

The need to continue to reduce our carbon emissions has accelerated recently with a growing understanding that restricting global temperature rises is the key priority in avoiding the issues associated with climate change.

These issues include threats to unique ecosystems, extreme weather events, impacts on food growing and access to water.

The world is currently 1C warmer than pre-industrial levels, every incremental increase in temperature worsens the impact of climate change. Reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) , the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change in 2018 clearly stated that global warming has to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C to prevent serious impacts.

Climate science has clearly shown that in order to prevent dangerous levels of global warming carbon emissions do not just need to be reduced, they need to end. Net zero emissions are needed as soon as possible, the Government has legislated for this to happen by 2050.

As urgency is the key when considering to deliver net zero, quite simply, the sooner the better it is delivered is the key message. By declaring our intentions to make Northumberland a net zero emissions county by 2030 we position ourselves as a key Local Authority with the desire, commitment and ambition to deliver it but also meet the growing need to address our residents, communities and businesses concerns about the seemingly slow progress made nationally to meet an international climate emergency. Our target date to halve our own operational emissions has been brought forward from 2030 to 2025 and we will publish an updated action plan for our own aim for net zero emissions by 2030 before 2024.

Clean growth is about decarbonising the county whilst improving the local economy. A post carbon economy becomes a necessity for net zero emissions and with this there are economic opportunities for Northumberland as the need for renewable, clean energy generation and use can attract clean economic growth, potentially lowering our residents', community and businesses' energy costs.

Northumberland has significant potential for capturing carbon emissions, tapping into renewable heat and generating renewable power. We have a proven track record in renewable generation and we must build on this and work harder to decarbonise heat and transport. We can make our own fair and equitable contribution to net zero by becoming net zero as soon as we can, but we need our residents and businesses as well as the Government's support to do so.

Policy and financing approaches need to change, continued investment in innovation in our energy sector, both commercial and domestic across buildings and vehicles needs to come to Northumberland backed by investment in land based activities/management which can lower and capture emissions, generate energy whilst sustaining food production.

Individual actions count, everyone of them and the sooner we all reduce our emissions the more effect they will have on curbing global temperature rises in the critical time period needed.

Five areas of approach

- Generation
- Consumption
- Capture
- Engagement
- Policy