

The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 Summary

November 2020



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Who is behind the Reading Climate Action Network?

Reading Climate Action Network (ReadingCAN) is run by Reading Climate Change Partnership, a voluntary, multi-stakeholder group including representatives from business, academia, community groups and statutory authorities. We were originally founded in 2008 as part of the Local Strategic Partnership and have developed two previous climate change strategies for Reading.

Following the declaration of a climate emergency in Reading in 2019¹, plans to produce a third Reading climate change strategy were brought forward by six months.

Production of this strategy has been co-ordinated by the Reading Climate Change Partnership with input from a wide range of stakeholders across Reading.

For the strategy to succeed, the action within it needs to be 'owned' by every organisation, business and resident across Reading.

What do we do?

ReadingCAN aims to inspire everybody who lives, works or studies in Reading to work together towards our goal of a net zero, climate change resilient town by 2030.

This target is based on the sound science outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, recognising the need for more ambitious and urgent action to avoid catastrophic climate impacts.

Our mission is for communities and organisations to come together in Reading to tackle climate change.

Working in partnership with individuals and organisations

Our strategy and action plan were developed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholder groups to ensure that it reflects their concerns, issues and priorities.

The Pathway to a Net Zero Reading by 2030

Achieving the net zero carbon target for Reading will require the removal of virtually all fossil fuels from the energy mix. Key priorities identified are:

- Housing: retrofitting and building new homes and other buildings to low/zero carbon standards
- Renewable energy: generating more energy from renewable sources
- Transport: reducing traffic and the need to travel by more polluting modes of transport, promoting walking, cycling and public transport, and phasing out petrol/diesel in favour of electric vehicles
- Consumption and waste: buying and using less 'stuff', reducing waste and developing Reading's 'circular economy'
- Nature-based solutions: working with nature to tackle climate impacts and reducing emissions through measures such as carbon capture

Across all of these priorities, effective communication and engagement with the wider public will be critical to the success of our efforts to deliver the aims of the strategy.

Being better prepared to deal with the impacts of a changing climate

The predicted impacts of climate change mean that Reading needs to become more resilient to a wider range of conditions than in the past. The Reading Climate Change Partnership commissioned a first adaptation study for Reading in February 2020. This is not a detailed action plan, rather, it indicates headline climate impacts for Reading by the end of the century, describing the big picture risks alongside the opportunities for the town to adapt. It sets out key steps for consideration in each category of adaptation and recommends a number of areas of work to improve Reading's resilience to climate impacts.

Monitoring and Reporting

The progress in delivery of both the aims and actions within the strategy will be monitored appropriately so that corrective action can be taken if needed.

Why is it important to act on climate change?



We believe that by taking concerted action on climate change we will be healthier, fitter and happier, that the negative impacts of climate change will be reduced, and that our communities will be more resilient to, and better able to cope with, those impacts.

Delivering the Strategy

We have identified six theme areas of focus.

Our aim is that by 2025...

Energy and Low Carbon Development



- Reading is taking urgent action to decarbonise its energy networks, increase energy efficiency and create renewable energy capacity
- Reading has concrete plans to achieve sufficient demand reduction to enable its annual energy needs to be 100% covered by its renewable generation, taking account of the increased load from transport and heat becoming electrically powered

Transport



- Reading will have a low carbon future for transport in which emissions are cut by reducing traffic and shifting more journeys to sustainable modes of transport and supporting the transition from petrol/diesel to electric vehicles
- In the process, we will improve health and wellbeing, while making transport infrastructure more resilient to climate impacts

Water



- Reading will become the most water aware and water efficient town in the UK, going beyond national targets. We will achieve this by developing and implementing a dedicated communications and education strategy and delivering a range of water saving improvements in Reading's homes and businesses
- The people of Reading will understand the risks of flooding from the River Thames and from urban storm water, and will be ready for them

Resources



- Reading will have made good progress towards becoming a zero-waste town by 2030. We continuously innovate to find new ways of using resources more efficiently and thereby minimise our contribution to climate change
- We will make it easy for everybody to access information and services to help them reduce waste and repurpose things they no longer need

Health & Wellbeing



- The people of Reading will be well informed about how to self-manage the health impacts of climate change and benefit from policies and programmes that enable them to thrive despite its effects
- All climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies will consider the impact on health; with particular emphasis on heat-related health risks, air quality and mental wellbeing

Nature



- The people of Reading will see changes to the management of open spaces and the green links between them that store more carbon as well as giving shade for hot summers, corridors for wildlife and some flood control
- New developments will include biodiversity net gain and water management, and there will be exemplar sites showing how to change planting and soil management around buildings to mitigate the impacts of climate change

¹ <https://www.reading.gov.uk/article/12745/Climate-emergency-declaration>

Positive benefits from tackling climate change

Residents and organisations who responded to the consultation on the draft Reading Climate Emergency Strategy cited in particular a number of positive benefits for taking action on climate change:

- **Improve community cohesion** – by bringing communities together, reducing inequalities, encouraging personal responsibility and respect for each other and the environment
- **Deliver health benefits** – e.g. the physical health benefits associated with more active, less car dependent lifestyles
- **Offer global benefits** – including reduced climate impacts on poorer countries and reduction in the forces driving mass migration and refugees
- **Improve mental health** – directly from addressing anxiety about the future and indirectly as a result of healthier lifestyles
- **Benefit future generations** – reduced risks to younger people who will have to live with the impacts of a changing climate as a result of today's emissions
- **Stimulate new economic/employment opportunities** – opportunities to develop new products, services, jobs and skills in the 'green economy'
- **Improve connection with nature** – bringing us closer to nature, recognising our place in it, respecting it and recognising the contribution which nature can make to tackling climate challenges

Economic

Clean and inclusive growth in the local economy
Reduced energy costs
Increased energy security
High quality employment
Reduced congestion
New opportunities in the low carbon economy
Economic costs of climate impacts avoided/reduced

Social

More active, outdoor lifestyles
Healthier diets
Warmer, healthier homes
Quieter, safer streets
Vulnerable people protected locally and globally
More cohesive, engaged communities
Improved physical and mental health

Environmental

Improved air quality
Better access to greenspace and nature
Healthier water
Improved biodiversity
Reduced risk of flooding, heatwaves and extremes
Global environment safeguarded for future generations

Communicating with and Engaging the Community

While the community in Reading is relatively engaged in the climate change debate, we know that we have a long way to go before we reach everyone. If the strategy is to succeed, the action within it needs to be 'owned' by every organisation, business and resident across Reading.

Reading Climate Action Network: Get in touch

We recognise that different people are at different points on the journey but everybody can do something.

- Learn how to take action on climate change
- Find out about organisations and services that make it easy
- Receive invitations to our events
- Collaborate with like-minded people

To find out more and to get involved:

info@readingcan.org.uk

www.readingcan.org.uk

Become a delivery partner and help us achieve our goal of a net zero, climate resilient town

The more people who join us and begin to take action, or step up their action, on climate change, the more we can achieve together.

We are grateful to businesses and community groups who have already committed to partner with us in delivering some of the actions. Why not join them?

Organisations working together can achieve so much more: in their own operations, along their supply chain and with customers.

Communities and organisations coming together in Reading to tackle climate change

