

JUST TRANSITION

Paper for Birmingham Route to Zero Taskforce's Communications and Engagement Sub-group

1 Overview

1.1 Summary

In response to pressure from climate activists and school climate strikers, Birmingham City Council declared in June 2019 a climate emergency 'for the City to be **net zero carbon** by 2030 or as soon after as a just transition permits - making sure we **take communities with us, protecting employment** and **without impoverishing deprived communities**.'

Both the Council declaration and the Anthesis Emissions Reduction study begin by recognising the **unprecedented threat** that climate change poses and potentially devastating consequences for Birmingham. Without **urgent action and steep emission reductions**, Birmingham will use up its carbon budget within 7 years.

A '**just transition**' is a vision that describes both where we are going and how we get there. It includes both the end goal of a net zero carbon City and the inclusive and fair approaches built into the Council declaration.

'**Taking communities with the Council**' along the road to a net zero carbon city involves building trust and confidence, communicating about the climate change, utilising existing community networks, embedding in existing democratic structures and perceived local resonance. The road to net zero needs to be **embedded** in the Council's existing neighbourhood, social and equality strategies.

'**Without impoverishing communities**' involves lifting people out of poverty in ways that do not add to emissions. Disadvantaged communities tend to have low carbon emissions and there is considerable inequality between wards.

'**Protecting employment**' involves creating meaningful jobs, redefining the nature of work and encouraging new work - leisure balances, not 'preserving old economy' jobs. This involves transitioning to a **circular economy** that is restorative and regenerative by design, not built on the presumption of cheap, unlimited natural resources to be consumed and then disposed of.

1.2 Conclusions

In summary, a just transition is a process that involves:

- Approaching change in inclusive and collaborative ways
- Creating sustainable systems and relationships
- Addressing inequalities and protecting the most vulnerable
- Improving well-being

A just transition is a **balancing act** between stakeholders in the Council declaration and their different perspectives. Young people, the finance community, campaign groups, trade unions, faith communities, universities, councillors and the Council itself have their own priorities and agendas, as well as differing power and influence. Inclusive and consultative approaches are needed, recognising that there will be 'winners and losers' along the way, but ensuring that the poor and disadvantaged are not always the losers.

A just transition needs to be embedded in Birmingham's **climate action plan** that includes a platform, finance, training, engagement and advocacy.

The criteria in Appendix 1 can be used to assess individual actions to identify how they form part of a just transition.

2 Climate Emergency Declaration and 'Just Transition'

Birmingham City Council declared a climate emergency at a full Council meeting in June 2019 aspiring, 'for the City to be net zero carbon by 2030 or as soon after as a just transition permits - making sure we take communities with us, protecting employment and without impoverishing deprived communities.' The motion had cross party support and was passed unanimously.

The Declaration began by recognising that:

"The Climate Crisis is an existential threat that requires us to change the way we invest in, grow and sustain our cities and regions.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC , 2018) report published in October 2018 set out the devastating consequences for the planet if it warmed more than 1.5°C - with increased extreme weather with heatwaves and floods driving mass migration and global insecurity; the catastrophic social and ecological impacts worsening for every degree of warming.

The impact of climate change will not just be felt in far-away lands or coastal areas, the impact on Birmingham residents of increased extreme weather events, including flooding, droughts and heatwave is likely to be profound, with increasing risks to both life and property. Given our global footprint and the diversity of the city the climate crisis will hit at the heart of families and communities within the city."

Progress is being made in developing an action plan. Sandpits related to Council workstreams are taking place, substantive presentations were made at the 29 April Taskforce meeting and the Anthesis Carbon Emission Reduction Study has been completed.

This paper addresses five key questions concerning how a just transition should be incorporated in the Council's climate action plan.

- What is a 'just transition'?
- What does 'taking communities with' the Council involve?
- How can employment be protected?
- What does 'not impoverishing communities' involve?
- How will the 2030 target date be affected by the need to ensure a just transition?

3 Wider context to Birmingham's climate action plan

3.1 Definitions and Council influence

There are different interpretations of net zero carbon, carbon neutrality and similar terms. In this paper, net zero carbon is taken to mean that carbon emissions of the Birmingham city

region will be reduced to zero by using off-setting or sequestering carbon balance off any emissions that cannot be eliminated by primary emission reduction activities.

The Council has direct control and can provide leadership over its own Scope 1 emissions which are mainly building gas heating and transport fleet. The Council's Scope 2 emissions are those associated with its contractors and suppliers' activities and, through specifications and contractual relationships are under the Council's indirect control. Finally, the Council's Scope 3 emissions are those associated with schools, social housing, staff commuting and other activities making up the services that the Council provides.

The Council's own Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, though, only represent 8.4% of the Birmingham City Region's emissions. Here the Council needs to use its influencing power to act as a catalyst for change across stakeholder groups through leadership, partnership, communication, lobbying and the provision of health and social care.

3.2 WMCA Climate Emergency Declaration

In June 2019 the WMCA Board declared a climate emergency with a 2041 net zero carbon target. The Board stated it was inspired by the Youth Strike 4 Climate movement, who also told the Board that they expected more from the region's leadership.

In February 2020 the WMCA published its *#WM2041 Actions to meet the climate crisis with inclusivity, prosperity and fairness* Green Paper. The Green paper undertakes to support local authority partners and their net zero targets, but states that the WMCA's own 2041 target is unprecedented in the country and require collaboration with others that will take time to build.

The Green Paper covers a wide range of actions that need to be taken by different stakeholders across the region, identifies who needs to take the lead and how action needs to be thoughtful and inclusive. Actions identified relate to: active travel and cleaner transport, electric vehicle charging, eco-friendly homes, tree planting, behaviour change, re-skilling and employment, clean growth challenges, the role of anchor institutions fiscal mechanisms, energy devolution.

The Green Paper also suggests that the investment programme needed to meet the challenge will be in the order of £40bn over 21 years (2020-2041).

3.3 National Government and the UK Climate Act

The UK Climate Change Act in 2008 legislated to achieve at least an 80% reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2050. This is consistent with keeping the global temperature increase to around 2°C. The Committee on Climate Change was established to oversee a system of carbon budgets that guided and monitored progress. The 2015 Paris climate agreement, however, has the more demanding objective of holding the increase to "well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5° C." In 2019 the UK became the first G7 country to legislate for Net Zero Carbon by 2050 for England.

The Anthesis presentation identifies that, if Birmingham City Region's emissions remain at today's levels, the finite carbon budget implied in the climate budgets will run out in 7 years and that a consistent annual emissions reduction rate of -12.8% is needed to adhere to the budget.

Although local authorities have a key role to play in reducing carbon emissions, the UK Climate Act does not place any statutory duties on local authorities nor provide funding for local sustainability initiatives. The recent APSE Energy report explains how Councils' climate

emergency declarations are ‘voluntary commitments’ Councils are free to choose what they will include in their climate action programs.

4 Taking ‘communities with’ the Council

4.1 Different facets

Taking ‘communities with’ the Council as part of a ‘just transition’ to a net zero carbon city has a number of facets, including:

- Trust and confidence in the Council
- Communicating to residents about the climate change
- How existing community networks are utilised
- Embedding existing democratic and city governance structures
- Resonance with perceived community issues local relevance (co-benefits)

The Council has been working to develop these areas of engagement over the past decade as part of its social inclusion and equality strategies.

4.2 Birmingham 2019 Neighbourhood White Paper

Taking ‘communities with’ the Council on the journey to a Net Zero Carbon city should be approached as part of the Council’s work to build strong, confident and trust-based relationships with neighbourhood organisations.

This involves building a culture based on the principles of localism laid out in the Council’s Neighbourhood White Paper, specifically:

- People are the end goal of localism
- Equality in local participation
- Dynamic local accountability – valuing participation as much as voting and consultation
- Local leadership is built around place
- Localism requires meaningful powers and integrated structures
- Economic power must support community responsibility.

4.3 Social Cohesion and Inclusion agenda

The journey to become a Net Zero Carbon city also needs to be part of Birmingham’s approach to social cohesion and inclusion and ensure that all Birmingham citizens have opportunity across the social and economic life of the city.

In March 2013, following the death of Stephen Lawrence, the *Making Birmingham an inclusive city*’ White Paper identified how Birmingham needed to work together across the city on an inclusive basis. At the time Birmingham was, and still is, a city with high levels of health and income inequality and people need to be able to participate fully in society and the economy. David Cox OBE speaking at the recent Footsteps’ Just Transition – Communities workshop, said that, in his view, the seven aspects of an inclusive city identified in 2013 are still equally valid in 2020. They are:

- Support families and children out of poverty
- Embrace superdiversity
- Protect the most vulnerable
- Connect people and places
- Create a city that values children and young people
- Empower people to shape their neighbourhood
- Address safety, isolation and loneliness

5 Without impoverishing communities

5.1 Economic justice

Birmingham rates 'low' on the key economic justice metrics: jobs per resident, employment rate for residents, qualifications, area deprivation, overcrowding and fuel poverty. There is extensive inequality within Birmingham and the city is also very deprived by national standards. 19 wards in Birmingham have deep or widespread deprivation and half of the wards are in the most deprived fifth of all local areas nationally.

People living in poverty tend to contribute to emissions reductions. They are already low carbon: they are less likely to own a car, and generally consume less - e.g. by rationing heating to pay for food. Lifting people out of poverty will add to emissions unless we can change how this is done.

5.2 Findings from Footsteps' Just Transition workshop

At the Footsteps' Just Transition - Community Perspectives workshop on 20 May participants said 'without impoverishing communities' involved the way in which:

- Inequality and deprivation damage the whole society and result in the city under-achieving
- Inequality is getting worse and the Covid induced recession will impact heavily on poor people.
- Not just income inequality, but also lack of information, influence, internet
- Income and health inequalities and deprivation co-exist and poverty robs people of energy, agency, status and purpose
- There are people who are left out of communities, such as people in care homes, old people left alone
- Persuading housing associations, council and other landlords to use sustainable energy companies, especially for those with prepayment meters

6 How can employment be protected?

A just transition that protects employment involves meaningful work and incomes for residents, the local economy, training and skills development, developing the new low carbon economy and, last but not least, the form that the 'post-Covid recovery' takes.

‘Protecting employment’ cannot be separated from the very deep Covid induced recession that the City will experience and the painful period of restructuring and economic recovery.

As well as needing a conceptually solid framework, a just transition needs to be seen in the context of the current political, economic and Covid pandemic context. A number of plans exist for a ‘green’ Covid recovery, including the Building Back Better initiative. The recent letter from the Committee on Climate Change to the Prime Minister advises that climate policy should play a core part of the post-Covid recovery.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change should be integral to any recovery package. These remain scientific, economic and social imperatives and will only be delivered if ambitious steps are taken during this Parliament. There are clear economic, social, and environmental benefits from immediate expansion of the following measures:

Extract from Committee on Climate Change letter dated 6 May 2020 to Prime Minister

Actions towards net-zero emissions and to limit the damages from climate change will help rebuild the UK with a stronger economy and increased resilience.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change should be integral to any recovery package. These remain scientific, economic and social imperatives and will only be delivered if ambitious steps are taken during this Parliament. There are clear economic, social, and environmental benefits from immediate expansion of the following measures:

- Investments in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Supporting reskilling, retraining and research for a net-zero, well-adapted economy.
- Upgrades to our homes ensuring they are fit for the future.
- Making it easy for people to walk, cycle, and work remotely.
- Tree planting, peatland restoration, green spaces and other green infrastructure.

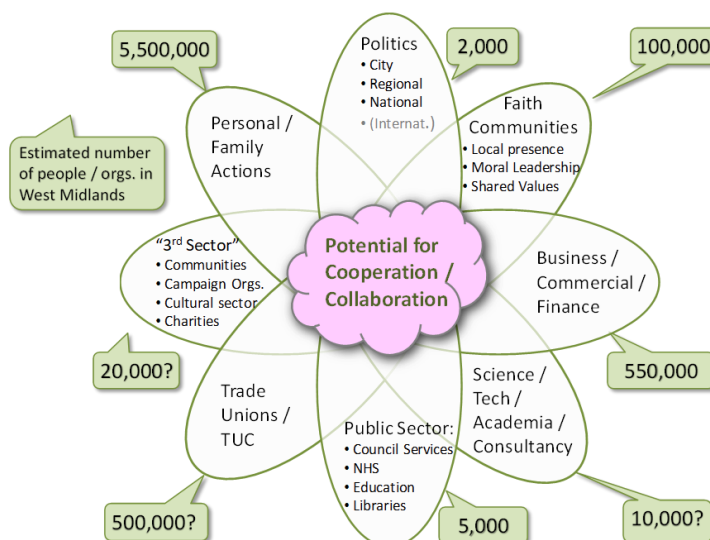
Specific opportunities are then identified in an annex to the letter and form framework for Birmingham’s own recovery and an indicator of where financial support from central Government is most likely to lie.

7 Just Transition – different stakeholder perspectives

7.1 Stakeholder diagram

Taskforce member CANWM has developed the stakeholder diagram below that identifies the features of the main stakeholders in the transition to Birmingham becoming a net zero carbon cities by 2030.

Communities to Engage in Just Transition to Zero-Carbon Region



7.2 Faith community's perspective

The Footsteps - Just Transition - Faith Insight Paper identified four elements of a 'just transition' as:

- New mindsets - reframing problems, using creativity, adopting different economic models.
- Decent jobs - re-skilling, meaningful work, rewarding sustainability, redeployment
- Cooperative approaches - context sensitive, collaborative, non-partisan, empowerment
- Innovative finance - values based, balance, mitigation v. adaptation, crowd funding

These four elements are all consistent with faith community values and practices.

7.3 Climate Action Network West Midlands (CANWM) perspective

The concept of Just Transition refers to the process of transforming society at all levels from one that creates and deepens the climate crisis to one that realises the substantial opportunities that a zero carbon, nature abundant future could yield.

Just transition involves fundamentally re-thinking our relationship to non-human life and to each other. Economic activities must be considered within ecosystems, at both the global and local levels. It means transforming the economic system, not just supporting a 'green' sector within the traditional economy.

A Just Transition secures the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their unions, employers, government and communities. Those most affected by change must be the ones to drive it. A plan for Just Transition provides and guarantees better and decent jobs, social protection, more training opportunities and greater job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies.

7.4 Young people perspective

Today's young people in 60 years-time will be living in a world that, unless the rise in global temperatures is contained to within 1.5° C, will be very different from today's world. This is reflected in the latest demands from Youth Strike for the Climate (YS4C).

Get Serious about the Climate

Demand 1 Communicate: We want the council to communicate to the public in a way that is clear and accessible for all residents of Birmingham, especially on climate-related issues. The council should prioritise climate related issues in their communications and ensure they are telling the public what they are doing to tackle the climate crisis. The council should make their website more accessible provide more frequent updates on social media and inquire into ways to best inform the public of their projects.

Demand 2 Change their Attitude: We want the council to recognise the severity of the issue at hand and change their attitude now. We want the council to radically change their ways in order to adhere to the climate emergency they declared. WE want the government to apply a 'green lens' to every potential venture and allow nothing to disrupt the net zero carbon target. Projects like Tyseley incinerator and Dudley road widening run counter to climate justice and mean they will likely not meet the targets set out in the declaration - this has to stop. A radical attitude shift is needed.

Demand 3 Be Transparent: Projects such as the Tyseley incinerator and Dudley road widening have been discussed behind closed doors, we think this is morally wrong for a city that aims to be green. We need the council to engage with Bham YS4C and with experts on how best to proceed given the climate emergency declaration, and we want them to do this with urgency.

Demand 4 Take Serious Action: Birmingham City Council declared climate emergency on June 11th yet their actions don't reflect the severity of the declaration. The climate is a danger right now: we want the council to invest in green projects to create a foundation for a Net zero carbon future. The council should listen to the science and act accordingly as this is in the interests of each and every human. Decisions made should be in accordance with the principles of the green new deal to create a safer climate and fairer society.

A consistent plea running through the recent Footsteps' Climate - Young People's Perspectives workshop was to improve communications with young people and involve them in the R20 climate emergency decision making process. As proficient social media communicators themselves, activists can help engagement across the city. The young people recognised the need for a just transition and the need to embrace social justice and equality issues. Young people have much to offer in creating change.

7.5 Finance and investment community

Within the global finance world just transition is seen as climate action combined with a levelling up in society. There is long- and well-established approach to 'responsible investment' that incorporates the UN Principles for Responsible Investment. The Financial Stability Board (FSB) Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures provides a framework for companies to disclose the climate impact of both their processes and their products and services.

7.6 West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Perspective

The WMCA has declared a climate emergency with the target of a net zero carbon by 2041. The WMCA's #2041 Green Paper '*Actions to meet the climate crisis with inclusivity, prosperity and fairness*' states that the regions need to make the journey to 2041 without

leaving anyone behind and to shift the West Midlands economy to one which is zero carbon and abides by circular economy principles. It states that the choices we make now will determine whether the region can deliver on its obligations, and the extent to which it can do so in a way which alleviates poverty, deeper inequality, and disenfranchisement.

The WMCA's approach to a just transition is, to quote the #2041 Green Paper, one of a more deliberate and socially purposeful model of economic growth - measured not only by how fast or aggressive it is; but also by how well it is created and shared across the whole population and place, and by the social and environmental outcomes realised.

The WMCA then uses the seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) for assessing and demonstrating whether it is 'focusing on the right things, and delivering against the social and environmental outcomes that people of this region will judge us by'.

In Appendix 1 these SDG's are also used as a framework for assessing whether actions forming up Birmingham's journey to net zero carbon are also part of a 'just transition'.

8 Relationship with Climate Action Plan

A just transition needs to be built into Birmingham's climate action plan.

The recent APSE Energy Local Authority Climate Emergency Declarations report identifies the key characteristics of a climate action plan. These are:

From APSE Energy Local Authority Climate Emergency Declarations report

A platform – the Council must recognise the importance of climate - that it will impact on demand and supply of services so it must be given a high profile. Senior and service managers need to be made aware and given time to consider the impacts on services. They should contribute ideas to how their services will change to address the issues identified;

Finance – all problems require resources and that includes financial resources. The local authority needs to find funds to tackle the emergency. This could be internally or externally sourced, by working with the private sector on pilot projects, crowd-funding, grants and loans or joint projects. It is also important to explore options of investing to save, as engaging with the energy agenda can make and save the local authority a significant amount of money. Investment is about more than just looking at upfront costs, it is necessary to build in the cost of not acting as well as the financial benefits over time;

Training – it is vital that those who carry out the Council's services – the van drivers, those advising benefit claimants to switch energy supplier, the person operating heating systems – understand the context they are working in and the potential impact they might have. This means putting a training plan in place and it is a measure that can be completed in the short term;

Engagement – local authorities are able to bring public and private sector bodies together to act as a group. They can provide capacity and facilities to enable the local community to come together and they can raise the profile of the issue to ensure all have the chance to make a contribution to the debate – at community groups, schools, sports clubs, religious groups and other appropriate settings;

Advocacy – as the only democratically elected organisation in the area the Council has a duty to take a lead on matters as serious as climate change. It should represent local issues at the national level and it should lead activity at the local level – setting an example, educating and investing.

9 Conclusion

In conclusion, a just transition is a process that includes:

- The approach to change
- Creating sustainable systems and relationships systems
- Addressing inequalities and protecting the most vulnerable
- Improving well-being

A just transition involves a balancing act between stakeholders in the Council declaration and their different perspectives. Young people, the finance community, campaign groups, trade unions, faith communities, universities, councillors and the Council itself have their own priorities and agendas, as well as differing power and influence. Inclusive and consultative approaches are needed, recognising that there will be 'winners and losers' along the way, but ensuring that the poor and disadvantaged are not always the losers.

A just transition needs to be embedded in Birmingham's climate action plan that includes a platform, finance, training, engagement and advocacy.

The criteria in Appendix 1 can be used to assess individual actions to identify how they form part of a just transition.

Chris Martin

Footsteps – Faith Community representative on the Birmingham R20 Taskforce

Paper Status: Chris Martin (Footsteps - Faiths for a Low Carbon Future steering group) researching and writing in a personal capacity. The paper includes contributions from the CANWM Steering Group and John Nightingale and feedback from members of the R20 Taskforce Communications and Engagement Subcommittee

24/06/20

APPENDIX 1

Assessing individual actions to identify how they form part of a just transition.

The checklist below is based on WMCA's Inclusive Growth Framework that lays out 'what good looks like' for economic activity. The WMCA Framework involves 'a more deliberate and socially purposeful model of economic growth – measured not only by how fast or aggressive it is; but also, by how well it is created and shared across the whole population and place, and by the social and environmental outcomes it realises for our people.'

Principles Checklist

Respect subsidiarity:

Where does the action come from? Does it come from individuals, households, organisations, neighbourhoods, public institutions, universities and central Government?

Building and recycling wealth

Does the action build and recycle wealth through skills and community ownership? Developing skills that meet the challenges of climate breakdown have a clear, motivating social purpose. Municipal, co-operative or local business ownership of, for example, generating capacity provides stability to the region's energy systems, and a revenue stream that can be invested back into places and people.

Boost health and wellbeing:

Does the action contribute to improving health and wellbeing? For example, involve spending time outdoors in green space, active travel, breathing cleaner air, living in a comfortable home and providing steady incomes.

Take a 'circular' approach:

Does the action form part of the circular economy that 'designs out' waste and pollution, keeps products and materials in use, and regenerates natural systems? This encompasses the reduction, re-use, and recycling of waste, as well a commitment to biodiversity net gain, as well as green spaces, canals, rivers, and lakes.

Investing in comfortable homes and buildings:

Does the action involve investing in the energy performance of buildings to give more comfortable homes and buildings? Does it address homelessness, fuel poverty and energy waste?

Make space for sustainable transport:

Does the action help make space for sustainable transport helping reduce congestion and pollution; discouraging solo occupancy cars, and encouraging walking, cycling, and mass transit.

Champion young leadership:

Does the action involve investing in the creativity, education, skills and capabilities of young people, making space for them to create and lead?

Unite people by creating common cause and addressing inequalities:

Is the action part of a 'common cause' around which people can unite? Does it help close gender, ethnicity, and disability employment and activity gaps and help people more likely to be exposed to the negative impacts of climate change?