

Durham Energy Institute Perspectives

Energy, Science and Society

CLIMATE STRATEGY AS WE EMERGE FROM THE PANDEMIC –

Responses to DEI Perspectives article Issue 9 ‘Looking to a post-COVID sustainable future’ by Cllr John Clare.

INTRODUCTION

In June, the Durham Energy Institute’s online publication *DEI Perspectives* featured my article on [Looking to a Post-Covid Future](#).

Within a generally pessimistic assessment of our Climate aspirations as we emerge from the pandemic, the article asked what our Climate Strategy should be in the coming months. How do we retain the lessons of lockdown? What do we need to do to make sure the recovery is green? What would a climate-aware recovery leap-forward look like? What might we wish Durham County Council and the DEI (realistically) to be doing?

Below, please find the written responses. As both the Council and the University prepare their exit strategies, these responses represent a compendium of suggestions/ demands which Climate activists will be able to harness to advance to inform their plans.

John D Clare

Durham Energy Institute are so pleased with the engagement and responses received to Cllr John Clare’s article. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Cllr John Clare and all the contributors for taking the time to engage in this discussion. It is essential that we prioritise supporting a green recovery and ensure a sustainable and just transition is put at the heart of plans and strategies moving forward.

We look forward to building on the themes raised by all contributors to this discussion with Durham County Council and other regional authorities over the next year.

Durham Energy Institute

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SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

We received a total of 20 submissions and have summarised the thoughts and suggestions received across 6 broad carbon reduction themes:

A just and inclusive low carbon recovery

County Durham can be at the forefront of tackling climate change. DCC should commit to a 2030 carbon neutrality target, we need to show ambitious leadership.

Investing in 'green growth', low carbon and sustainable post-pandemic, is a priority and not growth at any price.

DCC could hold a citizens' assembly, where residents decide with experts how to reach these targets. DCC and DU should leverage their procurement power to implement progressive procurement with climate, ecology, and social justice at the forefront.

The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated inequalities in our society. It is essential to ensure that social inclusion is at the heart of sustainability and investment plans, and that these solutions work for the most vulnerable and fuel poor members of society.

We need to change the system and choices available to people and ensure the costs and benefits of change are shared more fairly.

There is a real need for a Community Investment Bank to provide loans and support this green transition for business and home/car owners.

Economy

An economy-wide transition away from fossil fuels could employ immense labour power. We must encourage this and prioritise investment in green jobs.

Buying into an environmentally aware incentive post Brexit regarding chemical, product and waste legislation could see an escalation in recycling and the growth of 'green products', and the promotion of circular ownership models to consumers. Research undoubtedly illustrates that nations with an energetic long-term strategy for approaching global warming objectives will be economically better off than others.

Stimulate innovation – collaborate with the University, business and other public sector organisations to accelerate the deployment of next generation technologies and eco innovation products and processes. We need development that allows you to easily access local facilities, giving you a choice to move away from private car use, the high speed broadband provision that allows you to work from home, as well as world-leading levels of energy efficiency, renewable and low carbon heating, all of which are likely to make new developments more attractive to buyers and help the UK reach important climate change targets.

Durham University may see a drop of up to 75% in overseas students next year – a possible 50 % fall in income that could equate to £100 million less in income. There will be knock on impacts in fewer students in Durham City (using shops and pubs, footfall, accommodation, etc.) How can we compensate for this through tourism?

Buildings

DCC has the opportunity to lead by example – council buildings and actions of councillors; developing and installing district heating schemes using low carbon heating sources, whilst acquiring valuable expertise; convert shops and offices that become vacant into homes and live-work units; do even more than we are now to develop tourism.

Home energy efficiency (insulation and low carbon heating, including non-fossil fuel district heating schemes, use of minewater heat, etc.) will now become an even higher priority for a green recovery. An energy efficiency fund to assist with building fabric upgrade, boiler upgrade, additional insulation etc. would be very valuable both at national and local level.

This is not just retrofitting the housing stock we have but also other buildings including schools and hospitals. Improved building standards for new builds and support for net-zero homes is needed. With an ambitious programme the County will be able to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and create a significant amount of new jobs.

Transport

The greatest thing we can learn from the current pandemic is that we can reduce demand for transport by more home working. Public transport is vital for many people, and needs to be provided using energy efficient vehicles. Integrated bus ticketing and eco-friendly vehicles

We have to start putting the needs of public and active transport before the needs of private transport, as this is actually the best method of reducing levels of private motor ownership.

Invest with stakeholders in bringing the Metro train (a sustainable transport link) from Newcastle and Sunderland to Durham and beyond to Bishop Auckland. This would be achievable by reopening the Leamside Line.

Accepting that residents and business alike will still be dependent on cars for mid to long range journeys, the Council should encourage the take-up of ULEVs and publish its ChargePoint Delivery Plan so residents can see a Council plan for delivering Charging Infrastructure and thus encouraging residents and businesses to buy electric.

Ban the drive-through aspect of the fast food restaurants which feature in County Durham. This would reduce car journeys and lessen the rubbish being thrown about on our streets and open spaces. Customers must only eat in the fast food restaurant and not be allowed to take food out.

Possible rise in drop off/ collection points for deliveries (like Amazon lockers) boosting use of local post offices and shops again.

Is there potential for a (near to) city centre delivery hub for last mile cycle deliveries?

Much more needs to be done and we need to promote safer cleaner cycleways and preserve and extend current walkways. Lockdown has shown us that if safe space was available, then many more people would cycle. Effort should be made to maintain the narrative that daily exercise and commuting is safe, enjoyable and healthy.

Digital Connectivity

The Council should see fast broadband connectivity as an absolute priority as this has the potential to reduce road traffic, reduce the cost of road building (as building roads for cars is the most expensive form of transport infrastructure), enable home working, and benefit online trading from local businesses. Mass installation of fibre-optic broadband and 5G is required in County Durham.

Nature

Allotments have always been popular and often over-subscribed, and giving people the space to grow their own food has numerous social and environmental benefits. Some people have been buying and valuing local food and products during lockdown – can we continue this trend?

Adding 'forest school' teaching to the curriculum should be explored as a way to help maintain the children's enjoyment and education regards the outdoors, to learn new life skills and also as a way of countering a child being risk averse in life

We need to promote the County's tourism offer while ensuring that any adverse environmental impacts associated with an increase in visitor numbers are mitigated.

Make greater use of our past, create a database of notable places and walking trails which visitors can follow to connect to our past and encourage walking.,

COMPENDIUM OF RESPONSES:

Contributions are presented in alphabetical order below with contributions from Durham County Council teams at the end.

Simone Abram

There are so many things that could now be done. Some need national-level changes but some can be implemented locally - the challenge is coordinating between different organisations for maximum effect, despite the economic difficulties cruelly exacerbated by the lockdown.

One thing that is clear is the need to put social inclusion at the heart of sustainability. Investment needs to go where it is both sustainable and inclusive, and to be a matter of shared action ('how can we change the system'), not a moralising kind of identity politics ('I'm greener than you'). Becoming sustainable isn't just about changing your habits. It's about changing available choices and sharing the costs and benefits of change more fairly.

There is lots of evidence of things that work, from all around the world. Some of these solutions are not covid-related. So much of our carbon emissions come from heating and food production.

The cooperative heating networks found across Scandinavia that show us it's cheaper and more efficient to buy heat from an organisation that you are a member of than buying fuel to run a private polluting boiler. We also know from our own history that centralised home-improvement schemes can be really effective in improving housing-efficiency, as long as it's done with the people who live in those homes for their benefit. We know that housing developers prioritise building-profits over the cost of living in housing - many developers themselves call for more stringent regulations so that the market levels up, not down. We could all be living in net-zero housing now, if building regulations had not been watered down a decade ago, we'd all be spending less on heating (and cooling).

Being able to use streets and public spaces without being choked by pollution or scared by fast vehicles has been a vivid shared experience of lockdown, and most of us will want improvements to stay. These are some of the easiest to achieve – by shifting investment to clean, accessible public transport, and allocating more roadspace to human-powered mobility (walking, cycling, skating and scooting).

All of these are proven approaches, and none of them rely on personal choice. Democracy means working together to choose the way forward, and not sitting back and expecting someone else to sort it out.

Joanne Appleby

Sadly, I share Cllr John D Clare's sentiments for a post-Covid recovery and I mourn the loss of the 'climate momentum' that was starting to build prior to lockdown. I still, however, have hope as Covid has demonstrated three things:

1. We are capable of responding to a global threat;
2. We are capable of altering our lifestyles;
3. We want to survive!

These three things will be very important if we are to tackle climate change successfully.

Another interesting, if alarming, lesson that Covid has taught us is that we desperately need to do more! I have been watching with interest as article after article has tried to document the impact of Covid upon CO₂. The common theme is that, even when society grinds to a halt, our CO₂ output does not! The most optimistic statisticians are only estimating a 25% decrease! Consequently, whilst some people have marveled at the Covid-induced clear skies and waters, I have despaired at the enormity of the real challenge that still faces us and the fact that all talk has now turned to Covid rather than Climate Change.

So what should we do now to [#buildbackbetter](#)? I believe that we need to re-gain our Climate momentum and to do this we need to educate and empower. We have had sustainable technologies at our fingertips for centuries (the first electric car was built in 1832, the first hydroelectric power plant was built in 1882!) we have just not had the social, political or economic will to use them to their full advantage. We have understood for centuries that linear capitalism does not work, we just chose to turn a blind eye to the consequences as we wanted to enjoy the fruits of an unjust system. We already have all of the answers, we just need the will to employ them!

Since Greta Thunberg took her stand and Youth4Climate was born we have witnessed more movement towards a sustainable world than ever before. I believe this shift in social conscience is necessary to drive policy makers, politicians and powerful people to re-think. In short, Climate-apathy needs to become socially unacceptable!

Victoria Ashfield

Twenty-five years ago I moved into the centre of Durham City. I was delighted to note that, living on the edge of a graveyard, I could hear birds more loudly than traffic. I had not realised how much that had been eroded over the intervening 25 years until the Covid lockdown again brought silence to the city and allowed the birds to be heard again.

Across the world many people have enjoyed seeing wildlife return to cities yet, already still not fully out of lockdown, the noise and the fumes have returned.

What lessons have we learned and how can we hold onto them? I believe that there are four main pillars to reversing the climate disaster which is underway, but governments, local as well as national must be prepared to commit. We have the opportunity. Our whole economy needs to be rebuilt. Why should we not do it in a radical new way?

1. Decarbonisation and elimination of fossil fuels

2050 is far too late; it allows governments to make it the responsibility of 'the future'. We need a clear strategy for massive public investment to drive innovation and production for rapid decarbonisation. The establishment of a 2030 target would provide an unambiguous signal to encourage the government and private finance that they must invest in renewables.

A few significant industries including cement, steel and chemicals, expansion of the electricity supply, and the development of a green transport system, will be key to mass deployment of renewables.

2. Renewables

As John Clare's original article reminded us: during the lockdown, for the first time ever, the UK has had 18 consecutive days with no coal used in electricity generation and we know that wind and solar are hugely more affordable than fossil fuels.

We have an example then, of the opportunity to move to decentralise and create democratically-owned energy systems. Local government can encourage individuals to invest in localised energy storage and in large- and small-scale renewables, in particular onshore wind and roof mounted solar PV. Heat pumps and tidal energy generation are not quite at this stage yet but with investment will have their contribution to make.

Being truly revolutionary, communities could be linked to local businesses to harness district heating systems with heat capture from industry or solar generated electricity from local public buildings out of operational hours. Our buildings, homes and workplaces, must be retro-fitted to use renewable energy to provide the nearest to carbon neutral that we can achieve. There is no reason why laws could not require homeowners and builders to reflect this ambition.

3. Integrated transport

Transport subsidies are the key to ensuring that community transport systems become more popular

than private means of transport. At present households in London receive FOUR times the rail subsidy of those in the North East. This could make a huge difference not only to affordability of transport but also accessibility of work. Many places in the sparser areas (including our towns and villages in Durham) are inaccessible to places where jobs exist, making work impossible for all but car drivers.

Publicly owned, integrated transport planning, even if hugely subsidised, will pay in the long run as people are able to access new jobs from where they live. Integrated travel planning includes building-in alternative means of travel; easy access to walking and cycling must be included wherever possible.

4. **Green jobs**

Durham could lead the way in providing sustainable, green jobs.

We must persuade the national government that the recovery investment should be used to enable local government and to encourage private investors to create jobs in the green industries, for example in the transport and renewable energy creation sectors. The pay-back will be through the social and labour market inclusion which will result.

The transition to a zero-carbon economy also represents an unprecedented opportunity to change and improve the way we work. An economy-wide transition away from fossil fuels could employ immense labour power. We must encourage this.

Nick Bayliss

Throughout the world bicycles are the first choice for local travel and recreation, creating better environments, fitter people and less of a demand on our planet's resources...

But not the UK, why?

I am a keen cyclist but it has taken me years to work out a route from my house in Sacristan to Durham to take my young son safely on.

We **should** have a unique advantage in the north east when it comes to cycling infrastructure, we have miles of unused railway lines that link to all outlying villages. Although many have been repurposed for cycling it is still a complicated jigsaw to navigate to avoid dangerous heavily-congested and fast-moving roads.

Many families have taken to two wheels as a form of transport and leisure due to the lockdown. If we want discourage people getting back into their cars, we really need to look closely at a few points as a matter of urgency:

- More people need to be 'positively Exposed' to cycling; drivers stuck behind a cyclist causes frustration and inconvenience and bias against cycling in the first place.
- A more joined-up network of cycle and pedestrian byways, avoiding main roads. Improved signage, easier navigation, Safe highway crossings. using bridleways, access roads and green lanes ... not just roads and pavements.
- More PUMP tracks as in Chopwell would offer a cheap, inclusive, fun, low maintenance and effective way of engagement with socially-distant bike play to all.
- Cycle lanes on highways should be curbed to create safer separation.
- E-bikes are booming in popularity worldwide, opening up cycling for all ages and abilities
- More bicycle capacity on trains and buses to encourage commuting and travel.
- Secure garages (as in the rest of Europe) to store bikes safely in town and city centres, bringing people back to the highstreets to access cafes/ restaurants/ all local facilities.

Lauren Conway

Lockdown has shown us what is important – time with family, strong social bonds, nature, essential workers, good housing and health. Everything else is optional, so after lockdown it is important that economic stimulus packages bolster our resilience by prioritising the right things. Whatever they want us to believe, the primary role of government is not to keep the graphs happy at all costs, but to improve people's lives. Economics is a tool, not a master. The continuing climate crisis is about to eclipse this one, and these crises will mount.

All of our leaders need to take drastic and decisive action, yesterday:

- Commit to a 2030 carbon neutrality target. The 2050 target sadly represents DCC and government denialism, which is negligent given the scale of the crises we face;
- Hold a citizens' assembly, where residents decide with experts how to reach this target. The Labour council in Camden recently did this, and it received wide public support and positive appraisal from across the country. The charity 'Involve' will help with this;
- Implement a Preston-style model of progressive procurement with climate, ecology, and social justice at the forefront;
- Create a Community Investment Bank to provide loans for green development projects.

These four steps have been taken by other councils, demonstrating their feasibility. Be motivated in the knowledge that the poorest will be harmed most by, but will benefit most from the solutions to, climate and ecological breakdown.

The most important thing is to challenge harmful growth narratives. Economic growth is not realistic if we want a healthy environment, and to ensure the future of humanity. We cannot have infinite economic growth on a finite planet.

- Economic growth is bad for the planet and entrenches economic inequality, leading to social problems and poor health. Economists and ecologists recognise the impossibility of green growth. Instead, we must prioritise policies which boost health, happiness and eradicate poverty.

Stuart Dunn

I think there will be mixed reactions as we exit Covid restrictions.

Inevitably there will be bingeing of things that people have missed – that image of Bournemouth Beach full with no social distancing, the community impacts and the 40 tonnes of litter will no doubt be a precursor to many situations varying in scale across the country and that will go on for a while as did the rush on toilet rolls. Some people are already of the view that Covid is all over and it is 'back to normal'.

Others, though, I feel will have a more sober outlook as a result of their Covid experiences, their fears for humanity and the losses that many families have felt. I do believe and that for a lot of people this will or could ignite or reignite similar fears and concerns on Climate Change.

I do not anticipate or expect an adequate or timely Governmental response. I therefore believe that there is a need for – and that there will be a desire for – local government to show leadership, to pioneer research, and to deliver positive outcomes locally. If we do not get top down change legislated for, we can help stimulate from the bottom up.

We are all consumers, individually, as local authorities and as local businesses, and as such we can change things significantly by our buying power and preferences. We have the potential to change how products are packaged and manufactured, and how far they travel, by exposing bad practices and simply not purchasing them ... along with advertising why we are making more positive purchasing and procurement decisions. This will encourage others to do the same, in effect encouraging manufacturers and suppliers to change positively what standards we are offered.

As a local authority we need to green and improve our estate and how and when we use it. Working from home due to Covid has proved that is much more possible for many than may have previously been considered and should continue to some extent for those who can to avoid unnecessary travel. For the

buildings that we continue to need, we should do everything we can to make them carbon neutral or carbon negative, by generating more power than they consume from the footprint of land they occupy.

By increasing demand for green technologies, by improving our fleet and buildings, by recruiting (potentially from those displaced by Covid) and training staff to install green technologies, we can both reduce installations' cost to ourselves and others, and increase the green workforce needed to roll out green technology across the council, and also to those most in need and potentially least able to afford it.

We can also start cultivating and planting more trees around our estate, and encourage and support other businesses and landowners to do the same.

There is every reason for hope for the future in spite of Covid.

Jonathan Elmer

- **Pilot the implementation of a four-day working week**

This will clearly have implications for some essential staff and may not fit with every role, but studies have shown that productivity does not drop with staff dropping to 4 days, and that this can be achieved by outcome based work programming for staff. The benefits are huge in terms of the mental and physical wellbeing of staff, and in terms of creating space for them to engage in other activities, hobbies, community involvement etc.

- **Lock in a shift in 'economic' thinking**

The pandemic has shown us that economic growth is not the most desirable feature of local or national economies. Indeed, stability and resilience are more desirable facets. I have had the great pleasure of attending an audience with Kate Raworth, author of *Doughnut Economics*, and it is high time we re-purposed our local economy to provide for our basic needs whilst not exceeding environmental limits. There are numerous examples of where we have got this wrong.

- **More spaces for local food production**

Allotments have always been popular and often over-subscribed, and giving people the space to grow their own food has numerous social and environmental benefits. It also creates resilience against macro-economic and environmental changes that we cannot control.

- **Supporting local businesses**

I appreciate that the Council have worked hard with regards this matter and have delivered valuable support initiatives during the lockdown. However, we should not take our eye off the ball and these efforts should be continued. It is also important that DCC makes sure the good work of one department is not undermined by the activities of another. For example, DCC are restoring New Elvet Bridge and work will commence on the 20th July and go on for 14 months. This could not have been scheduled at a more damaging time for City retailers who are desperate to recover some ground post Covid. Just delaying the work for a few months would really help reduce the negative local economic impacts.

- **Physical Fitness**

As part of their narrative regarding acceptable behaviour during lockdown, UK government inadvertently established the expectation that exercise should form part of every person's daily routine. Many people took exercise regularly for the first time. Effort should be made to maintain the narrative that daily exercise is expected, normal and wholesome.

- **Highways Re-prioritisation**

Lockdown has shown us that if safe space was available, then many more people would cycle. We do not need to persuade people to cycle, they will if we just create the infrastructure. Climate Action Durham with the support of City of Durham Parish Council presented a range of immediate measures designed to retain use of the roads by cyclists and walkers and we are rather disappointed that the Council appear to not be taking the large majority of these ideas forward. In Durham City, we have

the unusual circumstance that the lockdown broadly coincided with the decision not to build the relief roads. This really does create space for a strategic re-think of how we do transport across the City and its surroundings. Over the last 3 decades (or more) Durham transport strategy has been largely reactive and has focussed on the need to make road space available to private cars, driven largely by annually inaccurate car growth projections from DfT. Planning for car growth is also about where we decide to build houses and so green belt development away from shops and services creates car dependency. For County Durham, most major development has been on green spaces, and has been driven by lobbying from national house builders, and this has put huge pressure on transport network designers to accommodate all the cars such development creates. The only solution here is genuine transformation in the way we think about and plan multi-modal transport networks. We have to start putting the needs of public and active transport before the needs of private transport, as this is actually the best method of reducing levels of private motor ownership.

- **Reducing the need to travel**

The lockdown has shown us all that working from home is possible and we should continue to do this post lockdown. However, it is clearly easier for some than others especially if you have a decent internet connection. This also creates a major inequality for children, some of whom are unable to learn from home as a consequence of having a poor network connection or no access to a computer. The Council should see fast broadband connectivity as an absolute priority as this has the potential to reduce road traffic, reduce the cost of road building (as building roads for cars is the most expensive form of transport infrastructure), enable home working, and benefit online trading from local businesses.

Mike Gladstone

Councillor Clare's article

- It is a superb article and I agree with almost every word.
- The thinking of Councillor Clare and DEI is way ahead of others – but recently there has been a flurry of Guardian articles and BBC programmes, and the Pope has made a thoughtful speech, all on the environmental opportunities for a post-Covid world.

This may perhaps be an opportunity

- The world is heading for a climate catastrophe which can only be averted if many people and countries act together in ways that are not in their short-term interests.
- Until recently this did not appear to be possible, but in September Greta Thunberg was asked to speak to the United Nations Climate Action Summit. Then coronavirus came and many people world-wide began to reconsider their attitudes. The not-unusual killing of a black man by a policeman caused disruption throughout the USA and many other parts of the world. And people said that statues should commemorate nurses, not generals.
- Might big changes now be possible?

What changes should we try to work towards?

What changes should be attempted nationally that we in County Durham could play our part in? The principle ones are:

- a) making big environmentally-friendly changes, including greatly reducing carbon emissions;
- b) 'levelling up' standards of living (with perhaps some levelling down) whilst encouraging economic recovery;
- c) developing IT-based opportunities.

And there are particular imperatives and opportunities here in County Durham, such as:

- d) provide fast internet access everywhere in the county (but particularly in the Dales) to enable home-working and knowledge-based enterprises in the under-populated parts of the county;
- e) boost NETPark;
- f) exploit the wind-power opportunities of near-by Dogger Bank, with its strong winds and shallow waters, providing work in the east of the county;

- g) utilise the steel-making expertise still remaining on Teesside;
- h) encourage Nissan to put even more effort into electric vehicles by providing a network of re-charging points, by buying electric vehicles from them, and in other ways;
- i) set up a factory (perhaps employing expertise from DEI) to develop and make batteries for Nissan, the National Grid, homes and other applications;
- j) develop and install district heating schemes using water geothermally-heated in disused coal mines, whilst acquiring valuable expertise;
- k) convert shops and offices that become vacant into homes and live-work units;
- l) do even more than we are now to develop tourism.

Sally Gladstone

This may be an opportunity

1. Raise the profile of locally grown and made products

- Perhaps with a 'Made in Durham' kitemark to ensure quality/ that it is indeed locally-produced;
- Perhaps wider use of the County flag to denote this?

2. Litter

- Talks in schools to re-educate children, especially about glass, plastic, tins and the dangers to wildlife;
- Organised voluntary litter picks that are either family-friendly (e.g. as is Lanchester's) or to quickly clean up a grot-spot;
- Encourage small teams of people to band together to create a rota to litter pick an area so that it is 'X' on Monday, 'Z' on Tuesday etc.
- Have (children's) poster competitions and put up the winners' posters in these areas to show that littering is socially unacceptable;
- Ensure that food outlets empty their bins more regularly to prevent the wind taking it away, and use posters to remind people of how to dispose of their rubbish. At drive-throughs, put the car registration number on the bags in case these are disposed of inappropriately.

3. Develop the 'What's on' page of the *Durham County News* magazine

- Take it online and update more regularly so that it is more flexible and can include more events, especially at the local level (also it would be easier to update in case of disruption).

4. Ensure that views of Durham Cathedral are not further compromised

- A staggering number of people cannot find it from the Market Place.

5. Link Durham more to the films and TV programmes that are filmed here (e.g. 'Vera', the blast beach at Seaham, use of Durham Cathedral as a film set etc.)

- Use pictures from these to promote Durham;
- Get greater recognition for these locations in the film credits;
- Create a database and trail for aficionados to follow.

6. Tourism

- We need to encourage 'staycations' and days out. Use local historians (e.g. David Simpson at www.englishsoreast.co.uk) to take the locations of events out of books and into the street;
- Improve signage at (e.g.) Neville's Cross;
- Put up more signage (e.g. where was the king of Scotland captured?) What was life like for him and for different soldiers?

7. History

- Make greater use of our past, create a database and trail:
 - The unique role of Co Durham in the development of railways, e.g. the Causey Arch, the rope railway in Gateshead, the use of the sand at Waskerley to cast iron for the Stockton and Darlington Railway. (Is the site of this well marked?)

- Develop the sites of the marches of kings (e.g. Edward III and the 'normal' soldier). Where were they going to and from, what was the purpose of the campaign, how successful was it? Link it to 'Durham, Land of the Prince Bishops' and why we were a palatinate.
- Ada Lovelace's parents (Lord Byron) were married at Seaham Hall, the mother's family home; where is this recognised?

Alex Greer

My suggestions are as follows:

- Evidence-based policy focussing on a meaningful push for carbon neutrality;
- Emphasis on a new circular economy, eliminating waste from processes;
- Climate emergency MUST be central to all council planning and policies;
- Radical but realistic targets with both immediate actions and longer-term goals;
- Investment in renewables to attract green industrial jobs to the area;
- Solutions that work for the lowest-income members of society;
- Campaigns to encourage less meat in diets (major source of emissions!!!)
- Functional Bus Network – more routes, better ticketing, eco-friendly vehicles;
- Disincentivise car use in city and town centres – more pedestrianisation!
- Possibility of congestion charges where necessary;
- More energy-efficient affordable social housing;
- Lead by example – council buildings and actions of councillors;
- Retrofitting buildings to increase energy efficiency;
- Subsidies must go hand in hand with charges/ taxes;
- Increased cooperation between council and university.

Post-Covid recovery can be a turning point in society; we must integrate the climate crisis into this recovery to best improve the country. This climate emergency should be central in any policy decision made locally from transport to waste disposal services, with an emphasis on creating a more circular economy.

I have always believed climate solutions should be a combination of personal action and institutional change. However, local governments should ensure it is both cost-effective and simple to reduce personal carbon footprints. Addressing the climate crisis is a class issue and should never come at the expense of the lowest income individuals in society. Indeed, a Green New Deal should encourage the manufacture of renewable technologies, and efforts should be made to attract green industrial jobs to the area.

Public transport is vital for many people and encouraging its use is vital in lowering carbon emissions and lowering air pollution. Smaller, common-sense approaches such as integrated bus ticketing could encourage public transport use by reducing cost when travelling. The council must pressure companies to commit to functional bus networks that serve most constituents with more eco-friendly vehicles on a greater number of routes. This allows for the disincentivising of car use, especially in city and town centres where air pollution causes major health issues.

There should be consideration of increased parking charges and fines, with the introduction of congestion charges if feasible. This could be in conjunction with more cycle lanes and pedestrianisation, making our town centres safer places to visit, reinvigorating the local economy post-pandemic.

When considering buildings, retrofitting would not only reduce energy wastage by increasing efficiency but would also see financial benefits over time.

We must push to build more affordable social housing that has an emphasis on energy efficiency and sustainability. The County Council must lead by example on this when thinking about council-owned buildings and the actions of councillors.

In each of these suggestions, any negative proposal (e.g. charges) must go hand in hand with a positive solution (e.g. subsidy); this is crucial to gain electoral and local government support.

Many of these ideas have been proposed by [Labour for a Green New Deal](#), which local councils could utilise to propose radical change.

Simon Hanson

Over the past 13 years carbon emissions in County Durham have been steadily declining. In fact, the County is now the second lowest emitter of carbon per km² in the North East. Whilst the figures are not yet available for 2020, there is little doubt that this trend will have continued during the response to the Covid pandemic.

This provides a great starting place for the County to become much more ambitious in how we plan the recovery of the economy. There are significant opportunities to stimulate innovation, create new jobs and inspire an entrepreneurial boom across the County.

So where are these opportunities?

Let's start with retrofitting. This is not just retrofitting the housing stock we have but also other buildings including schools and hospitals. With an ambitious programme the County will be able to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and create a significant amount of new jobs. One way of achieving this could be to adopt the *Energiesprong* approach which has seen increased productivity and reduced waste in the construction industry. It has also provided warmer homes and reduced domestic heating carbon emissions.

We have seen new businesses start up to tackle climate change including those like ZMove (who have shifted deliveries from vehicle to bike) and Plastech (who are developing plastic aggregates for new buildings). With the new £40m Clean Growth Fund even more innovative low carbon start-ups and businesses can be supported to help us reduce our carbon emissions.

Durham County Council spends £500m on procurement with third party suppliers. Through a more innovative approach we can tackle some of the biggest climate challenges that we face and support both new and existing businesses.

County Durham can be at the forefront of tackling climate change. We cannot wait to be asked and instead need bold leadership to achieve it.

Ian D Hunter Smart

One of the many things that this Pandemic has revealed is that Local Government can move quickly when it has to and respond to immediate community need in imaginative and creative ways – the setting up of the Communities Together Hubs is just one example. This would imply that 'where there is a will there is a way'.

Maintaining the Council's commitment to the Climate Emergency, demonstrated by the creation of a Directorate of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, must remain a priority – whatever it takes! This may involve some difficult conversations with the Directorate of Regeneration, Economy and Growth to ensure that any growth is 'green growth', low carbon and sustainable, and not growth at any price.

- Positive changes for the council to maintain: home working as the norm where it is possible to do so; use of technology to reduce the need for travel to face to face meetings; leaner decision-making;
- Working with businesses to maintain positive changes learned during lockdown, including valuing their lowest-paid employees and reducing income inequalities within organisations;
- Providing incentives for businesses to adopt more sustainable practices;

- Public awareness campaigns and involvement of the public to harness individual and household learning from the lockdown and how this can lead to healthier lifestyles and a more sustainable future;
- Maintaining commitment to improved public transport networks, publicly-accessible electric charging points including in rural locations, and 'green' housing and other developments;
- Working with local MPs to ensure national government enables and incentivises a post-Covid sustainable future and provides the means for Local Authorities to achieve it locally.

Thomas Jones

I don't think every feature of life in lockdown is transferable to a post-covid future, but one specific thing it highlighted to me and my family is just how much travel is avoidable.

We live in Durham, and since Durham is a small town you can get most places by foot without trouble. Instead of going to the larger shops further out, we've been going to the Tesco's in the center and greengrocers on North Rd, and it hasn't really changed our options much. We haven't wasted as much time getting the kids to and from their (far away) school, because they've been at home. We've spent a lot more time socializing with our neighbours and going for walks in the many beautiful outdoors places in Durham. The biggest losses for us were some of the sports activities and specialty shops that closed, but those were already close by. I'm hopeful that Covid-19 will teach us to enjoy the simple things of life - the outdoors, good relationships, sports, and of course Netflix - a little more, and make us less dependent on holidays in Malaysia, new cars and fast fashion, even if there is some degree of return to 'normal'.

Cliff Matsuya

In response to the ideas from Cllr Clare and DEI on looking to a post-Covid sustainable future, I wanted to voice my wholehearted agreement, and stress the urgency with which we need to step up our action. I'm particularly concerned that the opportunity to make permanent anything positive that could have come out of this sad crisis is quickly passing us by - and especially with regards to transport. Car usage is back up to at least pre-lockdown levels, and the chances of enabling and making permanent a shift to more sustainable forms of travel are becoming smaller and smaller. Walking or cycling into Durham city is neither a safe nor attractive option, having to navigate narrow pavements with smokers congregating outside pubs, or running with my toddler between gaps in fast moving traffic at informal crossings at roundabouts.

Not only must Durham CC ensure that they submit bold and ambitious plans to the Department for Transport's (DfT) second tranche of the Emergency Active Travel Fund, they must ensure that proper engagement with the community is carried out to deliver long lasting and substantial impact.

Matthew Phillips

Transport represents over a third of UK greenhouse gas emissions. Transport emissions have not fallen since 1990. To meet the UK's reduction targets we cannot rely on any single solution. Replacing petrol and diesel vehicles with electric ones will entail large manufacturing emissions and huge increases in renewable generating capacity.

The greatest thing we can learn from the current pandemic is that we can reduce demand for transport by more home working, though I am sure most parents would not be keen on more home schooling! The County Council must 'lock in' the traffic reductions by closing some secondary routes and rat-runs to keep the traffic on the main roads. Keeping neighbourhoods quiet will enable people to make shorter trips by cycling and walking instead of the car, leading to more reductions in emissions. Bus gates at the strategic

road closures could allow public transport routes to be retained and made more attractive by the lack of congestion.

Transport planners know this is possible because many cities in the Netherlands have used these techniques successfully. Our twin city of Tübingen is far ahead of Durham in restricting the use of the car.

Unfortunately, I think that the opportunity to put these measures in during lockdown has been missed, and the Council will find it very hard to make any radical changes now that traffic levels have started increasing again. Central government is funding massive expansion of the road network: we simply cannot afford to waste money and time like this in infrastructure that cannot possibly be needed in a green future.

Over the next decade the Council needs to ensure that no money is spent on roads improvements or maintenance unless the scheme actively shifts the balance in favour of sustainable transport. That will require exceptional political leadership.

Amanda Taylor-Saunders

What we as a household have noticed is far less car traffic on the roads – we live below Toll House Road and consistently have problems with school traffic, mainly going to Durham Johnson School. The peak of traffic normally lasts for an hour in the morning where we see traffic stacked up as far as the Aldin Grange bridge and towards Bearpark, then at school collection time parents park anywhere on the road-side and fill up Sainsburys local, and children hover around in large groups. This school traffic flow is exacerbated by the poor junction at Toll House Road onto the A 167 – further compromised by the school having ‘lollipop’ people who often close down the A167 to steer children across the road further compromising the traffic light synchronisation. There is a footbridge there which is never used. It is often one parent one child in a car and frequently they drop off their child at Baxter Wood Farm and turn round. The question for me is: Is there more we can do in terms of school buses – where are we with all of our schools travel plans in terms of mitigating traffic – when were they last updated?

During lockdown we noticed a significant decrease in litter on our road – sadly a lot of the litter is McDonalds bags thrown out of car windows. Is there more we can do to make McDonalds and other takeaway venues more responsible (e.g. car number plate on a discarded bag etc.).

We have noticed far more cyclists and walkers during lockdown – however our roads are not fit for purpose in terms of safety. More needs to be done and we need to promote safer cleaner cycleways and preserve and extend current walkways.

Our public pathways are in a sad state of repair with many of them overgrown – forcing single person walking – these need to be tended to.

Michael Watson

The Covid virus pandemic has signposted the interconnectedness of our planet in crystal clear terms. It is arguably changing our sociology. If we humans are clever and learn from the pandemic, we have the potential to be positioning the underpinning of the determinations required to challenge climate change. These changes need cross-party political and industrial leadership, as well as global societal cooperation by its citizens. Scientists are warning that we have ten years left to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. Juxtaposition can be offered of how to flatten the Covid curve; we are using new boundaries with regard to social distancing.

We can apply these learnings to ‘flatten the emissions curve’ by realising the Paris Agreement’s substantial reduction in carbon emissions in line with the global 1.5 °C temperature rise target. The pandemic has illustrated how excruciatingly clear just how interconnected our economic, environmental and social challenges are. The World Economic Forum highlights this in its latest Global Risks report. The

global top-five risks in terms of probability are all correlated to the environment. Numerous other studies have concentrated on the colossal impact climate change is having on humans. Research from Harvard University indicates that people residing in more polluted areas are experiencing more infections by the coronavirus than others. The medical journal *The Lancet*, envisages that half a million adults will potentially be killed as a result of climate change by 2050. As Mark Carney, former Governor of the Bank of England, said recently said: "We can't self-isolate from climate change."

- **Economic strategy**

Our government, with Durham County Council's (DCC) assistance, are now helping small and large businesses and individuals, arranging economic stimulus packages to help people and organizations survive the likely post pandemic recession.

I would argue we should ensure that sustainability and climate action are part of these economic packages that could be around a lot longer than first thought. A good example is EU tendering rules. They still procure constructed on the lowermost initial costing, irrespective of the environmental impact. Working together to ensure sustainability is a fundamental prerequisite of tenders; this will then both crucially support the economy and the environment simultaneously. Buying into an environmentally aware incentive post Brexit regarding chemical, product and waste legislation could see an escalation in recycling and the growth of 'green products', and the promotion of circular ownership models to consumers. Research undoubtedly illustrates that nations with an energetic long-term strategy for approaching global warming objectives will be economically better off than others.

- **Key policy changes** – To get economies moving again and enable a reduction of carbon emissions we must take advantage of what we have learned from the Covid pandemic lockdown and start preventative measures regarding future climate change:

- Mass installation of fibre-optic broadband and 5G in County Durham. We now know from the lockdown that it is possible to work from home and hold meetings virtually, communicate via video conferencing, emails and telephone – for organisations and individuals, fast and reliable broadband and mobile phone services are needed to make that much more efficient.
- There is no need for the work force to commute to a huge office building such as a DCC HQ or any office building. This will cut down road traffic emissions, road traffic congestion, and road traffic fuel consumption, enabling a cleaner, much more pollution-free Durham City or Bishop Auckland for example.
- People may feel safer to use more sustainable transport such as cycling in the city or towns regards less road traffic. Working from home during the lockdown has proved that energy costs/ carbon emissions from buildings have dramatically reduced. Working from home with the Covid future uncertain (how long will it be around?) will enable more efficient social distancing. There will be an enablement of less pressure on overloaded public transport systems.
- Built up areas in County Durham are now quieter during the lockdown. Seemingly now is the time to invest in the installation of more broadband cable, getting 5G systems working and laying the foundation for a digital future.
- Increase space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Government policy has reached County Durham with the County Durham Draft Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029. Its aim is to expand space allotted for cyclists and pedestrians, as more people head back to work, in a bid to avoid crowded public transport systems and packed sidewalks. Converting more road space to non-motorised travel could help hold onto the much less polluted air many cities have enjoyed during lockdown and encourage more people to abandon petrol or diesel cars for healthier alternatives.
- To get closer to lockdown lower pollution levels, to aid DCC carbon emission targets by taking thousands of cars from the roads around County Durham, we need to invest with stakeholders in bringing the Metro train (a sustainable transport link) from Newcastle and Sunderland to Durham and beyond to Bishop Auckland. This would be achievable by reopening the Leamside Line. Thousands would use the Metro trains to commute to work and for leisure/ shopping purposes.

This would arguably stimulate the economy by offering a real transport solution for the work force enabling businesses to relocate to Durham and surrounding areas.

- Re-open the Belmont Viaduct that straddles the River Wear located near Durham City and Belmont/ Brasside for walkers and cyclists to use as sustainable transport route. There would be an opportunity to link the Sustrans route with the Viaduct route and for the public to commute to work and back along this route. There could be a sustainable transport hub set up in the future incorporating the route over the Viaduct to link up with the Metro station at Belmont station.
- With the use of planning legislation, ban the drive-through aspect of the fast food restaurants which feature in County Durham. This would reduce car journeys and lessen the rubbish being thrown about on our streets and open spaces. Customers must only eat in the fast food restaurant and not be allowed to take food out.
- DCC and stakeholders could renovate buildings such as old boarded-up terraced housing to make them more efficient regards insulation, but also to reduce the risk of overheating in heatwaves. There is a need for housing and the economy will be stimulated by this work, creating jobs.
- Energy could be produced from the old Grange Drift mine located in Kepier Woods, near the Carrville/ Belmont area, that produces a steady water stream all year round.
- The lockdown has had high numbers of parents/ carers taking their children to the outdoors in woods and forest locations. Adding 'forest school' teaching to the curriculum should be explored as a way to help maintain the children's enjoyment and education regards the outdoors, to learn new life skills and also as a way of countering a child being risk averse in life. Moreover, time away from the school classroom can only reduce energy used in the building.

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL RESPONSES:

Anon (DCC Finance dept)

Personally I believe where staff have been able to successfully work from home – as long as they have sufficient resources/ support to do so and are able to maintain a secure environment (i.e. a separate room away from other household members for data protection issues) then I believe it would be beneficial, in most cases, to be able to continue to work from home. Thus less impact on highways and therefore lesser frequency of accidents and reducing pollution from motor emissions.

Where a building/ office space is not then being used to full capacity, there will be a reduction in electricity costs and therefore again reduction in carbon footprint.

I believe it is essential for the Council to maintain 'healthy' outdoor facilities and green spaces to ensure a balance/ neutrality of carbon emissions.

Maintenance of planting with economically and environmentally proactive irrigation systems (using sealed water butts/ filters for watering plants in all our Council buildings).

Push taps to be used in both public and office toilet facilities to ensure no tap is left on and therefore reduces water waste.

Reduction of paper waste and total removal of plastic where possible in our café/ takeaway outlets

I would imagine a lot of my thoughts have already been considered but I hope it helps to collate some ideas for a more 'green' Council for the future.

DCC Spatial Policy Response

THE GREEN RECOVERY FOR PLANNING

From a planning perspective, there could be push back from developers on developer contributions as they seek to rebalance the books post Covid-19. Kick starting the economy and delivering government housing targets will be seen as a priority.

What has become evident over the last few months has been the difference of the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Those people with gardens, easily accessible green space, access to cycle and foot paths, space to work at home and home school, good broadband, and in proximity to local shops have been more resilient during this time than those people who do not.

This has highlighted the importance of well-designed communities going forward and one of the key roles that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) can have at this time is ensuring that all those things, sometimes previously thought of as 'nice to have', are in fact essential for the resilience of the economy and the community not just in relation to a pandemic, but also in relation to climate change.

Developers and LPAs need to work together to ensure that schemes remain viable but deliver not just a number of houses on a spreadsheet but a community that has everything it needs to thrive whatever life throws at it. We note the importance of space standards and well-insulated homes, green infrastructure provision and associated increased wildlife, improved air quality and natural cooling effect, SuDS design which can provide flood resilience, and open greenspaces. We need development that allows you to easily access local facilities, giving you a choice to move away from private car use, the high speed broadband provision that allows you to work from home, as well as world-leading levels of energy efficiency, renewable and low carbon heating, all of which are likely to make new developments more attractive to buyers and help the UK reach important climate change targets.

LPAs also have a key role in supporting communities to bring forward Neighbourhood Plans which can shape the green recovery and future resilience of local communities in ways that are specific to their needs and aspirations.

THE GREEN RECOVERY FOR TRANSPORT

From a transport perspective, projections from the DfT demonstrate that cuts in emissions from the transport sector do not go hard or fast enough to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The government is challenging local authorities to deliver place-based Transport Decarbonisation Plans. Covid-19 has changed the landscape for transport, people are working at home more, and the government has advised people to use other forms of transport before travelling on public transport. There is a significant danger that as lockdown eases, car dependency will increase as it is perceived as a safe mode of transport.

One positive and unmissable feature of lockdown was residents exploring their local area through walking and cycling which helped to support mental and physical wellbeing. Residents were discovering local walking trails and valuing their local countryside. Bike shops were running out of stock as people across the demographic spectrum re-discovered the joy of cycling.

Prior to lock down, the council had already begun to deliver a programme of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans in some of the county's main towns. This was to enable safer active travel to workplaces and educational establishments. This process could be better resourced to cover more of our main settlements.

The Council could also substantively promote local walking and cycling routes in the other Towns and Villages by delivering residents led 'Local Walking Plans'. These would take a strategic approach to increasing awareness and usage of local recreational walks across all the settlements in the County.

Accepting that residents and business alike will still be dependent on cars for mid to long range journeys, the Council should encourage the take-up of ULEVs and publish its ChargePoint Delivery Plan so residents can see a Council plan for delivering Charging Infrastructure and thus encouraging residents and businesses to buy electric.

Maggie Bosanquet (and the DCC Low-Carbon team)

The Corona Virus pandemic has demonstrated that the world **can** take drastic action when a genuine crisis is perceived. Climate Change poses an even greater challenge to the survival of humanity and, in most cases, we already possess the technology needed to tackle the problem, yet we struggle to achieve the progress that is urgently needed.

What can we learn from the pandemic here in County Durham and what would a green recovery look like?

BUILDINGS

During the lockdown people have successfully worked at home across multiple sectors and that trend is expected to continue permanently. What might this mean?

- Less office accommodation will be required:
 - Will those offices still be powered and heated as before but used less efficiently (undesirable) or will there be a review of office space, rationalising buildings and closing many?
 - If office buildings are closed, can they be repurposed – e.g. for housing etc – and made zero carbon in the re-fitting process? NB this could create employment opportunities
- More people working in their homes each day:

- If 50 people who were working in one office together are now each working at home, this could mean 50 times as much heating and lighting required to support their individual homes, especially in winter. (And the office building may still be open, powered and heated but less efficiently used, as above.)
- Individual energy costs will increase significantly – which could further increase fuel poverty (but this will be offset to some extent by a reduction in travel costs.)
- Economic impacts of the pandemic are already showing higher unemployment, which is likely to continue for some time, greatly adding to fuel poverty.
- Home working creates the opportunity for people to make more sustainable choices such as using a slow cooker or growing their own food during the day. Anyone with solar panels can make better use of that energy (use of washing machine, etc. during the day).
- People working from home can increasingly choose to live wherever they like. This could mean people choosing to leave expensive cities (especially London) and move to the countryside – e.g. Durham Dales. Implications uncertain and complex
- **ACTIONS**
 - Home energy efficiency (insulation and low carbon heating, including non-fossil fuel district heating schemes, use of minewater heat, etc.) will now become an even higher priority for a green recovery. An energy efficiency fund to assist with building fabric upgrade, boiler upgrade, additional insulation etc. would be very valuable both at national and local level.
 - Analysis of the existing building stock in the UK and the challenge linked to retrofit suggests that, to achieve efficient buildings by 2050, we would need (nationally) to deliver over 100,000 concurrent, month-long building projects every month for the next 30 years. Are we up for that challenge? Can County Durham lead the way?
 - This offers excellent opportunities for (less skilled) employment creation.
 - Ensure that office space is rationalised to maximise energy efficiency. This will require the Council to prioritise efficient buildings for retention, in terms of operational energy, but also business mile reduction.
 - Ensure that the whole County is running superfast Broadband (the changes can only happen if people have the same levels of access to the network as they would from an office).

TRAVEL

Reducing emissions from transport is arguably both the biggest challenge and the biggest opportunity for reaching UK net zero emissions by 2050. The government is in the process of producing 'Transport Decarbonisation Plans' for the UK and will be working with Local Authorities throughout 2020 on this.

Current DfT projections demonstrate that cuts in emissions for the transport sector do not go hard or fast enough to achieve net zero in 2050, so the government is challenging local authorities to deliver place-based Transport Decarbonisations Plans. Covid 19 has changed the landscape for transport policy.

Covid impacts have resulted in people working from home and therefore commuting less. People have also changed their shopping habits and even the provision of health services, education, etc has increasingly become possible on-line. What are the implications?

- Less road mileage, air and noise pollution, lower fuel costs and more time freed up from unnecessary travel – a very positive impact.
- More people have been walking and cycling locally during lockdown, with a huge uptake in cycling. Road space is being allocated for more walking and cycling across the UK, with Government creating emergency Active Travel funding to capitalise and 'lock in' this behaviour change – we need to support this very positive development.

- The current viability of public transport, because of the pandemic, is a serious threat to reducing transport emissions. People have been advised not to travel on public transport and this is a major threat to the bus industry and the long-term viability of bus services – a very negative impact.
- As lockdown eases, Covid 19 is likely to increase car dependency (reluctance to use public transport) at a time when we need to reduce reliance on car travel – a very negative impact.
- Fewer car parking spaces required:
 - Unused space could be used for greenspace or for housing on brownfield sites.
- Fewer flights to national and international meetings – this will be a very important reduction in pollution if it results in fewer planes in the air:
 - Could also lead to reduced demand for rail services and to reduced demand for hotel accommodation.
 - Significant likely impacts on economy from all the above.
- Online shopping has mushroomed during lockdown. Will people go back to the High Street?
 - Potentially fewer shop buildings, reduced car mileage to shopping centres and fewer car parking spaces required if the on-line trend continues.
 - Massive increase in packaging waste from online deliveries. We need to understand the comparative carbon emissions from:
 - a) the scenario where each item is individually packaged and delivered from central depots;
 - b) individual people travelling to the shops by car.
 - Potentially big opportunities for rationalising deliveries to minimise mileage (but people expect very rapid delivery of their goods, reducing those opportunities).
 - Big opportunities for green, 'last mile' deliveries – E cargo bikes, etc.
 - Possible rise in drop off/ collection points for deliveries (like Amazon lockers) boosting use of local post offices and shops again.
 - Is there potential for a (near to) city centre delivery hub for last mile cycle deliveries?
- We need to create a strong network of electric vehicle charging points (we are already working on this and arguably it is not directly part of recovery) and explore diesel/ petrol car scrappage schemes for purchasers of EVs.
- The increase in home deliveries creates a business case for quick transition away from diesel vehicles to electric vans – the reduction in fuel cost of electricity over diesel is at least 2/3rds. In conjunction with a scrappage scheme this could create a significant reduction in emissions.
- People have started walking, cycling, jogging etc. locally much more during lockdown. How do we capitalise on this to encourage people out of their cars and into healthier lifestyles in the longer term? This requires the provision of wider pavements, more and better cycle lanes, etc.
- Some people have been buying and valuing local food and products during lockdown – can we continue this trend?
- **ACTIONS**
 - We need improved EV, walking and cycling infrastructure.
 - More research is needed on possible behaviour trends and their carbon implications.
 - Explore last mile delivery options.
 - Public transport use is likely to be a challenge – how can we safely incentivise its use again?
 - Can we encourage the use of car clubs – especially E car clubs?
 - Nationally we need legislation on packaging to ensure it is minimised, reusable, recyclable, compostable or biodegradable.

ECONOMY

- A very recent LGA report states that nearly 700,000 direct jobs could be created in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy by 2030, rising to more than 1.18 million by 2050.¹ The report stresses that the input of local councils will be key. We need to explore this further
- Sustainable or green economic recovery from the pandemic is becoming more mainstream in thinking/ language² and lockdown has raised awareness of the benefits of cleaner air, quieter streets and access to nature.
- There will be stimulus packages to enable recovery in some parts of the economy. How do we ensure that such finance is conditional on greening of the businesses concerned – e.g. investing in renewables, green vehicles, energy efficiency, etc. rather than business as usual and not supporting any investment in fossil fuels? This requires longer term thinking.
- In lockdown the UK went more than 60 days without using coal to generate electricity. Electricity demand fell by 16% when lockdown began and was at 12% reduction by May. Off-shore wind and solar have been especially productive but the energy system struggles to deal with such fluctuations in generation and demand. We do not have the systems to manage excess generation capacity, and this negatively impacts income for renewable energy generators. There is a need for rational energy storage (Hydrogen, etc) to absorb this excess. Energy policy nationally will need review.
- Durham University may see a drop of up to 75% in overseas students next year – a possible 50 % fall in income that could equate to £100 million less in income. There will be knock on impacts in fewer students in Durham City (using shops and pubs, footfall, accommodation, etc.).
- Utility debt is expected to have very serious impacts in Quarter 3 and 4 this year. Smaller energy suppliers will need support to survive. Vulnerable consumers and fuel poverty will be major issues.
- There are likely opportunities for a growth in ‘staycations’ and people visiting County Durham. We need to promote the County’s tourism offer while ensuring that any adverse environmental impacts associated with an increase in visitor numbers are mitigated.
- **ACTIONS**
 - Invest in clean tech-energy generation and efficiency – support green growth, jobs and skills, low carbon heating, transport and building retrofit upgrades as part of economic stimulus package.
 - Stimulate innovation – collaborate with the University, business and other public sector organisations to accelerate the deployment of next generation technologies and eco innovation products and processes.
 - Continue and grow the support for shopping locally and with local independent retailers.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Lockdown has encouraged people to appreciate their local natural environment. There could be significant opportunities to boost new, nature-based employment opportunities to improve biodiversity, mitigate climate change and provide new places and habitats for people to enjoy.

More people have become interested in gardening (including gardening for wildlife) and growing their own food. Can we encourage this? There is a role for schools and for promoting and facilitate allotment use.

¹ Local Governments Association: Local green jobs – accelerating a sustainable economic recovery (https://www.ecuity.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Local-green-jobs-accelerating-a-sustainable-economic-recovery_final.pdf)

² In May, more than 60 leaders of major businesses and environmental organisations sent an open letter to the Prime Minister calling for nature and the climate to be put at the heart of the recovery effort. At the international level, over 150 of the world’s biggest companies have signed a UN-backed statement asking governments to align their economic relief plans with science-based climate targets.

People have welcomed air quality improvements during lockdown. Can we use green roofs, living walls and planting schemes to help maintain this?

HEALTH

Health and social inequalities seem to play a key role in the severity of Covid illness, which implies that helping the population to become healthier will also makes them more resilient. This links in with many of the green recovery aims (walking, cycling, reduced air pollution, local food, etc.).

GENERAL COMMENTS

Recovering from the pandemic provides an opportunity to rethink and refocus County Durham's behavioural change messages on climate change.

The pandemic has been an opportunity for people to reflect on their lifestyles and priorities. A Sky News report found that only 9% of people want to go back to the 'old normal'. How can we help people to retain the positive changes they have made in their lives?

Young people are likely to be disproportionately affected economically by the pandemic – what sustainable future do they want and how can we facilitate this?