

CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2020-25

1. Introduction

Public consultation on the draft Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 opened on Friday 13th March. The consultation process was managed by Reading Borough Council on behalf of the Reading Climate Change Partnership which 'owns' the strategy. As a result, the Council is obliged to produce a consultation report summarising the results of consultation and the main changes made in response.

2. Timescale for the consultation process

The original intention had been for the consultation period to run for 6 weeks from 13 March until 24 April 2020. However, following the national 'lockdown' instituted as part of the response to COVID-19, the Partnership Board extended the consultation period until 31 May 2020 to enable more people to comment. The Partnership Board subsequently agreed to a further extension until 28 June 2020, a total of just over 14 weeks.

3. Promotion of the consultation process

The consultation was launched with a photo-call at the University of Reading involving a group of students, the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Vice-Chancellor of the University. Shortly after this the national 'lockdown' was instigated, and the communications programme designed to promote consultation was inevitably impacted as the focus of media attention was on COVID-19. Nevertheless, during the consultation period the opportunity to comment was promoted via:

- A press release issued by Reading Borough Council to launch the consultation
- An email to 2,000 members of Reading Borough Council's Citizen's Panel
- The social media accounts of the Reading Climate Change Partnership, Reading Climate Action Network, Reading Borough Council and other partners
- Advertisements on the digital screen outside Reading railway station

In addition to this, individual partners and organisations promoted the opportunity to comment via their own networks and internal communications (e.g. Reading Borough Council included details of the consultation in communications to all staff and many partners promoted the consultation during the later stages). The Partnership would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who promoted the consultation.

4. Responses to consultation

205 responses were received using the on-line consultation response form. A further 6 responses (2 of which were duplicates) were received directly by the Partnership via e-mail bringing the total to 210. This is a reasonable response for a consultation of this nature, particularly in view of the prevailing focus on COVID-19 throughout the period, and a higher level of response compared to previous Reading Climate Change Strategy consultations.

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5. Schedule of key changes made in response to consultation

The table below summarises key changes made to the strategy in response to consultation and updates made to reflect new developments/data available since the consultation draft was published in March 2020. These changes were discussed and agreed by the Board of the Reading Climate Change Partnership with input from theme groups and other partners.

Chapter	Changes to post-consultation draft strategy
Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amended to be consistent with later sections (see below)
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated to reflect changes since first draft
2. Climate Change: the context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factual changes to update (2.2) Graphs of/references to Reading's carbon footprint updated with latest data (2.3, 2.4)
3. Vision and Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes made to clarify that the targets apply to the whole Reading Borough area Vision statement broken down into two elements to make a clear distinction between 'net zero' and 'resilient' elements of the vision Language amended to refer to Reading 'being better prepared to deal with' climate impacts to better explain meaning of 'resilience'
3.4 The benefits of taking action on climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 3.4 expanded to refer more comprehensively to positive benefits Selection of quotations on positive benefits compiled (see end of 3.4) to reflect consultation responses
4. Reading's Pathway to Net Zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority statements amended to better reflect priorities highlighted in consultation (4.1) Importance of education and engagement emphasized and 'Natural Solutions' added to list of priorities (4.1)
NEW SECTION 4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added to summarise impacts of/opportunities from COVID-19
ENERGY THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes made to theme narrative to summarise best available evidence for renewable energy technologies and why some are given higher priority than others More detail added to action E3 on retrofit to reflect consultation comments
TRANSPORT THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets for modal shift revised to reflect higher level of ambition called for in consultation responses Action being taken to promote active travel and access Government funding summarised in theme narrative to reflect desire expressed in consultation for more support for active travel

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation responses on congestion charging and other issues flagged with LTP team to consider in final revisions to LTP • Also new actions added on freight, schools and mobility services in response to consultation
RESOURCES THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial revisions to theme narrative and action plan to better reflect waste hierarchy • New references added to address commercial waste
WATER THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para added to narrative on Covid-19 impact (increased domestic/reduced commercial use)
NATURE THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action added on biochar (N3) • Para added to narrative on Covid-19 and new action added on health benefits (N21) • Comments on tree planting flagged with RBC team working on revised Trees Strategy
HEALTH THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial changes to theme narrative to address perceived focus on negative/adaptation issues by strengthening content on opportunities to align health and climate goals, and theme title amended to 'Health & Wellbeing' • Links with other themes highlighted in new actions added to reflect desire for more cross-referencing between this and other themes • Changes to narrative and action plan to highlight climate impacts on the vulnerable (e.g. new action H2 on elderly/heat stress) • New actions added on cooling public space (H4) and links with key stakeholders (H11, H15)
COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of quotes/commitments from consultation included (6.1) • Detailed summary of Comms & Engagement Plan included (6.2)

6. Detailed summary of consultation responses

The on-line consultation form consisted of 6 questions with one of these questions being in 6 parts relating to the 6 action plans within the strategy – details of each are below.

6.1. Vision and Targets

The draft Strategy proposed a vision for 2025 of a Reading which was working rapidly towards a net zero carbon, resilient Reading by 2030, reinforcing the target of reaching net zero by 2030, and question 1 in the on-line consultation form asked ‘Do you have any suggestions for improving these?’

Response	Total	% of total
No suggestions for improvement/No comment	99	48.5%
Suggestions for improvement	105	51.5%

Most frequent suggestions for improvement (>10)	Number of references	% of total responses
Include sustainable transport	17	8.3%
More ambitious approach	14	6.9%
Clarity on targets	13	6.3%
Clarity on scope	12	5.9%

Analysis of responses:

- Just under 50% of responses either did not offer suggestions for improvement or explicitly stated support for the vision and targets – taken together these suggest a reasonably high level of support for the vision and targets as drafted
- Of those which did offer suggestions for improvement, the most frequent comments (>10) related to (i) the need for more sustainable transport/reduced vehicle traffic (ii) a desire for more ambition (iii) requests/suggestions for greater clarity around either the scope of the vision and targets, or the targets themselves
- Only 5 comments out of the total of 210 suggested that the vision and targets should be removed or were inappropriate on the basis that climate change was not a priority, but these were very clearly outweighed by the number of responses indicating support or calling for a more ambitious approach
- Many comments offered in response to this question did not relate specifically to the vision and targets – for example, they related to specific policies or projects which would not be appropriate to include in a high level vision statement but which are addressed elsewhere within the strategy
- Other comments or suggestions made less frequently (5 or fewer) related to: air quality; clarity on the definition of ‘resilience’, the priorities, the practical implications of the vision or the language used; competition with other areas; climate change being everyone’s responsibility; greenspace improvements; inclusion of biodiversity; involvement of people; inclusion of carbon sequestration; less development; littering; local food; local supply chains; preserving the environment; policy integration; impracticality of public transport for everyone; recycling;

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sustainable energy; third Thames Crossing; traffic light indicators; vision too long; tree planting; caveat on need to protect vulnerable people; more working from home; working in partnership (employers/business); working in partnership (neighbouring areas).

Responses received by e-mail outside of the main consultation questionnaire were also generally supportive of the vision and targets, though the response from Extinction Rebellion Reading suggested that Reading should adopt an alternative to the national BEIS dataset as the basis for measuring Reading's emissions. While their point (that the BEIS data focus on emissions from production not consumption) was well made, the Government measures the emissions from Reading Borough and we are obliged to follow the international protocols on emissions reporting which flow from this. Redirecting scarce resources to create parallel emissions reporting at a Council level is not considered a priority and would detract from the action needed to decarbonise the borough. On this basis, the Partnership Board rejected the suggestion of using an alternative mechanism as the basis for measuring Reading's progress towards 'net zero carbon by 2030' and the Strategy therefore uses the national BEIS data to assess the emissions from the borough as a whole, but encourages the use of more inclusive 'scope 3' emissions measurement for organisations when reporting their own emissions.

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy:

In view of the analysis above it was clear that many respondents supported the vision and targets, and that there was very little appetite among respondents for any weakening or dilution of the vision and targets. That said, there was some desire for greater clarity in how the vision and targets were expressed, and some appetite for more ambition (particularly on sustainable transport), albeit among a minority of respondents.

The Partnership Board considered these comments against the fact that the target of a 'Net Zero Reading by 2030' represents a hugely ambitious goal, and concluded that the desire for more ambition could be better reflected in amendments to the action plans (see below), rather than by changing the vision statement and headline targets themselves. That said, the Vision and Targets have been revised to:

- Clarify the scope of their application
- Make a clear distinction between 'net zero' and 'resilient' elements of the vision
- Better explain the meaning of 'resilience'

6.2 Benefits of tackling climate change:

The draft Strategy listed a range of benefits to be gained from taking action on climate change and question 2 in the on-line consultation form asked 'What else should we consider as a benefit of tackling climate change?'

Response	Total	%
No comments	52	25.4%
Comments offered	153	74.6%

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Most frequently cited benefits of taking action on climate (>10)	Number of references	% of total responses
Community cohesion	24	11.8%
Health benefits	16	7.8%
Global benefits	13	6.3%
Mental health benefits	13	6.3%
Future generations	12	5.9%
New economic opportunities	12	5.9%
Connection with nature	11	5.4%

The consultation produced a wide variety of responses to this question - the most frequently cited benefits of climate action (>10 references) included:

- Community cohesion - bringing communities together, reducing inequalities, encouraging personal responsibility and respect for each other and the environment
- Health benefits - e.g. the physical health benefits associated with e.g. active lifestyles
- Global benefits - benefits to the wider world including reduced climate impacts on poorer countries and reduction in the forces driving mass migration and refugees
- Mental health - improved mental health directly from addressing anxiety about the future and indirectly as a result of healthier lifestyles
- Future generations - benefits to young people who will have to live with the impacts of a changing climate as a result of today's emissions
- New economic/employment opportunities - opportunities to develop new products, services and jobs in the 'green economy'
- Connection with nature - bringing us closer to nature, recognising our place in it, respecting it and recognising the contribution which nature can make to tackling climate challenges

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<10) included (roughly in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): learning/educational opportunities; improved resilience; food security; reduced pollution; reduced waste; reduced/stable energy costs; local supply chains; safer streets; empowering people to act; improved biodiversity; no benefits; improve quality of life; and reduced travel.

A small number of comments (3) suggested that there were no benefits or that negative consequences would arise from taking action to tackle climate change. However, these were overwhelmingly outweighed by the comments identifying additional benefits which had not been identified in the draft Strategy.

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy:

A striking feature of the consultation response was that it identified a wide range of benefits arising from taking action to tackle climate change. The Strategy has therefore been revised such that:

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- The final draft strategy narrative and theme action plan narratives refer more comprehensively to the many positive benefits arising from action on climate change which were highlighted by the consultation process
- The section in the strategy on benefits arising from climate action has been expanded to include quotations from people who responded to the consultation

A selection of quotations from the consultation has also been compiled to be used in wider communications around the strategy launch and subsequent awareness raising and engagement activity as these represent the authentic voices of Reading citizens.

6.3 Priority areas for action

The draft strategy identified four priorities on the pathway to net zero (low/zero carbon housing, more renewable energy, reducing need to/impacts of travel and reducing consumption/waste) and asked 'What else should we consider as a priority as we work towards a net zero carbon Reading by 2030'?

Response	Total	%
No comments	35	17.1%
Comments offered	170	82.9%

Most frequent suggestions for additional priorities (>10)	Number of references	% of total responses
Sustainable transport	42	20.6%
Waste management	23	11.3%
Renewable energy	21	10.3%
Public education and engagement	18	8.8%
Sustainable greenspace management (e.g. tree-planting)	16	7.84%
Sustainable consumption (including food/diet)	15	7.4%
Housing retrofit	11	5.4%

The consultation produced a wide variety of responses to this question - the areas most frequently identified as additional priorities (>10 references) included:

- Sustainable transport - measures to reduce the need to travel, improve public transport and its affordability, better provision for Electric Vehicles, better provision for/promotion of walking and cycling and measures to reduce/disincentivise diesel/petrol vehicles
- Sustainable waste management - food waste collections, home composting, improved recycling, action on fly-tipping and a variety of other measures to reduce waste and manage it more sustainably
- Renewable energy - a variety of renewable energy technologies (particularly solar) and mechanisms to encourage their adoption
- Public education and engagement - importance of engaging and educating the wider public and giving them information to make climate-friendly choices

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- Sustainable greenspace management - highlighting the role of greenspace in delivering 'natural' solutions to climate challenges (e.g. via tree-planting), benefits of improved access to greenspace etc
- Sustainable consumption - action to reduce emissions from consumption, reduce its impacts or reduce consumption overall
- Housing retrofit - support for housing retrofit to reduce carbon emissions

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<10) included (roughly in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): local economic opportunities (9); support for local, sustainable and/or organic food (7); working from home (4); sustainable management of water (3); people need cars (3); business engagement, Commercial Buildings, Challenging targets, Divestment in fossil fuels, nature connection, reduce energy use, social justice, sustainable urban planning, cross-boundary collaboration (2 references each).

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy:

A number of the suggestions for additional priorities arising from the consultation were already included explicitly or implicitly within the draft strategy (e.g. renewable energy, housing retrofit, sustainable transport within the priority around travel, sustainable consumption and waste management within the priority around consumption and the 'circular economy'). While at one level this could be taken to reinforce support for the stated priorities, it also suggests that the priorities could be expressed more clearly or would benefit from some elaboration. The strategy priorities were therefore re-visited to better reflect the priorities highlighted in the consultation exercise.

Additionally, the section within the strategy on priorities was amended to emphasise:

- (i) the importance of public education and engagement;
- (ii) the potential for sustainable greenspace management and 'natural solutions' to help tackle climate challenges (both adaptation and mitigation), reflecting the importance attached to these points in the consultation response.

6.4. Action Plans

The consultation invited comments on each of the six action plans as set out below.

6.4.1 Energy & Low Carbon Development Action Plan

Response	Total	%
Comments/suggestions offered	90	43.9%
No comments/suggestions offered	115	56.1%

Most frequent comments/suggestions on Energy Theme Action Plan (>5)	Number of references	% of total responses
Support for the action plan	15	7.3%
More renewable energy	13	6.3%

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Housing retrofit/domestic energy efficiency	8	3.9%
Need for grants/subsidy for housing retrofit	8	3.9%
Reduce development pressure	5	2.4%
Questions about how this will be funded	5	2.4%

The consultation produced a wide variety of responses to this question - the areas most frequently commented on or suggested (5 or more references) were:

- Support for the action plan: there were a number of positive comments about the plan
- More renewable energy: there was support for more deployment of renewable energy both in general, in terms of specific technologies (heat pumps, solar, hydro, wind) and in terms of community energy/renewables
- Housing retrofit/domestic energy efficiency: there were a significant number of comments highlighting the importance of this, with some suggesting a major programme akin to the switchover to gas being required and others calling for obligations on landlords to retrofit private rented accommodation
- Need for grants/subsidy for housing retrofit: linked to the previous point, a similar number of comments suggested that incentives would be needed in view of the cost of retrofit to individual households
- Reduce development pressure: a number of comments made the link between new development and increased emissions, some of these expressing concern about the number of flats being built in Reading
- Questions about how this will be funded: several responses raised questions about how the actions, particularly in relation to housing retrofit, would be funded

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<5) included (in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): concerns about smart-meters (compatibility, trust) (4); caution urged on reliance on BREEAM standards, include proposals for retrofitting commercial not just domestic, make targets smarter/more specific, turn lights off in commercial buildings out of hours; require net zero standards through planning (3 each); consider embedded/embodied carbon, develop exemplar renewable heat projects, encourage switching to 'green' tariffs, more detail on skills, information for homeowners about retrofit, more ambitious targets, don't rely on off-setting, reduce streetlighting, ensure value for money with energy investment (2 each).

Among the e-mail responses received outside the formal consultation questionnaire, Extinction Rebellion Reading called for more ambitious targets (in relation to EPC ratings); solar power deployment at the bus depot; a task force to lead on funding, investment and programme/project management for housing retrofit; and greater clarity about how peak demand/surplus generation could be managed in a low carbon energy future.

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy

The consultation highlighted the challenge of identifying the best way forward in a fast moving energy policy environment as, while the thrust of the action plan was generally supported, concerns were raised or caution urged in relation to use of, for example, ground source heat pumps, anaerobic digestion/biogas, housing retrofit, carbon offsetting, BREEAM standards and smart meters.

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This illustrates that the solutions to our energy challenges are among the most hotly contested areas of climate policy. It also highlights the importance of good evidence to inform this vital strand of the strategy, not just for its own sake but also to give confidence to householders and organisations who are being urged to invest in low carbon energy solutions. Otherwise, the other over-arching message of the consultation for this theme was the need for more clarity about how the scale of retrofit required will be taken forward and funded.

With these points in mind, the theme was revised to:

- Summarise the best available evidence for the renewable energy technologies proposed and the reasons why some are given higher priority/greater prominence within the action plan than others
- Add detail to the actions on housing retrofit programmes

6.4.2 Transport Theme Action Plan

Response	Total	%
Comments/suggestions offered	105	51.2%
No comment/suggestions offered	100	48.8%

Most frequent comments/suggestions on Transport Theme Action Plan (>5)	Number of references	% of total responses
Better cycling infrastructure	26	12.7%
Better bus infrastructure/services	17	8.3%
Support for electric vehicles	13	5.4%
More ambitious targets	8	3.9%
Incentives/subsidies for public transport	7	3.4%
Segregated cycle routes (from cars and/or pedestrians)	7	3.4%
Introduce road pricing/congestion charging	6	2.9%
Improve cycle parking/storage (at stations and elsewhere)	6	2.9%

The consultation produced a wide variety of responses to this question – the areas most frequently commented on or suggested (>5 references) included:

- Better cycling infrastructure – this was the most commented on area, reflecting a desire for the action plan to place greater emphasis on improved cycling infrastructure, with a number of comments emphasising the importance of making cycling safer – linked to this, the 6th most commented on area was the desire for cycle routes to be segregated from vehicle traffic and/or pedestrians, while the 8th most commented request was for improve cycle parking/storage facilities (e.g. at stations)
- Better bus infrastructure and/or services – the consultation suggested a significant desire for the action plan to prioritise improved infrastructure for buses and/or higher quality/more frequent bus services
- Support for electric vehicles – the consultation indicated support for more EV charging infrastructure or other measures to accelerate take up of EVs, with a number of these

mentioning the taxi fleet in particular. A smaller but significant number of responses (5) suggested that reference be made to e-bikes and e-scooters in the action plan

- More ambitious targets: a number of comments called for transport action plan targets to be more ambitious, particularly in relation to modal switch (measured by % of journeys, not increase in public transport trips, active travel and traffic reduction)
- Incentives/subsidies for public transport: a number of responses called for incentives to promote public transport use, particularly in light of the impacts of Covid-19
- Introduce road pricing/congestion charging: a number of responses supported using pricing mechanisms to reduce traffic (compared to a much smaller number suggesting that the cost of travel should not be increased)

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<5) included (in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): encourage walking and cycling (5); promote working from home (5); pedestrianise town centre, repair roads (4); offer bikehire/replace ReadiBike scheme, use land use planning to 'design out' traffic/need to travel; work across boundaries/neighbouring areas to reduce traffic, reduce school traffic, ensure LTP is aligned with climate strategy, new development creates new traffic (3); more specific targets, more no car zones, build Third Thames bridge to cut through traffic, remove traffic lights, lower speed limits, consider hydrogen vehicles, improve cross-modal transport, unrealistic plans (2).

E-mail responses received outside the main consultation questionnaire reinforced support for better cycling infrastructure, improved public transport and support for EVs although the response from Thames Water suggested referring to 'zero carbon/non-fossil fuels' instead of EVs to accommodate potential for other technologies. Additionally, the email response from Extinction Rebellion Reading called for more ambitious targets (e.g. in relation to modal switch and requiring Taxis to switch to EVs), dynamic road pricing, segregated road space for cycling and a comprehensive cycle route plan for Reading, and more rigorous assessment of the carbon impact of Park and Ride and other transport proposals.

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy

The consultation suggested that those who responded would support a higher level of ambition and provision for active travel (particularly cycling), public transport (particularly buses) and electric vehicles within the policies and targets in the final Action Plan. Many of policy decisions covered in the Action Plan will ultimately be taken forward via the statutory Local Transport Plan, which has been the subject of its own consultation exercise. With this constraint in mind, the theme was revised to:

- Set a higher level of ambition in targets for traffic reduction and modal shift
- Better describe steps being taken to promote active travel

All the comments made have also been flagged with the LTP team.

6.4.3 Resources Theme Action Plan

Response	Total	%
Comments/suggestions offered	91	44.4%
No comment/suggestions offered	114	55.6%

Most frequent comments/suggestions on Resources Theme Action Plan (>5)	Number of references	% of total responses
Improve recycling	10	4.9%
Improve waste education	8	3.9%
Promote re-use/repair/sharing	8	3.9%
Support for the action plan	7	3.4%
Use greenspace/gardens for growing food	6	2.9%
Press businesses for more action on packaging/plastic	6	2.9%
Use regulatory measures to penalise non-compliance	6	2.9%

The consultation produced a wide variety of responses to this question - the areas most frequently commented on or suggested (>5 references) included:

- Improved recycling: the most frequently commented on area related to a call for improved recycling facilities or the ability to recycle a wider range of materials.
- Improve waste education: a number of comments highlighted the importance of educating people (via schools and elsewhere) about the sources/impacts of waste and where it ends up
- Promote re-use/repair/sharing: a number of comments asked to see more support for places or scheme enabling products and clothing to be re-used, repaired or shared e.g. Repair Cafes. Several of these highlighted the potential to work with charities to help those in need and potentially use vacant town centre premises for the purpose.
- Support for the action plan: supportive comments were made on the comprehensive nature of the plan
- Use greenspace/gardens for growing food a number of responses highlighted the potential for growing food in public and private spaces, drawing attention to the education value of connecting people with the food they eat
- Use regulatory measures to penalise non-compliance: a number of responses indicated support for a tougher approach to be taken e.g. with people or businesses who do not separate waste properly.

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<5) included (in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): encourage switch to more plant-base/climate friendly diet (including through public procurement); change culture of consumption, take more ambitious action on Reading Festival, make targets more specific/SMART, support for food waste collection (4 each); develop good communications, promote home composting, retain/expand allotments, support local producers (3 each), less emphasis on recycling/more on waste reduction, more action on commercial waste, questions about how this will be funded, climate-friendly labelling, more ambitious targets, focus on new economic opportunities, support the circular economy (2 each).

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy

While the focus of suggestions for improvement from the consultation was on recycling, reflecting public buy-in to the concept, the consultation also demonstrated concern that the action plan should focus higher up the waste hierarchy, on waste reduction, re-use and repair. The theme narrative and action plan was therefore revised to:

- Better align with the 'waste hierarchy' with action to 'reduce' waste highlighted at the top
- Include more reference to commercial waste relative to domestic

6.4.4 Water Theme Action Plan

Response	Total	%
Comments/suggestions offered	80	39.0%
No comments/suggestions offered	125	61.0%

Most frequent comments/suggestions on Water Theme Action Plan (5 or more)	Number of references	% of total responses
Support for Action Plan	14	6.8%
Water saving measures (various)	13	6.3%
Water company should tackle leaks/repairs/maintenance	9	4.4%
Prevent building on floodplains	6	2.9%
Prevent paving over of gardens	5	2.4%
Expand water metering	5	2.4%
Natural solutions to adaptation	5	2.4%

This theme attracted the fewest comments but still a wide range of suggestions. The most frequent areas commented on were:

- Support for the action plan: respondents expressed support for the plan in general
- Water saving measures: support was expressed for a variety of water saving measures including taking the opportunity of retrofit/new build to incorporate water saving measures in development, use grey-water recycling (including promotion of water butts), and the deployment of a range of water saving devices/practises.
- Water company should tackle leaks/repairs/maintenance: a number of responses indicated that this should be given greater priority and suggested that efforts to promote domestic water saving would be under-mined unless this issue was addressed.
- Prevent building on floodplains: responses called for development on floodplains to be restricted by the planning process.
- Prevent paving over of gardens: responses expressed concern about porous surfaces such as lawns and gardens being replaced with hard standing thus increasing flood risk.
- Expand water metering: responses expressed support for metering as a means of reducing domestic water consumption.
- Natural solutions to adaptation: responses said that well managed greenspace and initiatives like tree planting could contribute to a reduction in flood risk.

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In a response received from Thames Water outside the consultation questionnaire, the company expressed its support for water efficiency policies and targets as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Plan. Thames Water also supported the emphasis on management of flood risk and asked for further discussion on the Kennet Meadows proposal.

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy

In light of the consultation responses, the theme was updated to reflect the impacts of Covid-19 on patterns of demand for water.

6.4.5 Nature Theme Action Plan

Response	Total	%
Comments/suggestions offered	94	45.9%
No comments/suggestions offered	111	54.1%

Most frequent comments/suggestions on Nature Theme Action Plan (>5)	Number of references	% of total responses
Support for the Action Plan	19	9.3%
Change mowing regimes (less cutting/more wildflowers)	13	6.3%
Protection or planting of trees	9	4.4%
Prevent paving over of gardens	6	2.9%
RBC commitment to nature questioned	6	2.9%

This theme attracted a high number of comments (2nd only to transport), including a significant number of positive comments. The most commented on areas were:

- Support for the Action Plan: the consultation suggested that respondents were pleased to see the inclusion of nature as a theme within the strategy
- Change mowing regimes: these responses generally called for less cutting, more 're-wilding' and/or an approach to managing verges and greenspaces to encourage biodiversity/wildflowers. Responses in favour of this approach outweighed responses calling for more grass cutting in the ratio 13:1
- Protection or planting of trees: responses included general support for tree-planting, planting for flood protection, better protection of existing trees (including railway trees), with a number of comments also expressing a preference for natural regeneration and the need for after care of newly planted trees
- Prevent paving over of gardens: responses on this point echoed similar concerns raised in the content of the Water Theme, with some asking about the Council's ability to regulate this area
- RBC commitment to nature questioned: a number of comments questioned RBC's role for example in the context of approving developments which were perceived to be damaging to nature conservation

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Other responses to this question made less frequently (<5) included (in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): improve nature education, promote rewilding/natural regeneration (5 each); make targets SMART/more specific, reduce development pressure (4); include litter, set up/support volunteer groups (3 each) discourage/ban peat in compost, ensure after-care of newly planted trees, use planning to get developers to plant more trees, promote hedge-laying, include carbon sequestration, improve/create wetlands/ponds (2 each).

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy

The high number of comments on this theme illustrated the importance which residents attach to nature and greenspace in Reading. While the support for tree-planting expressed was perhaps to be expected, significantly, this was outweighed numerically by support for changing mowing regimes which could benefit wildlife, save money and sequester carbon. Comments on tree planting were also qualified by some in terms of a preference for natural regeneration, the importance of aftercare of newly planted trees, and using native species. In light of consultation, the theme was revised to:

- Address the impacts of Covid-19
- Include a new action on biochar (N3)
- Include a new action on health benefits (N21)

5.4.6 Health Theme Action Plan

Response	Total	%
Comments/suggestions offered	85	41.5%
No comments/suggestions offered	120	58.5%

Most frequent comments/suggestions on the Health Theme Action Plan (5 or more)	Number of references	% of total responses
Support for the Action Plan	9	4.4%
Importance of greenspace	7	3.4%
Requests for clarity/relationship with other themes unclear	6	2.9%
Importance of health education (diet, exercise etc)	5	2.4%
Importance of cooling public spaces (via trees, canopies etc)	5	2.4%
More emphasis on the poorest/most vulnerable	5	2.4%

This theme attracted a variety of comments, with the most commented on areas being:

- Support for the action plan: a number of responses said they were pleased to see the issue of health being addressed in the Strategy and/or approved of the content
- Importance of greenspace: responses highlighted the importance of greenspace/access to greenspace both for health and climate adaptation
- Requests for clarity: a number of responses said that the Health theme seemed 'tacked-on', had an unclear relationship with other themes, or could be improved by taking a broader approach than the current focus on adaptation

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- Importance of health education: responses highlighted this in relation to diet and exercise in particular
- Importance of cooling public spaces: responses supported action on this issue in relation to both natural (trees/hedges) and man-made (canopies) solutions
- More emphasis on the poorest/most vulnerable: a number of responses highlighted the fact that vulnerable people/communities are most exposed to climate impacts and suggested this be addressed in the action plan, specifically in relation to the elderly, homeless people, BAME communities and the poorest in society

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<5) included (in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): more emphasis on improving health (relative to adaptation); more specific/smarter targets (3 each); more on transport to/from hospital/health facilities, reduce streetlighting (to aid sleep), make drinking water available for refills (via public fountains, shops/restaurants etc), questions about how action will be funded, encouragement of walking/cycling for health, importance of publicising health information such as air quality data, increase support for buses to reduce air pollution (2 each).

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to Strategy

The mixed nature of consultation responses highlighted the challenge the Partnership faced in bringing a cross-cutting issue like health into the Strategy as a 'new' theme. That said, there was support for its inclusion and the Action Plan generally so the Theme has been retained with some refinements:

- Substantial changes to theme narrative to address perceived focus on negative/adaptation issues by strengthening content on opportunities to align health and climate goals, and theme title amended to 'Health & Wellbeing'
- Links with other themes highlighted in new actions added to reflect desire for more cross-referencing between this and other themes
- Changes to narrative and action plan to highlight climate impacts on the vulnerable (e.g. new action H2 on elderly/heat stress)
- New actions added on cooling public space (H4) and links with key stakeholders (H11, H15)

6.5 Encouraging/enabling action on climate change

The consultation asked (question 5) 'How can we get more people to take action to tackle climate change?'

Response	Total	%
Suggestions offered	177	86.34
No suggestions offered/not specific	28	13.66%

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Most frequent suggestions for how to get people to take action on climate change (>10)	Number of references	% of total responses
Raise awareness	82	40.2%
Financial incentives	43	21.1%
Improve engagement	38	18.6%
Financial penalties	20	9.8%
Demonstrate the positive of taking action	13	6.4%
Regulatory measures	12	5.9%

The consultation provided a wide variety of responses to this question but a number of comments or themes stood out, namely:

- Raising awareness: the need to raise awareness, provide information or encouragement to act on climate change via both mainstream and social media was highlighted in a large number of responses to this question. A significant number of these highlighted the importance of informing young people, both in their own right and as a route to influencing their parents.
- Financial incentives: a reasonable number of responses suggested that financial incentives (e.g. to use public transport or invest in renewable energy) would get more people taking action on climate change
- Improving engagement: the need to go beyond raising awareness to improve engagement of individuals, communities and businesses, giving them the tools to understand and reduce their emissions and to take ownership of the issue was referenced in a significant number of responses to this question
- Financial penalties: a number of responses suggested that financial disincentives (e.g. for polluting activities, driving, parking) would get more people taking action on climate change (though these were outnumbered by the number of references to financial incentives in the ratio of about 2:1). Related to this, a number of responses indicated concern that the burden of paying any additional costs of tackling climate change should not be borne by those least able to pay
- Demonstrate the positives of taking action: responses suggested that the benefits of climate action should be emphasised.
- Regulatory measures: responses suggested that regulatory measures or restrictions on polluting activities would enable more action on climate change

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<10) included (roughly in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): show leadership by example (mainly the Council but also businesses and individuals)(10); exemplar developments or projects (7); support the community/community initiatives, incorporate in the curriculum/schools (=6); make action simple, create Citizen's Assemblies, the importance of a just transition (=5); create a hub for information/action, reduce development pressure (=3); abandon catastrophism, reduce immigration, report transparently, facilitate walking/cycling (=2).

Email responses received outside the main consultation questionnaire also emphasised the importance of an effective communications and engagement strategy, e.g. XR Reading

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suggested that RBC should initiate this and co-ordinate with other partners and that it should include a 10-point plan for climate action which the public could sign up to. Additionally, the e-mailed response from XR Reading supported the creation of a Citizen's Assembly.

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy:

One of the strongest messages emerging from this part of the consultation was the importance of good communication and engagement to raise awareness of why and how people and organisations can take action on climate change. At the time the draft strategy was published, development of a communications and engagement plan referred to in section 6 was at an early stage. However, further work has been done to develop this aspect of the strategy since then. The final strategy therefore:

- Gives greater prominence and adds further detail to the communications and engagement plan referred to in section 6 of the draft strategy.
- Draws attention to the importance of communications and engagement in the theme narratives.

On the issue of a Citizen's Assembly, while the national Citizen's Assembly on climate change has proved very instructive, the Partnership Board does not believe it has the capacity to manage such a proposal effectively at the Reading scale. The Partnership Board agreed, therefore, that the final strategy should not include a commitment to establish a Citizen's Assembly for Reading. That said, the Board acknowledged that this could be something to discuss with other Berkshire local authorities as we seek to improve collaboration with them on climate change.

6.6 Commitments to tackle climate change

The consultation asked (question 6) 'Please tell us what you/your organisation would be willing to do to help make Reading a net zero carbon borough by 2030 - What would you be willing to do to help?'

Response	Total	%
Suggestions offered	152	74.1%
No suggestions offered	53	25.9%

Most frequent responses on willingness to help (>10)	Number of refs	% of total responses
Already do something/as much as I can	25	12.3%
Cycle/walk more	24	11.8
Help with communications/spreading the word	19	9.3%
Volunteering (not specific)	18	8.8%
Invest in renewable energy/green energy supply	17	8.3%
Recycle more	16	7.8%
Do all I can (not specific)	13	6.4%
Drive less	12	5.9%
Invest in energy efficiency	11	5.4%

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Switch to Electric Vehicle	11	5.4%
Get involved in managing greenspace/tree-planting	11	5.4%
Switch to public transport	11	5.4%

The consultation suggested a strong appetite to commit to additional action to tackle climate change in general and in a wide range of specific areas, as well as a sense that many responders were already 'doing their bit' (hence the most frequent response in the table above). Of those specific areas where people indicated a willingness to make changes:

- Cycle/walk more - a number of those saying they would cycle/more indicated that this was conditional on feeling safer, particularly in relation to cycling on roads
- Invest in renewable energy/switch to green energy supplier - some of these qualified their comments by saying as long as it was affordable
- Recycle more - many of those saying this indicated that they would do so if the facilities were available (e.g. in relation to food waste)
- Drive less
- Invest in energy efficiency
- Switch to an electric vehicle
- Get involved in managing greenspace/tree-planting
- Switch to public transport

Other responses to this question made less frequently (<10) included (in order of number of references, and excluding suggestions made only once): support with lobbying government (9); influence the institutions (e.g. church) I am part of (6); reduce energy use, support local/sustainable food (=5); buy local, use less water, work from home more often (=4); buy less plastic, share materials/equipment, pay more tax, make a zero carbon commitment (organisations) (=3); leave the area (2).

In addition, 28 responses (13.7%) made specific offers to help or collaborate in taking forward the aims of the strategy.

Summary & Subsequent Revisions to the Strategy

In view of the strong appetite to take action on climate change expressed by those who responded to the consultation, the following changes were made to the final strategy:

- A selection of responses to this question were compiled to be included in the final strategy and to be used in wider comms around the strategy launch and subsequent awareness raising/engagement activity
- The communications and engagement plan will include action to identify and promote the most significant actions which individuals and organisations can take to reduce their carbon footprint, making this as simple and accessible as possible

The Partnership is also following up with those individuals or organisations who have made specific offers to assist or collaborate on strategy implementation, with a view to engaging them in the work of the Partnership and/or theme groups as they transition from strategy development to implementation.