
Agenda Item: Carbon Footprint Report – Witney Civil Parish

Meeting Date: Tuesday 9 September 2025

Contact Officer: Compliance and Environment Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on officer's progress with actions that will progress the Witney Town Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

Background

At its meeting on 26 June 2019, Witney Town Council formally declared a Climate Emergency. In response, the Council committed to taking all necessary measures to address climate change, setting a target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2028 in pursuit of a cleaner, more sustainable future for its residents.

Current Situation

Officers are currently drafting a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to equip the Council with the necessary powers, resources, and clearly defined milestones to meet its carbon neutrality target. The Strategy will also enable the Council to support and complement wider community initiatives aimed at reducing the town's overall carbon footprint.

Supporting Information

Attached as Appendix A is the Carbon Footprint Report for Witney Parish (dated 15 July 2025), which will inform and guide officers and Members in delivering the phased objectives outlined in the forthcoming Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Carbon Footprint Audit for Witney Parish

Reducing carbon emissions and plastic waste is a fundamental step in tackling the climate emergency and protecting the environment. Parish and town councils are well-positioned to lead by example - by reducing emissions from their own operations, supporting sustainable practices among local businesses and residents, and promoting waste reduction and circular economy initiatives.

An understanding of Witney Parish's carbon footprint is essential for developing an effective emissions reduction strategy. Carbon calculators can be used to measure emissions from energy consumption, transport, and waste. Establishing a baseline through a carbon audit will help identify key areas for improvement across the community.

Carbon Footprint Report (Appendix A)

The attached report provides an overview of the Witney community's carbon footprint, including the scale of emissions and the primary sources contributing to them. This data has been generated using Impact (<https://impact-tool.org.uk/>), an online community carbon footprint calculator developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the University of Exeter. The tool enables carbon footprinting at the parish level and has evolved to allow analysis across various geographical scales.

The Impact tool draws on over 30 datasets, some of which are composites of multiple sources. As with all modelling tools, methodological decisions influence the data selection and analysis. The resulting footprints are intended as practical guides rather than definitive measurements.

The report presents both territorial-based and consumption-based emissions and compares Witney's footprint with district and national averages.

Understanding Territorial vs. Consumption Footprints

- **Territorial Footprint:** Measures emissions produced within a defined geographical boundary, including those from heating, transport, industry, and agriculture. These emissions are counted regardless of whether the activities serve local residents or external markets.
- **Consumption Footprint:** Captures emissions resulting from residents' activities, regardless of where those emissions occur. This includes emissions from food, clothing, household goods, leisure, travel, and home heating. This approach uses household-level data aggregated to the community level.

The Impact tool presents this data visually and includes comparisons with other towns, helping to initiate informed discussions and raise awareness of everyday behaviours that contribute to emissions.

Using the Data to Guide Action

The Impact Community Carbon Calculator will be instrumental in identifying priority areas for emissions reduction. Analysis of the data can help initiate conversations, highlight areas with the greatest potential for impact, and inform both personal and community-level actions.

By comparing Witney's emissions profile with national averages, the Council can identify specific challenges and opportunities. This comparative approach will help target interventions where they are likely to be most effective.

Engaging the Community and Monitoring Progress

An early priority will be to engage and educate the community on how to interpret and use the Impact tool's insights. The footprint data can guide strategic efforts to reduce emissions and support the Council in setting meaningful change targets.

Each section of the report includes suggested targets and reflective questions to help the Council identify potential areas for action. The data is intended to raise awareness and deepen understanding of the activities contributing to emissions, thereby encouraging both individual and collective action.

The carbon footprint report will be reviewed annually to monitor progress, benchmark against regional and national averages, and inform future Council decisions.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – The impacts of implementing a Climate Change Strategy for Witney will have equal impact on all services, customers, and staff as there is shared benefit.
- b) Biodiversity – Climate change action plans can include measures to protect and restore biodiversity, which in turn can help with climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the report.
- c) Crime & Disorder - No direct crime and disorder impact with regards to the content of this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The information and suggested targets within the report will have a direct, positive impact on the Council's plan for the wider positive benefits towards climate change mitigation and adaptation across the town.

Risk

In decision making Members should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Any recommendations will be reported to the appropriate Committee and Full Council for approval.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will have multi-dimensional impact across various areas including social, economic, and environmental benefits. Stakeholder engagement will be crucial including the public, communities, and local businesses. Consideration of the effects on local communities, including economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability will form the draft documents.

Financial implications

- Any costs associated with the Climate Emergency Action Plan incorporating the reduction of the carbon footprint for Witney will follow Council process and be reported to appropriate committees for approval or from existing budget allocations.
- All external funding opportunities will be explored to support climate action costs.
- Officers will maximise the use of support by the various organisations and agencies available.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That officers undertake an analysis of the Carbon Footprint Report for Witney Parish, in collaboration with Members of the Climate and Biodiversity Committee and the Climate Action Working Party, and to prepare draft recommendations and proposed actions for subsequent consideration by the relevant committee.