

RBWM CLIMATE STRATEGY RESPONSE DOCUMENT

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SUMMARY

The East Berkshire Green party welcomes the Royal Borough's Climate Strategy document and the current consultation process. We have drawn up a response to it that is often critical of its scope and ambition but want to underline that this is a step in the right direction.

Our principal issues are

The length of time proposed to reach net zero

Linear targets

Poorly articulated or missing metrics, targets, responsibilities, accountability and dates

Under resourced

Change and engagement

Dealing with these in turn

TIMESCALES

Where is the urgency? Scientists are agreed that we need to reduce our CO2 emissions by about 50% by 2030 and net zero by 2050 to keep the average temperature rise below 1.5 °C. This will allow us to escape the worst effects of climate change. Climate change is already driving changes to weather all across the world causing populations to begin moving, even in the UK and the US and fuelling conflict for resources in the regions that already have challenging climates.

This is not something we think might happen, we know it will happen. In the UK, we have seen a huge increase in flooding that have caused damage costing billions and loss of life. These will get worse and more frequent, and as our coastlines are changed and our summers get hotter who knows how this will play out in our small nation.

We are much more capable than most countries to reduce our emissions, we have wealth and expertise and as the first nation to industrialise and to begin the large-scale production of CO2 by burning fossil fuels, we should take the lead.

We demand that the target date for net zero in RBWM be re-stated as 2030.

LINEAR TARGETS

The climate change we all face is by nature not linear, some changes will be easier than others and some have a larger effect than others. The behaviour we are likely to exhibit is to do the easy things first leaving all the difficult tasks to the end; which will almost certainly cause us to miss the target. The Paris accord, which RBWM's Climate Strategy quotes, calls for accelerated action in the 2020's.

We demand that the targets be non-linear and as a guideline should be a halving of the current CO2 emissions in each 5-year period, i.e. in this first five-year period, from 671 ktCO2 to 336 ktCO2.

POORLY ARTICULATED OR MISSING METRICS, TARGETS, RESPONSIBILITIES, ACCOUNTABILITY AND DATES

Activities must be well defined and measured so that they can be targeted, each should also have a date by when it will be completed and set out who is responsible for driving the activity and who is accountable should the activity not be successful, i.e., not hit target. Without these elements in place, those who are responsible cannot be sure they are doing the right thing and the person accountable cannot be held to task if the activity fails.

We demand that all activities are well-defined and state metrics, targets, responsibilities, accountability and dates.

• UNDER RESOURCED

The council is poorly resourced in both people and money; in the strategy document RBWM suggest multiple times that central government will need to fund some aspect. We suggest that if we wait for that we will be likely to miss our targets, we need to raise money to find and fund the right people and projects to get to net zero and we need to bear in mind that we will be in competition with every other council and the whole world.

We demand that the council use its ability to set Council tax and Business Rates to begin raising a ring-fenced war chest to fight climate change and that this be included in the plan.

CHANGE AND ENGAGEMENT

This will be the biggest project ever undertaken in the borough, a multi-year project involving every aspect of its resident's life. As such, we need to pay attention to managing that change effectively. Change does not just come from above but must also come from the bottom as well. People must be consulted, truly consulted and not just not once but continuously, and their ideas incorporated in the plan, when the majority of people in the borough feel that the plan is their plan, the changes we need to make will become much easier, especially politically.

We demand that the plan includes objectives and actions for community engagement and strongly suggest that the council add a change manager to the team of officers working on it.

BACKGROUND TO THE REST OF THIS DOCUMENT

The council have divided their plan into 4 sections – Circular Economy, Energy, Natural Environment and Transport. We have followed this pattern, analysing each section separately for discussion.

Theme 1 - Circular Economy



3.9 **Aim:** Reduce waste and consumption, increase material re-use and increase recycling rates in the borough

Objectives:

- Reduce residual waste
- Improve recycling rates
- Promote more sustainable food choices

Targets:

We aim to improve recycling rates to over 50% by 2025, moving us into the top 100 council's in the country.

We commit to improve composting rates by 10% by 2025

3.10 Although BEIS do not deem waste as under the scope of emissions for local authorities, the efficient and sustainable use of resource is critical to establishing a low carbon future. There is a significant opportunity for those living and working in the borough to have an impact and reduce emissions and environmental impact in this area. It's an area our residents feel passionate about too.

3.11 This theme focuses our attention on reducing waste, increasing recycling and supporting less resource intensive lifestyles through greater re-use of material. There are opportunities to support local suppliers, innovation and sustainable approaches to food production.

3.12 We need to reduce residual waste consumption, and increase the amount we re-use, recycle or compost as soon as we can. We will build on the achievements we have already made, namely our zero to landfill waste policy. Currently around 44% of household waste is recycled or composted, the remaining 56% is sent to an energy from waste plant. The official England 'waste from households' recycling rate was 44.7% in 2018⁵. We will improve recycling rates to ensure we are a leader in recycling and waste management.

3.13 We aim to improve recycling rates to over 50% by 2025, moving us into the top 100 Council's in the Country. We also aim to improve the proportion that is composted since that generates further carbon emissions savings. To do that, we will first of all have to understand current composting rates. We commit to understanding them and improving them by 10% by 2025.

AIM

Reduce waste and consumption, increase material re-use and increase recycling rates in the borough.

Currently the aim of this strategic theme lacks ambition.

The focus is to reduce residual waste and increase household recycling rates. The aim should be to reduce total waste. We cannot recycle our way out of the problem. If we could recycle all of the plastic ever manufactured, we would already have more plastic than we could ever need.

Manufacture, recycling and composting require large amounts of energy. We need to reduce this energy use by reducing consumption.

A better aim might be:

Reduce total waste by reducing consumption, and reduce residual waste by increasing recycling, re-use and composting.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives underline the point that the emphasis of this strategic theme lacks vision and ambition.

The Key Action is to increase household recycling. The key action should be to reduce total waste, and this should be measured against a target from day 1.

The primary objective should be to “Reduce total waste”. Reducing residual waste, increasing recycling rates, and ultimately reducing recycling rates when they have reached a maximum, are subsidiary objectives.

Food supply and sustainability is an enormous subject and if it is to be addressed in this strategy should be a strategic theme of its own. It is out of place under Circular Economy.

TARGETS

In general, the targets lack ambition.

REDUCE RESIDUAL WASTE.

Three trial repair café events in 2020/21 could easily be amended to five events – quarterly from Q4 2020 to the end of 2021.

Refillable shops has no target in terms of number or timescale.

Emphasis for businesses should be reduce and re-use.

SUP strategy was delivered in the first week of July and the emphasis is almost entirely on reduce.

Three new clothing swap shops by when?

Re-use shop at waste site – feasibility study and business case by when?

IMPROVE RECYCLING RATES

Waste baseline is essential but it should be driven by the objective to reduce total waste and should address all types of waste, not just recycling.

Maidenhead Library trial could be by 2021.

PROMOTING MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES

Increasing composting by 10% by 2025 massively lacks ambition. It should have peaked and be coming down again by then.

Remaining targets are not measurable.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

REDUCE RESIDUAL WASTE

The first 5 years should be about “big ticket items” and “low hanging fruit”. Repair cafes, refill shops, clothing swap shops and reuse shop may not fall into either of these categories. That is why a waste baseline is so important.

PROMOTING MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES

The current actions just scratch the surface of the subject.

Improve education about what can be recycled should be improve education about reducing waste. Recycling is just one component.

FOR CONSIDERATION

The current draft feels as though Circular Economy has been included because it is new and somebody thought it ought to be, without really knowing what it is. It therefore seems a bit of an untidy mixture. This will no doubt improve over time as the vision for it becomes clearer, but in the meantime, would it be better to focus on reducing total waste/consumption and increasing recycling, subject to the results of the waste baseline?

Theme 2 - Energy

3.14 Aim: Reduce energy consumption and decarbonise supply

Objectives:

- Reduce energy demand
- Decarbonise supply
- Increase renewables generation

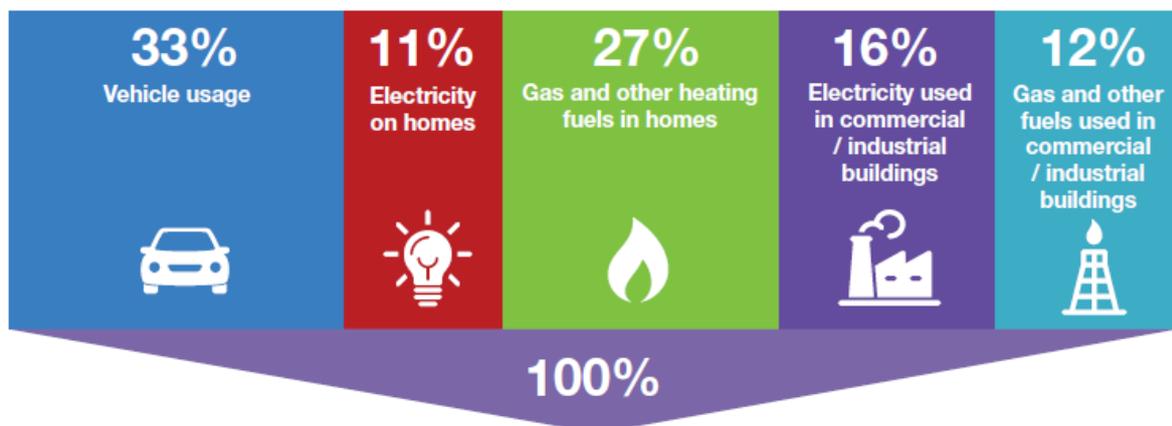
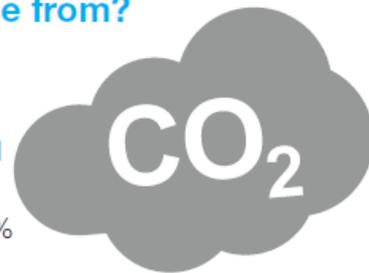
Targets: Our target is to reduce emissions from energy by 75 ktCO₂ by 2025, in line with the trajectory we have set out and increase renewable capacity 10 fold by 2025.

AIMS/OBJECTIVES/TARGET

Reducing energy demand and decarbonising supply is obviously the right thing to do but the target is unclear, using the figures from page 17 of the document

Where do emissions in the Royal Borough come from?

- Vehicle usage 223.1 kt CO₂ 33% of total emissions
- Electricity used to power homes 72 kt CO₂ 11% of total emissions
- Gas and other fuels used to heat homes 185 kt CO₂ 27% of total emissions
- Electricity used in commercial/industrial buildings 110 kt CO₂ 16% of total emissions
- Gas and other fuels e.g. oil used in commercial and industrial buildings 80 kt CO₂ 12% of total emissions



We can see that energy use (excluding transport) is 447kt CO₂, the 75kt CO₂ reduction by 2025 is therefore again a linear reduction, 1/6th of the total required.

We demand a more aggressive target of half the existing emissions, 224kt CO₂ by 2025

- 3.15 Two-thirds of the borough's emissions are a result of energy consumption in buildings. Reducing our energy consumption and decarbonising our supply of energy is therefore central to realising the borough's net zero emission ambitions. The Committee on Climate Change, the Government's independent advisory committee on climate change believe that a shift to a renewable energy based energy supply is an essential step to the UK achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- 3.16 Our objectives under this theme reflect these three focus areas; reducing energy demand, decarbonising supply and increasing local renewables generation. Actions to reduce energy demand (e.g. improving insulation) will create co-benefits too, for example it will help tackle fuel poverty which helps us protect the vulnerable and provide affordable housing.
- 3.17 Our target is to reduce emissions from energy by 75 ktCO₂ by 2025, in line with the trajectory we have set out. The majority of buildings in the borough that will be here in 2050 have already been built. Our focus therefore will be to look at how best to support those buildings to improve their energy efficiency and transition to low carbon heat and power solutions.
- 3.18 This will be complemented by a focus on significantly increasing renewable energy generation capacity in the borough. Currently the Royal Borough produces 13,142 MWh renewable energy per year⁶. Some well performing boroughs are producing 10 times more than this⁷. We aim therefore to increase renewable capacity 10 fold by 2025. This would save 33ktCO₂.

Insulation, Solar PV, Solar Thermal and Heat Pumps can decarbonize the energy requirements of most buildings in RBWM, assuming electricity supply becomes 100% carbon free, combined with energy efficient and smartly controlled devices. (See ZCB Rising to the Climate Emergency published by CAT)

Some buildings and industries may use Biomass as a fuel, or synthetic carbon fuels such as hydrogen or Biogas or a combination.

For example, currently RBWM generates 13,000 MWh of renewable energy. RBWM has 140,000 households so if 3kWp of PV were installed on 75% of these houses, RBWM could generate 270,000 MWh, a 20-fold increase in renewable generation. 50% or more of this electricity would be exported and could be used for electric vehicle charging, and create an income stream.

Installing good insulation and heat pump systems to the same number of houses would decarbonize by 1,000,000 MWh (10 MWh per house per year). It is all possible, but you have to spend the money, but on this scale, the costs will come down a lot, could be as low as £10K per house for a Photo Voltaic and Heat pump system. That is still £1.4B just for RBWM.

Householders need considerable technical advice and support – maybe this is the role for Local Government? Some local authorities, such as Nottingham or Hackney invested in renewable energy, creating an income for the local council.

Theme 3 – Natural environment

3.19 Aim: Cleaner air, higher water quality and increased biodiversity

Objectives:

- Protect and enhance our natural environment
- Green our towns and urban areas
- Increase awareness of biodiversity

Targets: We will set a new biodiversity net gain requirement, of 10% for developers through the planning system.

3.20 Changes to our climate will have a significant impact on our natural environment therefore it is important we take steps to protect it. Quality of life and the role of the natural environment in creating great places is a critical part of the success of the borough economy, and to our residents' health and wellbeing. Helping our residents to be able to access green spaces and support their local environment will have a positive impact on mental and general health.

3.21 Taking actions to protect and enhance our natural assets will help protect against the effects of climate change too. Biodiversity, through the ecosystem services it supports, makes an important contribution to both climate-change mitigation and adaptation. Consequently, conserving and sustainably managing biodiversity is critical to addressing climate change.

3.22 We will take action to deliver biodiversity net gain and in doing so this will help protect the ecosystem service benefits we receive (e.g. clean air and water). There are opportunities to protect and enhance our green and blue infrastructure (e.g. rivers, woodlands) within the Royal Borough. Currently we have 16,000 hectares of green and blue infrastructure which accounts for 80% of the land within the borough. We will set a new biodiversity net gain requirement, of 10% for developers through the planning system, in line with the Environment Bill 2020. We will use the concept of Nature Recovery Networks to enhance biodiversity.

AIM

Cleaner air, higher water quality and increased biodiversity

A stronger aim, could more aligned with the 10-year mission statement for DEFRA's Biodiversity 2020's strategy: "To halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people"

OBJECTIVES

- ***Protect and enhance our natural environment***
- ***Green our towns and urban areas***
- ***Increase awareness of biodiversity***

These are important objectives however, we feel that the actions and measures of success that underpin them are not very ambitious and slow to respond, biodiversity and opportunity will be lost during the preparatory phase. There need to be greater level of urgency to meet these objectives, utilising all expertise and resources available. Enhanced suggestions are made in 'specific actions'

TARGETS

We will set a new biodiversity net gain requirement, of 10% for developers through the planning system.

- Mandatory "Biodiversity net gain", as set out in the Environment Bill, requires development to deliver at least a 10 % improvement in biodiversity value.
- We would like to see RBWM set a more ambitious and specific target than to just meet the minimum government requirements.
- We share the same concern of the Wild Groups: if the aim is limited to, land in planning applications biodiversity will continue to decline in RBWM.
- To help quantify the value of this target, please shared further statistics, for example:
 - What percentage of land in RBWM goes 'through the planning system'?
 - Over what time period is 10% net gain to be achieved.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

1. Work with partners to establish a Nature Recovery Network

Measure: Prepare a funding bid by December 2020

2. Engage community groups to enable a rewilding programme

Measure: To have launched the programme and agreed targets by 2022

- There at least six Wild Groups in RBWM (Ascot, Cookham, Datchet, Eton & Eton Wick, Maidenhead and Windsor) these community groups are active and highly motivated to drive action.
- We would like to see RBWM leverage these existing groups and agree targets far sooner than in 18 months' time, with a phased rewilding programme across the borough starting in 2021.

3. Continue and extend the council's new mowing regime for roadside verges to ensure maximum wild flower success

Measure: Extend scheme by 50% by 2024

- With a pilot mowing regime already in place, this could be a quick win to encourage biodiversity. Maximising wild flower success is a relatively simple case of cutting verges less often and remove the arisings, which otherwise fertilize the land, suppressing wild flower growth.
- With the current council pilot regime allegedly focusing on only 5-10 sites in RBWM, we ask why extend the scheme by only 50% within 4 years? An increase of 50% is not nearly good enough. Please state the estimated size of the area to be managed under the new regime to maximise wildflower success compared to the total area of all verges.
- Guidance is readily available in the public domain, it is just a case of implementation and the target could be more aggressive, once sites have been mapped for suitability and safety.
<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/publications/road-verge-management-guide>

4. To develop a biodiversity baseline and metrics for the borough based on the work already undertaken in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Study and by the local 'Wild Groups'

Measure: To have agreed baseline measures and metrics by June 2021 and identified areas of current biodiversity value

- Policy QP2 Green and Blue Infrastructure supersedes Policy IF3
<http://consult.rbwm.gov.uk/portal/blp/blpsv-pc/blpsv-pc-oct19?pointId=s1559580199238>

GREEN OUR TOWNS AND URBAN AREAS.

1. Work with developers to provide green infrastructure in new town centre developments

Measure: Ensure all new town centre developments provides some form of green infrastructure in any public realm

- Will this be mandatory, we suggest that it should be. 'Some form of infrastructure' is very vague. What are the most valuable forms of green infrastructure to support biodiversity (e.g. a wildlife corridor, sedum (green) roofs etc..?) Suggest the council provides a prioritised (value based) list of green infrastructure type to ensure maximum return on investment in terms of biodiversity gain.
- See Natural England's Green Infrastructure guidance

2. Increase tree cover in the Royal Borough

Measure: Plant 15,000 new trees by 2025 whilst looking at best practice from other councils to maximise benefits

- We do not feel that this target number is anywhere near bold enough, compared to other councils e.g. After declaring a climate emergency, Surrey County Council has committed to work with partners to agree Surrey's collective response, which will include a strategy for becoming carbon neutral as early as possible. As part of this, the council has committed to facilitate the planting of 1.2 million trees – one for every Surrey resident – by 2030.
<https://www.local.gov.uk/surrey-county-council-facilitating-planting-12-million-new-trees-2030>
- Have locations for the new trees been identified? What partners will you collaborate with to ensure that the trees survive to maturity and deliver the intended benefits.

INCREASE AWARENESS OF BIODIVERSITY.

1. Provide biodiversity training to planning officers

Measure: Ensure planning officers have been provided with biodiversity training by 2022

- There are allegedly 50 planning officers in RBWM - having training/guidance/policy ASAP could have a big impact between now and 2022. We ask why wait 2 years? If budget is a barrier, free training courses are offered now via CIEEM.
<http://events.cieem.net/Events/EventPages/20082020000000BiodiversityIssuesWhatPlannersNeedtoKnow.aspx>

2. Set up biodiversity and climate education sessions at Braywick Nature reserve

Measure: Run training sessions for local businesses and education for local schools

- We are very encouraging of this activity, instilling a sense of stewardship in the community and across local businesses will expedite the success of the strategy in every aspect.
- Can local businesses be encouraged to fund this objective for example to receive recognition to supporting the community and commitment to RBWM's plan?

3. Offer a volunteering programme and awareness training for council employees and partners

Measure: Set up a scheme by December 2022

- A volunteering programme for council employees and partners is a positive way to accelerate awareness and understanding of the issue at hand. We feel the sooner this programme can begin the better to create a sense of shared responsibility and urgency.

4. Encourage wildlife friendly gardening

Measure: Better support existing schemes run by community organisations

- Gardens in Maidenhead alone make up 10% of the land area, encouraging wildlife friendly gardening could be a quick win. We would like to see a target date associated to goal.
- Wild Maidenhead already has a scheme up and running and ready to roll out the 'Wild About Gardens Awards'. This could be rolled out borough wide if supported and promoted by the council.

Theme 4 – Transport

3.23 Aim: Enable sustainable transport choices

Objectives:

- Improve health and wellbeing and reduce environmental impact through active transport (cycling and walking)
- Enable the transition to more sustainable transport use
- Support integration of transport options and support innovative smart mobility solutions

Targets: Reduce emissions in transport by 37 ktCO₂ by 2025

- 3.24 To date, the transport sector has proved to be the most challenging area for the UK to reduce carbon emissions. Good connectivity is critical to the economy, whether this is physical infrastructure, transport services or digital. We are committed to finding ways to reducing emissions in line with our net-zero commitment whilst delivering good connectivity.
- 3.25 We aim to reduce emissions in transport by 37 ktCO₂ by 2025 in line with the trajectory we have set out. Our objectives are to improve health and wellbeing through transport, enable the transition to more sustainable vehicle use and support innovative smart mobility solutions.
- 3.26 Currently low carbon forms of transport are not predominant in the Royal Borough. Only 12% of people commute by public transport, 3% cycle, and 10% walk. There are opportunities therefore to increase usage of low-carbon transport. There are several other benefits of doing this, which include improved health and wellbeing, better air quality, improvements to the economy and employment rates through industry and innovation and a reduction in inequality for those who are disproportionately impacted by pollution.
- 3.27 We will seek to improve public transport and explore the best approach to delivering 'shared mobility'. This may be through improvements to traditional bus and coach services, working with operators to improve rail services or to investigate and introduce new and innovative forms of transport. Where the only alternative is the car we will support and encourage the transition to low emission vehicle usage through the roll out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure within the borough.

AIM

We feel the wording is too weak and that while the carrot is mentioned, the stick is not, we cannot shy away from the fact that battling climate change is not going to be easy. We propose a stronger statement such as “promoting sustainable transport choices and restricting ones that are not”

OBJECTIVES

Again, stronger terms required, cars are the problem locally. We suggest

Reduce car use in the borough

Boost the move to electric cars

Encourage business to move to electric fleets, especially taxis

Promote and support other modes of transport, public transport, taxis, ebikes, scooters, cycling and walking

TARGET

In line with our recommendation a reduction by 50% in this 5-year period from 223ktCO₂ to 111.5kt CO₂

3.24

While it is true that good transport is important for the economy it is also true that climate change is bad for the economy. It is also likely that homeworking during Covid will drive a permanent change in working practices requiring less travel and we should be capitalising on this likely change and working to make it permanent.

4.9

4.9 Transport is a key contributor to carbon emissions across the UK and within the borough. Whilst other areas of the economy have seen levels of emissions steadily falling, transport emissions have seen limited reductions. To support delivery of our net zero target by 2050, we will need to produce a new Local Transport Plan with clear carbon reduction targets. This will focus on opportunities to decarbonise, improve levels of active sustainable transport and a transition to integrated, smart mobility solutions. Our proposed actions are as follows:

We agree that the local Transport plan is key but also believe that people will be hugely resistive to the idea of getting out of their cars on a fundamental level, it will be difficult even for many council officers and councillors to even contemplate this change. We must educate people about how climate change is going to affect them and why they need to change.

Each activity should have a target, a date and an owner. The total reduction should be more than the overall 111.5 ktCO₂ target.

Broadly speaking the actions are unconvincing and seem unlikely to even deliver the councils target of 37 ktCO₂.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Transport is challenging to “green”, the principal issue is that we are wedded to the personal freedom and ease of use we experience through the ownership and use of private vehicles

That personal freedom comes at an appalling cost to others.

We need to make it more attractive to use other forms of transport while making it less attractive to own and use cars

There are several things going on in the transport environment that will help, and hinder a move from personal vehicles.

Covid 19 has made public transport, buses, taxis and trains less attractive, this is likely to continue for several years.

Covid has opened the eyes of both businesses and individuals to the wellbeing and financial benefits of working from home. It is likely that there will be a change in behaviour that persists beyond Covid itself.

Electric vehicles are on the cusp of being cheaper to buy and run than diesel and petrol cars and are already so for higher mileage users. Growth in sales is rocketing already driven especially by schemes like the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London. For many business applications, electric vehicles will deliver productivity gains and lower costs.

Electric Bikes will extend the length of journeys contemplated and allow a new cohort of older and less able people to become cyclists. Using electric cycles, the length of journeys which people are willing to undertake are roughly doubled which roughly quadruples the number of people within the “cycling catchment area” of a particular location (A circle of double the diameter has 4 times the area).

Electric scooters and other forms of transport will also make journeys outside cars more palatable, we already see these being used in our towns and villages.

CARROT

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Lower costs, more services, more frequent services, better integration between bus and rail and coordinated with the reasons why people travel, for instance cinema film times. Incentivise public transport use through the advantage card system. Park and ride schemes

TAXIS

Incentivise the use of taxis through the advantage card system, taxis allowed in some pedestrian streets. Mandate all electric fleet, make them exempt from restrictions on cars and business fleets.

ELECTRIC CARS

Improve charging across the borough, free electricity in council car parks, marketing to show that using electric cars is cheaper than Fossil Fuel powered ones. Work on moving business fleets to electric where appropriate.

EBIKES/CYCLING

Purchasing scheme, encourage businesses to take up the governments Salary sacrifice scheme for bikes, provision of paths, particularly into large centres of population and to and from schools. Free Bike “doctor” sessions, bike “recycling”, reward via advantage card system. Bike hire schemes across the borough like the Boris bike scheme in London.

WALKING

Make it safe for people to choose this option, make it easier. Trolley loans in larger populations to allow transport of shopping (this is like the Boris bike scheme). Reward via advantage card system (Apps can easily measure steps)

STICK

CARS AND BUSINESS VEHICLES

Make it more difficult to use cars, restrict access to town centres, odd numbered registration access days and even numbered registration access days, raise cost of car parking, Ultra low emission zones. Pedestrianisation and more cycle lanes. Mandate planning of new buildings have electric charging points, reduce size of car parks in new developments, both business and housing.