

Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change



**Report
launch**

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1. What we did.

Our approach.



Two weekends of discussion and deliberation.

“The UK has legislation to reach ‘net zero’ by 2050. Should Oxford be more proactive and seek to achieve ‘net zero’ sooner than 2050?”

- Recruited a Citizens Assembly broadly reflective of Oxford demographically
- Weekend one – listening to and questioning experts.
- Weekend two – deliberation and discussion around what should happen next.
- Five key themes: waste reduction, buildings, transport, biodiversity & offsetting, renewable energy.

2. Key findings.

Waste reduction.



- Importance of recycling, reducing, and re-using waste.
- Individuals and organisations should be encouraged to consume and produce less.
- Confusion about recycling in Oxford – more education and information demanded so households can recycle correctly.
- Mixed response to potential solutions discussed – reducing bin size, charging people for their waste collection, freecycling and share/repair schemes.

To illustrate...



I don't think [reducing bin size] will solve the issue of waste. They just won't have anywhere to put it. They will fly tip.



I've read all the stuff, everything online, produced by the council and it's still unclear.



There has to be more requirement for businesses to change because without that you're reliant on the options businesses provide.



25/41 votes

Currently Oxford City Council offers three sizes of green waste bins for fortnightly collections. Should Oxford City Council withdraw the largest size of green waste bins from all households in order to encourage more recycling?



Who should have most responsibility for dealing with waste?

Producers of goods – 30/42

Consumers – 7/42

Local councils – 5/42

Buildings.



- Surprise that the largest proportion of emissions came from buildings, rather than from transport or industry.
- A mix of developers, private landlords, individuals, Oxford City Council, and central Government were felt to be responsible for reducing carbon emissions in buildings
- A strong sense that it's more cost effective if all new builds are built to sufficiently high standards, rather than the prohibitively high cost of retrofitting.

To illustrate...



My husband and I bought our first house in Oxford. My husband is in energy fitting housing business. We can't afford it. It's very frustrating. You can have the best values, but you can't be able to do it.



The main reason why we're reluctant to do things about these problems is a lack of money. Maybe we need to think differently, how to give people more money or how to pay for it in a different way.



It seems a bit ridiculous, with the new builds, in the near future you'll have to go back and retrofit again so it seems absurd that you wouldn't start there.



42/42 votes

Currently national policy does not require that new homes are built to net zero standards. Should the Government introduce this standard?

Transport.



- Encouraging behaviour change and modal shift away from private car use seen as key – people can feel reliant on their car.
- Implementing infrastructure changes (i.e. more and safer cycling infrastructure) and technological changes also important.
- A unified strategy for transport planning between Oxford City, the County Council, and public transport providers required.
- Incentivise public transport use, and consider how vulnerable groups (children, the elderly) can get about.

To illustrate...



Statistically we have the second highest use of bikes in the country, so how do we build on that success and make it a much better environment for cyclists?



We could ban cars in the city centre, like in Cambridge.



This seems like a more pleasant landscape for families and the city landscape. But the trade-offs seem quite onerous. Less personal freedom...it's what sparks rebellion.



35/42 votes

The Government has already legislated to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040. Should the ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles be brought forward to 2030?

Biodiversity & offsetting.



- Very positive about creating more biodiversity and green space around Oxford.
- Creating more green space and planting more trees an 'easy win' and visible to the whole community.
- Questions about whether 'offsetting' could effectively address carbon neutrality, and if it allowed those who can afford it to continue polluting.
- Tension between setting aside land for green space as well as allowing for new housing.

To illustrate...



It [offsetting] is a way for rich people to travel.



“[Planting trees/plants outside retailers in the city centre] Immediately you have a visual difference and it's not much to maintain. That could be done tomorrow.



I think all new housing should be accompanied by some landscaping, so there are trees and greenery around. So many of the new blocks in Cowley are brick and concrete.



Which of the following two options should Oxford City Council prioritise?

**Planting additional trees in public spaces in Oxford –
28/42**

**Procuring land outside the city in partnership with neighbouring councils for large-scale tree planting –
10/42**

Renewable energy.



- Surprise at how much Oxford has already done about renewable energy.
- Electricity viewed as more expensive than gas, and concern about affordability of solar panels.
- Currently too much emphasis on the individual to take the initiative. The council and national government need to play a more direct role in helping households to make the transition.
- Compromise could be reached in deciding where renewable sources would be placed – neutralising climate change was seen as more important than aesthetics.

To illustrate...



I imagine there's a big upfront cost moving to electric, and it's about convincing people about the long-term benefits, which is that it might be cheaper when you get your energy bill but you've got to make the investment.



If the householder can't afford to pay for solar panels, who's going to pay for it?



The larger renewables are a red herring. In a place where we have very little land and we're trying to be more biodiverse, I don't think we can afford to put land into renewables.

Strong support for being ambitious, though with a sizeable cautious minority.

	Waste reduction	Buildings	Transport	Biodiversity & offsetting	Renewable energy
Scenario A <i>Least ambitious</i>	2	3	2	2	6
Scenario B	9	7	12	8	7
Scenario C <i>Most ambitious</i>	29	31	26	30	27

37/41

“The UK has legislation to reach ‘net zero’ by 2050. Should Oxford be more proactive and seek to achieve ‘net zero’ sooner than 2050?”



To illustrate...



As a country or a planet, if our target is 2050, some of us are going to have to go quicker. If we're a prosperous, relatively erudite city then we have to do it.



Oxford has the research and intellectual and academics to help us, so if we can't use best evidence, who can? We need to be leaders.



I rejoice to see so much colour and variety compared to how Oxford used to be...it's a small piece of paradise.

3. Conclusions.

There's a strong desire for being ambitious...

- The majority of Assembly Members (37 out of 41) felt that Oxford should aim to achieve 'net zero' sooner than 2050. There was widespread belief that Oxford should be a leader in tackling the climate crisis.
- Assembly Members responded particularly positively to the examples of what is already being done across Oxford to address climate change and meet the goal of becoming 'net zero'.
- Enhanced biodiversity was central to the overall 'net zero' vision of Oxford with increased flora and fauna in the city centre, along with more cycling, walking, and public transport, and far fewer cars.
- The buildings sector should adopt improved building standards, widespread retrofitting, and more domestic and non-domestic energy needs being met by sustainable sources.

...but...

- Around one in four to one in three Assembly Members rejected the most ambitious – and, therefore, challenging to achieve – visions of a future Oxford.
- They were also perturbed by the extent to which the burden of change was – in their eyes – being placed on individuals.
- There was, therefore, a sense that the council needs to communicate a shared vision and strategy to reaching ‘net zero’ that shows the roles played by local and national government, businesses, and individuals.
- There was also a demand for more education and information provided for the wider public in Oxford to help them understand what they can do to help.
- Specifically, Assembly Members wanted more information about how to recycle correctly.
- There was little consensus on when before 2050 ‘net zero’ should be achieved.

THANK YOU.

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