

# CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

**FOR THE NEXT MAYOR OF  
TEES VALLEY**

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**10 priorities to protect people and planet  
and help the COVID-19 recovery**

**We're facing a climate and ecological emergency – the biggest threat we've ever seen to humanity's existence. What's more, we need to recover from the damage COVID-19 has done to businesses, jobs, and livelihoods. This is the challenge that awaits the next Mayor of Tees Valley**

Whoever is elected as the next mayor can't single-handedly solve the crisis, but must use the powers they have to make as big a difference as possible. The mayor has a central role to play in providing a vision for the area, and will need to work with councils, businesses, local communities, and the national government.

Tackling the climate, nature and COVID-19 crises must be done in a way which benefits everyone, no matter their income, race, age, or background. It's essential to address the sheer scale of inequalities that exist.

People who are most marginalised – both here in the UK and across the world – have done the least to cause climate breakdown and are the least able to rebound from its impacts.

People on lower incomes, and particularly black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, suffer most from the lack of nature and green space in our towns and cities. This is also true of air pollution, despite a smaller proportion of lower-income and BAME people owning cars than others.

Young people's futures are most at risk from climate breakdown and the decline of nature, and they're also disproportionately impacted by the economic impact of COVID-19.

The next mayor must also shift how the success of a COVID-19 recovery plan is measured. Rather than focusing on economic growth, metrics should identify whether the plan reduces poverty, decreases inequalities, increases wellbeing, and meets carbon reduction and nature restoration goals.

This Climate Action Plan will help the next mayor address the climate and ecological emergencies at the same time as responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **10 priorities the next Mayor of Tees Valley should commit to:**

- 1** Ensuring all infrastructure plans, programmes, and investment decisions – including plans to “build back better” from COVID-19 – are in line with what's needed to address the climate and ecological emergency. The mayor must establish a fair and equitable carbon budget for the Tees Valley, develop an ambitious carbon reduction pathway to keep within that budget, and set a clear action plan to deliver that pathway.
- 2** Ensuring those most impacted by climate breakdown and nature loss are heard and centre-stage in decision-making.
- 3** Protecting workers and communities through a just transition from a fossil fuel-dependent economy to a low-carbon, nature-rich, circular economy, including delivering the 12,772 jobs that a Local Government Association analysis says could be created in the region by 2030.
- 4** Introducing policies and measures that ensure new development is net zero carbon and existing homes are brought up to high energy standards, thereby relegating fuel poverty to the history books.
- 5** At least doubling public transport use, cycling, and walking within the next 10 years, to cut climate emissions and ensure everyone can breathe clean air.
- 6** Powering the region with clean, renewable energy and reaping the economic and job opportunities it will bring, while ensuring fossil fuels are kept in the ground.
- 7** Greening the city-region by increasing tree cover, protecting nature, and eliminating green-space deprivation.
- 8** Becoming a zero-waste city-region by 2030 without reliance on landfill or incineration, to reduce pressures on nature from resource extraction and pollution.
- 9** Calling on the local government pension scheme to divest from fossil fuels, to stop profiting from environmental harm.
- 10** Committing to revitalising communities across the Tees Valley by directing investment towards town centres and away from out-of-town development.

## What this looks like:

- 1 Ensuring all infrastructure plans, programmes, and investment decisions - including plans to “build back better” from COVID-19 - are in-line with what’s needed to address the climate and ecological emergency. The mayor must establish a fair and equitable carbon budget for the Tees Valley, develop an ambitious carbon reduction pathway to keep within that budget and set a clear action plan to deliver that pathway.**

Too many councils and combined authorities across the country are simultaneously declaring climate emergencies while promoting more high-carbon infrastructure like new roads. They also continue to invest in fossil fuels and promote high-carbon activities such as aviation. The adage, that “when you’re in a hole, stop digging”, is apt. All decisions need to be in line with what’s needed to address the climate and ecological emergency.

The Tyndall Centre has recommended that a fair contribution from the Tees Valley to the Paris Agreement would allow 64 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> to be emitted by 2100. It’s estimated that this budget will be completely used up by 2030 if emissions levels are not cut.

High-carbon developments throughout the region currently include new road building, such as the New Tees Crossing and the Darlington Northern Link Road, and the proposed expansion of Durham Tees Valley Airport. These are completely incompatible with getting on the right path to zero carbon.

### Practical action:

The mayor should work with partners across the region to develop an ambitious infrastructure development plan that complies with scientifically robust carbon budgets and supports nature recovery. This will involve working with local councils, the business sector, public services, trade unions, universities, and civil society. Infrastructure needed to tackle the climate and ecological emergency include large-scale programmes for building segregated cycleways and trams, new renewable energy capacity, new green spaces in areas suffering from green-space deprivation, and retrofitting houses with energy efficiency and eco-heating on an area-by-area basis. These programmes would create much needed jobs and help COVID-19 recovery.

The mayor should use their influence within the region and at national level to ensure an infrastructure programme for climate and nature is fully resourced. All existing major schemes should be reviewed to ensure they are compliant.

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- 2 Ensuring those most impacted by climate breakdown and nature loss are heard and centre-stage in decision-making.**

In the Tees Valley 161 neighbourhoods have been identified by researchers as being particularly vulnerable to surface flooding due to their location and demographics (for example, age or income). Flooding and extreme heat will both be exacerbated by climate breakdown.

In addition, 14 neighbourhoods have been identified as among those most deprived of green space in England. Green space is essential for physical and mental health and the lack of it in some areas has become very apparent during COVID-19 lockdowns. It must also be recognised that those who have done least to contribute to climate breakdown are often the most vulnerable to its effects.

### Practical action:

The mayor must commit to involving all citizens, but especially young people and the most vulnerable communities in decision-making and action planning. The mayor must also recognise the impact of decisions made today on the wellbeing of future generations and commit to having youth representation on the governance structures within the region.

Deliberative democracy approaches like citizen juries, citizen assemblies, and participatory mapping and budgeting should be used, especially for complicated or contentious choices.

Spending on climate change adaptation and nature restoration should focus on the most vulnerable communities.

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**3**

### **Protecting workers and communities through a just transition from a fossil fuel-dependent economy to a low-carbon, nature-rich, circular economy, including delivering 12,772 new jobs in the region by 2030.**

Green jobs and training will both be necessary to achieve a credible and sustainable plan for the region and to help the region's economy recover from the pandemic. The green economy is already the fastest growing part of the UK economy and action in this area will benefit the region.

The Local Government Association (LGA) says nearly 0.7 million direct jobs could be created in England's low-carbon and renewable-energy economy by 2030, rising to more than 1.18 million by 2050. Developing green industry, jobs and training programmes are essential to the future of the Tees Valley.

The LGA analysis suggests the region could benefit from 12,772 jobs over the next decade. That includes a potential 3,846 jobs in low-carbon electricity, 2,020 in low-carbon heat, 2,812 in alternative fuels, 1,848 in energy efficiency, 375 in low-carbon services, and 1,871 in low-emissions vehicles and related infrastructure.

#### **Practical action:**

The mayor should invest in green jobs, apprenticeships, and sustainable enterprise, leaving no communities behind. The job losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic mean that plans, investments and decisions to build the green economy in sectors such as renewable energy, housing retrofit, sustainable transport, nature restoration and the circular economy must be fast-tracked and prioritised. The mayor must push for the UK government to give councils the resources and powers to accelerate skills development. The mayor must also work with businesses, unions and others to develop locally relevant transition plans and for local investment to develop new employment within these sectors.

The mayor should also support the development of carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a means of helping industry decarbonise. But CCS must not be used to perpetuate the use of fossil fuels for energy or for the production of hydrogen through natural gas steam methane reformation.

The mayor should also seek to ensure that the Hydrogen Transport Hub on Teesside, announced in September 2020, is developed with green hydrogen that's produced from renewable energy and not from natural gas. Natural gas will still contribute to climate change through fugitive emissions from extraction, even if very high rates of capture are achieved at the hydrogen production site.

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**4**

### **Introducing policies and measures that ensure new development is net zero carbon and existing homes are brought up to high energy standards, thereby relegating fuel poverty to the history books.**

Any new homes and developments need to be built as net zero carbon. But most of the buildings that will be in use over the next 50 years have already been built. Only 38% of homes are currently well insulated in the Tees Valley. This represents a shocking waste of energy, high greenhouse gas emissions and unnecessarily high energy bills.

10% of households in the area are in fuel poverty, which means they can't afford to heat their homes properly. Poor insulation contributes to this problem. With more people at home because of unemployment resulting from COVID-19 or increased home working, this problem will get worse without urgent action.

#### **Practical action:**

All homes must be brought up to high energy-efficiency standards by rolling out an area-by-area retrofit and heat-pump installation programme, ending the misery of cold, expensive-to-heat homes. 20,106 homes need to be insulated every year within the Tees Valley to ensure all homes are properly

insulated by 2030.

In addition, the transition away from gas-fired boilers in our homes to eco-heating systems needs to be well underway. At least 12,117 heat pumps need to be fitted every year in the Tees Valley.

All new development must be net zero carbon, including all housing as standard, starting immediately.

## **5 At least doubling public transport use, cycling, and walking within the next 10 years, to cut climate emissions and ensure everyone can breathe clean air.**

The Tees Valley must achieve a dramatic change to transport infrastructure and travel habits so that using public transport (when safe it's to do so) or cycling and walking become the default. Enabling people to get around with minimum impact on the environment will also bring about big improvements in air quality. Everybody should be able to live decently and get about without needing a car. Across the UK, almost 50% of the lowest income families (people in the bottom 20% income bracket) don't have access to a car. The proportion of women that don't have access to one is twice that of men. Access to alternatives to car ownership is a social justice and social cohesion issue, as well as an environmental issue.

Air pollution is a real problem and limit for the toxic gas nitrogen dioxide are breached across the area. Fine particulate matter air pollution is the most damaging to health, and even World Health Organisation standards aren't considered "safe".

The mayor must protect the health of local people and commit to taking action to ensure air quality standards are met across the whole region.

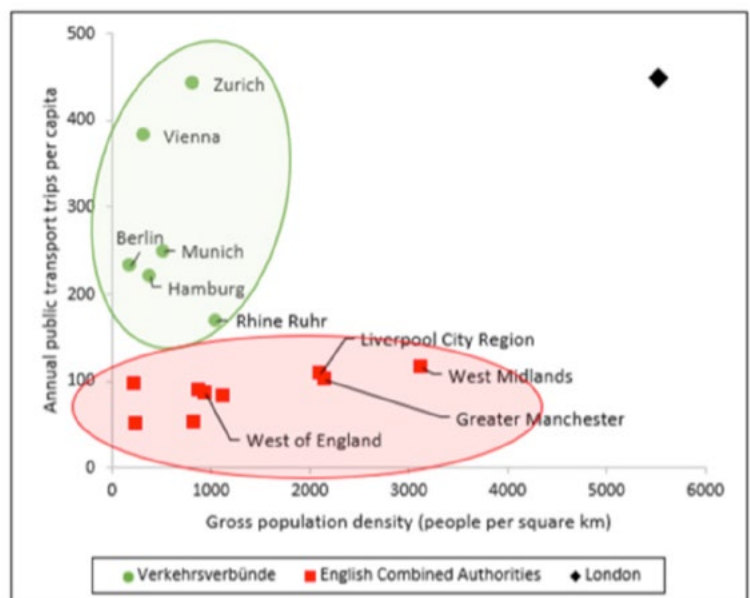
### **Practical action:**

On mainland Europe many places provide much better public transport. As a result, levels of public transport use are 3 to 4 times higher than they are in the UK's combined authority areas (see graph: Verkehrsverbünde are integrated regional public transport services).

To double public transport use, cycling and walking, the barriers to a good transport system need to be removed. The mayor should call for additional powers to re-regulate buses, develop a franchise system or commit to implementing these powers where they are already in place. In mainland Europe, some regions also control suburban trains as well as buses. The mayor should commit to improving rural public transport with the opportunity to extend the recently introduced demand-responsive bus network across the region.

The Tees Valley can also do much better at providing safe cycling routes. Research shows that 30% of commuter journeys in the region could be by bike if there was good cycling infrastructure, such as segregated cycleways and the uptake of e-bikes. A comprehensive network of safe segregated cycle routes like those planned in Copenhagen, Denmark should be the goal.

Pop-up cycle lanes and other active travel measures introduced as part of the emergency response to COVID-19 should be kept in place wherever possible, and new routes should be connected across the region. It's really important to build community support for these changes and consult in advance about



Annual per capita public transport trips in six continental Verkehrsverbünde (Transport Authorities), the English Combined Authorities, and London



new routes and measures.

Currently only around 22% of commuter journeys in the Tees Valley are by walking, cycling and public transport. As a bare minimum, the mayor should work to increase this to 52% by 2030. Money to achieve this transformation can be raised through schemes like the Workplace Parking Levy successfully pioneered by Nottingham City Council.

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**6**

## **Powering the region with clean, renewable energy and reaping the economic and job opportunities it will bring, while ensuring fossil fuels are kept in the ground.**

A rapid growth in renewable energy is needed to wean the UK off electricity produced by fossil fuels and to provide the extra electricity needed to heat homes and power transport. Some of this renewable energy can be provided in the Tees Valley.

The Tees Valley has the potential to be a crucial part of the supply chain for the growing offshore wind industry. The recent plans to develop the South Bank Quay to supply the Dogger Bank Wind Farm is to be welcomed.

### **Practical action:**

Sustainable energy infrastructure and renewable energy production must be delivered across the region in partnership with local authorities, communities, and energy utilities. In particular, community ownership of renewable energy should be encouraged and supported.

Currently 340,153 GWh of renewable energy is generated in the Tees Valley. This is equal to only 7% of household energy use. If every council area within the region matched the best similar areas, then 1,697,432 GWh could be produced.

In addition, all public purchasing of energy should be from 100% renewable power.

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**7**

## **Greening the city region by increasing tree cover, protecting nature, and eliminating green-space deprivation.**

Access to good quality green space is essential for people's physical and mental health. Green space, trees and other "green infrastructure" are also essential for nature. Friends of the Earth has used data on green space, gardens, and open-access land to rate access to green space for neighbourhoods in the region ([a map is available here](#)). Results unsurprisingly show that low-income and BAME communities are worst off when it comes to access to green space.

### **Practical action:**

In the Tees Valley there are 14 neighbourhoods rated E (the most green-space deprived). The region should aim to eliminate green-space deprivation by ensuring everybody has access to enough good quality green space. In some areas this might mean opening-up school grounds outside of school hours or converting some streets or car parks into public green space. It also means increasing tree cover with more street trees and growing more trees and woods on council-owned land. Friends of the Earth has [produced a map](#) identifying where new woodlands could be planted outside urban areas.

The new Metro mayor should use their influence to ensure that planning development does not result in the destruction of woodland and green space. For example, the mayor should oppose the removal of community woodland as part of the Skerningham Garden Village proposals near Darlington.

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**8**

## **Becoming a zero-waste city region by 2030 without reliance on landfill or incineration, to reduce pressures on nature from resource extraction and pollution.**

Only 33% of household waste in the Tees Valley is reused, recycled, or composted. The best local authorities in Wales are achieving more than 70%.

Incineration, or so called energy from waste, is not a sustainable alternative. It's even more carbon polluting than gas-fired power stations and it also contributes to local air pollution. Plans from Tees Valley councils (with Durham and Newcastle councils) to burn 450,000 tonnes of waste every year for up to 40 years at a new incinerator in Grangetown need to be urgently reconsidered.

### **Practical action:**

The Tees Valley should aim for 70% of household waste to be reused, recycled, or composted by 2025, and to achieve zero waste by 2030.

The mayor should also bring in doorstep food waste recycling across the region and make it easier for people and businesses to stop sending waste to landfill or incineration.

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**9**

## **Calling on the local government pension scheme to divest from fossil fuels, to stop profiting from environmental harm.**

Local government pension schemes are contributing to the climate crisis by investing in climate-wrecking gas, oil, and coal companies. This investment is leading to the loss of lives and livelihoods, and the displacement of people from their homes due to extreme weather.

### **Practical action:**

The mayor should publicly call for the local government pension scheme to divest from fossil fuels and engage directly with the local authorities that control these funds, encouraging them to make immediate commitments to divest from all fossil fuels.

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**10**

## **Commit to revitalising communities across the Tees Valley by directing investment towards town centres and away from out-of-town development.**

Greenhouse emissions from transport need to reduce significantly in the next decade for the UK as part of its contribution to tackling climate change.

Research carried out for Friends of the Earth shows that, even if all vehicles sold after 2030 were electric, we would still need to reduce car use by at least 20% (and up to 60%) by 2030.

To do this, business and retail development in the Tees Valley needs to be connected to where people live. The regeneration of town centres and neighbourhoods would be a major step forward in the development of "15-minute communities" where people can meet most, if not all, of their needs within a short walk or bike ride.

### **Practical action:**

The Tees Valley Mayor should play a leadership role in the collaborative development of a region-wide vision for a network of 15-minute communities across the Tees Valley.

They should work in partnership with the local authorities and the newly formed Town Deal Boards to foster this development, including focusing on businesses, retail outlets and thriving public spaces that are accessible to where people live.

They should also steer investment away from car-dominated retail developments and ensure industry and businesses are as connected as possible to housing.

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## Notes and further information

Details of the methodology, data sources and targets used [are available](#).

A summary report on green space deprivation, together with links to a map and full report, [is available](#).

The graph in the transport section is taken from [A radical transport response to the climate emergency](#) by Transport for Quality of Life, Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace.

The estimate of renewable energy capacity in the area outlined in point 6 excludes offshore wind. It also excludes biomass energy, because some biomass sources can have a large carbon footprint and harm biodiversity. And it excludes incineration, because of its very high carbon emissions.