



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Climate Action Plan

Part One



Introduction

We are a new unitary council, formed on 1 April 2023, with an ambition to provide leadership on climate change, for sustainable and inclusive growth, and a commitment to making Westmorland and Furness a great place to live, work and thrive. We are in a unique position where we can have climate change as a key priority from the outset.

Westmorland and Furness Council covers the areas previously administered by the councils of Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland in Cumbria.

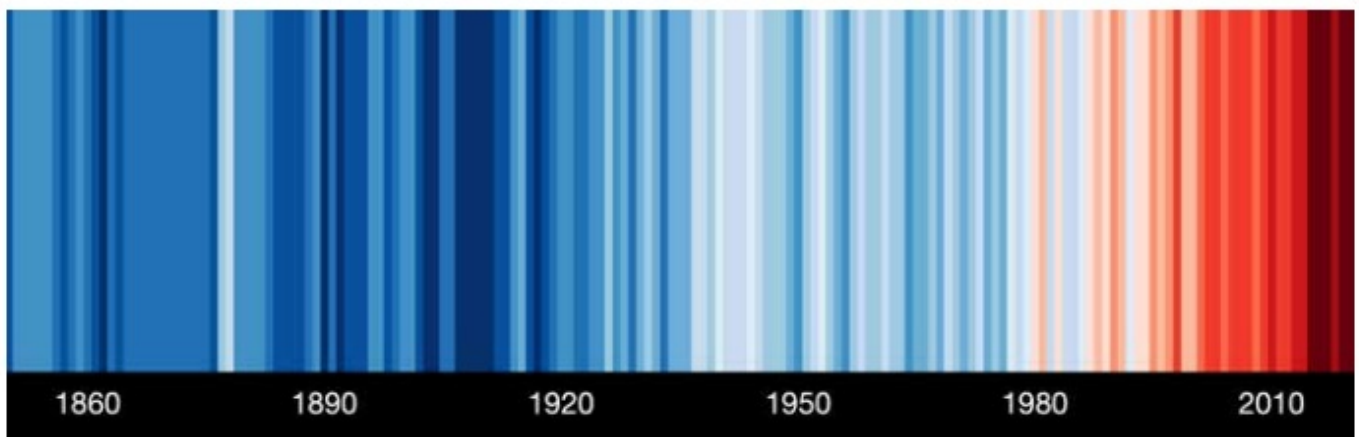
By geography, we're the third largest unitary authority in England and the most sparsely populated, home to 225,000 people. We have some of the country's most stunning landscapes and forward-looking towns and villages eager to transition to a low carbon future.

We are making climate change a high priority. This Climate Action Plan Part One will help set the scene and begin conversations across the council and throughout our communities about how we work together to address climate change. It will ensure that we maximise the co-benefits of acting on climate change, such as the health and wellbeing opportunities of low carbon towns, the jobs and skills created through the green sector and helping communities be more resilient to environmental shocks such as flooding or rising fuel costs.

Westmorland and Furness Council will be at the forefront of tackling climate change and the challenges it presents. We will provide leadership working to ensure that the council is carbon net zero as soon as possible and that the area it serves is carbon net zero by 2037.

As a newly formed council we are preparing our climate change programme. This document is Part One of our action plan, which will enable us to set out our direction and make a first step in engaging our residents and community, to help us shape our Climate Change Action Plan as we embark on aiming to deliver net zero for Westmorland and Furness by 2037. Following engagement, we will compile a Climate Action Plan Part Two which will set out our road map to net zero, including adaptation to lower the risks.

Climate change remains the challenge of our generation. The UK Committee on Climate Change states that the ten warmest years on record in the UK have all occurred since 1990. Governments from all around the world acknowledge this and that urgent change is required.



Title: Earth Warming Stripes 1850-2020, Ed Hawkins, University of Reading

Climate Change in Westmorland and Furness in Numbers



5.7mtCO₂_e total emissions for the whole area (2019 data SWC)



2,752 flooded residential properties in 2015 following Storm Desmond



£500,000 committed to a Climate and Environment Fund 23/24

To respond to the challenges of climate change, Westmorland and Furness Council will aim to undertake significant activity which will align to the national ambition of meeting the Government's net zero target for the UK by 2050 and the regional ambition of making Westmorland and Furness net zero by 2037.

Working collaboratively with partners, our ambition is to develop, deliver and support meaningful initiatives and projects to support key areas including the environment, natural capital, sustainability, decarbonisation, and biodiversity net gain for the benefit of Westmorland and Furness' residents and visitors.





Haweswater

What climate change means for Westmorland and Furness



Climate change impacts

Climate change is the long-term shift in global temperature and weather patterns. Climate change causes a wide range of negative impacts including increased heat, drought, intense storms and rising sea levels; these impacts in turn harm wildlife, damage habitats and cause serious disruption to people's livelihoods.

Climate change has already impacted on the natural and built environment of Westmorland and Furness. The area has experienced multiple extreme weather events over the last 20 years, including flooding in 2005, 2009 and 2015 (Storm Desmond) as well as Storm Arwen in 2021, when strong winds impacted over 10,000 properties. The risk of further flooding remains a concern as Westmorland and Furness is one of the wettest regions in England, and as temperatures continue to rise, so will rainfall precipitation.

While flooding and heatwaves are significant climate risks to our residents' safety and health, climate change is and will continue to impact upon our natural environment and landscape. Westmorland and Furness is blessed with a rich and varied biodiversity in a unique landscape. The area has many nationally recognised rare habitats such as open water habitats, upland habitats and coastal plains all supporting important species. The 2019 UK Climate Projections predict changes relevant to Westmorland and Furness' landscape including:

- Greater temperature extremes
- Hotter, drier summers increasing risk of wildfires, and wetter, warmer winters
- More intense and frequent rainstorm events e.g., Storm Desmond in December 2015 Significantly decreased snowfall
- Sea level rises causing coastal change and flooding
- Summer soil moisture decreases
- Changes in biodiversity and species loss

All of these factors will impact on our local communities, our environment and our infrastructure, that are not set up to deal with these extreme conditions.



Carbon Footprint

Westmorland and Furness Council recognise that in our response to the climate change emergency, our biggest opportunity and role is to mitigate carbon emissions. To meet the global call to action set in the UN's Paris Agreement 2015 and by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 report, our ambition is to mitigate the majority of our emissions and offset hard to reach emissions as a last resort.

The Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership brings together over 80 organisations spanning the public, private and third sectors, with the shared aim of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. In June 2023, the Partnership published a report outlining Westmorland and Furness' current emissions and the trajectory to net zero. The report focuses on a number of priority areas which highlight both the

extent of emission reductions required and the increases in sequestration capacity needed to limit global temperature rise. The council will continue to work closely with the Partnership to help achieve these pathways to net zero and we will be looking to take a data driven approach when formulating our Climate Action Plan Part Two.

Local authorities are responsible for 2-5% of local emissions but potentially influence around a third of an area's emissions through place-shaping and leadership. We aim to help all our sectors on their journeys to net zero, from residents and visitors to industries and landowners. The sources of greenhouse gas emissions across these sectors in Westmorland and Furness can be seen in the figure below.

Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Westmorland and Furness (2019)



Figure shows Westmorland and Furness' total area emissions by sector

Vision and Ambitions

Our Council Plan

One of the council plan's key priorities is to provide leadership in the drive to become carbon net zero. The value to be ecologically aware ensures we will be responsible for protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

We are determined to embrace innovation and opportunity, and deliver inclusive, green economic growth while reducing environmental inequality. Working together to realise this goal is the only way to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth in the era of climate change, enabling Westmorland and Furness to be a great place to live, work and thrive.

Why Act?

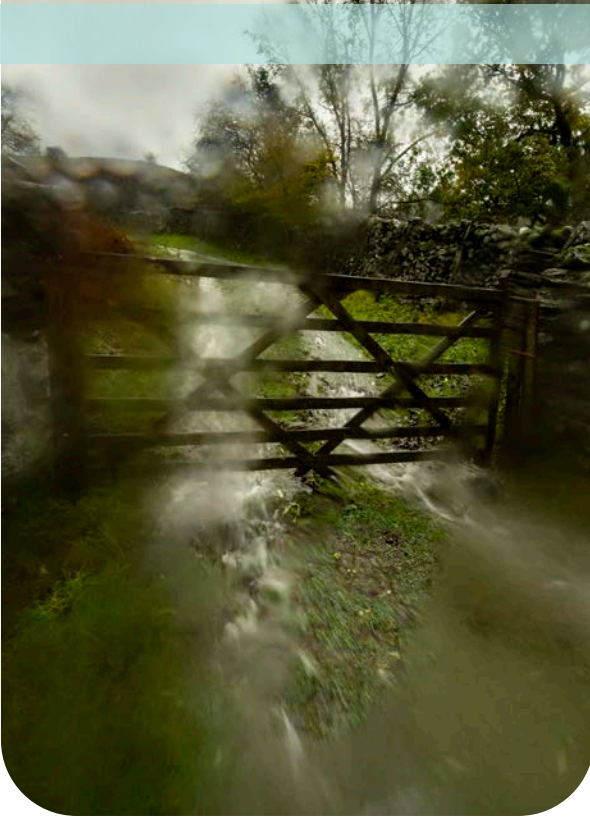
Climate change mitigation actions have many co-benefits and we have aligned our approach to climate change action with our council plan priorities:

- Supporting active, healthy happy lives for young and old
- Supporting people in need and reducing inequality
- Confident, empowered and resilient communities with inclusive workforces
- Sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- Customers at the heart of everything we do.

Environmental Inequalities

Through our commitments to health and wellbeing, it is crucial we do what we can to address the stark environmental inequalities facing our most deprived populations. From exposure to pollution, to climate impacts and shocks, and access to green spaces, we have to ensure that our climate solutions and environmental improvements are felt by everyone. This can bring both environmental and economic improvements to these areas as investing in cleaning our environment and improving our resilience will create jobs and encourage growth.





Climate Adaptation

We are already seeing increasingly intense rainfall events in Cumbria, and the timescales needed to reverse these changes mean that we cannot simply rely on emission reduction in order to protect our communities; we also need take action to mitigate and prepare for the increasing risk from flooding and other impacts.

It is vital that along with reducing our carbon emissions we are also ensuring our area is resilient to the changing climate. The UK average surface temperature has already warmed by 1.2c since pre-industrial times and is predicted to warm further, so early action to prepare for this is vital. Increased extreme weather events will impact on many of the council's services and wider, so it is vital we work closely with partners to reduce Westmorland and Furness' vulnerability to climate change impacts and improve our area's resilience, including linking through the Cumbria Local Resilience Forum.

Our 2037 vision for Westmorland and Furness

A holistic approach is needed to tackle climate change and achieve net zero, working across boundaries and in collaboration with everyone who lives, works and enjoys our beautiful area.

We will focus our actions in these six categories:



In June, Westmorland and Furness Council's Cabinet approved £5 million of priority investment into our area. Throughout the investments there is a green thread showing the commitment to climate change and biodiversity. These include a Climate and Environment Partnership Fund of £500,000. This is a new grant fund to support local partnerships to tackle climate change, support nature recovery and ensure a fair transition to a low carbon future for our communities, contributing to our aspiration for Westmorland and Furness to be a leader on biodiversity and carbon net zero. More information will be coming for how to apply for this fund.

The Way We Live

Retrofitting our houses

The Government wants homes in England and Wales to reach a minimum EPC level of “C” by 2035 for all homes. At present, in England only 42% of assessed homes currently reach C or above.

Since 2020, Cumbria-wide local authorities have spent almost £10 million from Local Authority led grant schemes to help retrofit around 1000 properties with fabric improvements and LCT (low carbon technology).

We have also secured funding for the next two grant schemes:

- The Home Upgrade Grant 2 which will focus on retrofitting off gas grid properties; and
- The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which will focus on retrofitting Social Housing.

With these new schemes, over the next two years, we are hoping to spend a further £24 million to retrofit approximately 1600 more properties across Cumbria. These initiatives not only help reduce our area’s carbon emissions but aim to support low-income households. Our aim is to combat rising fuel costs and reduce carbon emissions by improving energy efficiency of properties in Westmorland and Furness.

These schemes will help our housing stock to adapt to our changing climate too, as they will make our buildings more energy secure and help with warming and cooling properties.

The Way We Work

Carbon Literacy Training

The council is a Carbon Literate Organisation that has been bronze accredited as having made a substantial commitment to Carbon Literacy.

The purpose of Carbon Literacy is to ensure that climate is embedded across the organisation as part of our organisation culture. It gives ‘an awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions on an individual, community and organisational basis’.

Staff and elected members have been undertaking Carbon Literacy training, delivered by the council’s training provider Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS), to help increase their knowledge and understanding of the issues and challenges of climate change and how they can take positive action to tackle the climate emergency. We will be making the training available for all of our workforce.

We are now working towards the silver accreditation, which requires 15% of the workforce to be certified as carbon literate, along with meeting other requirements.



Council houses on Lesh Lane, Barrow



Kendal

Working with our communities

Cutting our carbon emissions to help tackle climate change means making changes to different aspects of life. Making sure the public have a say in what happens to tackle climate change is important to us, and a citizens' jury is one way we can engage with our residents on this issue.

There have been two citizens' juries on climate change in Westmorland and Furness, in Barrow-in-Furness and Kendal. Each had around 20-30 people chosen randomly. The panels met several times over the period of a few months to discuss climate change and to call experts to help them build their knowledge about the issue and solutions. They then considered what they felt should happen in their area to tackle climate change, putting forward their recommendations. The proposals raised in these juries will help inform our climate action plans and options are now being explored for potential future citizens' juries or wider assemblies.

We value the importance of our parishes, town councils and community groups in tackling climate change, and wish to work closely with these groups, as working together is essential to all our success.

We will support communities to understand and prepare for their increase in risk.

Working with Partners

Working together in partnerships with key government bodies, businesses, community groups and non-governmental organisations can help all of us to reach our common goals on climate change.

We know that this is a huge challenge for our council and area, but we are fortunate that Westmorland and Furness Council has many climate positive partners and partnerships, working towards this common goal. For example, the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership, Cumbria Local Nature Partnership and Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and Cumbria Local Resilience Forum all see the urgency of the climate crisis so together we can be greater than the sum of our parts. We will collaborate closely with our partners to help shape the council's actions on climate change.

Working with Industry

Businesses are putting Westmorland and Furness at the forefront of decarbonisation. We have production assets for offshore wind, gas, low carbon generation and storage opportunities and a fast-growing sector in clean growth and innovation. We boast some of the largest offshore windfarms in the world.

Westmorland and Furness Council are working closely with Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership on their Innovating for Success Programme, helping businesses to decarbonise. Decarbonisation plays a big part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, providing over £7 million of local investment. One of the key priorities for Westmorland and Furness' investment is to support local businesses to help with decarbonisation and improve the natural environment whilst growing the local economy.

Decarbonisation of our Estate

We are reviewing our buildings/assets portfolio as part of an estate decarbonisation programme. A carbon management reduction strategy will be coming out later this year which will align with the Climate Action Plan Part Two. This will look at our greenhouse gas emissions from scope one (direct emissions from buildings and fleet), scope two (indirect emissions associated with purchased energy e.g. electricity) and scope three (all other indirect emissions through our supply chain). This will follow the energy hierarchy of prevent, reduce, recover and replace, through the following four stages:

- Behaviour change
- Building fabric improvements
- Energy reduction measures
- Renewable energy and decarbonisation.

Retrofitting our buildings with nature-based solutions such as green roofs can help these buildings stay cooler in extreme heat and warmer in colder periods.





40,000MWh solar generation in 2021



250+ electric vehicle charging points available



2nd in England for hydro-generation in 2021, generating 16,200MWh annually

The Way We Produce Energy

Renewable Energy

We have set ourselves ambitious targets to significantly reduce our carbon footprint and investing in renewable energy will go some way to helping reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

The construction of a new 2MW solar farm site in Barrow, is an example of us using our assets in an innovative way to meet this serious challenge. In light of rising global energy prices, the development of this will help boost the council's energy sovereignty, independence and security.

The solar farm will help us to decarbonise our electricity supplies, future proof energy costs and bring about significant reductions in carbon for the council.

The Way We Use Things

The 3 R's

Reduce, reuse and recycle are three concepts that promote sustainable living. They help decrease the amount of waste we throw away and that ends up in refuse. You can make many changes in your daily life to reduce the amount of waste you produce and live more sustainably. Reducing waste is the best way to help the environment. Everything we produce and consume has an impact on the environment in some way. Making careful decisions about what we buy can have a huge impact.

Many items found around the home have different purposes. If we reuse items, we avoid disposing of them, for example repairing them instead of replacing them.

We should be recycling a great amount of the waste that ends up in refuse. The council provides kerbside recycling collections fortnightly. We also have several household waste recycling centres in locations across Westmorland and Furness. This allows residents to recycle as much of their waste as possible.



The Way We Travel

Active travel

The council has ambitious plans to get more people cycling, walking and wheeling in Westmorland and Furness, and make active travel the natural choice for everyday short journeys. Cycling, walking and wheeling more often is good for our health and wellbeing, the environment and the local economy.

To encourage active travel, we have established a programme to identify, develop and secure funding to deliver high quality infrastructure improvements. A key component of this programme is the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) which identify and prioritise future improvements to the local cycling and walking network over the next 15 years (2022-2037). LCWIPs have been developed for Barrow-in-Furness, Kendal, and Penrith. The council is committed to improving our footpaths to encourage more people to be active, committing £1 million for local sustainable transport schemes from the council's Priority Investment Fund.



Electric vehicles

If the UK is to reach its net zero target, we need to radically reduce our use of fossil fuels. In 2020, the Government announced plans to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030. As a result, the number of electric vehicles on our roads is predicted to rise to more than 35 million in the next 30 years.

As more and more people transition towards a greater use of electric vehicles, it's essential that Westmorland and Furness has a robust network of charging points which provide a low carbon transport solution.

We currently have over 250 electric vehicle charging points available across Westmorland and Furness and have been successful in an application for the Government LEVI scheme, receiving over £4 million for electric vehicle infrastructure. We will be developing an electric vehicle infrastructure strategy, to be published later this year.



The Way We Protect Nature

We are fortunate that Westmorland and Furness is home to a biodiverse natural environment and landscape. However, we recognise that climate change is a significant threat to our biodiversity and that restoration and enhancement of our biodiversity is a significant opportunity to tackle climate change. We will ensure that tackling biodiversity loss and restoring nature is at the heart of our response to climate change.

This Climate Change Action Plan will link closely to Westmorland and Furness' Biodiversity Strategy, which will be developed soon.

Natural Capital

The council recognises the critical role our environment plays and that the opportunity gains by looking after our natural capital could be huge for Westmorland and Furness. If we invest in our nature, we can help mitigate against flood risk, help regulate extreme climate, enable greater pollination and expand our biodiversity, help to regulate noise levels and air quality, create carbon storage as well as create opportunities for access to nature and the health and wellbeing that this brings.



7.3% tree canopy cover of land



£500,000+ spent in climate community grants since 2019



2 climate citizens' juries held



Local Nature Recovery Strategy

We are leading a Cumbria-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy, working closely with our key partners such as Cumberland Council, the Lake District National Park and Yorkshire Dales National Park, along with wider partners and communities. We hope to build on the success of the Cumbrian Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot to ensure everyone can help deliver on its vision “Cumbria’s wildlife in rural, urban and coastal places will be actively looked after and treasured. Healthy ecosystems on land and sea will support a sustainable local economy valued for its natural assets and contribute to the wellbeing of residents and visitors.” For more information, please click [here](#).

Biodiversity Boost

In the Priority Investment Fund, Cabinet approved £440,000 to support biodiversity and nature regeneration. This will help enable the council through our planning regulations to ensure, when Biodiversity Net Gain becomes mandatory in the Autumn, we are helping to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

Cumbria Coastal Community Forest

Former Cumbria County Council successfully applied for and received £2.5 million of DEFRA funding to plant a new coastal community forest which will provide a series of connected community woodlands down the western coast of the county including into the south of Westmorland and Furness. Thousands of trees, up to 150 hectares, will be planted over five years. These will provide direct and real benefit for people living within these communities through the development of new tree planting and woodland creation. Along with helping to reduce carbon and help our coastal communities adapt for changing climates. Ensuring the trees that are planted are suitable species for our changing climate.



A Dark Sky Friendly Authority

Former Cumbria County Council invested £12.9 million across Cumbria in a major countywide project to replace over 45,000 streetlights with more efficient and cost-effective LED technology.

The project enabled the council to reduce its annual lighting energy bill by over £1 million, reduce annual lighting energy consumption by 60% and save more than 9,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year, across the whole of Cumbria.

As custodians of the night sky and the world-class environment here in Westmorland and Furness, it is important that as a council we are mindful of the impact of our work.

By working in collaboration with suppliers and partner organisations, we can use innovative technologies and solutions to reduce light pollution and help protect the nocturnal environment, all while maintaining the safety of our communities.

Cumbria's Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme

Westmorland and Furness Council work closely with partners to mitigate the risks caused by climate change, for example by using natural flood management (nature-based solutions) techniques, which have many other climate benefits around carbon, biodiversity net gain and nutrient neutrality.

Cumbria's Innovative Flood Resilience Project (CIFR) has seen over £6 million of government investment into Cumbria to aim to improve the overall flood and climate resilience of small, rural communities that have suffered repeated flooding. By shaping our work around community and regional economic drivers, investment is directed to activity relevant to the long-term growth and prosperity of the region. We have a number of sites situated in Westmorland and Furness and hope the learning from these can be extended further across our area and beyond.





Westmorland
& Furness
Council

What next?

This is just a snapshot of the journey the council is on to address climate change. We will follow this plan with a Part Two which will outline in more detail how we will work collaboratively with all of you to address the climate emergency.

Join us on this journey

At Westmorland and Furness Council, one of our core values is being collaborative, and in tackling such a complex and global issue, engaging with our community and residents is paramount to any potential success.

The actions being developed in this plan will also contribute towards the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership goal of a zero carbon Cumbria by 2037, with improved quality of life, people living in balance with their environment and a sustainable low carbon economy.

We want to encourage discussion on climate change and nature and will be reaching out to environment action groups, businesses, charities and community groups to support the planning of our climate change programme.

If you would like to get in touch with us, email:
climateaction@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk.

[westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

