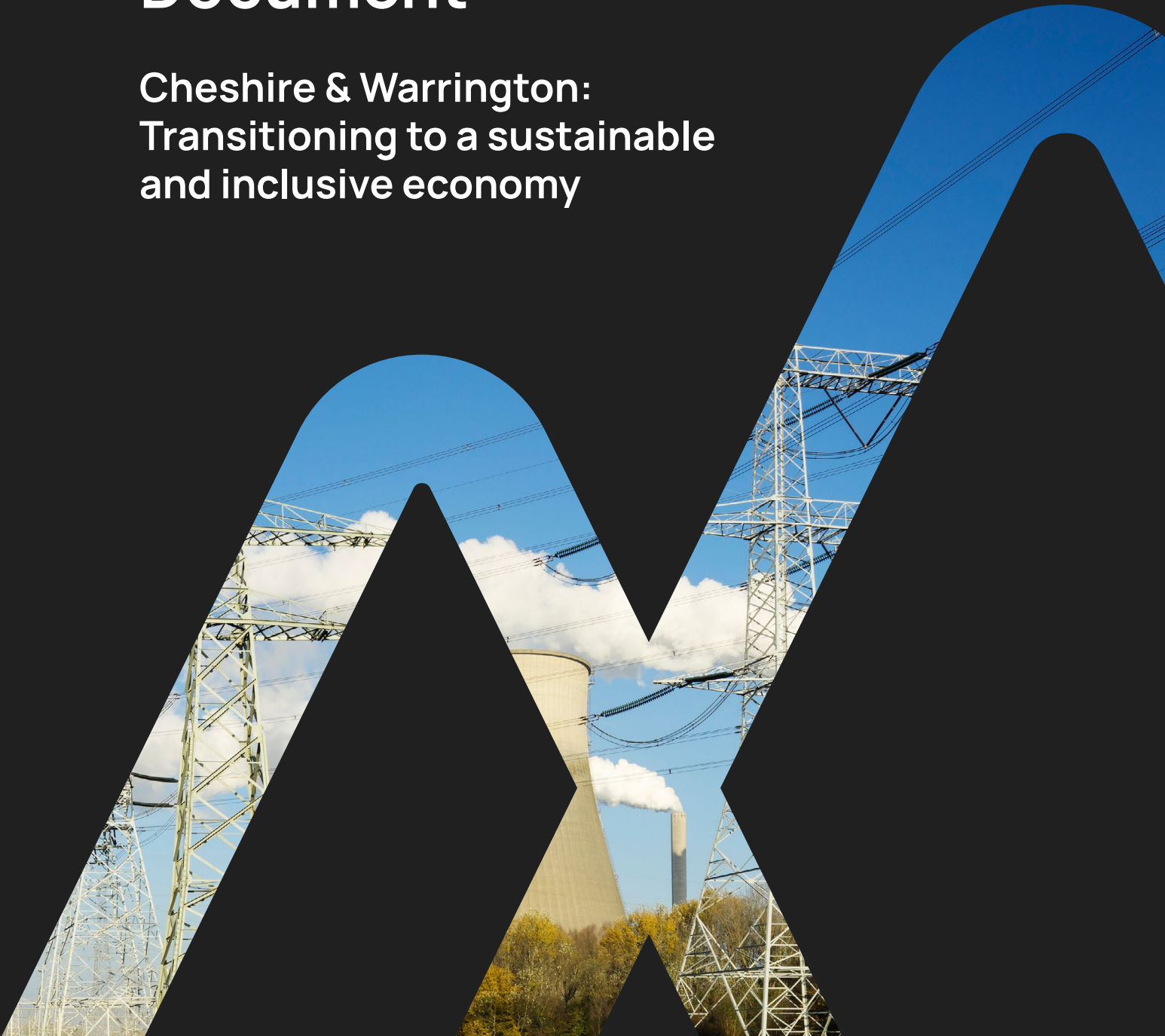




Cheshire and Warrington
**Sustainable and Inclusive
Growth Commission**

Consultation Document

Cheshire & Warrington:
Transitioning to a sustainable
and inclusive economy





The Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission was set up by the Subregional Leaders' Board in November 2020, with the aim of contributing towards realising Cheshire and Warrington's ambition of becoming the most sustainable and inclusive subregion in the UK. It has been divided into collation, planning, engagement (and consultation) and action phases, with a final report to be produced in summer 2022.

The Commission is independent, and is made up of elected representatives from each local authority and a Local Enterprise Partnership Board member, as well as representatives from carbon intensive industries and agriculture, finance and investment, energy, and experts from civil society including university, housing and local nature sectors, and has also worked with additional expert advisers. The Commission's Secretariat is drawn from the LEP with support from the Local Authorities.

The Commission has been working on four themes: Inclusive Economy, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Land Use, and Net Zero. For each of these themes the Commission has developed an evidence base for Cheshire and Warrington's current position, a vision representing where the Commission believes the subregion should aim to be and a set of recommended actions to achieve these visions. These findings are presented in this document.

Consultation

We have reached the engagement and consultation phase of the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission. The evidence, vision, and recommendations for each of the four themes (Inclusive Economy, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Land Use and Net Zero) have been collated into a Consultation Document.

On page 04 there is a visual representation of the Commission's vision for Cheshire and Warrington, which relates directly to the content of this document.

The Commission are looking to hear from a wide variety of people and organisations about their views on the content of this document, including members of the public, public and private sector organisations, civil society and local interest groups. This will help the Commission to ensure we have identified the right actions, to increase the chance of achieving the broad visions that have been set out.

The feedback from the consultation process will be used to sense check, review and update the recommendations, creating a final report. Findings from the consultation exercise will be shared with those who took part in the consultation.

If you would like more detailed evidence and full explanations, please refer to the Consultation Document with Evidence Pack available here: [Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission - Cheshire and Warrington](#) Please let us have your

comments on the report. Comments are welcome on the whole report or just one or more sections of the report. Questions can be found at the end of this document

You can access an [online survey tool](#)→

We will also be running several events both virtually and in person. All are welcome to these events and details can be found below.

Wednesday 30th March 2022	Online
Monday 4th April 2022	Online
Thursday 7th April 2022	Online
Friday 29th April 2022	Crewe Alexandra Football Club
Thursday 5th May 2022	Ellesmere Port Civic Centre
Monday 9th May 2022	Warrington Village Hotel

If you would like to attend one of these events, please register on [Eventbrite](#)

¹ [Climate Central](#) | Land projected to be below annual flood level in 2050

Introduction and Purpose

Within Cheshire and Warrington, and nationally and globally, the global pandemic has hit some of the most vulnerable people in our communities the hardest, including the lowest paid, young people, women and minorities, and those living in more deprived areas with fewer facilities and green spaces.

It has brought about an increased awareness of the iniquities in society and stimulated greater collective action across all sectors of society to meet basic needs, address poverty and hunger, including through calls for fair employment. It has come at a time when the effects of climate change are becoming ever more real and visible across the globe, and no one can deny that it poses a serious risk to our local society and economy. This area has especially high carbon emissions across our industrial sector, and agriculture as well as transport and housing. We also need to contend with the serious risk that global warming poses to food security and production, biodiversity loss, health and infrastructure, and with impacts such as flooding and sea level rise, the latter of which some models predict will affect parts of the area by 2050 without mitigation.

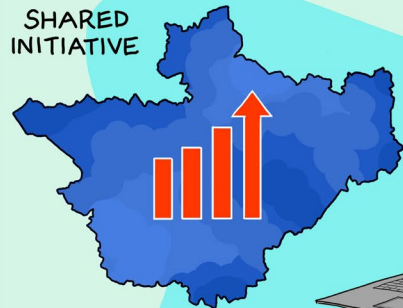
It is in this context that the Leaders of Cheshire and Warrington committed not to return to the 'old normal' - an economy that worked for many but not for everyone, and in which the impact of our activities on the earth's natural resources was not fully acknowledged or addressed.

In response to these challenges Cheshire and Warrington's Leaders set out an ambition to become the most sustainable, inclusive, healthy and growing subregion in the country. As well as delivering benefits and improving outcomes for local people and the environment, delivering against these ambitions will enable the area to be better able to attract both public and private investment and become a leading example of a just transition to a green, fair and growing economy: distributing the benefits of local economic development more evenly within the area; and also exporting skills and know-how within the UK and globally. This is especially important and timely in the context of the UK's hosting of the global COP-26 climate change agenda, and the UK Government's flagship Levelling Up White Paper and Net Zero Strategy.

The Leaders have established this independent Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission to act as a catalyst for how the subregion can go further, faster towards achieving this vision. Its recommendations for action are outlined in this document.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

POLICY SOLUTIONS CO-DESIGNED
WITH THE PEOPLE AFFECTED



SHARED
INITIATIVE

PUBLIC INVESTMENT
TO ADDRESS
DISADVANTAGE AND
TARGET OPPORTUNITIES

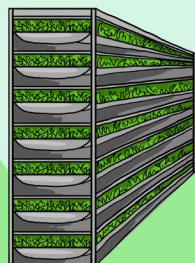


USE DATA TO IDENTIFY
INEQUALITIES SO THEY
CAN BE ADDRESSED

EQUAL ACCESS TO
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
ALL - ESPECIALLY WITH
GREEN JOBS AND SKILLS



SUPPORT PRODUCERS AND LAND OWNERS
TO INCREASE ENVIRONMENTALLY
FRIENDLY FOOD SUPPLY



DECARBONISATION
OF DAIRY THROUGH
ANAEROBIC DIGESTION
AND REGENERATIVE
AGRICULTURE



REVERSE DECLINE OF NATURE - AND
ABSORB CARBON INTO BETTER SOILS,
MORE WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS

UNLOCK ECONOMIC
POTENTIAL OF
RURAL AREA

MAKE CURRENT
LAND USE NET
NEGATIVE



REPLACE RURAL FOSSIL
FUELS WITH LOCAL WIND FARMS,
SOLAR, BIOFUELS - IMPROVE
INFRASTRUCTURE

MAKE NATURE
ACCESSIBLE FOR
HEALTH BENEFITS

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

TRANSITIONING TO A SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON ECONOMY



ALL PEOPLE TO HAVE
ACCESS AND THE ABILITY
TO USE INFORMATION AND
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
SUCH AS THE INTERNET



'FULL DECARBONISATION OF
ALL TRANSPORT IN CHESHIRE
AND WARRINGTON BY 2035'

EASY
CLEAN
HEALTHY

IMPROVE
ACTIVE TRAVEL



NEW INFRASTRUCTURE/ SUPPORT
FOR ELECTRIC CARS AND ZERO-
EMISSION VEHICLES TO MAKE
THEM COST EFFECTIVE AND
ACCESSIBLE



IMPROVE
PUBLIC
TRANSPORT



ADDRESS HEATING AND
INSULATION IN SOCIAL
HOMES - REDUCE FUEL
POVERTY



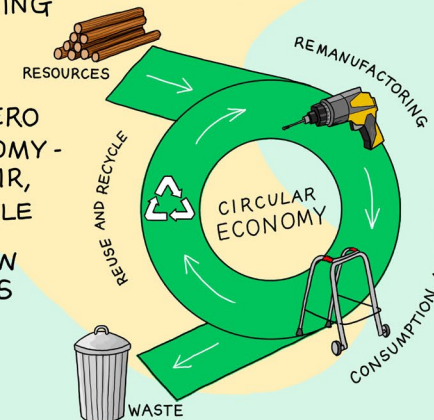
NEW GREEN JOBS IN
HOUSING INSULATION AND
LOW CARBON HEATING

SUPPORT PROJECTS
THAT WILL REACH NET
ZERO CARBON AND
GREEN JOBS



IMPLEMENT ZERO
WASTE ECONOMY -
REDUCE, REPAIR,
REUSE, RECYCLE
- FEWER RAW
MATERIALS

BUILD UK'S FIRST NET
ZERO INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE



Inky
Thinking

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

NET ZERO



INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

Vision and Overview

In response to the evidence we reviewed, our overall ambition is to encourage economic growth that combines increased prosperity with greater equality, creates opportunities for all, and distributes the benefits of increased prosperity fairly across the subregion.

We propose this will be delivered through three priority actions:

- By mainstreaming inclusion into policy, investment, procurement and hiring practices across the subregion, using agreed toolkits.
- By implementing a joined up approach to inclusion in the subregion through shared initiatives such as social value (Fair Employment Charter, Anchor Networks), inclusive skills and employment, digital inclusion, and positive action.
- By creating new and collecting existing data more efficiently to identify inequities and inform policy making, and piloting recent and new approaches such as embedding lived experience in policy.

For the purposes of this work, we have defined 'inclusive economy' as the encouragement of economic growth that combines increased prosperity with greater equality, creates opportunities for all, and distributes the benefits of increased prosperity fairly.

When thinking about inclusivity, it is important to consider equality issues related to both 1) protected characteristics and 2) to socioeconomic status, as well as 'intersectionality', where categorisations overlap.

An inclusivity toolkit has been used to assess proposed projects throughout each theme. We have looked at both (a) how we can ensure that an inclusive approach is mainstreamed through our environmental sustainability work and (b) how to address the inequalities in society more generally.

It was agreed that the Commission would focus on inequalities relating to work, education and skills via a lens of socioeconomic status/deprivation, sex, race and disability.

At the subregional level, Cheshire and Warrington is performing well with high skills levels, employment rates and earnings, but the aggregated data hides inequalities across the subregion. 5% of the population (30 neighbourhoods) live in the top 10% most deprived places in the country on the Index of Multiple Deprivation², whilst in the highest earning neighbourhood, annual household income is twice as high as in the lowest performing neighbourhood³.

Furthermore, the percentage of jobs in the area paying below the real living wage (which acts as a proxy for in work poverty) is higher than the UK and regional average⁴ and significant gender disparities also remain in Cheshire and Warrington in terms of economic activity and earnings.⁵ The pockets of excellent activity taking place across the subregion are not joined up, and it is the view of the Commission that more joined up thinking and partnership working across the inclusive economy remit would help to deliver the outcomes sought.

Recommendations

Delivering social value

- The Commission recommends that the Leader's Board:
 - Commits to establish and adopt a Fair Employment Charter which subregional businesses would sign up to with commitments to fair employment principles such as paying a living wage and embedding equality and diversity.
 - Commits to the establishment of a subregional Anchor Network building on the good practice led by Cheshire West and Chester Council, and the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership. This would use the combined commissioning/procurement, employment and social value principles of anchor institutions to deliver an inclusive (and sustainable) economy.
 - Commits to undertaking a study to understand the scale and make-up of the socially-trading and cooperative sector in the subregion, and their potential to achieve inclusive economy outcomes.
- Ensure that any potential County Deal asks of Government, and approaches to levelling up funding, such as the Shared Prosperity Fund, properly consider inclusion.
 - Ask a suitable organisation to run a pilot project to understand how public investments can properly consider inclusive and sustainable factors.
 - Commissions the LEP's Data and Labour Market Steering Group to carry out a pilot study (or PhD Studentship) to establish a clear understanding of the barriers to employment and progression in targeted geographical communities where the evidence collected to date shows that residents are at a disadvantage..

Data, policy and investment

The Commission recommends that the Leader's Board:

- Mainstreams inclusion into policy, investment, procurement and hiring practices across the subregion, using agreed toolkits to ensure that commissioned projects benefit rather than further disadvantage the most vulnerable in the subregion.
 - Extends the approach and commitment to embedding lived experience of poverty in policy and decision making across the subregion to be able to draw upon the insight of real people to understand existing issues/ barriers and co-produce solutions..
 - Commit to the ongoing robust analysis of inclusive economy data, address data gaps, and develop recommendations on where key inclusive economy initiatives could be shared and implemented more widely, with the intention of undertaking a feasibility study on an ongoing Data Hub.
- ## Digital inclusion
- The Commission recommends that the Leaders' Board:
- Promotes and embeds good practice from the Digital Policy Lab project led by Cheshire West and Chester Council. This has produced a how-to guide/toolkit for local authorities and others looking to understand and tackle the digital divide.
 - Lobbies Government to provide funding for internet access and training to digitally excluded communities in the subregion.
- ## Inclusive skills
- The Commission recommends that the Leader's Board:
- Commissions the Local Enterprise Partnership to create a subgroup of its skills and employment board looking specifically at inclusion.
 - Makes inclusive green skills a strategic subregional priority so that all can share in the benefits from new, green jobs, and support with investment (e.g. via the Local Enterprise Partnership Skills and Employment Board).
 - Commissions the creation of affordable, accessible short courses on green skills / carbon literacy at sub-regional education and training organisations and ensures these are promoted and available to disadvantaged areas and groups.

- Sponsor a marketing and engagement campaign showcasing inspiring stories of women in IT and STEM careers in order to encourage take-up in the sub-region, potentially working with the Pledge and Marketing Cheshire.

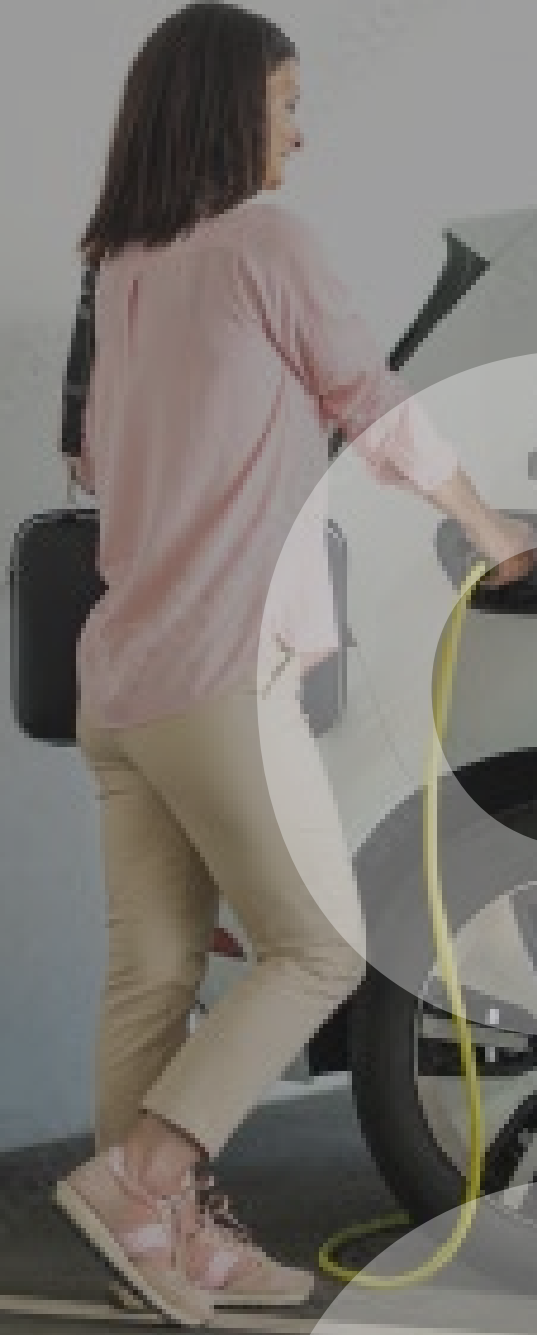
Positive action

The Commission recommends that the Leader's Board:

- Commits to the development of a sub-regional Positive Action Toolkit to encourage and provide confidence on the use of robust positive action aimed at addressing the skills deficit.

The toolkit would promote greater representation of protected groups such as those with a disability and from disadvantaged socio-economic groups and help address issues such as the gender pay gap, attainment, and the disparity in representation of males in post-16 education.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT



Vision and Overview

The Commission considers that the subregion should set itself an objective of full decarbonisation of all transport in Cheshire and Warrington by 2035, to be delivered in an inclusive way through three priority activities:

- By creating a public transport system which is affordable, zero carbon, accessible and integrated across the subregion making bus use a first choice for residents, shoppers, commuters and visitors by 2030;
- Creating an ecosystem which makes the adoption of electric or zero emission (rather than petrol or diesel) cars the most cost effective and accessible means of private and business transport by 2030 where public transport is not appropriate or available;
- By making active travel, on bikes and walking, easy, clean and healthy option for all our residents, employees and visitors, fully integrating it with other forms of travel.

This will require a sustained collaborative effort from a range of delivery organisations including Department for Transport, Great British Railways, Highways England, local authorities, bus operators, private sector operators (e.g. taxis, haulage companies). Hence this is a long-term strategy covering 20+ years, but with some interventions that could start within 6 to 12 months. It will require a mix of working with and lobbying businesses and other public sector bodies alongside investing in specific projects.

In the UK surface transport is the largest contributing sector to greenhouse gas emissions of which most are caused by road transport, and these transport emissions have grown overall since 2013. It is therefore essential that the transport network is decarbonised if the UK, and Cheshire & Warrington is to successfully shift to a low carbon economy.

The majority of Cheshire and Warrington residents live and work in the sub region, re-enforcing the importance of connectivity within our area. Cross boundary movements are also important as Cheshire and Warrington relies heavily on commuters from surrounding regions, as well as there being a number of Cheshire and Warrington residents that commute out for work.

Based on the Cheshire & Warrington Transport Strategy 120,000 jobs could be generated in the subregion along with 127,000 additional homes by 2040, with increases in demand for travel occurring across the sub-region.

Before the pandemic, a significantly higher proportion of Cheshire and Warrington residents travelled to work by car or van than the England average and evidence points to this still being the case due to current relatively low proportions of journeys to work involving public transport. Therefore, it is unlikely that a policy based solely on improving public transport will lead to a substantial reduction in emissions meaning a rapid transition towards electric vehicles and access to Electric Vehicle charging devices will be important.

Recommendations

Develop a sub-regional zero-emissions transport infrastructure plan

- With the objectives of a faster roll-out of zero-emission vehicles, greater standardization of charging infrastructure and a stronger link to spatial (land use) planning.

A step-by-step pathway to streets for all

- To help identify the steps necessary to transition to car-free city/town centres in 30 years.

Encouraging bus use

Some of the recommendations for encouraging bus use include:

- A feasibility study looking at how a subregional integrated ticketing, timetabling and real time passenger information system could be rolled out.
- Lobby for open access platforms for electronic ticketing usable by different companies.
- Develop and implement bus priority measures in the Local Authority Bus Service Improvement Plans.

Encouraging active travel

Some recommendations for initiatives that local authorities should engage with and lobby relevant organisations to deliver:

- More walk/bike to school, bike to work schemes
- Secure more/better bike storage at train stations and on trains/buses
- Encourage the Dutch commuting model (leaving bikes at both ends of railway journeys)

Encouraging zero-emission vehicles

Some early steps local authorities could take include:

- replacing their fleets with Electric Vehicles as part of their regular replacement programs
- requiring all buses to have zero emissions by 2030
- incentivise sustainable transport use by reviewing parking policy in city/town centres
- commission work to help local authorities and

the LEP to understand how best to support the 2nd-hand EV market, helping to improve inclusivity in accessing EVs

Further measures

- Adopt low carbon materials for highway maintenance, improvement schemes, and new developments.
- Run a pilot study to assess shared transport schemes for travel from rural to urban areas.
- Investigate the issues and opportunities of supporting projects that turn plastic into fuel.
- Establishing sub-regional stakeholder groups

Establishing subregional stakeholder groups

SIGC recommend that local authorities and the LEP:

- Establish an inclusive subregional stakeholder group to engage with when developing transport policy and strategy to allow local people to report issues found in the transport infrastructure.
- Lobby HS2 to improve stakeholder engagement, integration with wider transport networks and reduce environmental impacts.



SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

Vision and Overview

Our overall ambition is to make current land use net negative in the subregion and unlock the massive economic potential of the rural area. We propose this will be delivered through three priority activities:

- By realising the potential of the rural and land use sectors to generate economic growth and accelerate the move to regenerative agriculture and deliver our carbon zero ambition in an inclusive way.
- By reversing the decline of Cheshire's natural environment and biodiversity, promote the natural capital approach and promote the environment as our natural health service for all people.
- By supporting producers, landowners and local authorities to increase the amount of accessible, fresh, low carbon, locally produced food available to people within the subregion including addressing food poverty.

Whilst heavy industry emissions may be concentrated in certain places, land use presents other new opportunities as we deliver net zero, largely in rural areas, but also applicable to brownfield land in non-rural areas. We have reviewed land use from the point of view of agriculture, natural capital and biodiversity, vertical farming and innovation, diet change and energy/ renewables.

Agriculture is an important part of our economy in rural areas with 9,000 jobs and a further 5,400 jobs in agri-food. Cheshire is the 2nd largest milk producing sub-region in the UK resulting in higher-than-average herd sizes and milk yields. This means that this area in Cheshire and Warrington is a net emitter of 400,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year at the cost of £30.5m annually. In addition, tree and woodland coverage is below the national average.

National policy driving change for agriculture practice could mean that Cheshire has a fewer total number of dairy farmers with a smaller number of bigger famers operating a more intense system. Farmers will have a special responsibility to protect carbon reserves already in soils and vegetation which will require a reduction in emissions and to return carbon to the soils. Moving to sustainable and regenerative agriculture with a focus on

reducing carbon emissions, increasing renewables, and increasing sequestration, whilst expanding woodland, restoring grassland and bog (mire habitats), and enhancing biodiversity is essential to addressing climate change and environmental degradation and will also improve the quality of life for our residents who can make the most of our natural capital.

Furthermore, the Commission believes that for our land and agriculture sector to play its role in the subregion achieving net zero by 2050 whilst maintaining a strong food production sector, there are two broad groups of economic and societal changes required:

- Behavioural change: diet change and food waste reduction.
- Improvements in agricultural practices: crop yield improvements, stocking densities and moving horticultural production indoors.

Recommendations

Agriculture

Recommendations for subregional organisations:

- Lobby to accelerate the recognition of soil and tree planting for carbon sequestration/storage.
- Improve green agriculture skills and showcase technologies through a variety of new initiatives.
- Work with other bodies (i.e. NFU/CLA) to promote good farming practice and the benefits of regenerative agriculture to reach net zero.
- Work together to create an industry led world leading environmental sciences cluster at INCE/ Rocksavage bringing together local universities with global research leaders.
- Actively promote new innovative projects being delivered in the region such as anaerobic digestion (Grosvenor) and DEFRA funded Hedge and Edge (Cholmondeley) as case studies that can be scaled and rolled out
- Work with the private sector to identify gap funding and support for the projects that will springboard collaborations and commercialisation of local existing world leading companies to deliver new technologies that will accelerate the ability to address the climate crisis.
- Allocates resource to manage and support a project pipeline of land use (and natural capital) investment opportunities to decarbonise the dairy sector / agriculture, create growth and jobs, move towards a more plant-based diet and conserve resources with the move to a circular economy.

Recommendations for the Leader's Board:

- Brings together the oil and fertiliser sector, with landowners and research establishments to scope the opportunity for a proposed environmental science cluster as part of the net zero offer
- Lobby Government to invest in required infrastructure and connectivity to reach net zero and unlock the economic, social and environmental potential of the rural areas and agriculture including:
- Invest in the national grid capacity to enable the switch from fossil fuels
- Deliver 100% coverage of broadband and 4G and 5G mobile phone signal
- Invest in a pipeline network to enable the decarbonisation of our dairy sector by moving manure off site and into large scale Anaerobic Digestion
- Include land based low carbon technology and innovation in any County Deal/Levelling Up ask.
- Commission the new Energy Officer post at the LEP to assess the willingness of landowners to invest in greenhouses near plants creating waste heat, and to look after the portfolio of land use related energy projects, remove blockages and facilitate investment.
- Ensure local planning policy prioritises schemes which maximise anaerobic digestion, solar PV and other renewables.

Recommendations for farms in the subregion:

- Engage with demonstration networks, assessing the economic viability and market potential of land sparing by intensifying the most productive areas to spare the least productive areas for carbon sequestration, biodiversity etc. This could potentially include conversion to vertical farms for crops.
- Engage with the Local Food Sustainable Place Network to unlock new local food market demand and develop a direct to consumer supply chain, restoring pride in the production of high quality locally produced food
- Engage with the Local Nature Partnership to shape emerging environmental policy implementation including Biodiversity Net Gain, Trees for Climate, Local Nature Recovery Networks and implementation of the Natural Capital investment plan

Insetting-Offsetting/ Natural Capital

Recommendations for local authorities:

- Use the Natural Capital Audit to inform their planning policy, use internal and external training to embed in working practices, and identify best value locations for investment, with the ambition to become national leaders in the field.

- Work together to host the natural capital evidence base on a GIS based system/portal and complete a data sharing protocol, and protocol and set up a mapping service to provide natural capital information to developers, updating evidence periodically to enable change to be tracked compared to the baseline.
- Convene relevant partners to establish a more suitable funding mechanism for the Local Nature Partnership.
- Work with the Environment Agency to secure more Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund projects in the area.
- Ensure that the investment opportunities in natural capital are held and promoted subregionally by an appropriate body and develop and deliver 5 investment deals in landscape scale restorations and enhancement projects by 2030.
- Increase the volume of Hedgerows (encourage others to increase the size of existing ones) and restore bog (mire) habitats on Council owned land and via planning policy.
- Adopt the target of initiating 500,000 tonnes of CO2 sequestered in trees and hedges and 100,000 tonnes in our soils by 2030.
- Bring together stakeholders to ensure that a field study is done to support the Defra ELMS test and trial (with Cholmondeley).

Additionally in support of this we recommend the Leaders' Board should:

- Commission studies following the natural capital audit. These include identifying insetting and other investment opportunities and to identify where new green spaces provide the most benefits to local people's wellbeing.

Diet

Recommendations for the Leader's Board:

- Adopt the Sustainable Local Food Place Award across the sub region, including reconnecting consumers and producers, highlighting the health and low carbon benefits of local food through improved labelling,
- Adopt the recommendations of the National Food strategy to address food poverty, providing targeted healthy eating support for people on low income and, healthy start voucher scheme to support changes in diet
- Works with GPs/the health sector to promote a range of projects suitable for natural health prescribing and link to diet as an extension of the Nature for Health Programme.

- Recommendations for local authorities:
- Apply for a Sustainable Local Food Place Award.
- Review the potential of Council owned farms to deliver local food production.

Renewable Energy Generation

Recommendation for the Leaders' Board:

- Commission work to identify the total planning and infrastructure requirements for renewable energy generation to inform project development towards the Invest Net Zero Cheshire Pipeline.



NET ZERO

Vision and Overview

Our overall ambition is to support and develop carbon reduction projects across Cheshire and Warrington while creating employment in a way that generates opportunities for all. We propose this will be delivered through three priority activities:

Housing decarbonisation and retrofit.

- By speeding up decarbonisation and retrofitting of the existing housing stock.
- Retrofitting insulation and clean energy to housing, particularly social housing, will reduce carbon emissions, boost employment, save money on heating bills and improve the health of disadvantaged residents. A new cohort of workers will need to be trained in fitting and maintaining heat pumps.

Industrial decarbonisation.

- By building the UK's first new zero industrial cluster which can act as a blueprint for industrial decarbonisation, enabling us to export our skills and expertise around the world. Supporting our industry to move away from fossil fuels and adopt renewable energy and sustainable processes will make a significant contribution to lowering emissions, safeguard existing jobs, create new jobs for all and act as a blueprint for industrial decarbonisation allowing us to export our skills to the rest of the world.

Circular economy.

- By developing a whole system approach to waste collection, disposal, energy distribution including the use of farm waste and slurry.
- Our economic model of make, use, and dispose, needs to change to a circular, more sustainable, system where products can be repaired, reused and recycled using fewer raw materials. We are seeking to take a regional approach to survey opportunities and work with business, public sector and agriculture to hasten this transition.

Cheshire and Warrington has some of the highest CO2 emissions in the country so reducing these is essential to meeting the challenge of the climate emergency, ensuring the future resilience and growth of our economy, and improving the quality of life of our residents.

The Net Zero sub-group considered a range of projects that will support the decarbonisation of industry in Cheshire and Warrington, including HyNet North West. The project is a game-changer. It will realise the potential of the hydrogen economy through the creation of state of-the-art infrastructure. Alongside this, the Protos energy and resource hub at Ince is leading the way in low carbon energy and waste management with the deployment of innovative technologies including the UK's first plastic-to-hydrogen facility.

In addition to these schemes, there are other potential options for decarbonising existing energy systems at scale. The Government's energy white paper has set a goal of a decisive shift from fossil fuels to clean energy, in power, buildings and industry. A low-cost, net zero consistent system is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar, but to ensure the system is reliable, renewables need to be complemented by technologies such as clean hydrogen and long-duration storage. We also have a great opportunity to link residents into green jobs in an inclusive way as they develop.

There is also a need for a new, sustainable energy flow model that puts less pressure on the eco system. The circular economy is what provides the economic system with an alternative flow model. It is based on renewable energy, smarter product design, supply chain collaboration, reuse and recycling.

Cheshire and Warrington lags behind the national average in terms of its green infrastructure with more houses with an EPC rating of Band 'D' or below (over 60% in Cheshire East, compared to 42.1% in England) Enhancing the quality of housing through a retrofit programme is essential in the transition to net zero and creates supply chain opportunities for local SMEs. It also has the potential to improve the quality of life of our residents through improved health outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Housing Decarbonisation and Retrofit

Recommendations for the Leaders' Board:

- Work with the LEP to develop the skills needed for housing retrofit and decarbonization.
- Lobby Central Government for various policy changes relating to housing decarbonisation and retrofit e.g. to improve buildings standards to require new build properties to be zero carbon (please see main document)

We recommend that:

- Carbon literacy training for suppliers, households, tenants and landlords. Policy advice and best practice is shared among suppliers and housing organisations.
- LAs review the feasibility of establishing heat networks in each LA area integrated with private wired power from renewable sources, EV charging and broadband upgrade.

Circular Economy

Recommendations for the Leaders' Board:

- Commission work on reinforcing the need for recycling campaigning and to spread best practice.
- Seek ways to support the Grosvenor Anaerobic Digestion trials and explore options to spread the news and engage with farmers.
- Engage with specialists to identify key opportunities in heat mapping.
- Support the planned Green Expo inward investment conference in June 2022.
- Support the development of a whole system approach to waste collection, disposal and energy distribution including the use of farm waste and slurry.
- Work with industry to encourage the submission of a business case for grant support for Protos Plastics Park to the Enterprise Zone Investment Fund.

Building the UK's first net zero industrial cluster

Alongside the Commission's work, the LEP has been developing plans with the Cheshire Energy Hub and Net Zero North West to make Cheshire and Warrington the home of the UK's first net zero industrial cluster. The work has four key elements:

- Delivering reliable and cost-effective net zero energy
- Strengthening Cheshire and Warrington's energy R&D ecosystem
- Attracting investors looking to invest in net zero projects
- Ensuring that businesses have access to the green skills that they need and that residents can access these jobs

The Commission recommends that the following actions are incorporated into this work:

Delivering Zero Carbon Energy

Recommendations for the Leaders' Board:

- Lobby Government to ensure funding for 2 large hydrogen projects (HyNet Phase 2 and Cadent's Hydrogen Village). Also, to ensure a level price playing field exists to incentivise industry to switch to low carbon.
- Lobby BEIS/OFGEM to allow Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) to invest ahead of demand.
- Ensure that planning policies and frameworks are aligned with and actively enable industrial decarbonisation and the transition to low carbon/renewable energy.

Strengthening Cheshire and Warrington's R&D Eco-system

Recommendations for the Leaders' Board:

Some opportunities include:

- Attracting an industrial decarbonisation catapult to Cheshire and Warrington.
- Persuading Rolls Royce to select Cheshire and Warrington for a nuclear Small Modular Reactor manufacturing.
- Lobbying BEIS/Ofgem to identify funding for SME decarbonisation programmes.

The LEP also considers that there is a strong case to find funding to commission consultants to develop business cases for several potentially investable projects:

- A hydrogen demonstrator at Thornton Science Park, supporting the development of HyNet.
- A Nuclear Technology Catalyst at Birchwood Park.
- Undertaking a low carbon R&D/innovation eco-system mapping exercise.

Attracting Net Zero Investors

The Local Enterprise Partnership considers there is a strong case to:

- Develop a compelling low carbon inward investment proposition for Cheshire and Warrington.
- Lobby DIT to secure High Potential Opportunity status for low carbon investment sites/ opportunities in Cheshire and Warrington.
- Persuade Rolls Royce to select Cheshire and Warrington as a location for SMR manufacturing.

Identify funding to invest a relatively small sum of money to commission financial consultants to undertake a feasibility study into the creation of Cheshire and Warrington low carbon investment fund to invest in low carbon projects across the subregion.

Green Skills

The LEP and local authorities should: :

- Work with industry and education providers to ensure that there are appropriate education and training programmes in place to support an industrial decarbonisation workforce including skills 'escalators' to ensure all people can benefit

Consultation Questions

We would be grateful to receive specific responses to the following questions for each theme. Please feel free to respond to the themes that are of interest to you, but all are invited to answer every section.

1. Is the document hitting the priorities you consider important overall?
2. Do you consider that there are any gaps in the document? If yes, please explain your answer.
3. Are we ensuring that our sustainability-led recommendations are inclusive enough?
4. Do you agree with our vision statements?
5. Do you agree with our recommendations?
6. Which of the recommendations do you think are most important to prioritise?
7. Are there projects or initiatives that are already delivering on our recommendations, or additional evidence that we have not mentioned?
8. Please let us have any other comments or views.

Please let us have your comments through our [online survey](#)→

