

Towards A Zero-Carbon Worcestershire

Prepared by: Parliamentary Candidate, Richard Burt, on behalf of West Worcestershire Liberal Democrats:

Registered at:

19 High Street,
Persore
Worcestershire
WR10 1AA

Tel: 01386 555945

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Table of Contents

1. Forward by Parliamentary Candidate, Richard Burt.....	3
2. Introduction.....	4
3. Environment survey.....	5
4. Results.....	7
5. What is being done already?.....	13
6. Recommendations.....	18
7. Conclusion.....	23

Forward by Richard Burt

All the indicators point to climate change impacting more and more on everybody's lives - now and in the future. Consequently, we in West Worcestershire Liberal Democrats surveyed every home across the county constituency to see how we can better manage and mitigate the direct causes of the damaging effects of climate change.

Increasing incidences of storms, floods, and drought in Worcestershire are consistent with climate change predictions. In July this year, bewildered residents in Upton watched the River Severn fill the streets, their homes and businesses as torrential waters hit the town for the sixth time in the year. Tenbury's High Street was drowned when the River Teme burst its banks - restaurants and shops will be closed for months and insurance premiums are set to rise dramatically.

Freak rainstorms are becoming more frequent, and yet 2006 was the driest year on record, which led to reduced crop yields and increased the risk of subsidence and greater demand for water.

The adverse effects of climate change are beginning to impact upon us all, whether it be by flooding, drought, or economically through the negative impacts on tourism and businesses more generally.

This report sets out some clear messages for all of us in Worcestershire if we are to tackle the causes of climate change seriously. We urgently need to reduce our use of fossil fuels for transport and heating our buildings in order to sustain our livelihoods and our rich and beautiful landscapes. We need to take action individually and collectively, because we can no longer deny climate change nor can we afford to put off difficult choices.

Tackling climate change is imperative. Addressing the challenge now will also bring economic and social benefits to our community. By taking immediate action to reduce our use of fossil fuels we can look forward to warmer homes especially for our most vulnerable, lower fuel bills and some protection against future price increases, more jobs locally in the energy efficiency and renewable energy sectors, and less reliance on unstable regions for our energy as our national oil and gas resources begin to decline.

Richard Burt
West Worcestershire Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate
September 2007

Introduction

Rising concentrations of greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels - in homes, in power stations and through transport, business & industry use - are contributing to warming of the atmosphere, resulting in a noticeable effect on weather patterns around the world.

Globally, temperatures are rising each month, and severe weather events such as storms, flooding, gales, heat waves and droughts are becoming increasingly common. The human costs include food shortages, health risks and economic damage. Predictions show current trends continuing into the next century.

Climate change is already having a wide-ranging impact on Worcestershire. In the last 100 years the growing season in the county has increased by 30 days, but in the last 10 years we have experienced extremes of drought, storm and flood unprecedented in recorded weather history, causing disruption to services and costs running into the millions.

The impact of climate change is being felt to a lesser or greater degree by all of us, including wildlife. We need to plan now to prepare for the even more extreme weather conditions, hotter drier summers and wetter winters that are predicted.

We also need to urgently reduce Worcestershire's contribution to climate change. The county as a whole produces approximately 5.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, (a key climate change gas), every year and there are strong indications that this is rising, particularly in terms of emissions from transport and our homes. There will be extra benefits in reducing our climate change gas emissions by improving energy efficiency and introducing local renewable energy projects; such action will deliver improved air quality, creation of local jobs and retention of money in the local economy.

Through this report, West Worcestershire Liberal Democrats make a firm commitment to combat the cause and effects of climate change locally. We stress that it is something that cannot be ignored any longer, and that we all have to act now.

Environment survey

West Worcestershire Liberal Democrats undertook an environment survey in February 2007, to see what people across the county constituency of West Worcestershire thought of environmental issues, how current measures could be improved to meet the challenges that face the county, the country, the continent and world.

The survey had three broad aims:

- 1. To raise awareness of the issue of climate change & its impact on the county;**
- 2. to help local Liberal Democrat councillors and the party's Parliamentary Candidate, along with Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament to represent constituents views more effectively, and;**
- 3. to enable West Worcestershire Liberal Democrats to build a consensus with constituents as to how climate change can best be tackled locally.**

Method:

Sent to 37,000 homes across the county constituency, the survey asked a number of both qualitative and quantitative questions.

The qualitative questions within the survey inevitably produced responses that were demographically varied. Any attempt to accurately reflect the nature of these responses within such a report would be difficult, if not impossible. They have therefore been duly noted, although will not be covered within this document.

The quantitative questions asked were as follows:

Lifestyle:

- Do local shops stock enough environmentally friendly products?

Our countryside:

- The Liberal Democrats are fighting against government plans for excessive building development in our countryside. Do you agree with us?

Global warming and energy use:

- Do you think the government is doing enough to:
 - Combat global warming?
 - Prevent energy being wasted?
 - Invest in renewable energy?

- Which of the following sources of energy do you think we should be investing in for the future?
 - Solar energy
 - Tidal power
 - Hydro-electric power
 - Domestic generators using waste heat from central heating systems
 - Biofuels
 - Wind turbines
 - Nuclear power

Eco-friendly building regulations:

- Which of these (if any) should new homes be required by law to have fitted?
 - Solar panels to generate electricity
 - Mini windmills to generate electricity
 - Rainwater butts to conserve mains water

Transport:

- What would encourage you to make more use of public transport?

Recycling/waste disposal:

- How do you rate recycling services provided here by your local council?
- Which of the following do you recycle regularly? Glass, paper, cardboard, garden waste, cans, plastic bottles, textiles/shoes, other

Paying the cost of pollution:

- Do you support:
 - Reducing car tax for fuel efficient and low emission cars?
 - Taxing aircraft according to the pollution they create?
 - Taxing plastic carrier bags?

Does the environment matter?

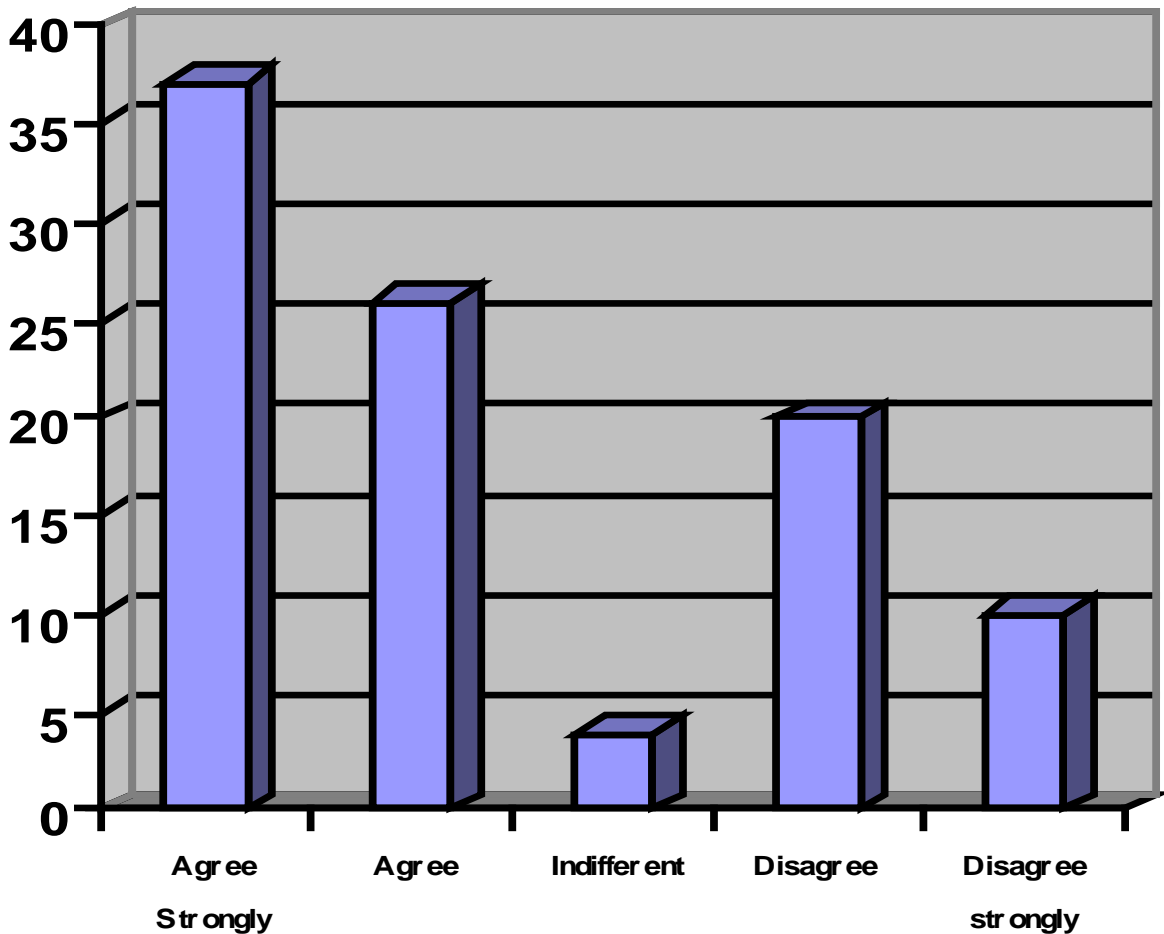
- How much do environmental and green issues matter to you?

Results:

700 completed surveys from across West Worcestershire were received. The results to the questions outlined in the previous are as follows, show as a percentage of the 700 completed surveys:

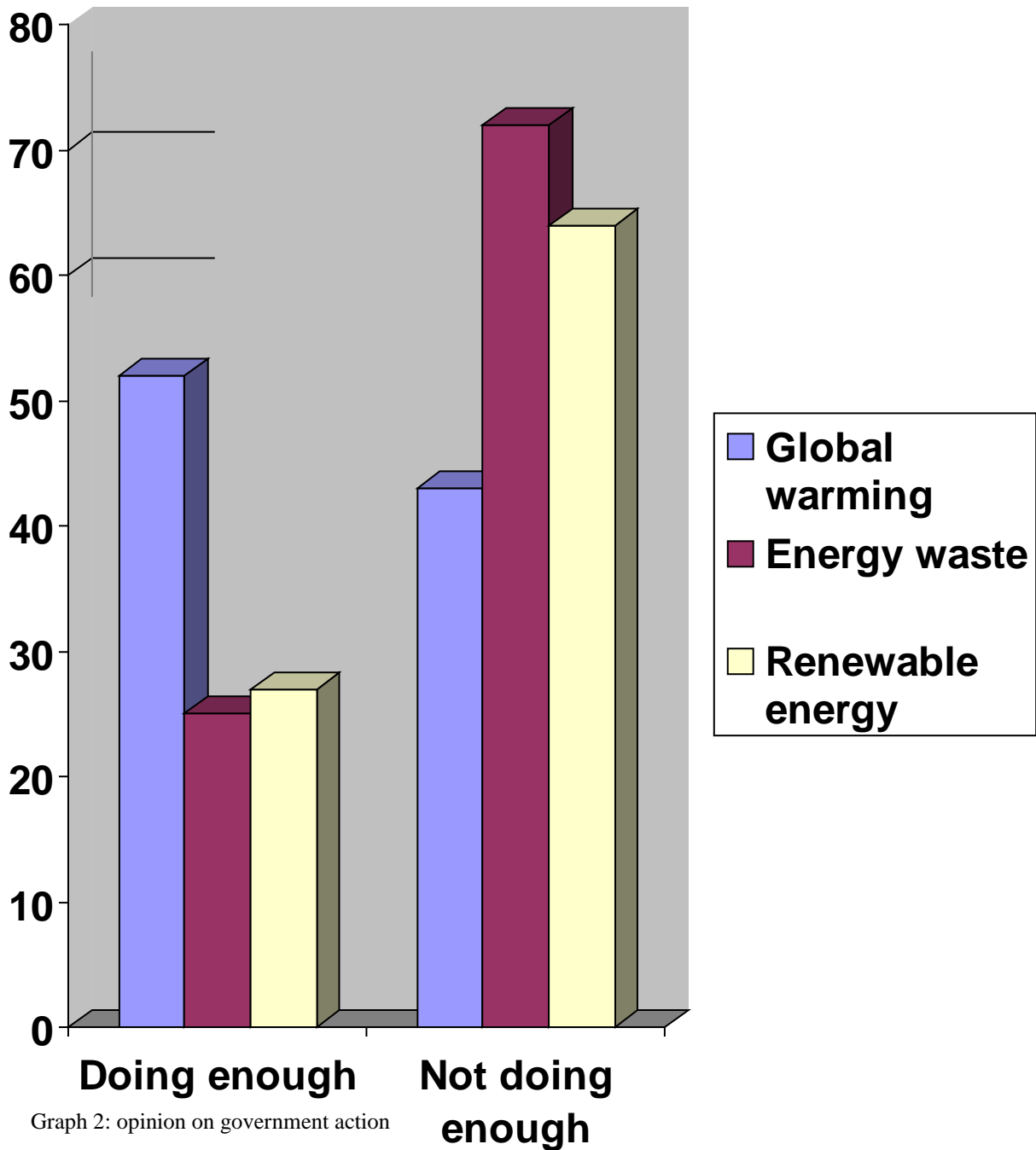
- 59% of people said that their local shops do not stock enough environmentally friendly products, with 34% saying that their shops catered adequately for the environment, and 7% not answering.
- 37% of the respondents agreed strongly with the Liberal Democrats, who are fighting against what is seen as excessive building development in our local countryside. A further 26% simply agreed with the party's stance, while 4% said that they didn't really mind.

Therefore 63% of respondents are in broad agreement with the party's stance on this issue.



Graph 1: People's views on Liberal Democrat policy to building in countryside

- 43% of respondents believe that the government is not doing enough to combat global warming, with 52% content with the government's efforts.
- 72% of people indicated that they believe that the government is failing to prevent energy being wasted, with only 25% thinking that enough is being done.
- When asked about renewable energy, 64% of respondents showed that they thought more needed to be invested into possible sources of renewable energy, against only 27% who think that the government is investing enough.



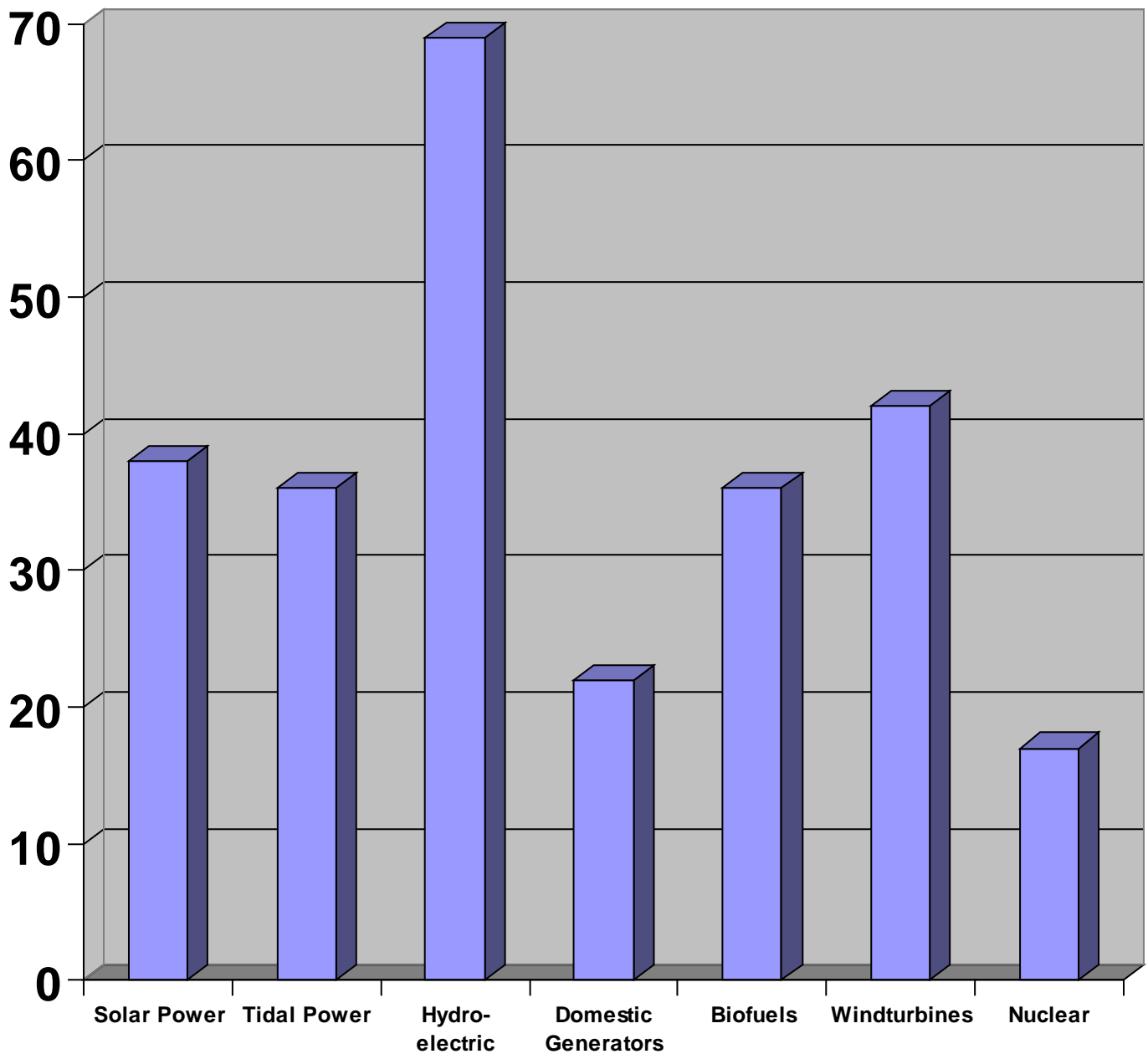
- When asked which sources of energy we should investing in for the future, 74% - nearly three quarters of people - thought that solar energy and tidal power were of key importance, with 69% of people favouring hydro-electric power.

Wind turbines were less popular, with only 42% of people thinking they merit greater investment, as were biofuels, which only 36% of respondents favoured.

Domestic generators and nuclear power were the least popular overall, with only 22% of people favouring generators, and 17% favouring nuclear power.

Therefore, sources of renewable energy were most favoured with 78% of people indicating that at least one of the four above demands greater investment.

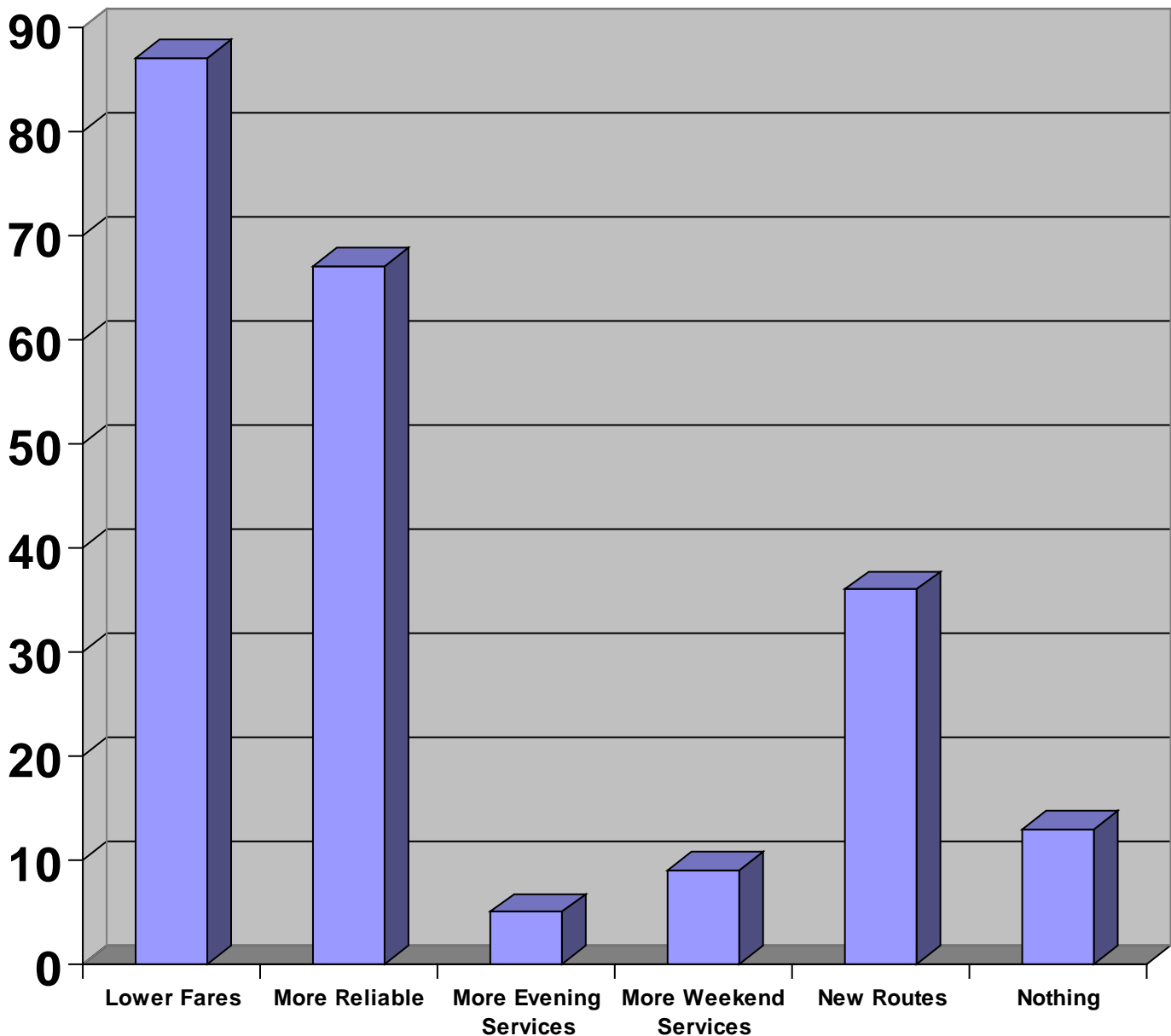
Graph 3: sources of power



- As far as eco-friendly building regulations were concerned, a substantial minority, 41% thought that solar panels should be required in new homes by law to generate electricity, against only 16% who thought that a mini windmill was a good idea or the 26% who would favour the introduction of rainwater butts in all new homes as standard.
- The question on transport produced similar results across the board. 87% of respondents indicated that lower fares would encourage them to use buses or trains, and 67% of people said that better reliability would help to increase public transport usage.

Very few, only 14%, said that more evening or weekend services would encourage them to leave their cars at home and use the bus or train, with 13% saying that nothing would help them to make use of the public transport available.

Graph 4: Incentives to use public transport



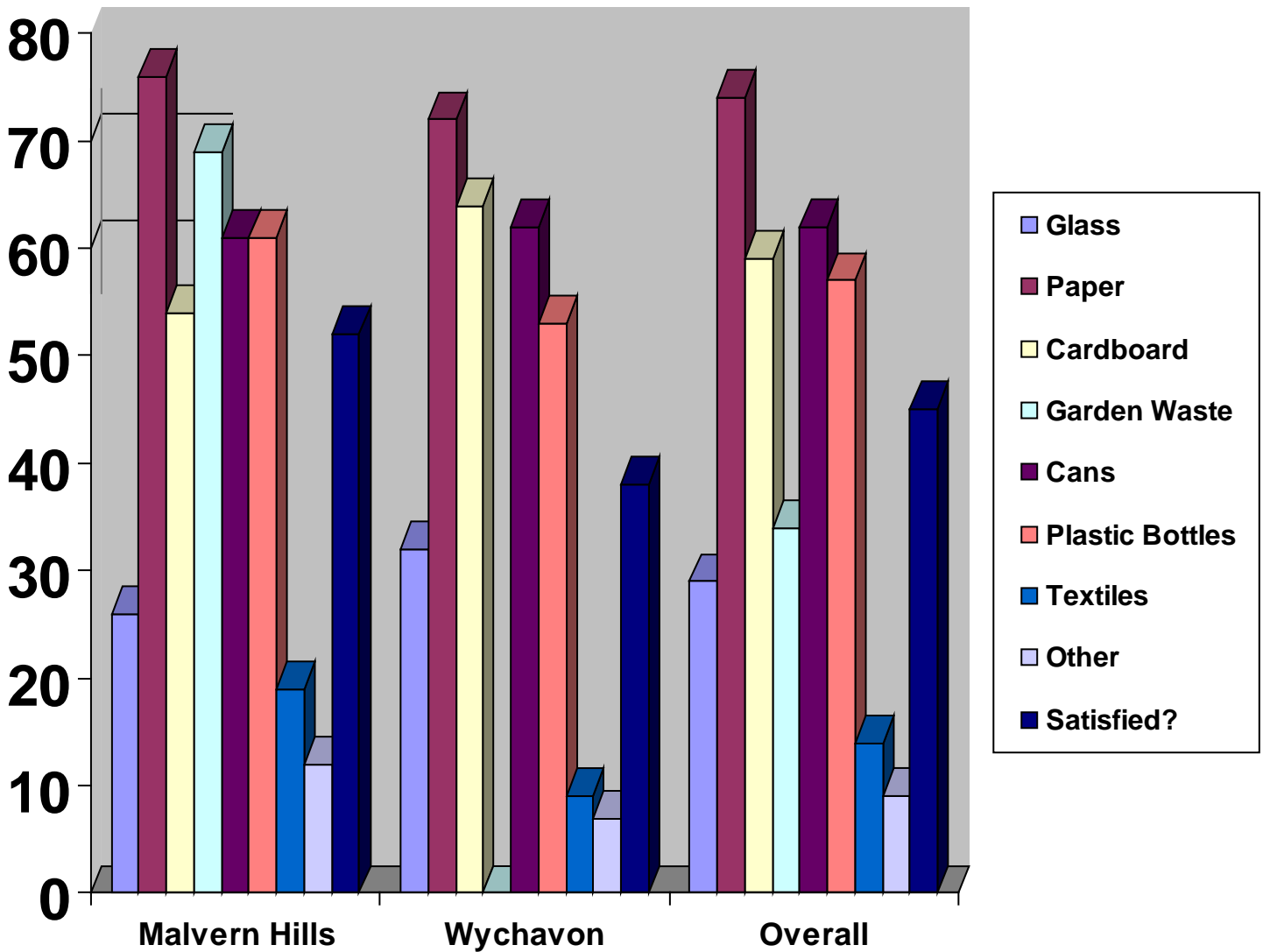
- Questions on recycling proved to be extremely interesting, with a noticeable divide in satisfaction.

West Worcestershire county constituency comprises the entire county district of Malvern Hills, and five wards within Wychavon.

Respondents from within Malvern Hills District were noticeable happier with their levels of recycling that those who responded from Wychavon. Only 38% of those in Wychavon felt that the district council provided a recycling service that was good or very good, against 52% of those who responded from Malvern Hills District.

- The vast majority, 87%, of respondents from the constituency recycle in some form or another, with all who recycle using the full service provided to them by their district council.

Graph 5: Recycling in West Worcestershire



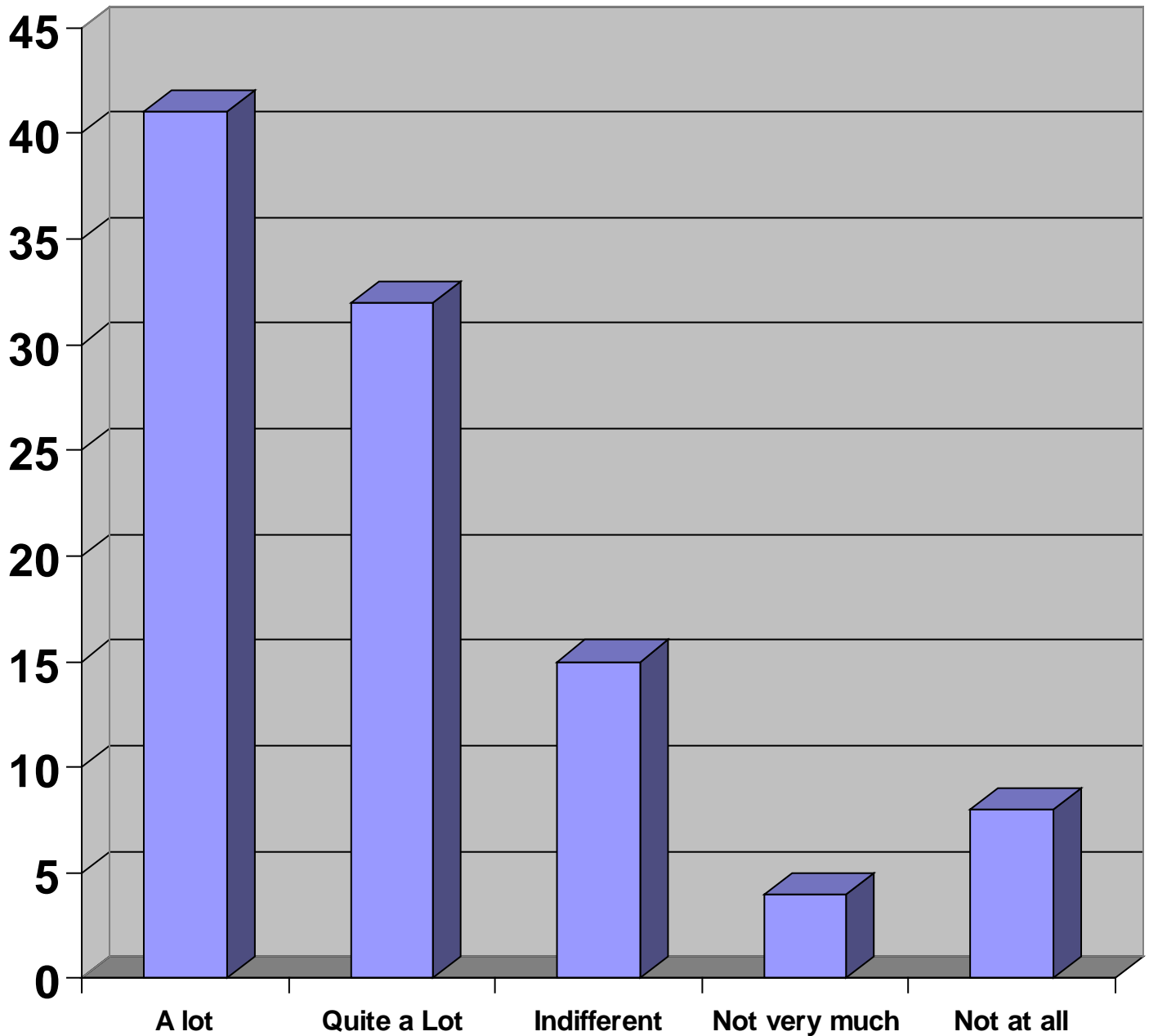
- When asked how the cost of pollution should be covered, 56 % of people agreed with the idea of reducing car tax for fuel efficient and low emission cars, yet only 39% supported taxing aircraft according to the pollution they create.

A tax on carrier bags was not at all popular with only 21% of people supporting the idea.

- When asked how much the environment matters to them, an overwhelming number of respondents either responded by saying 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' (73%).

Only 12% indicated that it did not matter very much to them at all.

Graph 6: How much does the environment matter?



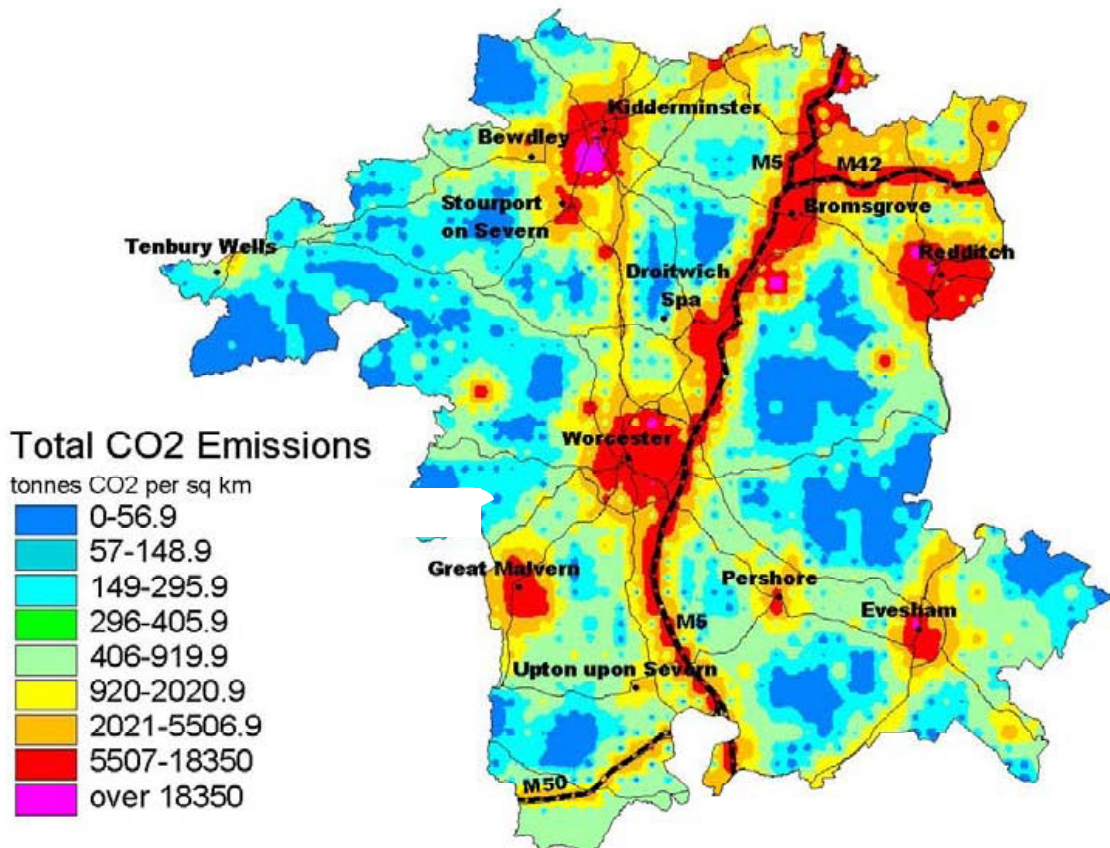
What is being done already?

Measures are currently being implemented at every level of governance, whether that be district, county, UK, European or international level to limit the impact of climate change. However, for the purposes of this report we will look at specific local measures already underway in Malvern Hills, Wychavon and across the county as a whole.

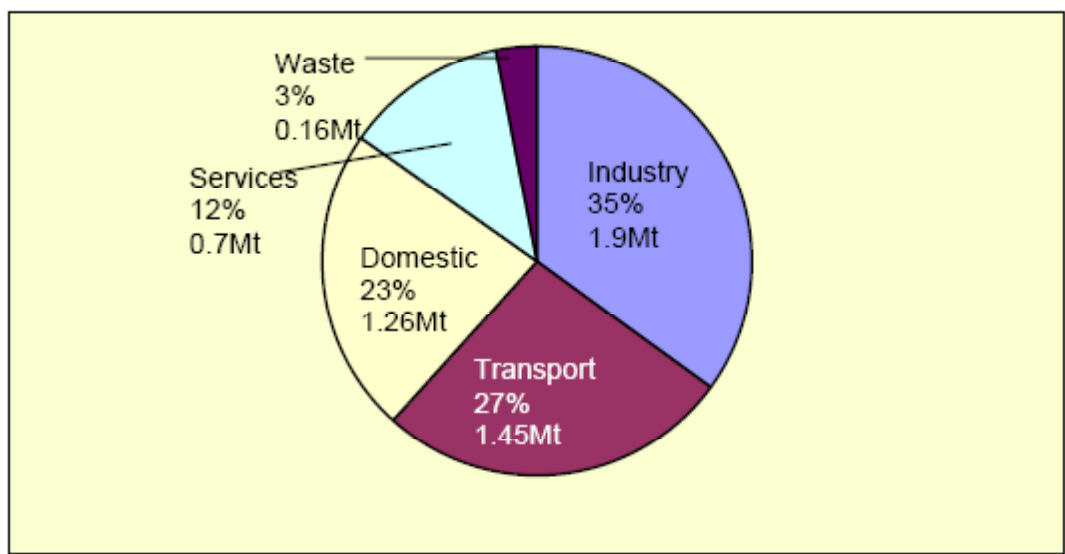
Detailed county or district level data on greenhouse gas emissions is currently hard to obtain, although robust estimates, from which it is possible to identify what needs to be done in the county to reduce emissions, are available.

The emissions estimates used here have been obtained by scaling down UK statistics to the county level using census data and other information specific to Worcestershire, such as traffic data.

The map below illustrates the location of the main sources of CO₂ & CO₂ equivalent emissions (CO₂e)*10 in the County, (excluding electricity consumption). It is clear emission sources are mainly concentrated around towns and transport routes, such as Malvern, Pershore, Upton-upon-Severn & Tenbury Wells within West Worcestershire.



The diagram below shows CO2 emissions by sector in Worcestershire. It includes CO2 equivalent emissions (methane) from Waste. (Methane is a 23 times more potent greenhouse gas than CO2.)



CO2 emissions by Sector (Worcestershire) (Source MEA*) Mt=million tonnes

Within Worcestershire then, a number of measures are currently underway to limit the county's carbon 'footprint' in the domestic, industrial, transportation and waste spheres.

Domestic

The use of energy in our homes accounts for an estimated 23% of total CO2 emissions in the county. It is also the sector where there is most potential for reduction of CO2 emissions by improving energy efficiency, for example through proper roof & wall insulation and use of low energy appliances such as low energy light bulbs & fridges.

A large proportion of Worcestershire's existing housing stock is in need of improvement in terms of adequate insulation & energy efficient heating & lighting systems. The Home Energy Conservation Act 1996 (HECA) requires district councils to work to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes in their area in order to reduce energy consumption by 30% by 2012. Measures have been taken in all districts in Worcestershire, and the county as a whole is ahead of target with an average of 17.7% reduction in energy consumption since 1996. Particular improvement has been made in homes owned by district councils and by housing associations. The aim now is increasingly to improve the efficiency of privately owned and 'harder to treat' homes such as those without cavity walls.

District councils are working as part of the Worcestershire Home Energy Group (WHEG) with the Worcestershire & Warwickshire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (WWEAC) & other organisations such as 'nPower', Worcestershire Primary Care Trusts and the county council to promote home energy efficiency in a number of ways;

- The implementation of a countywide Affordable Warmth Strategy to tackle fuel poverty.
- The provision of free home energy advice to all Worcestershire householders

- The provision of schemes offering free or discounted energy saving products such as light bulbs & insulation.

In order to meet 2012 HECA targets WHEG members aim to obtain more resources to devote to encouraging householders to improve home energy efficiency. They also aim to help householders off the gas network to take advantage of the potential of renewable energy.

Business and the public services

The use of energy by businesses, public services and voluntary organisations has tended to fluctuate over time according to the status of the economy. The majority of energy used in this sector across Worcestershire is for the heating & lighting of premises and to power office equipment. With the introduction of the climate change levy which has increased costs in many organisations, and now rising fuel costs as the UK becomes increasingly reliant on imported fuel, the importance of good energy management in businesses and public & voluntary organisations is growing. While larger companies and organisations are often seen as having resources to invest in energy efficiency measures to save on energy bills, frequently small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and those in the voluntary sector, feel they do not.

There is a lot that can be done by undertaking low and no cost simple measures such as installing low energy light bulbs and turning off equipment on standby. By doing this, all businesses and organisations can make substantial savings in their carbon emissions and save money at the same time. There is a need to encourage the wide uptake of such measures so that they become the norm in Worcestershire's businesses and organisations. By taking further action, such as installing fuel efficient boilers and lighting timers, there is potential for further savings to be made.

Industry

The industrial sector has the greatest volume of greenhouse gas emissions with an estimated 35%. A decline in traditional manufacturing industries in the county and some improvement in energy efficiency means that total emissions are falling year on year. This sector has, more than others, found costs rising as a result of the climate change levy. Many companies in this sector are involved in energy intensive processes such as metal forging and porcelain manufacture and have comparatively few staff. This means they do not benefit from compensation in terms of national insurance contribution reductions in the way that companies in the service sector do. Increases in fuel prices are also hitting these companies hard.

Industrial use of energy can be complex and specialist advice on energy efficiency is often needed. Nevertheless there is great potential for this sector to make energy savings and so increase competitiveness. There are examples of companies in the county that have done just that.

Taking action on waste reduction often leads to reductions in energy use. There can also be untapped potential for companies to sell waste heat to other users. Some urban fringe industrial sites may also be suitable for the development of wind or other renewables, as has been shown at other such sites across the country.

Partners across the county are currently working together to achieve a 19% decrease in industrial CO2 emissions by 2011 by identifying opportunities to reduce emissions, sharing best practice and ensuring that the development of the A38 Birmingham to Malvern technology belt encourages companies to adopt energy efficient practices.

Construction

The UK's building regulations set standards on the energy efficiency of new buildings. Most new buildings in the county are designed to meet the current standards, but not to exceed them. Building control officers work to ensure that current standards are met in new homes and other development, but do not have the power to request higher energy efficiency standards from developers.

Councils have identified potential to encourage more sustainable and energy efficient construction through training and education within the county's construction sector and through the planning system through supplementary planning documents and the inclusion of renewable and energy efficiency requirements in planning permission for new development.

The councils are currently developing supplementary planning documents regarding energy efficiency for Worcestershire districts and are seeking inclusion of energy efficiency in all relevant planning documents.

They are also increasing the level of awareness of sustainable construction techniques & technology within Worcestershire's construction sector by training construction professionals and local authority staff and members.

Transport

Increasing levels of mobility and the continued rise in the use of private vehicles means that transportation is one of the fastest growing sectors for CO2 emissions. The county has above average emissions from transport (approx 27% of county emissions). In part owing to its rural nature, Worcestershire has a higher than average reliance on private transport. It also has a greater than average rate of people travelling to work in single occupancy cars.

Due to the strength of underlying trends in traffic growth, the best that can be realistically aimed for in the short term is to stabilise emissions from transport, with reduction of emissions in the longer term.

Three key objectives need to be achieved: To reduce demand for private car and freight transport, reduce fuel consumption in vehicles and to increase the use of alternative fuels, especially biofuels.

These objectives can realistically only be met by applying pressure on central government and the European institutions, and are simply not achievable by local councils.

Waste

Worcestershire produces relatively high levels of waste, most of which goes to land fill (currently 77% of domestic waste). This adds to the emission of greenhouse gases in three ways;

- When waste breaks down in landfill sites it gives off greenhouse gases like methane (65%) and carbon dioxide (35%). (Currently waste contributes approximately 3% of County CO₂e emissions).
- Energy is needed to dispose of waste, (particularly in transporting it).
- Disposal, rather than reuse, repair or recycling leads to a need for more raw materials. Generally less energy is needed to make items from recycled materials than from raw materials (providing the waste collection process is not too energy intensive).

Reducing the amount of waste produced in the first place is the most effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from waste.

The Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire has the aim of reducing the amount of household waste produced in the county. It includes the following targets and interventions. In line with Government targets, Worcestershire county and district councils are aiming to reduce the amount of household waste going to landfill to 22% of the total amount produced by 2015. They are also aiming to reduce the total amount of waste produced by households.

To achieve this target kerbside recycling schemes have been introduced to households across Worcestershire collecting items such as paper, plastic, cans and textiles. There are also plans for two waste recovery autoclave treatment plants in the county.

Recommendations

The results shown above show that people want to see new, innovative and urgent action to prevent future climate change locally. However, many of these reforms can only be undertaken at UK level.

The Liberal Democrats have always been a party of the environment, and the federal party is the first in the UK to aim for a carbon neutral Britain, where the country absorbs as much carbon as it emits by the middle of this century. Liberal Democrats have set ambitious targets and have sought to back them up with bold, commonsense policies. There is no choice because the task is so important and the challenge so urgent.

The long-term strategic goal of climate change strategy should be to limit the average global temperature increase to within 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. It is clear that HM Government's current aim of a 60 per cent cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 will not be enough. A reduction in emissions of the magnitude that Liberal Democrats are advocating will only happen if developed countries such as the UK take the lead by cutting their own emissions.

The objective of climate change strategy must be to make the UK carbon neutral by 2050.

An international approach to tackling climate change is essential, with developed countries taking the lead in transforming themselves into low carbon, high energy efficiency economies.

Liberal Democrats wish to see, and would therefore:

Provide UK and EU leadership for an international framework that will enable each country to manage the transition to a low carbon economy by:

- Reaching agreement on a much more ambitious set of targets in the negotiations for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and beyond.
- In the short term, developing a post-2012 framework that allows different countries to participate according to their national circumstances through a multi-stage approach.
- In the medium term, allocating emission credits on a per capita basis, first to developed countries, but eventually to all countries.

Within the UK, there are three key elements of a mitigation policy response: pricing carbon through trading, tax or regulation; encouraging development, demonstration and deployment to bring forward a range of low carbon technologies; and encouraging long term behavioural changes.

Liberal Democrats would introduce credible and predictable mechanisms for pricing carbon by:

- Strengthening the EU Emissions Trading System, by linking it to the EU target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, setting national emissions caps for rolling five year

periods on an incrementally reducing basis, aiming for full auctioning of allowances and broadening the scheme to cover aviation, shipping, and road transport through fuel suppliers.

- Reforming Labour's Climate Change Levy into a carbon tax that would apply to primary fuels as they enter the economy, once our energy efficiency measures have become effective in tackling fuel poverty, using revenues to cut other taxes.

- Making a green tax switch by more steeply graduating Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) for new vehicles, based on carbon emissions, reforming the per ticket Air Passenger Duty into a per flight Aircraft Tax, and indexing fuel duty to GDP growth except in periods of oil price spikes, using the revenue to cut income tax.

Liberal Democrats would bring forward environmentally sustainable technologies by:

- Setting a target for 30 per cent of the UK's electricity to come from clean, non-carbon emitting sources by 2020, rising to 100 per cent by 2050, providing new incentives for renewable energy sources and small-scale micro-generation through guaranteed prices ('feed-in tariffs').

- Providing new incentives for renewable heat technologies.

- Promoting transitional technologies such as carbon capture and storage.

- Rejecting a new generation of nuclear power stations.

- Working to introduce mandatory UK/EU average vehicle emissions targets of 120g CO₂/km by 2015, 95g/km by 2020, and zero carbon for all new cars by 2040.

- Increasing the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation to require at least 10 per cent of all fuel sold on UK forecourts to come from renewable sources by 2015.

Liberal Democrats would encourage behavioural changes by:

- Requiring all new homes to be built to the Green House standard no later than 2011 (this is the best known standard for building homes that require no fossil fuels for their space heating).

- Introducing 'WarmHomes' packages of improvements available for existing houses funded through 'green mortgages', which enable people to use the savings from their lower energy use to pay back the cost of the package through their quarterly energy bill.

- Setting up a Future Transport Fund to invest in key rail and light rail improvements and extensions, including High Speed Rail, by using the proceeds from charging road freight for using the motorways and the proceeds from a climate change charge on air flights within the UK, exempting 'lifeline' flights.

Liberal Democrats would also enhance the UK's ability to adapt to the effects of climate change by:

- Developing a UK national adaptation plan to educate individuals and businesses about what adaptations are necessary in response to climate change.

- Ensuring that government departments are given a clear responsibility for planning for the effects of climate change.
- Investing in flood management systems.

Liberal Democrats would help developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change by:

- Working for the establishment of an International Leapfrog Fund to facilitate the development of low carbon technologies, energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies in developing countries.
- Advocating a new UN Adaptation Fund.

Liberal Democrats would ensure that UK climate change strategy is credible and capable of being implemented by:

- Placing a legal duty on ministers to achieve the long-term goal of a carbon neutral UK and producing annual carbon budgets.
- Setting up a Cabinet Committee on climate change
- Creating a new Department of Environment, Energy and Transport.

In Worcestershire

Local government has a vital role to play in delivering climate change objectives in Worcestershire.

Local councils are well placed to identify and implement local solutions such as zero carbon building development and sustainable transport. Councils can also work effectively in partnership with the voluntary or third sector.

Whilst noting the current actions of the two district councils and the county council, West Worcestershire Liberal Democrats recommend:

- The collective lobbying of central government, along with political parties, to press the government to allow local councils more power over the licensing, regulation and funding of bus services, which will allow them to invest in developing bus routes and community transport services.
- Ensure that environmental priorities are at the heart of council spending plans by publishing a full 'Green Budget' assessment of every budget and writing environmental policies and targets into all council decisions where appropriate (eg. planning).
- Developing good, local early warning systems for extreme weather events so that measures can be put in place to minimise their risk, in particular with respect to human health and safety.

- Mapping drainage systems at risk of being overwhelmed by intense rainfall and encouraging Ofwat to prioritise storm water improvements.
- The promotion of safer cycling and walking in all local transport plans: The Tyndall Centre has recently concluded that a third of the reduction in carbon emissions from transport by 2050 could come from a switch to public transport, walking and cycling, as well as measures to reduce the need to travel by car. Since 1997 the time spent walking and cycling has decreased by nearly 10 per cent, bus use has declined while the amount of time people spend travelling by car has increased.
- Introducing a rolling 50-year planning horizon for climate change adaptation.
- Including good water resource management in building and planning proposals.
- Setting up Climate Change Scrutiny Committees to provide strategic policy advice to councillors on local climate change and co-ordinate the work of council departments where it affects climate change and chase progress on targets.
- Including carbon reduction targets in regional spatial strategies and local development plans.
- Voluntarily issuing annual carbon reports to central government to aid with the dissemination of best practice.
- The adoption of policies by the local councils to maximise the on-site capture of renewable energy in commercial buildings, providing that the developer can show that this does not invalidate the lifetime viability of the building.
- Maximising local community benefit by encouraging, where appropriate, renewables schemes in which the local community has a share in the ownership and profits or benefits from reduced energy prices, for example through part-ownership by a community trust.
- Seeking investment for anaerobic digestion of local farming slurry: This could capture methane to generate renewable energy, and produce soil-conditioning fertiliser with reduced odour and lower bacterial load than un-processed waste.
- Extend levels of recycling in Wychavon and Malvern Hills to allow people to recycle all recyclable substances.
- Introducing recycling in care homes that are run by the county council.
- Providing more public information to raise awareness of the full energy costs and climate impacts. Examples include performance labels, the introduction of 'smart' energy meters, and dissemination of best practice.

- Collective lobbying of central government, along with political parties to allow the local authorities to set higher standard buildings regulations.
- Councils to require all public bodies only to build, purchase or lease new buildings meeting the highest BREEAM (the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method - a tool that allows the owners, users and designers of buildings to review and improve environmental performance throughout the building's life) efficiency standards and use central government funding to ensure that local government buildings meet these standards, and:
- The adoption of policies by the local councils that insist on a high energy performance score, using the BREEAM assessment system (unless the developer can prove that achieving such a standard would make construction not viable).

Conclusion

West Worcestershire Liberal Democrats are committed to a zero carbon Worcestershire, within in a zero carbon Britain by 2050. Whilst we acknowledge that the road to achieve that goal is long and difficult, the first steps towards this target can be taken now.

We urge the local authorities in Worcestershire, in partnership with the private sector and voluntary sector, to lead the way in tackling climate change at home.

Climate change is without doubt the greatest challenge facing humanity. It is an issue which should transcend traditional party rivalries, and we should work together wherever possible to safeguard the future of our environment.