

# A Climate for Change

## Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy 2014-2020

### Introduction

The world's climate and weather patterns are changing. Global temperatures are rising, causing more extreme weather events, like flooding and heat waves. If the global average temperature rises more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, significant negative impacts of climate change will be more likely and the cost of managing them will rise sharply. The Industrial Revolution led to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity. The Earth's surface has consequently warmed by about 0.8°C since around 1900, with much of this warming occurring in the past 50 years.

Climate change presents both a challenge and an opportunity to transform our homes, our businesses, our public services and the way we live and work. We also need to adapt by preparing for the potential impacts of climate change. This means we will be better protected against negative impacts like flooding. It also means we'll be better prepared for new opportunities, like the chance to grow different crops. The earlier we plan for adaptation, the less it will cost and the better equipped we will be to cope with potential changes.

The Government is taking this seriously and has agreed goals to address the trend. For example, it includes a target to reduce carbon emissions by 80% (from 1990 levels) by 2050. It also wants to achieve a 15% increase renewable energy by 2020.

We all have a vital role to play in cutting energy consumption, tackling fuel poverty and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Energy efficiency and renewable energy are important issues and people expect us to play a strong role in addressing them. It is about making choices that not only have a positive environmental impact, but also generate a return in financial or community terms

Over recent years, there has been concerted action to cut emissions and protect from extremes of weather at both district and county level. However, while carbon emissions are currently falling, there is much to be done. The first Wyre Forest District strategy on climate change (2008) identified a variety of actions. This new strategy, developed by Wyre Forest District Council with input from a range of key local organisations, shows how we will build on previous good work in order to tackle this issue through these themes:

1. Warmer, healthier homes
2. Building a low carbon economy
3. Transport and infrastructure
4. Healthy and resilient communities

## The Global Context

The world's climate and weather patterns are changing. Global temperatures are rising, causing more frequent and more extreme weather events such as flooding and heat waves. Since 1850, global combined land and ocean surface temperatures have risen by 0.85°C. Concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub>, one of the main greenhouse gases responsible for human-made climate change, have increased by 40% since pre-industrial times, and are higher than at any time in the last 800,000 years. If current emission trends continue, warming is likely to exceed 2°C, and possibly 4 °C, by 2100. This would result in large changes to most natural cycles.

## Climate Change 2013 IPCC Assessment Report 5

In September 2013, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its fifth five-yearly assessment report on the latest climate change science. The report considered evidence from many independent scientific analyses and has been endorsed by all UN member States. Scientists are now all but certain that climate change is mostly caused by human action, and that it is already leading to changes in regional weather patterns, with extreme events on the increase. Further reports in 2014 examine climate change impacts/ adaptation and mitigation measures. The full reports and summary versions are available at [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change considers the global response to climate change-how do we collectively reduce emissions and adapt to the inevitable impacts of a changing climate. Governments have agreed that emissions need to be reduced so that global temperature increase is limited to below 2 °C.

## UK- the National Picture

The UK Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to reducing emissions by at least 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels. This is to be achieved through a series of legally binding 5-year 'carbon budgets'. To better understand the specific risks that climate change poses to the UK, the government has carried out a [UK climate change risk assessment' \(CCRA\)](#) . The [National Adaptation Programme \(NAP\)](#) sets out what government, businesses and society are doing to become more climate-ready.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Local Government Group and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) acknowledges "the pivotal role councils have in tackling climate change: by reducing carbon emissions from their own estates and operations; encouraging and enabling their residents, businesses and visitors to reduce their carbon emissions; and by achieving national priorities such as the Green Deal and renewable energy deployment in a locally appropriate way." It recognises how councils, through local governance, "can ensure climate change policies and programmes protect and help the most vulnerable, particularly the fuel poor."

The Local Government Association has developed the Climate Local initiative, to drive, inspire and support council action on climate change. Wyre Forest District Council is signed up to Climate Local and this strategy and the associated action plan outline our commitments under this initiative.

Local authorities are uniquely placed to assess the needs of their areas and local residents and to act as catalysts for change. The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their areas. HECA requires local authorities to produce a series of reports, setting out the energy conservation measures that considered practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.

The government also recognises the leadership role that local authorities can play in their communities by reducing their own emissions. All local authorities are required to measure and report annually on the greenhouse gas emissions from their own estates and operations.

## Tackling Climate Change in Worcestershire

The Worcestershire Partnership's Climate Change Strategy 2012-2020 sets out a framework for securing a low carbon and climate resilient County. It sets a vision of a county:

- *Making the most of opportunities that a low carbon economy brings,*
- *Resilient to volatile costs of fossil fuels and severe weather,*
- *Where businesses and residents are empowered to take action themselves and the most vulnerable people and assets protected.*

Its aims are to:

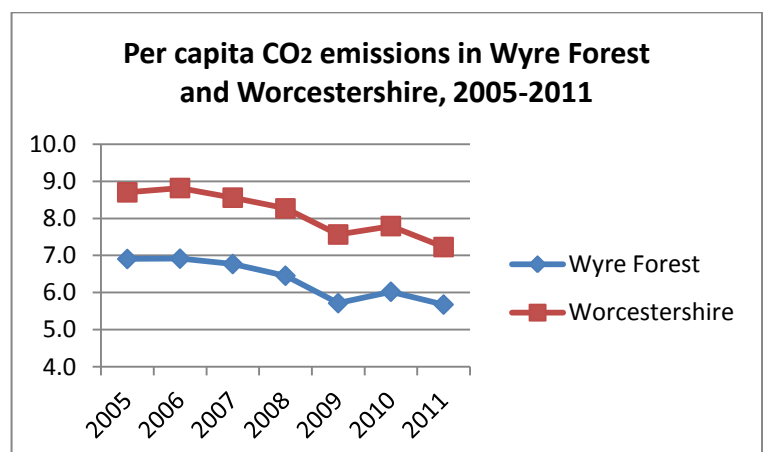
- *Build Worcestershire's low carbon economy*
- *Hit tough but critical carbon targets*
- *Adapt to inevitable climate change*
- *Empower Worcestershire's communities to take action*



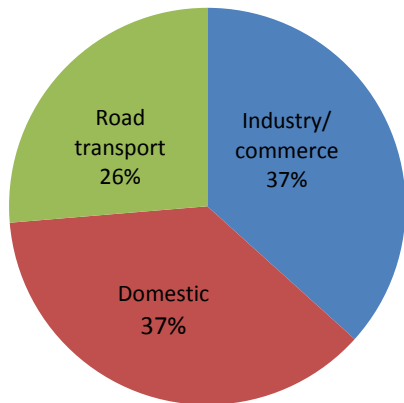
The Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan aims to deliver the Worcestershire strategy within Wyre Forest. It focuses on key areas where Wyre Forest District Council and district partners can have the most impact within current resources.

### Wyre Forest- A Climate for Change

Each year, DECC releases per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emission figures for all local authorities. Between 2005 and 2011 (the latest data available), emissions in Wyre Forest fell by over 17%, from 6.9 to 5.7 tonnes per capita. Emissions fell in all sectors measured- industry/ commerce, domestic and road transport. These figures reflect the trend across Worcestershire as a whole, where emissions fell from 8.7 to 7.2 tonnes per capita.



**Wyre Forest CO2 emissions by sector  
(2011)**



### **Weird weather**

Our climate is already changing and will continue to do so, due to the carbon already 'locked in' to our climate systems. In the UK, agencies such as Defra and the Met Office develop climate projections. These projections indicate milder but wetter winters, warmer but drier summers and more frequent and intense extreme weather, such as flooding. Projections are based upon different scenarios, representing future levels of greenhouse gas emissions (high, medium or low). The more we do to reduce our emissions, the less extreme the impacts will be. However, as some degree of

climate change is unavoidable, we need to be prepared in order to withstand or recover from the impacts. Locally, we have seen the impacts of severe weather in recent years, especially during the summer of 2007. It is estimated that the 2007 floods had an overall cost to Worcestershire of around £150 million. The earlier we plan for adaptation, the less it will cost and the better equipped we will be to cope with potential changes.

## **Theme 1: Warmer, Healthier Homes.**

Improving the energy efficiency of the district's housing stock has multiple benefits- social, economic and environmental.

Living in cold, damp homes can exacerbate health conditions, particularly cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses. Worcestershire has slightly higher than average excess winter deaths, the majority of which tend to be caused by diseases of the cardiovascular system (such as stroke and heart attack) and respiratory illness (e.g. influenza). Excess cold, damp and mould growth are some of the most common more serious category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), used by environmental health professionals in assessing the condition of private rented properties. Slips and falls are also a significant issue and can also be exacerbated by living in cold homes. Helping residents to keep warm and well can help reduce costs to the health service, by reducing the need for treatment or a hospital stay. Public Health England recognises the importance of energy efficiency measures and locally the council works closely with public health professionals, amongst others, at a district and county level, to promote affordable warmth.

The rising costs of energy are never far from the headlines. According to Ofgem, energy costs have increased for a variety of reasons over recent years: an increasing dependence on gas imports, the need to replace ageing power stations and the move towards cleaner sources of energy. A recent report from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows that in 2012, UK households spent an average of £106 a month on household energy, a 55% rise on the 2002 monthly spend, after accounting for inflation. This is despite a decline in average energy usage. The proportion of disposable household income spent on energy also increased over the same period. The council therefore works with a range of partners, including public health, Age UK, Act on Energy, Wyre Forest Citizens Advice Bureau, the home improvement agency and the Fire and Rescue Service, to encourage various measures to reduce energy bills. Such measures include encouraging residents to make sure they're on the best tariff, claiming any grants or benefits they are entitled to and installing insulation and efficient heating systems.

37% of the district's carbon emissions came from the domestic sector, i.e. from the energy used to heat and power our homes. Improvements to make our housing stock more energy efficient, and to move towards less carbon intensive forms of energy, will also have environmental benefits.

### Fuel poverty.

Traditionally, a household is said to be fuel poor if it needs to spend 10% of its income on fuel to maintain a satisfactory heating regime. The key drivers behind fuel poverty are:

- The energy efficiency of the property (and therefore, the energy required to heat and power the home).
- The cost of energy.

Year	Properties in fuel poverty	%
2009	10,654	24.8%
2010	8,536	19.9%
2011	6,676	15.3%

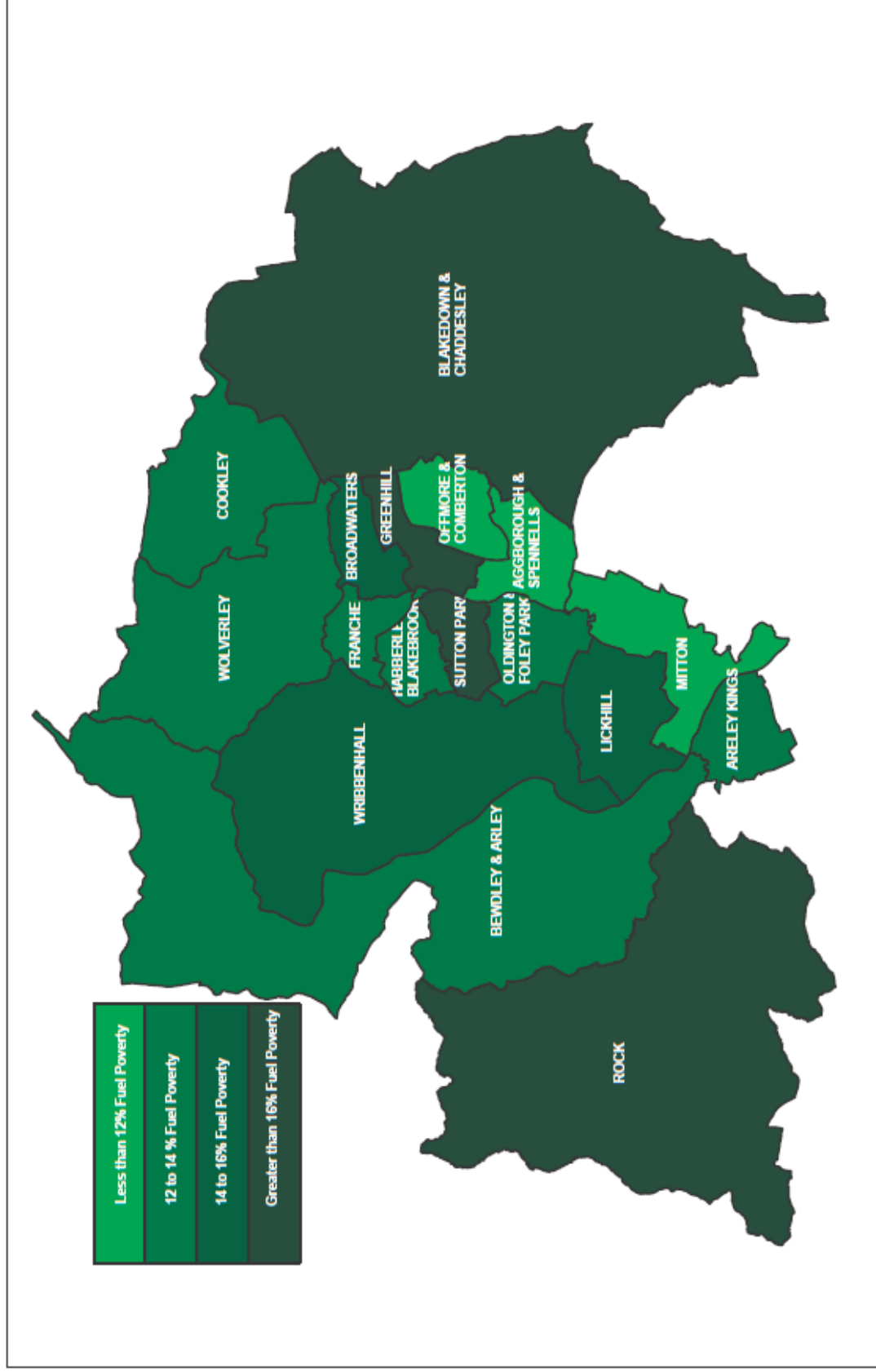
The table to the left shows the number and proportion of properties in Wyre forest in fuel poverty, based on this definition.

This information is also made available at ward level. In 2011 (the latest data available), the percentage of properties in fuel poverty varied from 5.6% (in Spennells, Kidderminster, which has more modern/efficient housing) to 26.4% (in Chaddesley Corbett, where there are more off-grid, harder to treat properties).

The government has recently set out a new definition, where a household is said to be in fuel poverty if:

- they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
- were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line

# Fuel poverty in Wyre Forest wards (2011)



SO8176



## **Warmer, Healthier Homes: The story so far**

For many years, the council has led work in the district to tackle fuel poverty, working with a range of partner organisations including Act on Energy, public health, the Fire and Rescue Service, Disability Action Wyre Forest, Community Housing, Age UK and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). Activities have included training and awareness events and running schemes to provide assistance for energy efficiency measures, utilising external funding wherever possible. Examples include:

- Act on Energy run energy advice surgeries at the Kidderminster Hub once a month between September and June. Residents are able to seek in depth advice on reducing their fuel bills, whether by changing tariffs or by installing energy efficiency measures, such as insulation. In 2013, the Act on Energy advisor spoke to an average of 25-30 people at each surgery.
- Advice stands are also held at events where those most likely to be affected by the impacts of fuel poverty are likely to be in attendance, such as flu jab clinics, the annual Showcase of Services for Older People at Kidderminster Town Hall and the Home Safe Home electric blanket testing events at Bewdley, Stourport and Kidderminster fire stations. We have also provided advice to residents in rural areas through the mobile library service.
- In October 2013, the council joined forces with the Wyre Forest CAB to organise the first Wyre Forest Energy Day at Kidderminster Town Hall. An estimated 200 people attended to obtain advice on all matters energy related, from a wide range of organisations, including energy suppliers and renewable energy companies.
- Each year we organise affordable warmth training for frontline workers who come into contact with vulnerable residents who may be at risk of fuel poverty. As well as helping these workers to recognise the signs of fuel poverty and the problems associated with living in cold, damp homes, the training also covers the types of support available to help. The training has benefited staff from within the council, such as Hub advisors and housing officers, and from a wide range of partner organisations, including Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Housing, nurse advisors, Age UK, Care and Repair, medical centres, doctors surgeries and children's centres.
- The national Warmfront scheme provided funding for heating and other energy measures for benefits recipients. WFDC co-ordinated activity to promote the scheme amongst front line workers and residents. Between 2007 and 2013, 1513 Wyre Forest households were assisted through £3million of Warmfront funding. Whilst this scheme has now closed, we are working to ensure households will benefit from its successor, funded through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO).
- Over recent years, WFDC has run a number of subsidised/ free loft and cavity wall insulation schemes, utilising external funding wherever possible. As an example, 1260 lofts and cavities in the district were insulated through the council run scheme in 2012/13, leading to estimated annual savings of £147k on energy bills, as well as an estimated annual 580 tonne reduction in CO2 emissions.



- In October 2013, a 'Services on your doorstep' project was carried out in Broadwaters, Kidderminster. Various organisations, including WFDC, Act on Energy, CAB, the police and fire service, carried out a doorstep survey. Residents were then assisted as appropriate, e.g. advice on for energy efficiency and fire safety measures, clearing debt and health issues.
- As well as promoting energy efficiency, WFDC has also encouraged installation of appropriate renewable micro-generation systems. Initially this was through a grant scheme for residents and community groups; currently interested parties are signposted to relevant national support such as the Feed-in Tariffs. A series of case studies featuring local renewable energy installations are available on the sustainability pages of the council's website.
- Officers from sustainability and planning (conservation) also joined forces with Transition Bewdley to run an event on 'Energy Conservation in the Conservation Area', focussing on what CAN be done to reduce energy use in conservation areas and Listed Buildings.

### Warmer Worcestershire



The Warmer Worcestershire project began in 2009 with a thermal image survey of Worcestershire to highlight heat loss from roof of properties. Residents- and businesses- were able to go online and get an indication of the energy efficiency of their property. They were then encouraged to take up insulation measures to reduce their energy use and bills. In a typical British home, one third of the heat produced by central heating systems is lost through the roof, walls and windows. For a poorly insulated property, this means that £1 out of every £3 spent is wasted.

Warmer Worcestershire has since grown and carried out a range of schemes to encourage energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty, including insulation and boiler repair schemes, training for front-line workers, provision of energy advice (e.g. at flu jab clinics and electric blanket testing events) and production of promotional materials such as thermocards. In the last two years Warmer Worcestershire has attracted £340,000 of funding from the Department of Health's 'Warm Homes, Healthy People' fund. The Warmer Worcestershire Network is made up of the county and district councils, public health, and other agencies such as Age UK, Act on Energy and Care & Repair. Through linking with these partners, Warmer Worcestershire promotes a whole range of services which support the energy efficiency agenda e.g. tackling the health impacts of living in cold damp homes, financial support through benefit checks giving residents more income to pay their bills, fire safety checks, carbon monoxide detector installation and promotion of chimney safety for those residents with open fires.

The network plans to build on the established Warmer Worcestershire branding and resources in attracting new external funding through the Energy Company Obligation and in delivering the Green Deal in the county.

## **Warmer, Healthier Homes: Overall Aims**

- Stop the growth of fuel poverty and reduce excess winter mortality.
- Help to maximise the take up of energy efficiency schemes (e.g. ECO funding, Green Deal) by Wyre Forest residents.
- Reduce CO2 emissions from homes by 32% from 2009 levels by 2020, in line with county and national targets.

### **How we will we do this.**

- 1.1 Encourage and support uptake of energy efficiency retrofit measures, such as loft and cavity wall insulation, solid wall insulation and efficient heating systems, in all types of residential property.
- 1.2 Work with partners (e.g. through the Warmer Worcestershire Network) to secure external funding and deliver energy efficiency schemes and campaigns.
- 1.3 Seek to assist 'harder to treat' properties, such as residential park homes and off-grid properties (e.g. through appropriate insulation and by encouraging installation of appropriate renewable energy systems).
- 1.4 Help protect householders against rising energy costs (e.g. by carrying out benefits checks; advising on energy tariffs and on setting up oil buying clubs).
- 1.5 Encouraging energy efficient behaviour by working with community groups, schools etc and by taking part in campaigns such as the national Big Energy Saving Week.
- 1.6 Providing training for front line workers to help them recognise the signs of fuel poverty and advise on the support available to help.
- 1.7 Delivering an ongoing programme of awareness and advice (e.g. through press releases, websites, displays, newsletters, social media, at events etc).

## **Theme 2: Building a low carbon economy**

In Wyre Forest, 37% of carbon emissions arise from the industrial and commercial sector, including the public sector. This includes the energy used to heat and power our businesses and organisations and to run our services. Businesses also contribute significantly to transport emissions. Taking transport into account it is estimated that business activities account for about half of all greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions from this sector have fallen over the last few years, due to a number of factors- the recession, increased energy efficiency, the shift away from heavy industry and changes to the national energy mix.

Increasing energy prices have led to an increase in business interest in becoming more energy efficient, as shown through attendance at seminars on this topic and take up of grant schemes. Good energy management makes good economic as well as environmental sense. According to the Carbon Trust, for businesses, reducing energy bills by 20% can add the same amount to profits as a 5% increase in sales. Energy efficiency can contribute to aspirations to decouple the link between economic activity and carbon emissions.

As well as opportunities to reduce costs through resource efficiency, there are opportunities for 'green growth' for businesses setting up or diversifying into the environmental technologies sector, for example in renewable energy, electric vehicles, energy and waste management. In Wyre Forest and across Worcestershire there is a need for a greater understanding of the size and potential of the low carbon economy.

### **Building a low carbon economy: The story so far**

The Feed-in Tariff (FIT) is a government scheme to promote the uptake of small scale renewable electricity generation. The tariff provides a payment for both the generation and export of electricity from renewable/ low carbon sources. The latest available OFGEM report shows that between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010, when the scheme was launched, and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013, there were 350 accredited installations under the FIT scheme in Wyre Forest. All of these were photovoltaic panels; the vast majority were retrofits to domestic properties.

The Marches Environmental Technology Network (MetNet) promotes the development of environmental technologies in Worcestershire, as well as Herefordshire and Shropshire. MetNet promotes collaborative working amongst businesses providing products and services relating to environmental technologies such as pollution control, renewable energy, waste recovery and contaminated land remediation. For example, Kidderminster based renewable energy company Eco2Solar linked up with a Shropshire based environmental consultancy through MetNet in a business deal to help farmers and landowners make the most of renewable energy opportunities.

The two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to which Wyre Forest belong, Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull, both have aspirations to enable a low carbon economy. WFDC is a member of the Worcestershire Nature Partnership, which is working with the Worcestershire LEP to develop the county's low carbon economy, for example through resource efficiency, skills development, business opportunities, green jobs and best practice sharing. WFDC is also represented on the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP's Green Commission and Low Carbon

group, and will work with partners on delivering a carbon roadmap to reduce emissions and encourage 'green growth'. Sustainability West Midlands, a regional advisory body, is working on a number of cross-LEP projects on the low carbon agenda, in order to share best practice and avoid duplication.

As part of work to develop the Green Deal and ECO, Encraft consultants produced a report, on behalf of Worcestershire councils, to identify opportunities in the county. The report identified the potential for investment in energy efficiency projects in homes and businesses across Worcestershire, for example though solid wall insulation. It is estimated in the report that more than 14,000 households in Wyre Forest have either un-insulated solid walls or hard-to-treat cavity walls. The report also looked at issues such as supply chain opportunities and skills requirements. This information will be used in the ongoing development of energy efficiency projects.

Energy and resource efficiency assessments and grants are available to small and medium sized businesses in the district, through a scheme run by Worcestershire County Council and the local Chamber of Commerce. In Wyre Forest to date, 22 companies have had a resource efficiency review through the scheme; of these 5 went on to receive grants funding totalling £32k, towards measures such as energy efficient lighting and equipment.

WFDC has a Carbon Management Plan, which aims to combat rising energy bills and reduce carbon emissions from its buildings and fleet by 30% over a 5 year period to 2017. When the plan was developed, it was estimated that carrying on with 'business as usual' would lead to an annual energy bill increase of £215k by 2017, whereas implementing the plan would lead to a £65k annual reduction in our energy bills. Projects to date have included installation of LED lighting at several sites, insulation measures, green driver training for fleet staff and inclusion of fuel efficiency features in fleet vehicle upgrades. Projects currently underway include further LED lighting installations and upgrades to appropriate heating systems.

### **Case Study: Efficient lighting**

State-of- the- art new lighting has been installed at three Wyre Forest District Council sites, in a bid to slash energy bills and reduce carbon emissions. LED lighting is now in place at the council's Green Street Depot and offices, Kidderminster Town Hall and Hub, and Bewdley Museum.



LED lighting technology has advanced rapidly over recent years and can now be a viable option for commercial buildings. The LED lights installed use a fraction of the energy of the previous lights and are expected to lead to significant savings on the electricity bill. LED lighting has a much longer lifespan than other lighting, which will also lead to a reduction in maintenance costs. The costs of the installation are expected to be recouped within 2 to 3 years though the savings made

## **Building a low carbon economy: Overall aims**

Contribute to county targets to reduce emissions from businesses by 19% from 2009 by 2020.

Maximise the opportunities for Wyre Forest residents and businesses in the development of a green economy.

### **How we will do this:**

2.1. Work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and regional bodies such as Sustainability West Midlands in developing the low carbon economy.

2.2. Participate in the development and promotion of county wide low carbon schemes, ensuring that Wyre Forest businesses get their 'fair share' (e.g. through energy efficiency project work, supply chain and training opportunities).

2.3. Promote relevant low carbon support opportunities (e.g. networks, grants, FITs) to Wyre Forest businesses and organisations.

2.4. Lead by example in reducing our own energy use and carbon emissions, through implementation of the carbon management plan.

2.5. Encourage sustainable procurement and lead by example in our own procurement decisions.

2.6. Ensure low carbon economy opportunities are considered in relevant strategies and developments (e.g. green tourism?)

## **3. Transport and Infrastructure**

In order to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and our carbon emissions, we will need to make significant changes to our infrastructure. We need to start planning now in order to achieve the required level of cuts in emissions- 80% by 2050. We need to consider how we design our buildings and towns, travel, deal with our waste and generate/ use energy.

Planning policies and building regulations are gradually changing to facilitate lower carbon development, for example by guiding the types and location of new developments and by requiring increasingly energy efficient new buildings. It is estimated that 80% of buildings in existence today will still exist in 2050, so retrofitting energy efficiency measures to these buildings will also be necessary.

In Worcestershire, an estimated 5% of Gross Value Added (GVA) is spent on energy to heat and power buildings. Much of this money leaves the local economy, going to companies outside of the county. Using imported energy more efficiently may help reduce energy bills; increasing the proportion of energy sourced from local renewable resources may also be beneficial to the local economy.

More than a quarter of carbon emissions in Wyre Forest arise from road transport and traffic congestion is an issue in the three main towns. Encouraging and enabling residents and businesses to adopt more low carbon means of transport, such as public transport, electric vehicle use, walking and cycling, can provide many benefits including increased opportunities for exercise, reduced congestion and improved air quality.

### **Transport and Infrastructure: The story so far**

The Wyre Forest Local Development Framework is a portfolio of documents setting out what type of development is to be located where and which areas of land are to be safeguarded. The LDF's Core Strategy was adopted in 2010 and covers the period to 2026. This is the key strategic level document for development in the district, centred on key issues and challenges, including the need to adapt to and mitigate against climate change. Sites for new development identified and allocated in other LDF documents, the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (KCAAP), need to meet the requirements of the adopted Core Strategy.

In the Wyre Forest and Worcestershire, the amount of energy generated from renewable sources forms a very small percentage of the total energy use. Locally, residents and organisations are signposted to national incentive schemes such as the Feed-in Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive, which aim to increase renewable energy generation. The government's new Heat Delivery Network Unit has been set up to support local authorities progress the development of local heat delivery networks (e.g. district heating schemes). There may be opportunities, e.g. through the Local Enterprise Partnerships, to investigate the potential for, and the benefits of, local heat networks.

The Wyre Forest Cycle Forum was formed in 1998 to promote cycling within the area. The Forum acts as a facilitator and consultee for all matters relating to cycling. Members of the Forum work to raise the public's awareness towards cycling and to ensure that new infrastructure for cyclists is convenient and safe to use. Activities have included the provision of advice to the local highways authorities on local cycling infrastructure and the organisation of events for the annual national Bike Week.



## **Case study: Tackling climate change through the Wyre Forest Core Strategy**

Wyre Forest District Council's adopted Core Strategy has 4 key themes, one of which is 'Adapting to and Mitigating against Climate Change.'

The strategy includes a policy on Delivering Sustainable Development Standards, setting out requirements on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, including:

- All new development proposals within the District must demonstrate how they reduce their impact on the environment. The design, layout, siting, orientation, construction method and materials used should seek to maximise energy conservation and efficiency.
- A minimum of 10% of the energy requirements of major new developments should be met on-site from low or zero-carbon energy sources. The technologies installed should be retained and maintained during the full lifetime of the building. Consideration should be given to the use of combined heat and power systems on larger sites, particularly on industrial sites or sites of new community infrastructure.
- Free-standing renewable energy developments will be supported, subject to them meeting the requirements of all other policies within the Local Development Framework.
- The implementation of the Code for Sustainable Homes will be supported in line with the national timescale. Developers will be encouraged to meet a higher code level than is mandatory where this is economically viable. Non-residential buildings will be encouraged to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'very good' or higher.

The Core Strategy also includes a policy on promoting transport choice and accessibility. Development proposals should have full regard to the traffic impact on the local highway network and developers are required to provide a Travel Plan for major development proposals, demonstrating full consideration of access by all modes of transport. Where appropriate, new developments are required to connect into the surrounding infrastructure and contribute towards new or improved walking and cycling facilities and the provision of an integrated public transport network.

## **Transport and Infrastructure: Overall aims**

Development and implementation of relevant planning policies to assist in the transition towards a low carbon economy.

Contribute to county targets to treble the amount of energy generated from renewable sources (2012-2020), recognising the importance of public perception in renewable energy developments.

Contribute to county targets to reduce emissions from road transport by 10% from 2009 by 2020.

### **How we will do this:**

- 3.1 Seek to encourage low carbon development and sustainable travel through the development and implementation of relevant planning policies.
- 3.2 Participate in activity to investigate the potential for local heat networks and renewable energy.
- 3.3 Encourage cycling through training, awareness and facilitating cycling infrastructure improvements, e.g. through the Wyre Forest Cycle Forum.
- 3.4 Lead by example by encouraging our staff, Members and visitors to use lower carbon forms of transport.



#### **4. Healthy and Resilient Communities**

The impact of both rising energy costs and a changing climate have been, and will continue to be, felt by our communities in various ways. In the context of this strategy, healthy and resilient communities will work together to reduce reliance on fossil fuels (for example through local food production and energy generation) and be resilient to the impacts of climate change and the associated changes in our weather.

In order to meet the scale of the challenge of climate change, action is required across different aspects of our lives and will require the involvement of all sectors of the community. Community engagement through awareness-raising and active participation in decision making will be vital for these aims to be met. For the necessary changes to be carried out, our communities need to understand why action needs to happen, what they can do themselves, what their role can be and be helped to do this.

##### **Healthy and Resilient Communities: The story so far**

- The Transition Network is an international network of voluntary, community-led initiatives. Each transition initiative (a village, town or city) is working to help their community become more resilient by reducing reliance on fossil fuels, for example by promoting local food production, energy efficiency and renewable energy and more sustainable transport. There are currently nine transition initiatives in Worcestershire, including groups in Kidderminster and Bewdley. The council has provided some officer support for these groups, such as assistance in organising events and producing promotional materials.
- The 'Growing Worcestershire' initiative aims to promote the benefits of buying local food and growing your own, to reduce food miles and associated carbon emissions, and to improve resilience to climate change in the natural environment and in agriculture. Stakeholders from across Worcestershire, including various organisations in Wyre Forest, attended a launch event in November 2013, to map activity, identify opportunities and barriers and begin to develop a local food strategy. A Growing Your Own event, held at Bishop's Wood Centre (near Stourport) in March 2014, was attended by 300+ people and supported by various Wyre Forest organisations.
- Transition Kidderminster and Transition Bewdley both have their own Food Groups. In Kidderminster, the transition group has organised a plant swap event and a talk on permaculture gardening, and is involved in a project to set up a community allotment in Birchen Coppice.
- Any school is an important part of its local community. The Eco-schools award scheme encourages everyone in the school community to get involved in improving the school, local and global environment. It involves pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff, governors and members of the local community. Worcestershire is a leading county on the Eco-schools

programme, with support from the county council. In Wyre Forest 46 schools and nurseries are participating in the scheme; of these 11 have achieved the prestigious Green Flag award.

- The Warmer Worcestershire Network was recently awarded funding through DECC's Green Deal Communities Fund. The money is to be used for making 'harder to treat' properties more energy efficient, and will be delivered through community groups throughout the county, including Transition Kidderminster, with support from the local authorities.
- The Government released its first Community Energy Strategy in January 2014. The strategy recognises the role of local communities, alongside government, large companies and investors, in maintaining energy security, helping keep down energy costs and tackling climate change. Local authorities have a role to play in community projects to generate, use, manage and purchase energy, for example through planning policy and provision of support to apply for funding and develop project ideas.
- In the past, the council has carried out work to assess the impacts of extreme weather events, on our communities and services, and to identify the potential impacts of further climate change upon the district and possible adaptation measures. Flooding, for example, whether from water courses or surface water, is predicted to become more frequent as our climate changes and managing this is a key function of the North Worcestershire Water Management Team, hosted by WFDC.

#### **Case study: Transition Bewdley**



Transition Bewdley was established in 2011 and focuses on land use/ food and energy. Their Land Group identified a need for increased space to grow food in the town so have promoted a national garden share scheme and have been trying to identify land for allotments. Negotiations with the Town Council resulted in the development of a community garden on the Millenium Green. Some individuals were able to negotiate shared use of private land for their own projects. The group also ran a family gardening event in Jubilee Gardens and are involved in the Growing Worcestershire project. Members have also been instrumental in developing a Bewdley Apple Co-op, bread making courses, a local Community Land Trust and plans are advancing for a Local Food Centre.

The Energy Group organised an event to explore making buildings in the conservation area more energy efficient. They coordinated a successful Energy Tracers pilot project using thermal imaging cameras to survey 5 old houses and to identify ways in which they can be improved for energy efficiency without compromising architectural conservation. Approx 20 energy champions have been trained. The group are identifying potential sites for community owned renewable energy schemes.

Two young volunteers who carried out projects for Transition Bewdley while based at Bewdley Development Trust have gone on to full time employment as a result of their involvement. One who developed the Transition Bewdley website moved into full time work in the IT field. Another who organised two "renewable energy" weekends and who designed several energy conservation and renewable energy leaflets went on to work for Worcestershire County Council.

### **Healthy and Resilient Communities: Overall aims**

- Help Wyre Forest's communities and organisations to prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- Build capacity within Wyre Forest communities to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and become more healthy and resilient.

### **How we will do this**

4.1 Work with local community groups to organise events e.g. Wyre Forest Energy Day

4.2 Support the development of local transition groups.

4.3. Provide appropriate assistance to community groups in investigating community renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes.

4.4. Assist in low carbon promotions to the school community (e.g. through Ecoschools and the 'My Money' initiative).

4.5 Identify and publicise funding opportunities for local community groups to deliver low carbon projects.

4.6 Support schemes to encourage food growing and to reduce food waste.

4.7 Participate in county activity to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

### **Delivery of this strategy**

This strategy will be delivered through a range of partners and in part via other plans and strategies. An annual action plan will be developed. Progress on delivery will be reported to the appropriate committee each year.



