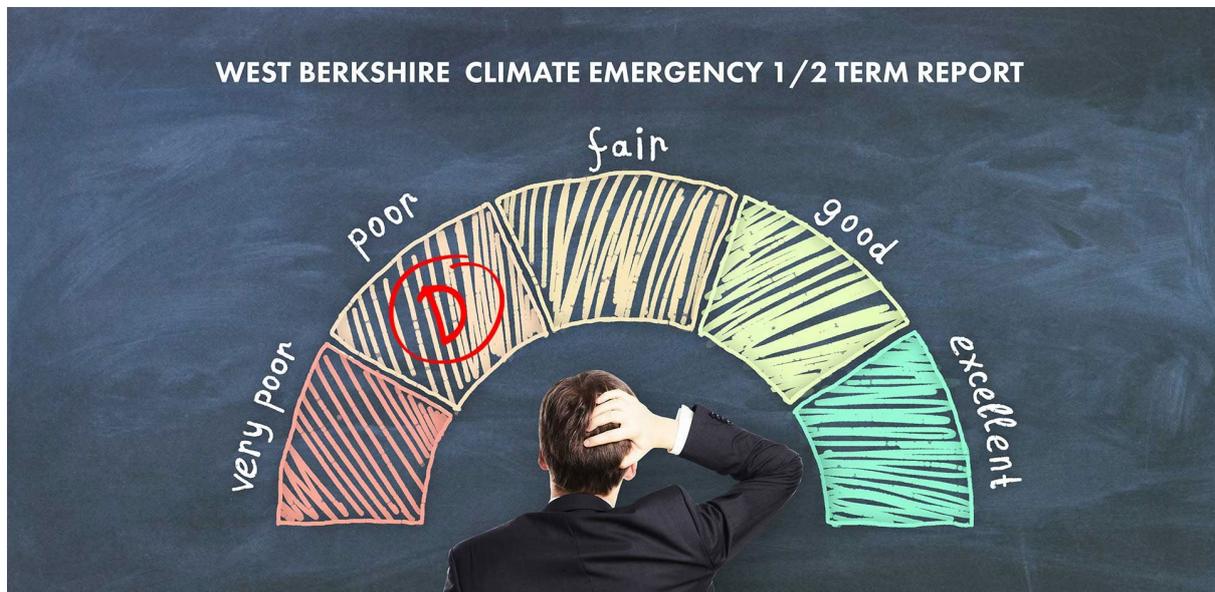


Half-Term Report since the Climate Emergency. 'A' for the Officers, 'D' for the Conservative Administration



Since West Berkshire Council declared a climate emergency the Liberal Democrats have been pushing the Conservative Administration to take action faster and to provide some easy-to-understand visuals so we can see what progress we are making. See example at the end.

As an example, although the 10MW solar energy farm at Grazeley is now claimed as the Administrations idea, it was in fact something suggested almost straight away by the Lib Dems. We have since pointed out that this should be 60MW as the location will sustain such a development. That moves us from a small 3% of what's needed to nearly 20%

The Liberal Democrats have focused on suggesting solutions that follow the SMATE principles (Save Money and the Environment) because, in reality, much of what we can do quickly in the first 4 years does give you this win-win.

Even as the Shadow Portfolio Holder for the Environment it's nearly impossible to get an actual number on what progress we have made in terms of CO2 reduction. My estimate is that progress, as a direct result of Conservative policies, has been essentially zero.

How do I justify that number? First, measurement of progress at Academy schools are not reported to the council so remain an unknown! Second thinking about the houses built since we declared the Climate Emergency, **NO** major development has been net carbon-zero; brand new schools, like Highwood Copse, which was meant to have solar energy, had that **opportunity** taken away by a Conservative decision; new libraries at Park Side School are going to be fitted with traditional boilers; the latest plans for a Sports Hub have no solar panels and no biodiversity net gain.

The Administration **removed the old** solar panels from the Market Street offices and replaced that with more **updated** solar, but when I last checked the old solar panels had simply been put into storage. The £1 million raised with such fanfare by the Conservatives is now being spent, but won't **actually** deliver very much for **some considerable time** yet.

Even if the Administration list everything they have done since the declaration of the Climate Emergency that reduces the CO2 footprint and **totals** it, this is easily **cancelled out** by continuing to **contribute to** the problem with new-builds that **do not have good carbon-neutral credentials**, so the **final amount of CO2 saved remains** approximately zero.

In my opinion, the problem is that although many Conservatives Members want to take action – and I see this when they speak at the Environmental Advisory Group - they are locked in process and lack the clarity of vision needed to address things as an **emergency**. "Emergency" is the critical word here, it denotes that we must do things **fast**.

An example is West Berkshire Council's planning and the willingness to test its policies. If anyone looks at CS15 it clearly states that since 2019 any new major development should be net Zero Carbon. In fact, for residential builds, this **should** have been the case since 2016. At the recent Sandleford enquiry, West Berkshire officers argued strongly that CS15 applies, despite the lawyers **acting on behalf of** Bloor homes arguing that because there was not **a single** example of the rule having been applied, it had been abandoned by West Berkshire Council. So, acting fast could be as simple as actually applying the Council's existing policies?

So why am I giving the officers an 'A' **grade**? Just look how many there are (not enough) and what they have produced. It's not a lack of willingness or capability (although we are all still able to learn more concerning climate change), it's simply a **case of not** being given the authority, direction and funds to start making the rapid changes.

What would the Liberal Democrats have been doing differently in the first 4 years?

- 1) We would be pushing as hard as possible to reduce consumption – that, in almost every way, saves people money as well as having a direct impact on our carbon budget;
- 2) We would ensure our own policies are applied to ensure no new builds are done that further add to the problem;
- 3) We would accelerate the move to alternative energy and ensure there are no schools (Academy or otherwise) that are not on a path to net carbon zero;
- 4) We would be accelerating our own clean energy production through schemes like:
 - a. Grazeley (but sized to the maximum)
 - b. micro-hydro schemes along the rivers and canals in West Berkshire;
- 5) We would be looking at how we can get all homes insulated to the best standard possible;
- 6) We would be enabling the circular economy through the collection of food and green waste that then finds its way back to local farmers as energy and fertilizer and then **get their local produce** in local shops;
- 7) We would be ensuring that BioDiversity net gain or at least 1.1 is embedded now in **all** infrastructure projects undertaken.

In short, we would look to take **emergency** measures now which happen to save money for people and West Berkshire Council as well and do this whilst laying the plans for the next 6 years so that we could **meet** the 2030 net-zero target for West Berkshire.

I'm willing to go on the record and say that this Administration and its actions WILL fail in this goal and it needs a team like the Liberal Democrats (backed by experts) who are willing and able to turn the tiller towards not just declaring a climate emergency, but **delivering** the solutions needed.

Suggested visuals for reporting to OSMC and the public

OSMC
How to report progress

