# Concerns grow over Newcastle's carbon-neutral ambitions



Concerns surrounding Newcastle’s ambition to become a carbon-neutral city by 2030 have intensified, with councillors expressing frustration over the lack of information being shared by the local authority regarding progress towards this target. Members of the Liberal Democrat party, who sit on Newcastle City Council’s climate change committee, have voiced their apprehension, stating that judging the city's progress has become “impossible.”

Newcastle City Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019, setting a target to achieve net zero emissions by the end of 2030. Earlier this year, the council passed the halfway mark between the declaration and the target deadline. To monitor this journey, a series of 93 priority actions were established in September 2020 aimed at decarbonising the city, which included ambitious goals like installing solar panels on 30% of homes and transitioning 40% of car commuters to low-emission buses.

However, recent findings from the Liberal Democrats indicate a lack of transparency in the council's reporting on these actions. While the Labour-led council published its annual net zero progress report, it was critiqued for its vague revelations. The report did not outline specific details on how much progress has been made against the aforementioned priority actions, which the opposition accused of being “alarming”.

The council recently reported a decline of 10.31% in city-wide carbon dioxide emissions between 2019 and 2022, but no further data has been made available since then. The Liberal Democrats emphasised that without ongoing monitoring of these priority actions, it would be “impossible to ascertain whether we are on track to achieve our goals,” framing the lack of detailed reporting as a significant setback in effectively combating climate change.

Concerns were further raised regarding the process of report publication, as the new document was made available without prior review by the climate change committee for necessary scrutiny. Coun Gareth Kane, the sustainability spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, remarked: "If the Labour administration was serious about net zero, they would agree to our calls to make the climate change committee a full scrutiny committee so we could demand update reports come to committee first."

In response to the criticisms, Newcastle City Council pointed to various initiatives and steps taken to advance its climate agenda. This includes launching a new trial that successfully collected over 100 tonnes of household food waste, approving funding for the decarbonisation of public swimming pools in Jesmond and Elswick, and retaining a top ‘A’ grade rating from the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). Labour councillor Juna Sathian, the cabinet member for climate and transport, expressed optimism about the progress being made against the city’s priority actions.

Sathian stated, "While we recognise there is a long way to go and achieving net zero will require ongoing and scaled-up government support, we can see from our 2024 update that by working together with communities, businesses, public bodies and other stakeholders, there is the will and ability to create lasting change for the good of our planet."

Newcastle City Council remains committed to its climate objectives, asserting that the initiative requires collaboration among various community segments and consistent governmental backing to realise its net zero target.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://newcastle.nsw.gov.au/getmedia/2B905379-0035-4856-9FF8-EA41F03AFC8D/Climate-Action-Plan.pdf> - This document provides information on the City of Newcastle's climate action plan, its commitment to renewable energy, and carbon emission reduction efforts, although it does not directly address Newcastle City Council's specific situation.
* <https://cape.mysociety.org/media/data/plans/newcastle-upon-tyne-city-council-df05bc1.pdf> - This report updates on the Net Zero Newcastle 2030 Action Plan, detailing progress and future steps towards achieving a carbon-neutral city, aligning with Newcastle City Council's climate ambitions.
* <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sustainable-campus/themes/carbon/> - Newcastle University's commitment to net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 demonstrates the broader regional focus on sustainability and climate action, supporting the city's overall climate goals.
* <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/netzero> - This webpage provides access to information on Newcastle's Net Zero efforts, aligning with the city council's climate change initiatives.
* <https://www.cdp.net/en/cities> - The Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) evaluates cities worldwide for climate leadership, relevant to Newcastle's top 'A' grade rating and climate efforts.