

REPORT OF **Head of Communities and Place**

To: **Council**

Subject: **Torrige District Council's Climate Commitments**

Date: **26th January 2026**

Reference: **N/A**

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To review progress with delivery of TDC's climate commitments and to consider resetting our ambitions.

1. CONTEXT

In July 2019 Torrige District Council signed up to the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration. The Council committed to becoming carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and for the District to become net zero carbon by 2050.

The Council publishes an annual carbon footprint and routemaps to achieving the Council's 2030 target have been developed and costs estimated.

Achieving carbon neutrality as an organisation by 2030 is challenging and requires significant investment in our Estate and our vehicle fleet. Decarbonisation of key properties is estimated at £3,233,107 and electrification of our specialist van and HGV vehicle fleet (including eHGV charging but excluding diesel savings) is estimated at £8,203,000.

Since 2019 the organisation has made little progress in decarbonising its operations. Political support for tackling climate change fluctuates and funding for energy saving and decarbonisation projects is tight.

In 2025 Council were not able to support key strategic decarbonisation projects at Holsworthy Leisure Centre and Bideford Town Hall. We are therefore unable to significantly decrease carbon emissions from our Estate as planned.

It seems sensible that Council undertakes a mid-term review and confirms its commitment to the 2030 target, and considers the resources needed to meet this target.

2. REPORT

TDCs Climate Emergency Declaration

At a Council meeting on 1st July 2019 Torrige District Council made a number of climate commitments:



That: The significant action that TDC has taken to date in reducing its own carbon footprint and the wider collaborative activities that TDC is involved in at the current time be noted.
(Vote: For 27, Abstentions 4)

That TDC declare its own “Climate Emergency” with a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030 at the latest.
(Vote: For 24, Against 5, Abstentions 2)

That preparations be made to sign up to the Devon Climate Change Emergency (subject to formal approval) which will commit TDC to updating the Carbon Management Plan for Torridge with a caveat that TDC had signed up to a target date of 2030 and not DCC target of 2050. Consideration also be given to agriculture within the Devon County Declaration, and the Agricultural Industry be consulted. (Vote: For 27, Against 3, Abstentions 1)

That TDC declare a “Climate Emergency” and pledge to make the Council carbon neutral by 2030 as part of a Devon-wide carbon reduction plan being organised by Devon County Council and that a working group be set up and reporting commence with immediate effect. Additionally the Council will protect and promote biodiversity throughout Torridge as part of this.
(Vote: For 28, Against 3)

That TDC declare a “Climate Emergency” and pledge to make the Council carbon neutral by 2030 as part of a Devon-wide carbon reduction plan being organised by Devon County Council. A decision on biodiversity throughout Torridge be deferred until a programme could be put forward.
(Vote: For 22, Against 9)

The Devon Climate Emergency Declaration that TDC signed up to can be found in Appendix One.

Carbon neutral versus net zero carbon

Being carbon neutral means that the Council will balance the amount of carbon dioxide emitted from its operations with an equivalent offset, typically through carbon credits. Carbon dioxide emissions are usually only Scope 1 and 2 emissions, ie those directly emitted by the organisation. Whilst organisations could be expected to reduce carbon emissions between now and 2030 to reduce the number of offsets purchased, this is not mandatory. We would not expect to purchase offsets until 2030, and then would continue to do so every year to balance our emissions.

Net zero carbon a far more comprehensive and ambitious commitment. Achieving net zero means that a company not only offsets its emissions but also significantly reduces them across all three scopes—direct, indirect, and supply chain-related emissions.

TDC has committed to the organisation being carbon neutral by 2030.

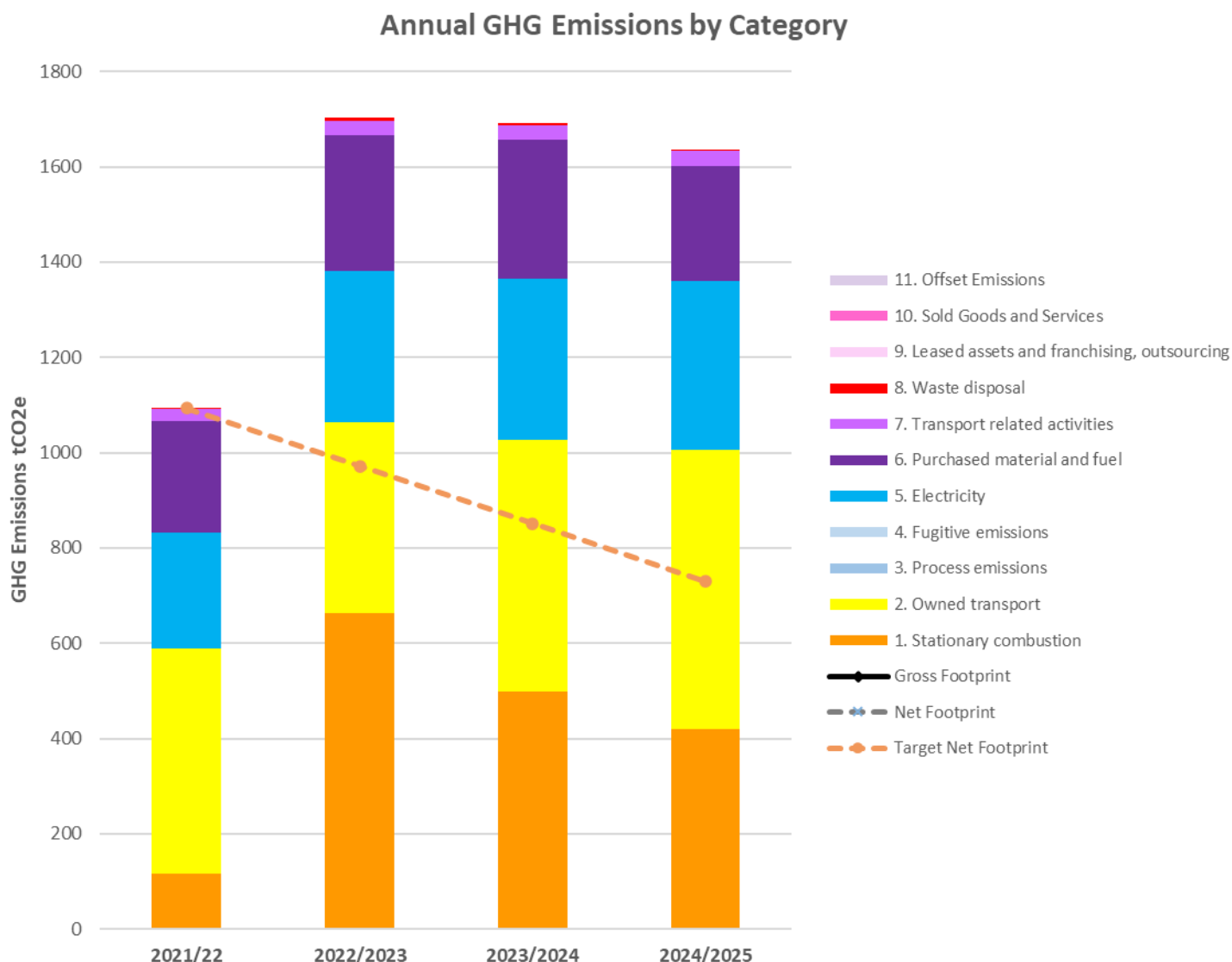
Torridge District Council’s Carbon Footprint

The Council publishes its carbon footprint annually. We report scope 1 greenhouse gas emissions (from fuel used in our buildings and vehicles), scope 2 emissions (from electricity) and some scope 3 emissions (from all other aspects of our value chain) as tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).



Members should note that our carbon footprint is under-reported. We are not able to obtain energy usage for all our leased buildings and we are unable to obtain data to accurately report all our scope 3 emissions.

Progress towards our target to be climate neutral (target net footprint is 0 by 2030) can be seen as follows:



This clearly shows the Council is not on track to meet its commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Annual reports of our carbon footprint with detailed explanations of emissions can be found on our website.

Emissions from owned/leased properties In the past six years there has been little investment to reduce emissions from our existing Estate, and this has mostly focussed on Holsworthy Leisure Centre.

We received £60,900 funding through the Swimming Pool Support Fund to put solar panels on Holsworthy Leisure Centre. We have invested an additional £699,494 in fabric improvements on site, replacing the roof, windows and doors and installing a heat pump to provide hot water and heating for changing rooms.



A successful £1M project using Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding to fully decarbonise the leisure centre did not receive Members approval due to a lack of Council match-funding.

The Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme closed in 2025 and currently there is no grant funding for building retrofit that TDC could access.

Planning permission for solar panels and an Air Source Heat Pump to decarbonise Bideford Town Hall was not granted by TDC's planning committee.

Emissions from new buildings

There has been significant investment in developing new buildings with high standards of energy efficiency, renewable energy generation etc. This includes Sully House, the new Operational Services Centre and Appledore Maritime Innovation Centre.

Further 'green' developments are planned at Holsworthy and Torrington through Community Regeneration funding.

We anticipate the carbon footprint for Waste & Recycling depots will decrease, as three energy inefficient depots are being replaced by one new facility. As additional buildings such as Appledore or Sully House come into use, we will see increases in our carbon footprint. These should be significantly lower than if the buildings were built to current standards.

Emissions from transport In the past six years there has been very little investment to reduce emissions from transport. Electric vehicles have been purchased for the Estates team as they offer cost savings to the Council over the vehicle lifetimes, as well as carbon savings.

The role of the Council's climate working group

TDC set up a Councillor Climate Change Working Group to provide an operational response and delivery of our stated aim that Torridge District Council will achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. The terms of reference for this group are attached in Appendix 2. TDC also has a Lead Member for climate change.



Since the Climate Change Working Group was formed in 2019 the following recommendations have been made in relation to the Council's 2030 target:

2019 – none
2020 – none
2021 – none
2022 - That the energy surveys report be presented at Committee & Resources Committee.
2023 - That a proposal is put forward to Community & Resources Committee to install bike racks at Riverbank House.
2024 – That the below proposal be approved for recommendation to the Community and Resources Committee:
 It is proposed that a sum of £500,000 is allocated in TDC's budget for 2025/6 to fund measures to reduce the Council's carbon emissions, such as: Improvements to council-owned property (e.g. solar power installation, insulation and other energy efficiency measures as appropriate); The purchase of electric vehicles and battery-powered equipment.
2025 - That the funding request for EV charge point infrastructure at Riverbank House be approved
 That the Working Group will proceed with the tree planting work conducted by Treeconomics.
That the Council buys HVO fuel for its fleet.
That any new building purchased by the Council be NetZero, where possible.

A full list of recommendations from the Working Group can be found in Appendix 3.

All papers for the Climate Change Working Group can be found [here](#).

Estimated costs to meet the Council's 2030 target

Costs to reduce our carbon emissions below are based on various studies that the Council has commissioned and are not comprehensive.

Service	Estimated cost (£)	Estimated saving (£)
Estates (key properties only)*	£3,233,107	£148,330 per annum
Operational Services low carbon fuel purchase**	£70,180 -£124,410 per annum	none
Operational Services HGV fleet replacement	£4,703,000	£475,000 per annum
Operational Services provision of EV charging for HGVs****	£3.5M+	

* based on surveys for Active Torridge sites, hostels excluding Sully House, Riverbank, Appledore Fish Dock, Bideford Town Hall, Caddsdon and Holsworthy Manor Offices.

** based on costs provided September 2025 and current fuel usage

***based on prices presented to CCCWG March 2025

****based on costs to other Councils of installing HGV e-charging

Cost of carbon offsets below is based on 2025 prices and is calculated on the basis of fully offsetting our current carbon emissions.

Carbon saving measure	Estimated cost (£)
Purchase of carbon offsets from 2030 onwards	£65,480 – £163,700 per annum



The Council's 2030 target

It is extremely unlikely that the Council will meet the commitment it made to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Members are asked to consider if we should reset our ambitions.

It should be noted that requests for funding of energy and carbon saving measures for key buildings, funding of a low carbon fuel replacement and for nature recovery are being considered at the Community & Resources budget setting meeting on 2nd February. Delivery of these measures will reduce our emissions but the Council will still exceed its target net footprint.

Approach of other Local Authorities to their climate commitments

Torrige District Council is not unique in struggling to meet their climate emergency commitments. Many Councils are not on track to meet the targets set for their own organisation.

Most Councils in Devon have set a date of 2030 (or later) for their operations to be carbon neutral or net zero carbon. None of the Councils who provided information have revised their targets as yet.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None identified.

Financial Implications

At the time of writing the budget for next year and medium term financial strategy (MTFS) for the next 5 years, is still being worked on. However by the time of the meeting this will be published (for C&R), it will show that we have large deficits in each of the next 5 years.

Therefore there are no funds available for the measures required to hit the Councils climate goal. The cost requirements to reach these goals are in the region of £11.4m of capital spend, with an ongoing additional £1m per year to the revenue budget (extra cost of electric waste fleet). The council does not have the funds or resources to meet either of these.

Human Resources Implications

Additional resources are likely to be required to deliver decarbonisation of Estates; these will be identified as individual projects develop.

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

Equality/Diversity

No impacts on protected characteristics identified.

Risk Management

None identified at this stage.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

None identified at this stage.

Climate Change



There is an urgent need to reduce carbon emissions; removing the requirement for the Council to do so will not be in line with the UK's legally binding climate target.

Ward Member and Lead Member Views

Cllr Hames 'In the last eleven years the world has experienced the eleven warmest years on record, with 2025 being the third warmest year. Global temperatures from the past three years have averaged more than 1.5 C degrees above the pre-industrial level, which is getting perilously close to exceeding the long-term limit set by world governments under the Paris Climate Agreement. Given this emergency situation and the critical impact on our way of life, such as more incidents of flooding, much stronger winds, long periods of drought and food crop failures, it is imperative that this Council continues to aim for carbon neutrality by 2030 and the data presented in the report to members indicates clearly that we need to intensify our efforts to reach the target. It should be emphasised that not only will this reduce the carbon emissions from our vehicles and our buildings and thus produce a cleaner environment but the measures we take will produce significant cost savings for the Council through lower maintenance and fuel costs for our vehicles and cheaper energy for our buildings.'

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Council has a number of options that it could take in relation to the organisation's target to be carbon neutral by 2030:

- i) Retain the Council's target to be carbon neutral by 2030, recognising that funding to achieve this is unlikely to be found.
- ii) Update the Council's target to be net zero carbon by 2030 (for scope 1 and 2 emissions), recognising that funding to achieve this is unlikely to be found. This is in line with other Devon Councils.
- iii) Retain the Council's target to be carbon neutral by 2030 or update the Council's target to be net zero carbon by 2030 and fund measures to achieve this.
- iv) Revise the target date by which the Council becomes carbon neutral or net zero carbon.
- v) Remove the requirement for the Council to be carbon neutral by 2030.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to agree which of the above options they wish the Council to pursue.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Date of Consultation – 14th January 2026
Officers Consulted – Head of Communities and Place
Contact Officer: Sustainability & Climate Officer

Background Papers:



Appendix One Devon Climate Emergency Declaration

1. This Declaration has been prepared by a consortium of public, private and voluntary organisations collaborating through a Devon Climate Emergency Response Group. It sets out an ambition to tackle climate change that covers all of Devon, including those people who live, work in and visit our county, and those businesses who are based or operate here.
2. We are aware of the significant implications of climate change for Devon's communities; it is already affecting our environment, infrastructure, economy and health & wellbeing. If not addressed, the impact on future generations will be profound and the ability to meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals will be severely compromised.
3. We understand that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has advised that carbon emissions must reduce globally by at least 45% by 2030 from 2010 levels and reach net-zero by 2050 if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change by keeping warming below 1.5 degrees.
4. We will lead in the global response to climate change through our collective action, innovation and influence.
5. Individually, we will review (within 6 months) our plans to reduce our organisation's carbon emissions to meet or exceed these targets, including ensuring the people we do business with are doing the same. We will publicly report our carbon emissions annually in accessible formats.
6. In collaboration, we will engage Devon's residents, businesses and visitors to develop and implement a plan to facilitate the reduction of Devon's production and consumption emissions to meet IPCC recommendations at the latest. We will openly report progress on its delivery. We know this transformational change will be challenging and will include:
 - Deploying more renewable, decentralised and smart energy systems
 - Retrofitting energy-efficiency measures into our existing buildings
 - Constructing zero-carbon new buildings
 - Travelling less and using improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure more often, and using electric and hydrogen vehicles
 - Changing our consumption to use less, re-use more and choose low-carbon options
 - Challenging all economic sectors to review their practices and the values of those they do business with
 - Divesting from fossil fuels
 - Changing our dietary patterns and reducing food waste
 - Changing agricultural practices to reduce emissions associated with farming operations, manage soils sustainably and replenish soil carbon
 - Encouraging carbon storage such as through tree planting, the use of wood in construction and peatland restoration
 - Empowering the people of Devon with the knowledge and skills to act collectively.
7. Additionally, we will work to understand the near-term and future risks of climate change for Devon to plan for how our infrastructure, public services and communities will have to adapt for a 1.5-degree warmer world.
8. Local organisations and communities cannot do this alone as national government plays a key role in many of the policy areas that are vital to reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. We call on government to prioritise decarbonisation and adaptation within decision



making and work with us by using its powers to provide the resources and funding necessary to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon and resilient economy and society.

9. We challenge every organisation, business, community and individual to do the same.



Appendix Two Excerpt from TDC Constitution

COUNCILLOR CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Terms of Reference and Function

The Torridge District Council Climate Emergency Working Group will provide strong strategic direction and oversight in order to achieve Torridge District Council's target of carbon neutrality by 2030.

2. Responsibilities

The Working Group will:

- Enable and establish collaborative working across the Council and engagement with individuals, community groups, parish and town councils, businesses and other partners in the district.
- Investigate steps that may be taken by the Council and by Torridge residents and businesses to work towards the Council's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030 and towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Oversee the Carbon and Biodiversity Plan for TDC, ensuring that actions are realistic, measurable and deliverable. Provide input into the development of the plan and strategic direction and oversight of its delivery, once adopted, making recommendations to Full Council, Community & Resources Committee and other strategic and governance committees and groups, as necessary.
- Identify support needed from Central Government in terms of funding, additional powers and policy changes which are needed to achieve the Council's climate and ecological objectives.
- Monitor funding opportunities making recommendations through governance structures where necessary or support Officers to undertake bids/projects.
- To identify, support and champion climate and ecological progress across the Council whilst providing an appropriate level of critical challenge for the organisation.
- To identify, promote and participate in partnership opportunities that will progress TDC's stated Carbon and biodiversity goals.
- To promote and champion the actions, progress and achievements of the Council in meeting its carbon neutrality, environmental and economic development aims.
- Through governance structures to report on activities, outcomes, risks and resource demands, and action direction out of these governance arrangements.
- To provide support and oversight of actions, initiatives and opportunities coming out of Devon County Council's declaration of climate emergency made in February 2019.
- To support and champion Torridge's high-quality environment, air, land, water, food products and renewable energy resources.
- To identify appropriate income generating opportunities which will tie in with the council's climate objectives.

3. Composition & Quoracy

The quorum level shall be 2.

Membership is a minimum of 4 Members which are appointed at the AGM and will include Lead Member for Climate. Membership can be expanded on agreement of the group.



External representatives can also be invited to join the group subject to approval of the Chair, to offer specialist advice or support. Officers will attend to support the Working Group, as necessary.

Members can nominate substitutions at meetings if necessary.

The Climate Change Working Group shall have no decision-making powers other than the power to make recommendations to the Council's Community and Resources Committee.



Appendix Three Summary of recommendations from Councillor Climate Working Group

Thursday, 6 January 2022 - 1.30 pm

Devon Carbon Plan – Citizens’ Assembly

Resolved to include an amendment:

1. That the results of the Citizens’ Assembly be noted
2. That the proposed actions in Appendix 1 be approved and included in the next public consultation
3. That additional comments from the discussion at the meeting be presented to Communities & Resources Committee.

Thursday, 13 October 2022 - 1.30 pm

Energy Surveys

Resolved: That the energy surveys report be presented at Committee & Resources Committee.

Thursday, 17 November 2022 - 1.30 pm

Devon County Council Carbon Plan

Resolved: That when the current energy arrangement expires in 2024 a re-procurement exercise to consider the use of renewable energy be recommended to the Community & Resources Committee.

Thursday, 9 March 2023 - 1.30 pm

Staff survey

Resolved: That a proposal is put forward to Community & Resources Committee to install bike racks at Riverbank House.

Thursday, 14 September 2023 - 1.30 pm

Water Fountains

Resolved: That it be recommended to Community & Resources Committee to investigate installing water fountains on Torridge properties.

Thursday, 18 January 2024 - 1.30 pm

Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Adaptation Strategy

Resolved: That the Councillor Climate Change Working Group accept the endorsement of the Adaptation Strategy and recommend the Strategy to Community & Resources Committee.

Thursday, 5th November 2024 - 1.30pm

Plant based Councils

RESOLVED: Whilst recognizing the serious climate impact of carbon emissions generated by the meats and dairy industry and with reference to TDCs net zero carbon target, it is recommended that this council serves 50% plant-based food at its internal meetings and events, and it aims to increase plant-based offerings at its external sites, and generally aims to raise awareness in the Torridge area of the benefits of a plant-based diet.

Thursday, 12 December 2024 - 1.30 pm

Matters Arising

RESOLVED: That the below proposal be approved for recommendation to the Community and Resources Committee:

It is proposed that a sum of £500,000 is allocated in TDC's budget for 2025/6 to fund measures to reduce the Council's carbon emissions, such as:

- Improvements to council-owned property (e.g. solar power installation, insulation and other energy efficiency measures as appropriate)



- The purchase of electric vehicles and battery-powered equipment.

Thursday, 13 February 2025

Requests for funding

Resolved: That the funding request for EV charge point infrastructure at Riverbank House be approved, and additional information on the Torrington Climate Changing Room Sticker Awareness raising campaign and the Part-funding of the Devon Local Nature Partnership requests to be provided.

Thursday, 22 May 2025

TDC Tree Planting Plans

Resolved: That the Working Group will proceed with the tree planting work conducted by Treeconomics.

Councillor Climate Survey

Resolved: That the Working Group will continue to develop the climate survey.

Thursday 20th November 2025

HVO

Resolved: That the Council buys HVO fuel for its fleet.

Strategic Asset Management Plan

Resolved: That any new building purchased by the Council be NetZero, where possible.

