report states that government has committed to working more closely with local authorities to reduce their emissions as 82% of the UKs CO2 emissions fall within the scope of local authorities. There are currently no statutory net zero targets set by the government due to the different circumstances in different boroughs, however the government will continue to support the targeted programmes run by local authorities to reach net zero. Being that there is a lack of new income streams announced in the Net Zero Strategy report but a large amount of money to be invested over the next decade officers should stay alert to future announcements that impact their areas of expertise.

The relevant officers will be alerted to additional funding options that may become available over the next decade.

Joseph Linnett

Climate Change Officer

22/10/2021