

## Towards a Carbon Neutral Exeter

### Progress Update: December 2019

On 23 July 2019, Full Council agreed that Exeter would declare a climate emergency and commit to making Exeter a carbon neutral City by 2030. In a paper authored by Exeter City Futures titled “Towards a Carbon Neutral Exeter”, a range of recommendations were made which were unanimously accepted by the Council. Exeter City Futures was asked to take the lead on delivering against these recommendations, a role which the organisation was honored to take on.

This report outlines progress against those recommendations and provide key updates on the activities that will support Exeter to become carbon neutral by 2030.

**Recommendation 1:** *The Exeter target is framed in a way that links to wider regional targets. This shows Exeter’s intention to decrease its emissions without increasing emissions in the wider region.*

Since making the commitment for a carbon neutral Exeter, Devon County Council have also declared a climate emergency and have mobilised the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group which brings together a range of regional authorities and key industry. The group have commissioned some analysis from The Centre for Energy and the Environment (University of Exeter) to provide baseline greenhouse gas inventories for the region.

The latest figures state that Exeter’s emissions were **545,620 t CO<sub>2</sub>e** in 2017. The breakdown of these emissions per sector, as well as how they compare to other regional authorities is in Figure 1 below.

In the analysis, emissions have generally been considered from sources within the geographic boundary. Sources have been categorised into the sectors and emissions have been reported within these sectors as far as possible given data availability. Aviation and marine emissions have been excluded from the analysis because the assumptions used in the data require further investigation.

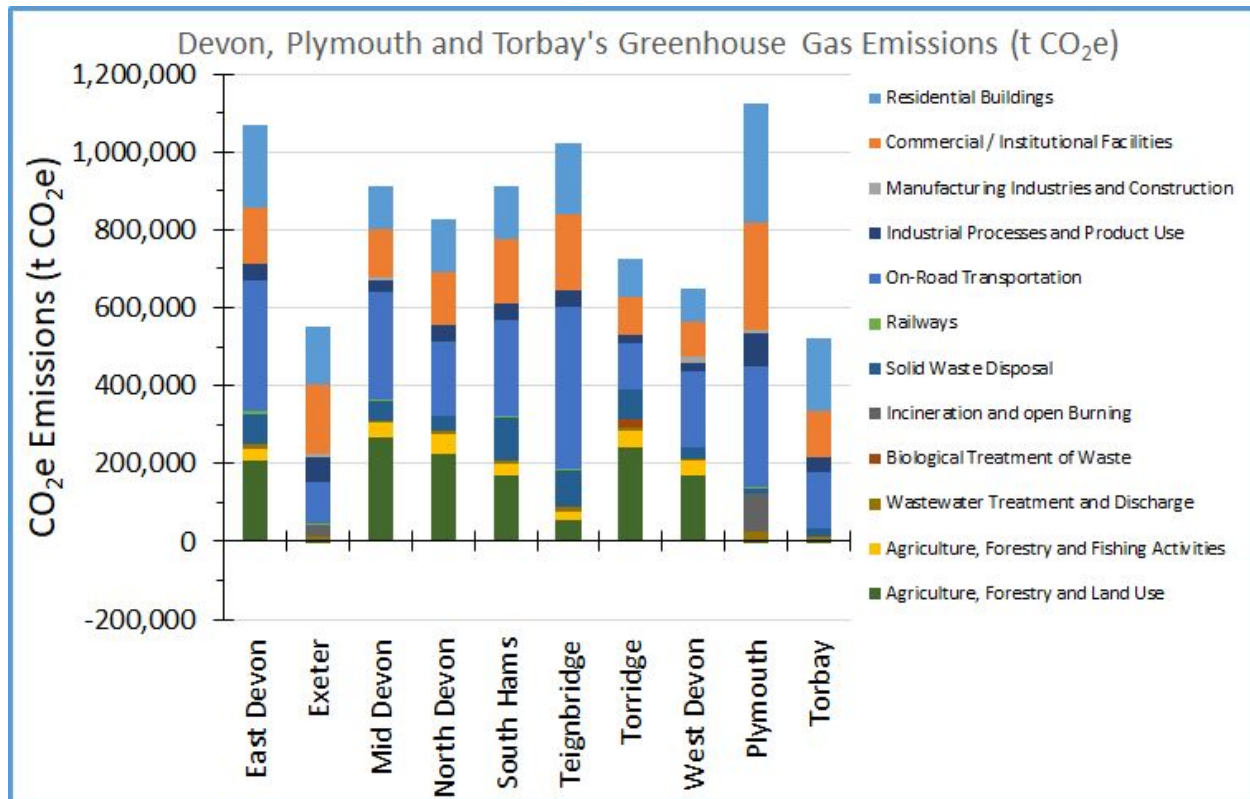


Figure 1: CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions across Devon in 2017

**Recommendation 2:** All ECF CIC Member organisations commit to their operations becoming carbon neutral ahead of the 2030 date and mobilise resource to develop internal plans to deliver the target.

Exeter City Council, Devon County Council and the University of Exeter have all declared a climate emergency and have made commitments to make their own operations carbon neutral.

Exeter City Council has commissioned work to determine its own carbon footprint and is currently collecting data.

The University of Exeter has released its [climate emergency plan](#) that states ambition to be carbon neutral for direct emissions by 2040, and to reduce indirect emissions by 50% by 2030, with a plan to reach net zero by 2050 (while aiming for 2040).

The Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust has released its [Sustainable Development Management Plan](#) which sets out how the Trust will approach its role as a sustainable healthcare provider, making sure that in everything it does the environment and wider society

are considered, along with direct patient impact and financial costs. Part of the plan includes how they will work with local partners for broader changes that promote sustainability and improve the wellbeing of the communities they serve, including the commitment to making Exeter a carbon-neutral city by 2030.

Devon County Council has declared a climate emergency and have committed to facilitating the reduction of Devon's carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050 at the latest. Devon County Council have collaborated with other organisations in Devon to established the [Devon Climate Emergency Response Group](#) to implement a response to the Devon Climate Emergency. The Council has a target to reduce its own carbon emissions by 50% by 2030.

Exeter College and Oxygen House (represented on the ECF CIC Board by via Global City Futures) are developing strategies to be released in the new year.

**Recommendation 3:** *A “Carbon-Neutral Working Group” is convened by ECF CIC to establish a city plan for delivery that builds on the [Energy Independence Roadmap](#) produced by ECF CIC and uses the 12 Goals as the basis of the approach.*

The concept of the carbon neutral delivery team at this stage has not been released. The announcement of this recommendation led to a flurry of companies asking if and how they could join because the name gave the perception that only this team would have the opportunities for commercial contracts. This was not the rationale for the recommendation and in hindsight the naming was misjudged.

The commitment for the City to be carbon neutral will require significant change to be made at every level of the City, therefore the roadmap needs to be generated through open engagement rather than by a closed group. Furthermore, analysis of evidence collected to date and a detailed review of other leading Cities highlights that the outline objective we have already set within the Exeter City Futures Goals outline what we need to do to become carbon neutral. We don't need to spend more time discussing what needs to be done. Focus needs to be given instead to understanding what are the barriers that are preventing our City from mobilising these activities.

There is, however, significant benefit to be offered to Member organisations and key partners from the formation of a co-located agile group of members and key partners; this “Carbon Neutral Delivery Team” denotes a group of people who are all committed to delivering the City's carbon neutral commitment rather than a specifically selected team who own the task. This informal “Team” will allow for peer alignment and early identification and sharing of challenges and risks.

ECF provides a convening force for these interactions. Already DCC, ECC and UoE are seeking to co-locate those tasked with sustainability within their own organisations at the ECF offices for the benefit of sharing ideas and challenges and identifying areas for collaboration.

This recommendation also had a number of sub-recommendations and progress is reported under each below:

*3a: Draw together existing evidence and data to establish baseline state of the City presented under each of the 12 Goals*

As we begin the journey towards carbon neutral it is important that we understand the current state (or 'status quo') of our City. Whilst we are not starting from nothing, we need to understand where we are now so that we can fully assess the scale of ambition, innovation and investment required to deliver the 12 Goals and achieve a carbon-neutral status.

The 12 Goals for the City can be grouped into four themes: Energy, Mobility, Sustainability and Capability. These themes align strongly with the themes of many other leading Cities, thus enabling a degree of comparison with our peers as well as monitoring of our own progress.

A report titled "Towards Carbon Neutral Exeter: Key Facts 2019" has been drafted which collates data around the four themes identified above, as well as including an additional section that relates to general life in Exeter. The report is currently being reviewed by key stakeholders and is scheduled for release mid-December.

*3b: Conduct a full audit of the City to highlight gaps between current plans and what is required to achieve a carbon-neutral City*

The audit of the City is an area where progress has been below expectations. Exeter City Futures does not currently have resource capacity to undertake a review to formally capture all projects and capabilities that are already working towards the agenda.

A range of showcase projects have been submitted by Member organisations and these are displayed on the exeter City Futures website under our Explore Showcase page. This, however, is not an analytical review.

*3c: Define a clear city plan showing outcomes that will need to be met to deliver a carbon neutral city, how existing activities support and where there are gaps.*

Carbon neutral by 2030 is an ambitious target. Success will depend, in our view, on the degree to which we manage to position, and evolve the development of a city plan (roadmap) as an entirely shared enterprise and successfully leverage the will of the people from right across the city.

Our engagement and analysis work to date - including the Energy Independence Report - has identified many of the things we need to do; the key now is to identify the factors that are in the way, preventing practical actions from being taken. Barriers that are tangible, as well as those to do with attitudes and behaviour.

With the financial support of Exeter City Council we have engaged a limited amount of external specialist support for overall event management and for a designated programme of community engagement. We are now planning the public launch of this city-wide initiative, working with an event brand “Net-Zero Exeter” that fits within the brand hierarchy of the City (logo being designed).

Arts organisation Encounters are leading on the public engagement to understand concerns and barriers relating to the carbon neutral commitment. Encounters will deliver engagement in up to 10 locations across the City. We are currently engaging with Members and the Community Builders to determine these locations.

The launch event will be described as a Mobilisation Summit and is scheduled for 26 March 2020, in a city centre location (discussions about logistics are already underway). The event is not about working out what to do, instead it will be focussed on working out what is standing in our way and will be a combination of formal presentations and panel discussions. There will also be exhibition spaces, showcasing great projects in the City, potential new technologies and output from community engagement activities. We are hoping that there will be “fringe” events too, run by our partners (which could range from schools to clubs to businesses...)

We are already planning a media package to inform people of the event and aiming for a microsite to be launched with the outline programme (core and fringe) on January 7th, with some key events and activities defined by the 20th December.

In the lead up to the event we will be conducting workshops and community focus group sessions. These will help inform our overall strategy, and the precise make-up of the event programme.

### *3d: Identify immediate opportunities and crucial first steps*

Identification of activities will come from the mobilisation event.

**Recommendation 4:** *A “Carbon Neutral Mandate Group” is convened by ECF CIC through a series of summits to validate, challenge and endorse the Roadmap produced by the Carbon-Neutral Working Group.*

A draft of the terms of reference for the Mandate Group has been completed and reviewed by Exeter City Council's democratic services lead. It is proposed that a core membership is formed

by invitation and then a wider membership selected by this core from nominations/expressions of interest.

Devon County Council have released proposals for a Citizens Assembly and it will be necessary to ensure that the scope of the Exeter Mandate Group is defined and alignment is articulated appropriately. Further review is required before calling for members.

**Recommendation 5:** ECF CIC request assistance from the University of Exeter to establish an academic team that can: a) Agree a robust definition of what is included in the measurement of Exeter's carbon emissions and how this accounts for the carbon emissions created in the wider region by commuters; b) Define the measurement framework for the carbon neutral journey (real-time or periodic); c) Define the optimal way for Exeter to consider its carbon-reduction strategies and the impact on wider regional emissions; d) Analyse potential solutions to consider carbon savings, cost and social impact.

To date no progress has been made on this recommendation by Exeter City Futures. However, several organisations and local authorities are currently working with University of Exeter to obtain detailed carbon footprints / emissions baselines.