

CABINET
25 February 2025

Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map and Oxfordshire County Council Climate Adaptation Delivery Plan

Report by Director of Economy and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - a) Note the recent endorsement of the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP).
 - b) Approve the adoption of the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map and Oxfordshire County Council Delivery Plan.

Executive Summary

2. The risks to Oxfordshire residents, businesses and stakeholders, as well as Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) from the impacts of climate change are significant. OCC is well-placed to play a convening role and work with Oxfordshire's stakeholders to plan against these risks.
3. The draft Route Map has been co-developed with Oxfordshire stakeholders through a strong partnership approach. The key parts of the Route Map are the Priority Actions and Implementation Blueprint that identify the key actions that need to be taken by Oxfordshire's stakeholders. The actions are structured into the following themes:
 - (a) **Enabling actions** - including governance and training.
 - (b) **Critical Infrastructure** - including water, highways assets and wider transport considerations.
 - (c) **Health, Communities and Built Environment** – including residential retrofit, schools and public health.
 - (d) **Natural Environment** – including species and habitat recovery and protection.
 - (e) **Business and Industry** – including support for farms and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
4. The accompanying OCC Delivery Plan provides an organisational level plan for OCC to control climate risk, now included in OCC's Strategic Risk Register.

5. In January 2025, the Future Oxfordshire Partnership endorsed the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map and committed to work with partners on its implementation.

Key Issues

Climate Risk in Oxfordshire and Inclusion on the OCC Strategic Risk Register

6. OCC is subject to operational risks from heatwaves, flooding, drought, storms and cold snaps. These risks are increasing in severity and frequency due to the carbon emissions already released into the atmosphere.
7. The latest national [Climate Change Risk Assessment](#) states that even under low warming scenarios, the UK will face costly impacts without immediate significant action. It identifies potential costly impacts including on health and productivity, affecting households, businesses and public services.
8. The 2023-24 [Director of Public Health Annual Report](#) on Climate and Health outlines climate-change induced public health risks across the county.
9. Heatwaves will affect the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire's most vulnerable residents, impacting OCC's public health, adult and children's services. Flooding, heatwaves and drought will increasingly impact highways, property and infrastructure operations.
10. The above points provide a strong justification for the inclusion of climate risk in the OCC Strategic Risk Register. The subsequent development of the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map and OCC Delivery Plan (as part of the wider development of an adaptation programme) represents a key control measure to reduce this identified strategic risk. These are set out at annex 2 and annex 3 respectively.

Overview of the Route Map Work Package and Key Principles

11. The Route Map is an important step in the development of the wider Oxfordshire climate adaptation programme. OCC has played a convening role to help key Oxfordshire stakeholders co-develop a countywide approach to climate change adaptation, taking a strong partnership approach in developing the Route Map.
12. In May 2024, OCC commissioned Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to:
 - (a) Produce an **Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map**, emphasising nature-based solutions and actions to reduce excess deaths and ill-health as a result of climate change.

- (b) Produce an accompanying **OCC Delivery Plan** to provide an organisational-level plan for building adaptation and resilience to climate change.
- (c) **Build capability of stakeholders** to understand climate adaptation principles and manage climate risks for their roles and organisations.
- (d) Deliver a **risk management workshop** for stakeholders as part of the capacity building approach.
- (e) Demonstrate a clear **economic rationale** for implementing the identified adaptation and resilience measures.

13. SWM were commissioned due to their expertise in stakeholder engagement and experience developing local authority climate adaptation plans.

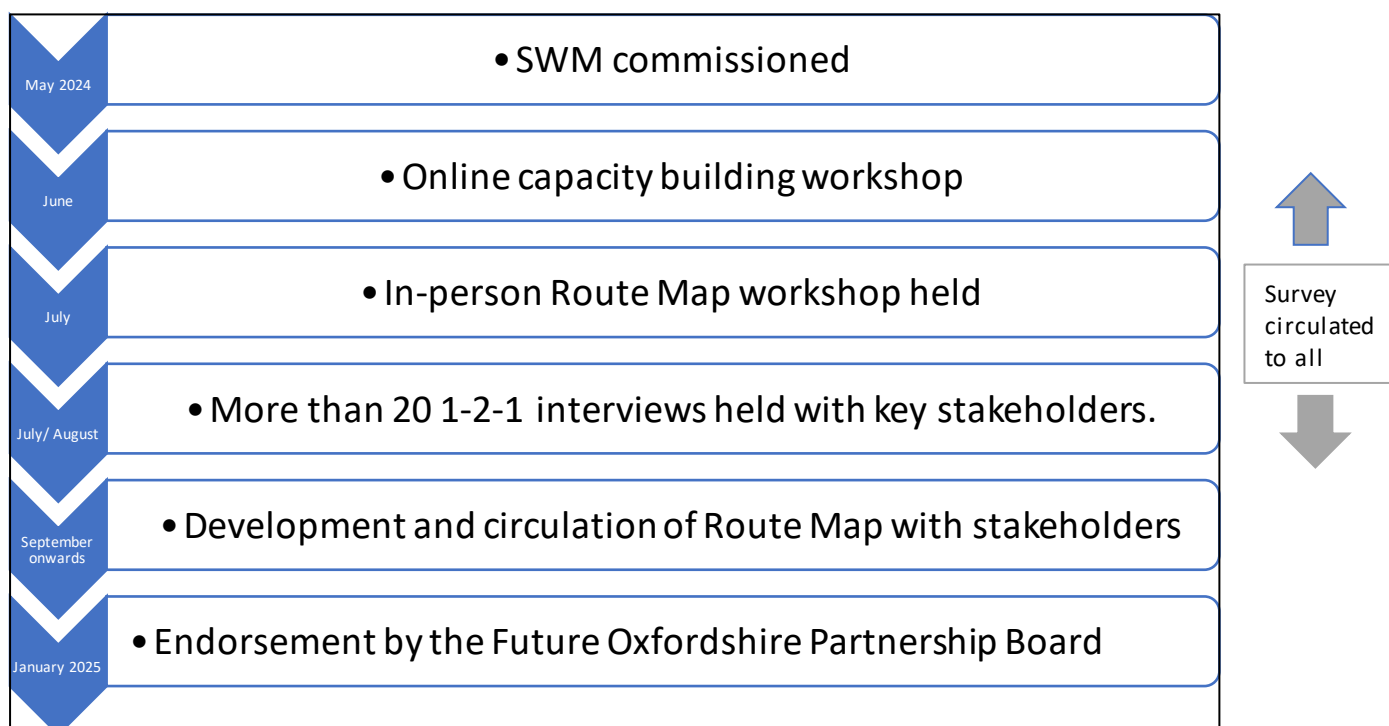


Figure 1: Engagement approach followed to develop the Route Map.

14. At the time of writing the stakeholder risk management workshop remains to be scheduled. This will take place once as part of an upcoming Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Summit later this year, once final approval of both the Route Map and OCC Delivery Plan has been achieved.

The Route Map Priority Actions and Implementation Blueprint

15. The Priority Actions and Implementation Blueprint represent the key parts of the Route Map and have been developed based heavily on the engagement activity outlined in Figure 1. Input has been received from more than 40 of Oxfordshire’s key stakeholders, including the district councils, the NHS, OxLEP, Community Action Groups, Thames Water and the Local Nature Partnership.

16. The actions are categorised into five key themes:

- (a) **Enabling actions** - including governance and training.
 - (b) **Critical Infrastructure** - including water, highways assets and wider transport considerations.
 - (c) **Health, Communities and Built Environment** – including residential retrofit, schools and public health.
 - (d) **Natural Environment** – including species and habitat recovery and protection.
 - (e) **Business and Industry** – including support for farms and SME's.
17. A set of 15 priority actions have been identified as the initial focus for implementation and consist of mainly enabling actions such as governance, identifying finance opportunities and capacity building.
18. A further 67 longer term actions are included in the Implementation Blueprint in the report annex. Planning for their implementation will continue alongside and be supported by the successful implementation of the priority enabling actions.
19. The Implementation Blueprint provides a framework to guide future action in the County on climate adaptation. The Committee on Climate Change recognises that work on Climate Adaptation nationally is not yet at levels needed. As such many identified measures are not yet funded and therefore cannot be actioned in the immediate term. The document provides a blueprint against which to engage government and to work collectively to seek future funding over the medium to long term.
20. Many actions in the Route Map have been categorised as 'no-regrets', meaning they will be required no matter what direction future climate change takes. A few actions will need to be re-assessed as climate change scenarios and the scientific consensus evolves.
21. Route Map actions are focussed on what Oxfordshire's stakeholders have the agency and/or influence to implement and do not provide detail on measures to be taken by national infrastructure providers.
22. A shorter 7-page summary document has been developed for the Route Map to support engagement, which focusses on the priority actions and next steps for stakeholders (see Annex 1).

OCC Delivery Plan

23. An OCC Delivery plan has been developed to accompany the countywide Route Map and focuses on deliverables at the organisational level.
24. There are 10 additional OCC actions included in the OCC Delivery Plan that are not appropriate to include in the countywide Route Map.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

25. The impacts of climate change on Oxfordshire residents, communities and business are expected to be widespread and can be expected to particularly impact the most vulnerable members of society.
26. Nature and biodiversity will struggle to adapt to rapid changes in climate and the highways network along with other infrastructure will increasingly be exposed to climate conditions they are not designed for.
27. The actions included in the proposed Route Map and Delivery Plan therefore support a range of Council priorities outlined in the OCC Strategic Plan 2023-25.

Financial Implications

28. The Route Map development has been funded with a contribution from FOP.

OCC is designated as having lead responsibility (cutting across different council functions) for implementing several actions in the Route Map. The priority enabling actions (actions 1, 2, 4-7, 15) which utilise the council's convening role, will be funded through use of existing staff time, within the current adaptation policy workstream.

29. Many of the actions outlined in the wider Implementation Blueprint are not currently resourced and will require additional funding/ resourcing to effectively implement. This would be requested through separate business case proposals/ cabinet papers.
30. The 100 Together conference is one route to help identify funding opportunities for actions identified in the Route Map and OCC Delivery Plan. Significant funding will also need to come from the public sector.
31. Failure to adapt to climate change will increase the cost burden for OCC due to increasing demand for its services from vulnerable residents and the impacts to infrastructure owned and maintained by OCC.

Filipp Skiffins, Asst Finance Business Partner
Filipp.Skiffins@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

32. The statutory power of the Council to take a specific action as a consequence of adopting the Route Map and Delivery Plan will need to be assessed on a case by case basis but in the absence of applicable specific legislation is likely to sit within the Council's general power of competence pursuant to section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. No other legal implications are identified at this stage.

Jonathan Pool, Solicitor (contracts) Jonathan.pool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

33. The initial implementation of the priority set of actions in the Route Map will be led by officers in the Climate Service, including the Climate Adaptation Policy and Project Lead.
34. The Route Map and Delivery Plan identifies a wide range of further actions that will need to be implemented over a long-term horizon, requiring involvement from a range of different OCC services and by other Oxfordshire stakeholders.
35. Many of the wider set of actions in the Route Map annex are currently not resourced. One of the key initial priority actions is to begin the process to identify the resourcing opportunities to enable the Route Map and Delivery Plan to be taken forward. Actions identified in the Route Map will only be implemented when appropriate resourcing has been secured

Equality & Inclusion Implications

36. The impacts of climate change on Oxfordshire residents, communities and business are expected to be widespread and can be expected to particularly impact the most vulnerable members of society.
37. Heatwaves and flooding will particularly impact the elderly, very young, those with certain disabilities and many living in deprived communities who have limited ability and resources to adapt to increasingly severe and frequent weather events. Failure to adapt to climate change can be expected to disproportionately impact Oxfordshire's vulnerable residents, including those with disabilities, the young and elderly and those in areas of deprivation.
38. The Zero Carbon Oxfordshire team conducted a multi-stage participatory research project on climate action at the community level to inform the council's upcoming Engagement Route Map. The research involved a commissioned piece of work to understand barriers faced by ethnic minorities and people living with disabilities.
39. The actions included in the proposed Route Map and Delivery Plan therefore support the council's equality and inclusion objectives. The council's adaptive actions to date such as the heat health plan is focused specifically on supporting vulnerable residents.
40. An Equalities Impact Assessment (see Annex 4) has been completed alongside the Route Map and Delivery Plan to identify possible positive and negative impacts on communities and residents with protected characteristics. No negative impacts were identified in the assessment.

Sustainability Implications

41. Oxfordshire's long-term climate adaptation programme will prioritise nature-based solutions to maximise co-benefits.

42. The climate adaptation workstream aligns closely with key council strategies including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Director of Public Health's Annual Report (Climate and Health) and Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. It is also closely linked with the Local Nature Partnership's work on nature-based solutions.

Risk Management

43. [A Climate Vulnerability Assessment](#) has been commissioned by OCC to identify key risks and vulnerabilities for Oxfordshire.
44. [An Extreme Value Analysis](#) commissioned by OCC estimates the probability and spatial variation of future extreme heat and rainfall events across Oxfordshire.
45. Climate risk has been added to OCC's strategic risk register due to the wide-ranging risks posed by climate change. The Route Map and Delivery Plan outlined in this report represent key risk control measures for this strategic risk.

Consultations

46. The Route Map has been co-developed with several Oxfordshire stakeholders.
47. Oxfordshire stakeholders have been kept up to date on the development of the Route Map through consultation during Route Map development (see Figure 1), regular items in Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership (ZCOP) meetings, updates to FOP and via informal meetings with the city and district council sustainability leads.
48. Key OCC teams have been kept up to date on progress and invited to input via OCC climate adaptation working group meetings and email updates.
49. The Heat Health Plan and actions from the Director of Public Health's Annual Report represent key communications initiatives with Oxfordshire residents.
50. In January 2025, the Route Map was endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Board.

Next Steps

51. Upon approval of the Route Map and Delivery Plan, efforts will turn to implementing the identified actions, with initial focus on the 15 priority actions identified.
52. A working group on climate adaptation will be set up under the auspices of the new Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership to take forward the

recommendations in the Route Map, as well as the other enabling action identified in the Route Map and Delivery Plan.

Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place

Annex

Annex 1: Draft Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map Summary

Annex 2: Draft Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map

Annex 3: OCC Climate Change Adaptation Delivery Plan

Annex 4: Equalities Impact Assessment for Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map and OCC Climate Adaptation Delivery Plan.

Contact Officer: Tom Layzell, Climate Adaptation Policy and Project Lead,
tom.layzell@oxfordshire.gov.uk

February 2025