
#WMM2041

**Tackling the Climate Challenge:
A Status Update - November 2019**



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Building the Future

Status Update: November 2019

Since the WMCA Board declared a climate emergency in June 2019, inspired by the Youth Strike 4 Climate movement, we have moved swiftly to setting ambitious targets and developing an action plan for the region.

In July 2019, the WMCA Board committed to net-zero carbon emissions for the region by 2041 - alongside a carbon budget that we will need to work within to deliver on our obligations under the Paris Agreement. The Board also agreed that an estimated investment of 1-2 per cent of GVA was required to ensure that it was possible to meet these goals.

Due to the calling of a General Election and restriction around local government publications, the WMCA Board could not consider the full #WM2041 Climate Action Green Paper at their 8 November 2019 Board meeting.

Therefore in this **status update** we are sharing the high priority areas of opportunity for reducing emissions and environmental impact in the region, and the **existing work the WMCA has already approved and is already undertaking** in these areas.

At the WMCA Board in January 2020, the Board will consider the full **#WM2041 Climate Action Green Paper**, with ideas for **new actions which the WMCA and partners should consider** to accelerate our progress. This will be the next stage in mobilising the public sector, businesses, community organisations and individuals in tackling the climate challenge. This is a collective challenge, which needs a system and society-wide response.

The responses to this Green Paper, and the engagement that the WMCA will take part in over the next few months, will help us to create an investment programme and clear asks of Government to deliver our ambition.

Message from Councillor Ian Courts, Environment and Energy Portfolio Lead, WMCA



Year.

“Climate change is a huge challenge for all of us. We need a step-change in our approach to address these environmental issues.

I am pleased that the WMCA has made swift progress on developing our #WM2041 Climate Action Plan, and I look forward to engaging with the public, businesses, the public sector and civil society in the New

This is an urgent issue, and in this status update we have set out some of the high priority areas of opportunity. We welcome your thoughts and feedback on where we should be going further and faster over the coming months.”

Reminder: The Climate Challenge

It is clear that achieving our climate goals will require an unprecedented reduction in emissions, which is why the WMCA has been careful and evidence-led in setting its zero carbon target for 2041. Previous reductions have been possible because of a number of factors, which we are unlikely to replicate.

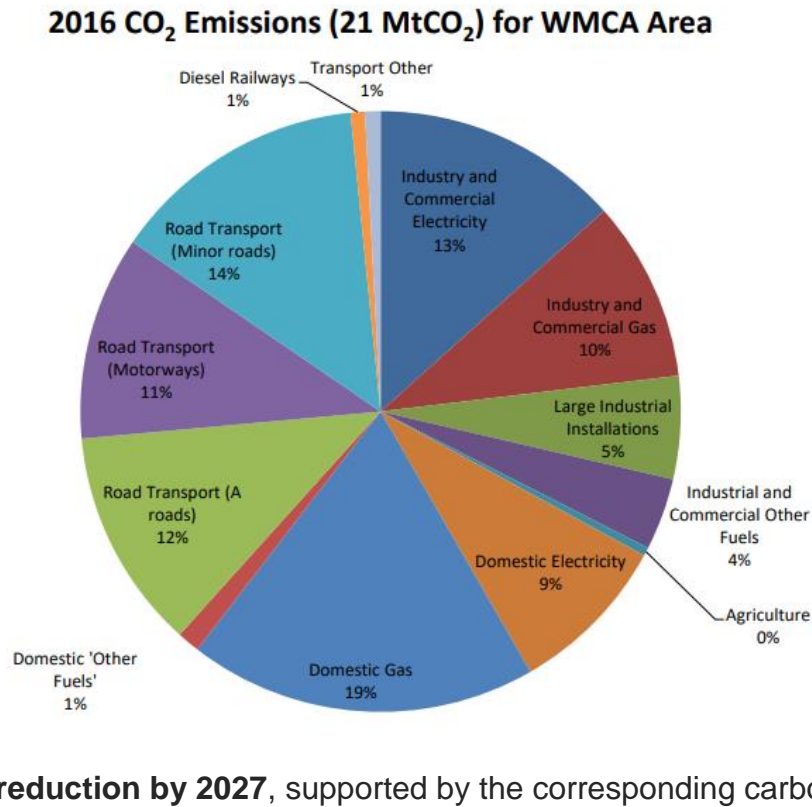
The closure of coal-fired power stations, and national scale installation of renewables, has been a significant factor in the last decade. Large reductions in industrial emissions have also been caused by local deindustrialisation, but consumption has not declined at the same rate – suggesting we are ‘offshoring’ our emissions to other countries. This means that, now more than ever, we need to begin changing the way we do things.

The WMCA Board has committed to addressing the climate crisis in a way that protects our citizens, communities and businesses. We are clear that the scale of this challenge will require large-scale action and investment – that will impact on jobs, skills, health, mobility and public services. We must ensure that people living in poverty – who already contribute to emissions reductions through consuming and emitting less – are both protected from the impacts of transition, and given a chance to thrive within the cleaner economy we are striving to create.

Our Green Paper will show the kinds of areas within which these investments and actions will need to be made. Making them happen in reality will require the region to come together and make the case strongly and collaboratively.

Reminder: Our Climate Commitments

The carbon budget committed the region to the following:



Staying within a cumulative carbon dioxide emissions budget of 126 million tonnes (MtCO₂) for the period of 2020 to 2100.

A West Midlands target of **net-zero emissions no later than 2041**, with interim targets based on a 2018 baseline of **36% reduction by 2022**, and **69%**

Figure 1 – WMCA emissions in 2016: like most areas there is a relatively even split between three areas: commercial/industrial, domestic and transport sectoral emissions.

Priority Areas of Opportunity

As part of the preparation of the **#2041 Climate Action Green Paper**, the 24 October 2019 meeting of the WMCA Environment Board highlighted ten areas of opportunity where the WMCA with its regional partners can play a significant role in delivering reductions in carbon emissions and environmental impacts.

In this status update, we have given examples of **existing work within these areas that the WMCA Board has already approved and the region is already undertaking**. In the full **#2041 Climate Action Green Paper**, these actions will be supplemented by longer-term actions and additional new ideas to be tested through the planned engagement in early 2020:

1. **Active travel and cleaner transport**, including new infrastructure which will encourage moral shift, reduce emissions, and support clean air. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Retrofit and upgrade bus fleet to clean low emissions standards
 - Deliver new rail stations, Metro extensions and new Sprint bus routes to encourage commuters to switch from cars to public transport
 - Encourage cycling and walking through better segregated cycling infrastructure through the Transforming Cities Fund and the Better Streets Community Fund
2. Infrastructure to support the transition to **electric charging** at scale in the region – to put our region at the forefront of change in one of its anchor sectors. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Secure as much of the Government’s charging infrastructure funding for West Midlands councils as possible to build new charging points in their areas
 - Understand the investment required in capacity in the underlying energy network to enable widespread adoption of electric vehicles
 - Win Government support for a battery gigafactory in the West Midlands, building on the investment in the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre in Coventry
3. Transition to more **eco-friendly homes**, through new design standards for new builds, and a focus on brownfield development. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Fund brownfield remediation, particularly in the Black Country, to relieve the need for further greenfield development
 - Encourage homebuilders to design new homes with high energy efficiency and environmental standards through a WMCA Design Charter
4. Creating breathable places, including big ambitions for **improvements to natural capital** at scale and building on Wildlife Ways and designs for a West Midlands ‘national park’. The WMCA is already working to:

- Develop a programme of investment in natural capital, such as tree planting, and extending Wildlife Ways across the West Midlands
 - Ensure on-street infrastructure such as bus shelters is eco-friendly, and support green improvements to public realm as part of the Town Centres Programme
5. A number of **behaviour change** campaigns at-scale, including on single-use plastics, energy use, waste and cycling, walking and active travel. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Encourage behavioural change schemes like Living Streets to get children and their parents to walk to school
 6. Investment to support **re-skilling and employment**, particularly in clean technology industries. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Increase the availability and take up of higher-level technical qualifications, which would support careers in green industries
 - Supporting new Institutes of Technology in the region which will provide further world-class technical education and training for young people
 7. Incentives for business innovation, including **'clean growth challenges'** which boost the R&D capacity of the region in support of its Industrial Strategy. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Support the region's companies and universities in their applications to Government funds such as the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund and other UK Research and Innovation funds
 - Develop the WMCA Innovation Board's role in encouraging clean growth innovation
 8. Commitments we can make as **'anchor institutions'** (within the public sector) to use our size, scale, procurement practice and employers policies. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Eliminate single-use plastics from all activities of the WMCA organisation by 2020
 - Work with other regional public sector partners to develop plans to reduce carbon emissions in their current and future activities
 9. Consideration of **new fiscal mechanisms** to incentivise clean growth and make the devolution case to Government. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Secure the devolution of Energy Company Obligation funds to the region
 10. Pursuing **energy devolution** so that we can combine a shift to sustainable energy with a medium term reduction in fuel poverty. The WMCA is already working to:
 - Develop the work of Energy Capital and continuing to lobby Government to give the West Midlands further control over its own energy policy and the associated funding

If you would like to be kept up to date as we develop our plans, please email our Environment team: WM2041@wmca.org.uk