



**sustainable NI**

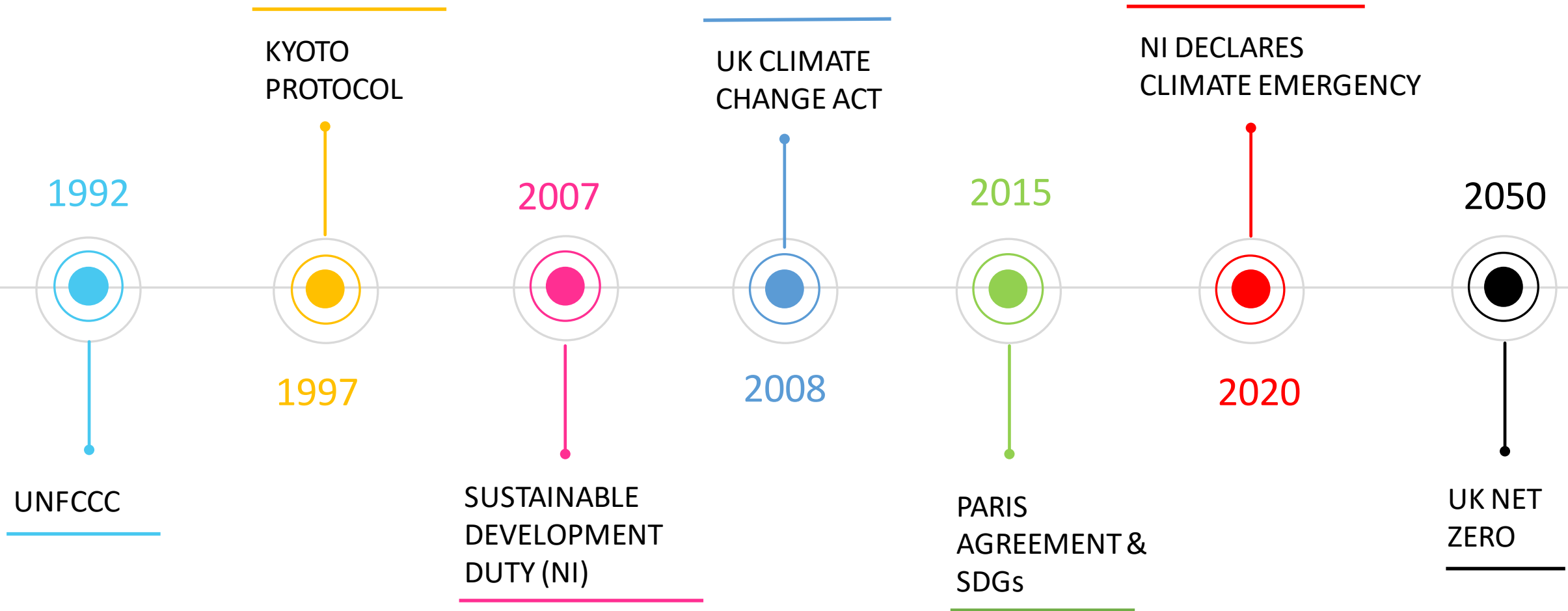
**Nichola Hughes**

# Building a sustainable future – the role of local government

Nichola Hughes

Director, Sustainable Northern Ireland

# Driving change – milestone timeline



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“Climate change is the symptom, not the disease”

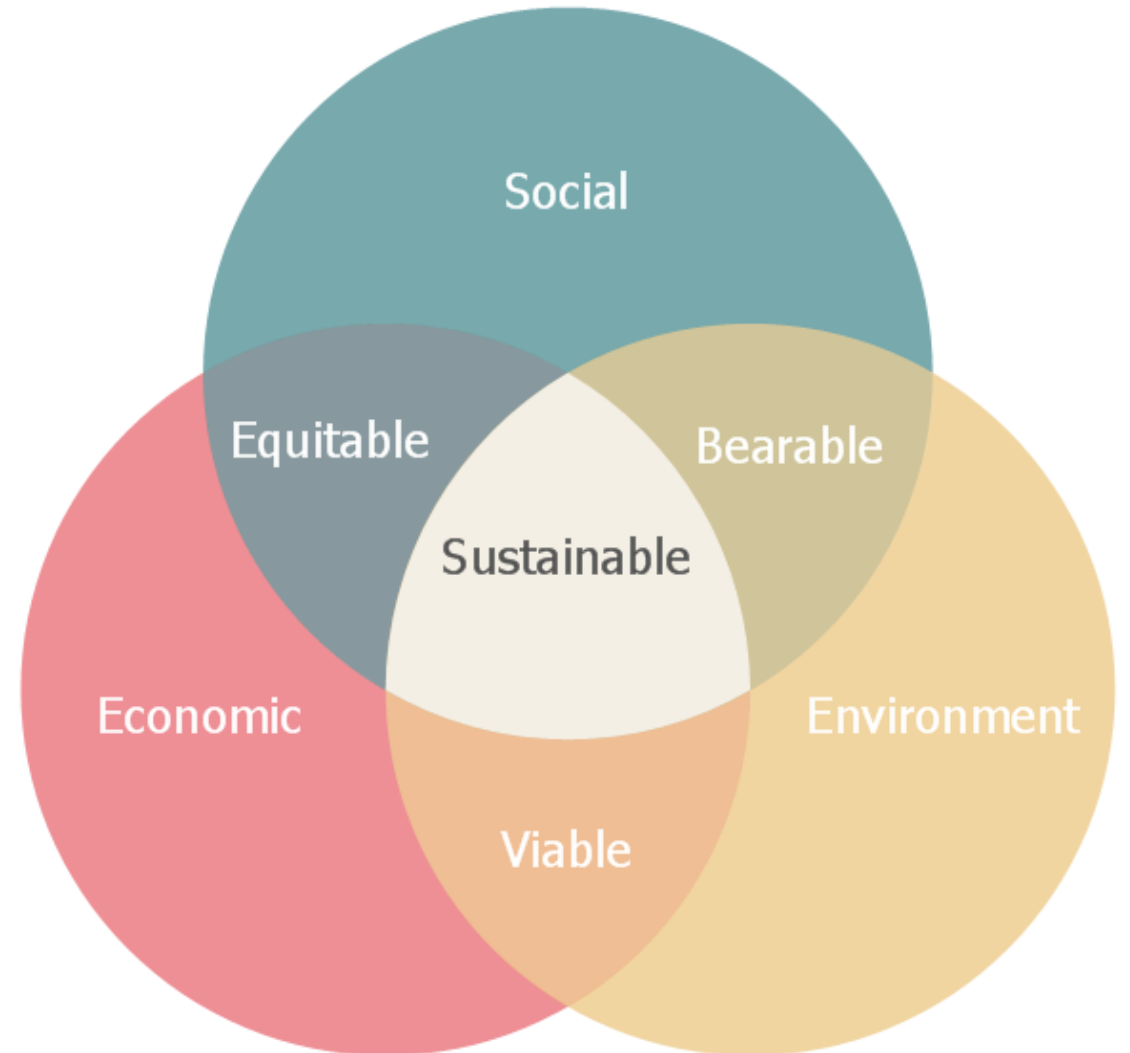
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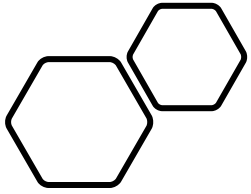
The disease is:

- The rapid loss of biodiversity
- The way we have polluted the atmosphere
- The way we have reduced the fertility of soil
- The greed with which we have used resources



Growing the economy in a way that is equitable and not at the expense of the planet





What does a sustainable future look like?





## Surface travel

We have access to safe, integrated **walking** and **cycling routes** as well as **cheap, efficient and reliable public transport**.

There is a reliable network of rapid **EV charge-points** and all **HGVs** are **electric or hydrogen**.



## Air travel

We **fly less** with taxes on air travel that increase as people fly more often and as they fly further.

We have **decarbonised air travel** through investment in new, cleaner aviation technologies.



## In the home

Our homes and buildings are built (or retrofitted) to the highest **energy efficiency and resilience standards**.

We **no longer build on floodplains**.

We have a more **decentralised energy system** with most households meeting their energy needs on site or locally e.g. through **solar, wind, geothermal, heat pumps or heat networks**.

**Green infrastructure, sustainable drainage and rainwater harvesting** is mandatory in all new buildings.



## What we eat and how we use land

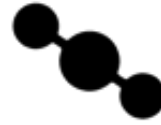
We support local food production by **buying local produce**. We eat **less meat** and **dairy**.

Farmers are incentivised to manage land in ways that enhances **carbon storage in soil** and have been given support to **diversify land-use and protect the environment** by adopting **nature-friendly farming methods**.



## Where our electricity comes from

Fossil fuels, and nuclear power have been replaced by **100% green renewable energy** e.g. off-shore wind, solar and geothermal energy.



## How we remove greenhouse gases

Large scale **forestation schemes** have restored lost native woodlands and increased biodiversity.

**Forests are managed** to maximise carbon sequestration and biodiversity. We promote the use of **sustainably sourced wood in construction**.

We have restored and are **managing our peatlands and wetlands turning them into carbon sinks** and have made them protected sites.

We **do not need to use carbon capture and storage** methods as we achieved our net-zero target through a combination of behaviour change, green technologies and nature-based solutions.





## What we do with waste

All **waste has an economic value** and the majority of **waste is recovered and repurposed.**

Citizens are incentivised to recycle and use **deposit return mechanisms** to return household waste.

**People do not litter** because of a shift in public attitudes and stricter enforcement. There is a ban on unnecessary **single-use plastic items** and all **packaging is reusable or recyclable.**

Landfill sites are closed. There are a limited number of **energy from waste facilities** and **anaerobic digestors** which provide energy to local communities.



## Our public realm

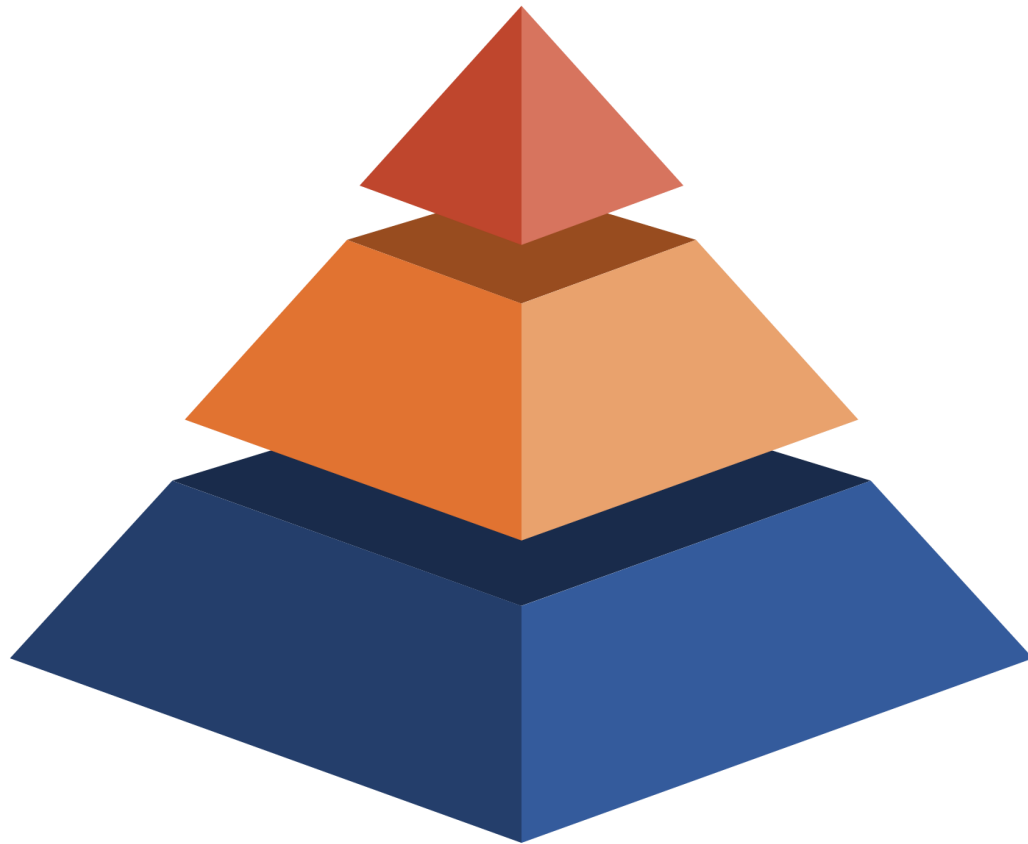
Stricter planning rules mean **climate resilience measures** are included in all **new development** so that assets can withstand extreme weather.

**Green roofs, urban greening, flood resistant road surfaces, and adaptable planting regimes** are the norm.

There is **less risk of flooding** due to a connected system of water recycling, **sustainable urban draining** and **rainwater management measures.**

**Road and rail infrastructure** is constructed using **heat resistant materials.**

# A policy framework conducive to change



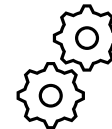
## CLIMATE LEGISLATION

National carbon target & carbon budgets. National Climate Action Plan. National Indicators.



## SECTORAL PLANS

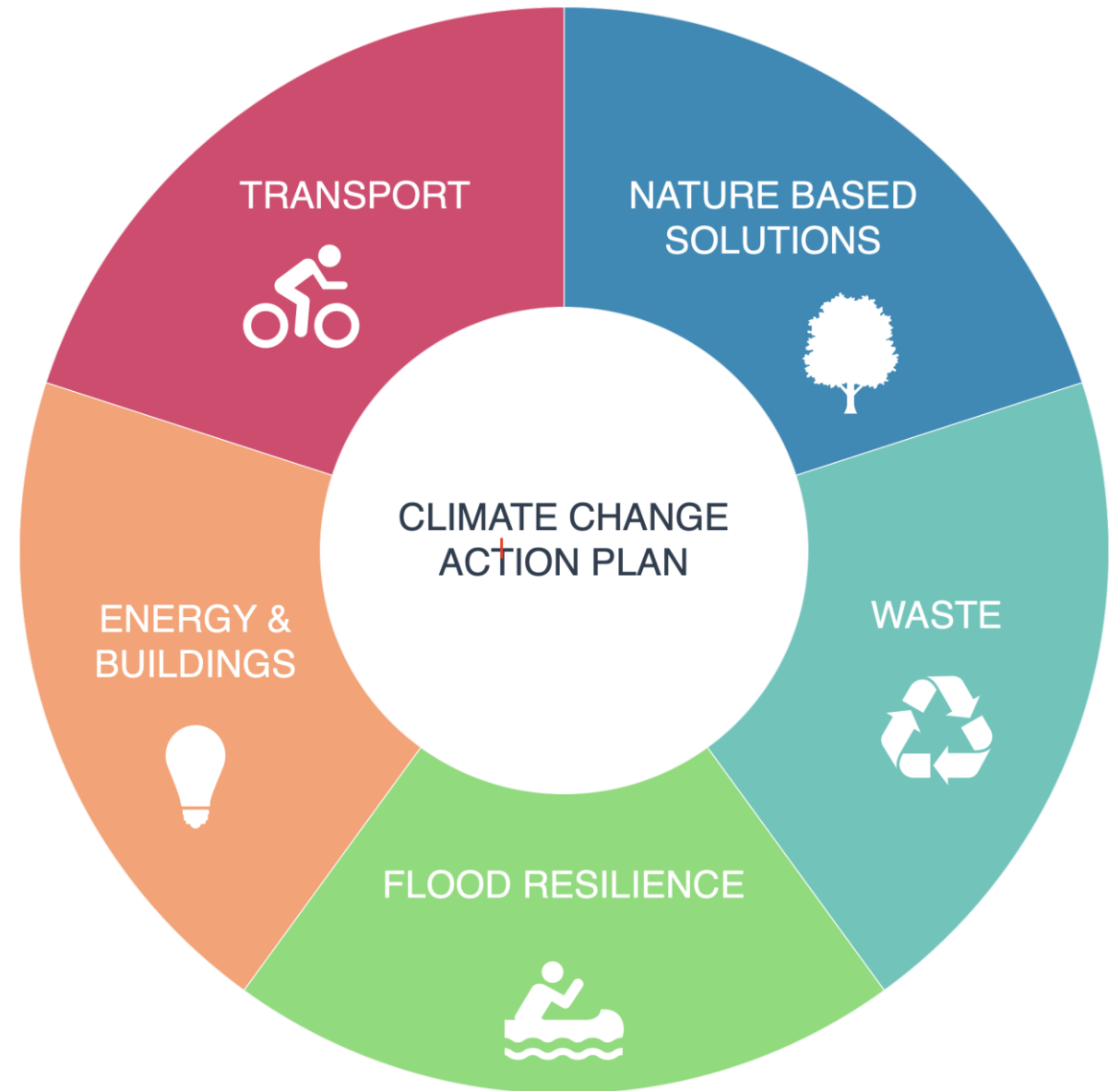
Regulatory change and national programmes.

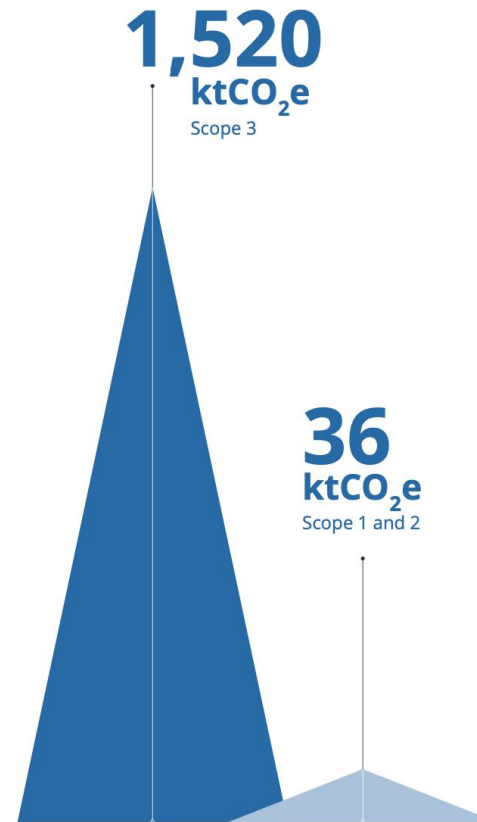


## LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANS

Council adaptation and mitigation plans. Local performance indicators.

Councils have a critical role to play





For organisations and financial centres like ours, **scope 3 makes up a large portion of the total carbon footprint** – and measuring it can lead to the design of innovative solutions to reduce carbon emissions significantly.

## Sustainable Council

- Improve energy efficiency on corporate estate
- Produce or buy 100% renewable energy
- Align investments with Paris Agreement
- Enhance carbon removal in open spaces
- Drive net-zero through your supply chain
- Integrate climate considerations into all council decisions



## Sustainable Community

- Cycle lanes / schemes, EV charge points, green car clubs, low emission zones, parking incentives
- Stricter planning requirements for new development
- Community energy co-ops
- Energy audits for local businesses
- 'Cosy homes' schemes (retrofit)
- Green loans



CLIMATE CONSCIOUS CHANGES

KGCO2E/YEAR

Drink only tap water		0
A weekend newspaper - recycled		94
Buy produce - local + seasonal		2
Take a shower		183
Dishwasher at 55°C		80
Take a train or bus		1'800
Wash at 30°C - dry on the line		62
Low energy bulb		90
Plant-based diet		1'391
From UK to South of France by train		72

**3,773 kgCO2e**  
**3,8 tCO2e**



BUSINESS AS USUAL

KGCO2E/YEAR

234		Drink only bottled water
213		A weekend newspaper - to landfill
42		Buy produce - air-freight long-haul
949		Take a bath
103		Dishwasher at 65°C
8'520		Drive by car
250		Wash at 40°C - tumble dry
500		100 watt incandescent bulb
2'624		High meat diet >100g/day
2500		From UK to New York by plane

**15,935 kgCO2e**  
**15,9 tCO2e**



The solutions already exist

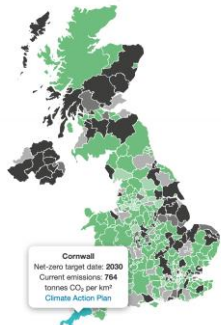


### Explore what's happening locally

From places that have not yet declared a climate emergency to places targeting net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.



Zoom in to see more, hover over an area for info, click to go to local area page.



# More information

Email: [nichola@sustainableni.org](mailto:nichola@sustainableni.org)

Web: [www.sustainableni.org](http://www.sustainableni.org)

What other councils are doing:

<https://carboncopy.eco/local-climate-action>