

Green plans to invest more than £27 million into climate action in Brighton & Hove



25 February 2021

The Green-led council in Brighton and Hove has put forward plans to commit to investing more than £27 million into climate action in the city to help improve the lives of residents and tackle climate change. [1]

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and despite swingeing government cuts, which have seen Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) lose £100 million over ten years of Conservative austerity, Brighton and Hove Green Party councillors have put forward their plans for a Green recovery in the city which will be decided at the authority's budget meeting on Thursday [25 February].

The plans include:

- £5.2m on the Brighton & Hove Warmer Homes Investment Fund which will make grants available to all residents in the city particularly low-income households. This will allow residents to update the insulation and heating systems in their homes, lowering both their fuel bills and their carbon footprint.
- A total of £7m on Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Investment Funds, which will provide funding to departments for projects that meet council sustainability priorities
- £1.7m combined to invest in parks and open spaces, creating new school streets, low traffic neighbourhoods and the expansion of the Brighton BikeShare scheme.

Green Party Councillor Phelim Mac Cafferty, leader of Brighton and Hove City Council, said:

"One year into the coronavirus pandemic, and with the climate crisis looming ever larger, it has become increasingly clear that it is down to local councils and communities to step up and deliver the kind of support and transformational change that the government is simply not prepared to do.

"Despite years of budget cuts we have prepared a budget which will not only keep local services on their feet and get people through this immediate health crisis, it will actually help improve all of our lives in ways that will tackle the spiralling climate emergency.

"This budget offers a Green recovery for Brighton and Hove, offering protection for the most vulnerable in the city, creating jobs and helping to build a cleaner, healthier and Greener future for us all."

The budget proposal would also see the creation of a £4m reserve fund to kickstart a huge retrofitting scheme for all council homes in the city by 2030.

The investment plans put forward would be paid for by a rise in council tax, with those on low incomes protected from any increase in payments, a responsible and necessary use of the council's reserves and sustainable borrowing at the current historic low rates.

Green Party Councillor David Gibson, joint finance lead on BHCC, said:

"Our priority is for a fair budget; where charges go up, we increase support for people struggling with council tax; and exempt low-income households from Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) increases.

"It's a budget for recovery – instead of slashing services and jobs in a recession, we have used a modest amount of reserves to cover some of the extra costs of the pandemic, leaving enough resources to invest in public services and recovery right now, when it is certainly most needed. Crucially, as we head towards recovery, these reserves are repaid.

"This budget also fights to protect residents from another huge emergency: our climate crisis. We've worked to create green jobs, promote community wealth, and aid recovery in public projects. Projects such as building much needed additional council homes, warmer homes, easier to heat and climate friendly, will make a huge difference.

"Planting trees, investing in sustainable, active travel options and supporting our cultural and tourism recovery will also be key to getting our city back on its feet, able to rise to future challenges and thrive again."

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Here is a full breakdown of climate action investment in Brighton and Hove City Council's budget:

- Solar panels for corporate buildings – £500,000
- Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Investment Fund (SCRIF) – £3.1m
- Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Investment Fund – Transport – £3.9m
- Brighton Bikeshare Replacement Programme – £467,000
- Pocket Parks – Parks and Open Spaces – £350,000
- School Streets – Transport – £50,000
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods – Transport – £300,000
- Brighton & Hove Warmer Homes Investment Fund – £5.2m
- Climate Assembly Actions – £1.3m
- Domestic and communal heating improvements in council houses – £2.24m
- Funding over two years to replace inefficient heating systems across all council housing stock and to consider opportunities to improve the energy rating and identify projects that will help to contribute to the

target of being carbon neutral by 2030 – £4.8m

- Installation of a district heating network – £1.1m
- Home energy efficiency, insulation improvements and renewables – £300,000
- New Solar PV panels across council housing stock – £1.750m

Total – £27.057 million

- In addition to this investment, the council would put aside an extra £4m into reserves to go towards a retrofit scheme for all council houses. The authority aims to have a fully-costed report by November which will set out how the council's housing stock can be retrofitted over the next nine years and how much it will cost. In the meantime, consultation work will begin with residents.

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[Greens demand further protections for schools to avoid another lockdown](#)



22 February 2021

- **The call comes as Boris Johnson is set to address the nation this evening to announce a lift in lockdown restrictions from March**

The Green Party is urging the government to introduce additional measures to protect schools which could save lives and avoid another lockdown in the coming months.

The Green Party Education Spokesperson Vix Lowthion said:

“It is vital to stop transmission in schools by introducing effective protections to make them safer – such as masks in classrooms, adequate ventilation, a rota system and utilising outdoor and community spaces to allow social distancing as part of a phased return to school.

“These protections are commonplace in European nations, and a phased return is what is happening in Scotland and Wales. This government's belief in English exceptionalism is incredibly dangerous.

“If new, additional protections are not introduced then we could face exactly the same issues as we did in December, and a fourth lockdown in the coming

months.”

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley added:

“It is essential that Boris Johnson carefully follows the science as the nation comes out of our third lockdown. In the past the government has lifted restrictions too quickly, causing thousands of people to tragically lose their lives, many more than should have been the case.

“The chancellor has a chance at the upcoming March budget to provide financial security for all those struggling to deal with the economic hardships the pandemic has brought. It is vital he acts with the interests of the most vulnerable at the centre of his attention.”

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[Green Party welcomes US return to the Paris climate agreement](#)



19 February 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley:** “As COP chair the UK government needs to get its own house in order when it comes to climate change and demonstrate the global leadership required so that others can follow suit”

The Green Party has welcomed the US’ official return to the Paris Climate Agreement today. [1]

It has now warned the UK government that as chair it is responsible for ensuring this year’s crucial COP talks bring forth the necessary global commitments to prevent catastrophic climate change.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“The return of the US to the Paris climate agreement is vital if we are to secure any meaningful climate action at this year’s COP summit.

“As one of the world’s biggest carbon emitters, the US’ involvement in such a

crucial international agreement should never have been put in doubt by the Trump administration, and today is a significant reminder of how grateful we should all be that his presidency is over.

“This year’s COP is the most crucial ever. Unfortunately, it is clear that we have left it far too late to stop damaging climate change from happening, but if we are to stand any chance of staying within the 1.5 degree warming limit and preventing the most extreme outcomes, all countries must act with great urgency.

“As COP chair the UK government needs to get its own house in order when it comes to climate change and demonstrate the global leadership required so that others can follow suit. As long as it keeps opening new coal mines, expanding airports and building new roads its climate commitments cannot be taken seriously.

“The US’ official return to the Paris agreement today has made it possible for the world to take the necessary action to prevent runaway climate change. It is now up to the UK government to step up and make sure this happens.”

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<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/19/us-official-return-paris-climate-pact>

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Greens welcome High Court ruling on Manston Airport



16 February 2021

The Green Party has welcomed the High Court’s decision to quash the government’s order to reopen Manston Airport, in Kent, as a global freight hub [1].

The High Court ruling is the first time a government Development Consent Order has been quashed by the courts. It means a decision on the future of

the airport will need to be taken again at a future date.

Members of Thanet Green Party have been campaigning against the development of the airport, warning reopening it as a freight hub would be in conflict with the government's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Green Party peer Natalie Bennett has now welcomed the High Court ruling but warned the government must start taking its climate commitments seriously.

Bennett said:

"This High Court decision to quash the government's order to reopen Manston Airport is of course welcome, but it is not the end of the line yet for this disastrous plan.

"There is simply no excuse for reopening old airports in a climate emergency. Yet time and again, from opening new coal mines to building new roads, this government shows that, despite talking of a green recovery, it does not care about its own climate commitments.

"As the chair of this year's COP, it is extremely worrying that the Conservatives are willing to hold their promises, including to reach net zero by 2050, in such low regard.

"The Prime Minister would do well to learn from the campaigners and Thanet Green Party members who have made it clear that we cannot go back to the old ways of doing things, which rely on prioritising polluting and dirty businesses over the health of people and planet.

"If Boris Johnson was able to understand this, it would be clear to him that reopening old airports makes no sense whatsoever."

Deb Shotton, vice chair of Thanet Green Party, said there was increasing interest in the development of the former airfield for clean energies:

"The imposition of a new cargo hub would bring terrible harm to Thanet, East Kent and the planet. The promised jobs are, by the developer's own admission, diminishing by the minute.

"In the face of the devastation of the air industry by Covid, this proposed hub becomes nothing more than a vanity project for the egos involved. Its long-term failure is inevitable.

"It needs to be put to bed now, once and for all, and the land used for the promotion of clean energies. Green jobs in a growth industry would be far more beneficial for Thanet and beyond."

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<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-56076770>

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Cumbrian Greens welcome County Council decision to reconsider coal mine decision



12 February 2021

Penrith and Eden Green Party are cautiously celebrating the news that Cumbria County Council will reconsider the application for a new deep coal mine on the Copeland coast near Whitehaven.

Green Party Councillor and campaigner Ali Ross said:

“We are outraged that the Government has failed to intervene in this case – which is clearly of national and global importance – and at a time when the UK is supposed to be leading on climate action as chair of COP26.

“It is abundantly clear that the grounds on which Cumbria County Council approved this planning application are totally flawed. The mine will not be ‘carbon neutral’ as claimed by the developers. Far from it, it will result in massive carbon emissions that will further destabilise our already dangerously unbalanced climate.”

Cllr Ross also refuted the commonly cited argument that the coking coal from this mine is essential to the future of steel production in the UK:

“Less than 15% of the coal from this mine is actually destined for the UK market; the rest will be exported. Steel production is currently one of our most carbon intensive industries and that has to change. Low carbon production technology exists and is well on its way to commercial use. The UK should be speeding up that process, not slowing it down by investing in more outdated coal sources.”

Cllr Ross also challenged the suggestion that the coal mine was necessary to protect local jobs:

“Of course we are all sympathetic to County Councillors’ desire to create jobs in West Cumbria, but this project never looked likely to deliver the

massive opportunities that were promised.

“Coking coal is a climate destroying fuel that would inevitably result in the community being let down again. The Government should be providing jobs in green technologies instead.

“Cumbria has enormous potential for renewable energy, green transport infrastructure and retrofitting homes to bring them up to good energy efficiency standards – to name but a few. What West Cumbria needs is investment and training that will create long-term jobs for a sustainable future.”

The Council stated that its decision was made in light of the recommendations from the Government’s Climate Change Committee [1], issued in December, regarding the UK’s future greenhouse gas emissions. The application will now go back to Committee for a fourth time.

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<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/>

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