

24 February 2022

Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer and Maggie Ibrahim ☎ 508965
Title	Climate Emergency Action Plan Update		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details key progress made with the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the previous meeting on 13th January 2022.

1.2 Progress includes:

- **Funding for improving energy efficiency** of homes in Colchester available for residents on low incomes and with homes with low energy efficiency through the Government's Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Scheme phase 2. Further information can be found at www.colchester.gov.uk/greenhomesgrantlad2, and enquiries/applications for the grant can be made through www.warmworks.co.uk/greenhomesgrant or by calling 0808 196 8255. Promotion has gone out through parish councils, Community 360 and other local community organisations and charities.
- **Further grant funding for improving energy efficiency** has been secured by the Council from Government for delivery between March 2022-March 2023. Funding came from the [Sustainable Warmth Competition](#), and will fund energy efficiency improvements in homes in Colchester. The eligibility requirements will be similar to the LAD scheme phase 2. Communications will be organised in the coming months about this grant funding.
- **A review of the [Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan](#)** has been published by Climate Emergency UK, an organisation set up to document the climate emergency declarations and plans of local authorities, as well as provide support to help local authorities respond to their declarations. [The Council's Action Plan got a rating of 52%](#), greater than the national average of 43% for district councils. This highlights the positive progress made so far on developing the plan, but more action is still required in several areas such as diversity and inclusion, alongside climate adaptation.
- **Electric vehicle charging points** went live at Priory Street car park on 18th January 2022 for public use.
- **Electric vehicle car club** being progressed with tender being written, after liaison with other local authorities to develop this. 1 electric vehicle car club bay has been agreed for Priory Street Car Park, and other locations are being explored.
- **Litter Warriors** has been relaunched, with plans to make improvements to the resident sign up process and requests for litter picking equipment.
- **Funding secured for four new SMART bins** for trialling in Dedham that will use solar technology to compact rubbish and display bin fill levels, sending notifications to operatives to empty the bin only when it's full.
- The Council is participating in a **challenge lab** workshop with the University of Essex. The challenge lab involved university researchers collaborating with the Council to

tackle key challenges we face including climate adaptation, single-use plastics and community engagement. Over the two day workshop, several project ideas are being developed on topics including climate adaptation, single use plastics and oyster conversation which will be put to a judging panel for funding in February.

- **Essex Schools Green Day** has been planned in for 6th July 2022. The day will be about raising environmental awareness in schools and getting schools to demonstrate what they are doing to protect the environment and tackle climate change. The Council will be offering support on this day, as well as contacting other organisations in the borough to see what support they can offer. This follows on from the Go Green Schools project the Council has been doing, which has engaged with 7 primary schools to understand good environmental practice in schools, challenges faced to doing more and what support would be welcome.
- **Climate Action Challenge Fund** made available by Essex County Council for communities to apply to carry out projects that tackle climate related challenges. Community groups, charities and schools can bid for funding of up to £20,000. More information about the fund is available at www.essex.gov.uk/leisure-culture-local-heritage/culture-and-communities.
- The **Eco Festival** has been agreed to take place on 3rd September 2022. The Sustainability, Transport and Climate Change Team are leading in ensuring our sustainable modes of travel work is showcased, along with resident input into existing and future schemes. The festival had a great turn out with over 3500 people attending.
- The Sustainability, Transport and Climate Change Team are feeding into Colchester Institute's **student learning programme** to embed sustainability into curriculum through a pilot.
- The ECC Anchor Group on climate change kicked off with an agreement to **map out local authority Climate Emergency Action Plans** across the local authorities and identify synergies, challenges and gaps. ECC are organising a year of climate action, with more details to be shared in the next meetings.
- The Essex Climate Action Commission are developing a **Climate Focus Area** approach to take up the Commission's recommendations, focussed around the river catchments of the Blackwater and Colne. Colchester is among the local authorities that are in discussion to explore this unique opportunity led by John Meehan and his team (coastal, financial, sustainability experts).

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the report and to provide any guidance on the progress being made with areas of the action plan, or ongoing work in these areas.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To ensure that the Panel is content with the progress made to date and has the chance to feedback on ongoing work.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not Applicable

5. Key updates

- 5.1 The Council has funding to deliver energy efficiency improvements to homes in Colchester that are of low energy efficiency (have Energy Performance Certificate below D) and where residents have a combined income of no more than £30,000/they receive means tested benefits or Council tax reduction. Vouchers of up to £10,000 are available for those living in owner occupier homes to fully cover the costs of improvements such as wall and loft insulation. Those living in rented (private or social) homes can also receive 2/3 (or up to £5,000) of the total costs of efficiency improvements, with their landlord needing to contribute a minimum of 1/3 of overall costs.
- 5.2 This funding has been made available through the Government's Green Homes Grant LAD scheme phase 2. Further information can be found at www.colchester.gov.uk/greenhomesgrantlad2. Residents who think they might be eligible to the scheme should fill in a referral form on the Warmworks website (www.warmworks.co.uk/greenhomesgrant), or call Warmworks on 0808 196 8255. Alternatively, please get in contact with the Council by emailing climate.change@colchester.gov.uk, or calling 01206 508965. The scheme has been promoted through many channels, including through parish councils, Community 360, charities such as Age Concern and also on several social media based community pages.
- 5.3 The Council has been successful in securing further grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Colchester through the [Sustainable Warmth Competition](#). £689,823 has been secured to deliver energy efficiency improvements to homes, where residents are on low incomes and living in low energy efficiency homes. Part of the funding will go towards securing a new officer to lead the project and ensure it is communicated effectively to the community, along with other associated administration costs. The funding will be delivered between March 2022-March 2023, giving continued support beyond the LAD phase 2 scheme that ends in March 2022.
- 5.4 An assessment of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan has been published, as part of a review of all UK local authority climate emergency action plans/strategies conducted by the organisation [Climate Emergency UK](#). The assessment is a review of the content and actions outlined in the action plans, rather than how actions have been implemented. The Action plans have been assessed against many different criteria such as Governance, mitigation and adaptation, commitment and integration, community engagement and communication, amongst others. All plans will be marked on a 'scorecard', enabling comparison of performance between councils. Overall, the Council received a score of 52%, above the national average for district councils of 43%. Strong areas of performance included a consideration of climate action 'co-benefits', 'commitment and integration'. Areas for improvement included consideration of 'diversity and inclusion' within actions and climate adaptation. The Council will take the outcome of the review on board, and look to strengthen the action plan. The full review of all the council climate scorecards can be found [here](#), and the Council's specific review [here](#). A more detailed analysis of the review, and the Council's response to this, will be presented at the next Environment and Sustainability Panel.
- 5.5 The three electric vehicle charging points installed at Priory Street Car Park went live for public use on the 18th January 2022. Further Council owned car parks are being assessed for the inclusion of electric vehicle charging points, and grant funding to do this will be explored this year.



Figure 1: One of the three electric vehicle charging points in Priory Street Car Park in use.

- 5.6 The Council is progressing with the set up of an electric vehicle car club. This will provide residents with electric vehicles that can be shared between users, reducing the need for private ownership of a car for some residents. An electric vehicle car club bay has been secured in Priory Street Car Park, with further locations being explored. The tender is currently being written for the delivery of the scheme and provision of electric vehicle, with advice provided through liaison with other local authorities.
- 5.7 The Council is relaunching its 'Litter Warriors' programme, making the sign up process easier for residents to request litter picking equipment and to arrange collections of litter. Additionally the project is looking to provide additional equipment so volunteers can carry out other activities such as weeding.
- 5.8 Investment had been made to provide four solar-powered SMART bins which will help to make collection of rubbish more efficient. The bins will be installed in Dedham, and provide a compacting feature, enabling rubbish to be crushed so the bin can hold five times more rubbish than a standard bin. A fill indicator will also show when the bin is nearing capacity, and Council operatives can then be notified to empty the bins.
- 5.9 The Council is participating in a challenge lab organised by the University of Essex. The challenge lab process brings together university researchers/staff and staff from an external organisation to brainstorm ideas to tackle a challenge faced by the organisation. University staff apply their own research to think of project proposals to tackle the challenges and these are then posed to an external panel who assess the quality of the proposals. Several ideas are then progressed for implementation. So far, project briefs are being worked up for consideration by an external judging panel to review and award funding for delivery. Possible projects include looking at how a garden could be managed to adapt to a changing climate, a campaign to reduce single-use plastics in the town centre and raising awareness of the environmental benefits of oyster beds.
- 5.10 The Essex Schools 'Green Day' will be taking place on 6th July 2022. The day ran for the first time on 8th July 2021, organised by the lead of the [Multi Schools Council](#). The Council would like to have more schools participating this year, as well as more support available to schools. The Council has already started reaching out to organisations in the borough that could offer support, as well as putting together a support offering itself. Support councillors can offer local schools in their ward would be appreciated. This

follows on from the 'Go Green Schools' project the Council received funding to deliver from the Net Zero Innovation Programme co-ordinated by the Local Government Association and University College London. The project has engaged with 7 primary schools and has given the Council an insight into good environmental practices in schools, where challenges lie and where further support could be provided.

- 5.11 Essex County Council have launched a [Climate Action Challenge Fund](#) pot for communities to bid into to carry out projects that tackle a climate related challenge. Community groups, charities and schools amongst others can bid for funding of up to £20,000 and is open until March 31, 2023 or until funds last. Further information about the fund and its guidelines can be found [here](#). This information has been circulated with Community 360, Town and Parish Clerks and all councillors.
- 5.12 The date for the upcoming Eco Festival 2022 has been agreed for 3rd September 2022. Last year, the event attracted over 3500 people, and we hope this number will increase this year. The Council will be supporting the event by providing sustainable transport options on the day using eCargo bikes, and will be having several stalls on the day to promote its projects involving sustainable travel, air quality, waste and biodiversity.
- 5.13 The Council is in discussion with Colchester Institute about creating some content for student curriculums based on the Council's environmental action. The Colchester Institute declared a climate emergency in October 2021, and is looking to take further environmental action starting with a £5 million decarbonisation project at the site.
- 5.14 Essex County Council's Climate Action Working Group for Anchor Institutions held its first meeting in January, and identified an exercise to map out all local authority climate emergency action plans and strategies to identify where there are synergies, gaps and opportunities for collaboration. A year of environmental action is planned, with further direction on this to come from Essex County Council in future meetings.
- 5.15 The Essex Climate Action Commission are looking to develop a 'climate focus area' in Essex, specifically in the river catchments of the Blackwater and Colne. Figure 2 shows the scope of the area. The aim is for the area to be a focus for achieving net zero carbon, recovering biodiversity levels and shortening the food supply chain. The project also hopes by enhancing the landscape, that it will lead to new economic opportunities through tourism and recreation opportunities. The area is hoped to be a pilot, where knowledge from the project can be shared across Essex.

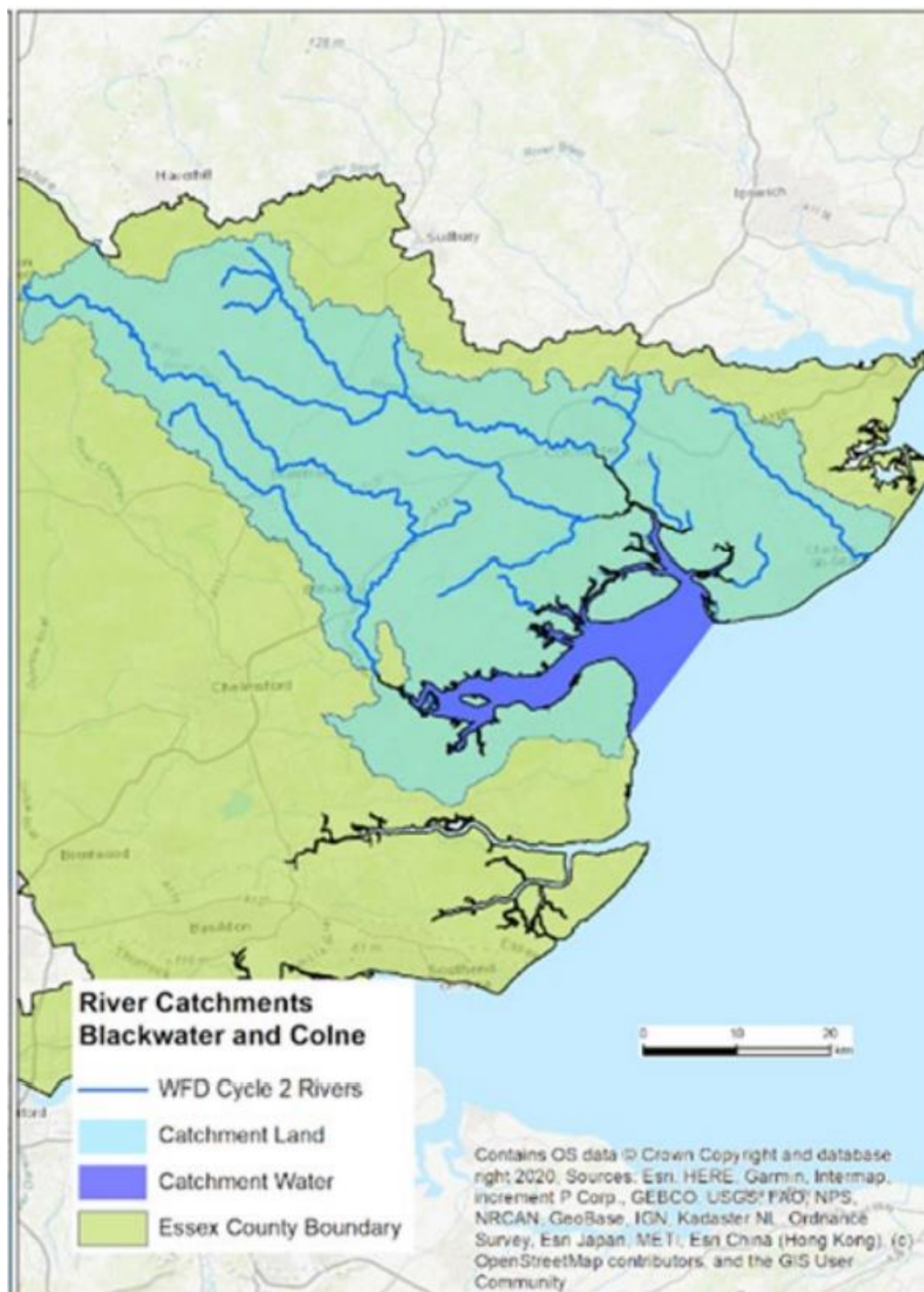


Figure 2: Map showing the suggested boundaries of the Climate focus area (shown in shades of blue for the river and land catchments). The green indicates the whole Essex county boundary.

5.16 For further information on updates in the Climate Emergency Action Plan, see appendix 1.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 This report has no equality, diversity and human rights implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 All of the updates provided in this report contribute to the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 theme of 'Tackling the Climate Challenge and Sustainability'.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this paper, although several of the projects referenced have consultation elements within them and success in tackling climate change will involve engagement and education of others to influence behaviour change more widely.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no specific financial implications from this paper.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no specific community safety implications from this paper.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no health and safety implications.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 There are no risk management implications from this update.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 The updates mentioned in this report are all relevant to tackling climate change and/or improving the environment. Actions and projects highlighted in the report all have co-benefits outside of environmental improvements for residents.
- 14.2 Provision of supporting infrastructure for electric vehicles, alongside promoting uptake of sustainable modes of travel is a key way to provide residents with options for travelling across the borough sustainably. Many of these methods provide residents with health benefits, alongside cost savings and reductions in emissions.