Our Vision in Detail

That by the 2030s the Cambridge region will have transitioned to a healthier, more beautiful and more equitable region, with abundant employment opportunities within a carbon neutral economy.

It is becoming increasingly clear that by the middle of this century, the world needs to be approaching net zero carbon emissions if we are to avoid the consequences of dangerous climate change.

Cambridge is a well-connected and influential city, with significant investment in transport and housing planned in the newly created Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. We therefore believe that our region should be at the heart of demonstrating how the UK can achieve carbon neutrality by the mid 2030s, while maximising health and social equity in the process.

Our vision is that by the 2030s, Measurable Carbon Emissions from the Combined Authority area will have reduced by a factor of 5, while our remaining emissions will be absorbed by recreating the lost peat, soils and woodlands in our area. We think we can then say that we're demonstrating regional carbon neutrality. Along the way we hope to have benefited from best practise demonstrated elsewhere and to provide an exemplar for other parts of the UK**.**

Some will say this is wildly ambitious. Others that it's not ambitious enough. Our current thinking is that it is achievable if we all work together. Which we must: since failure is not an option.

We want a Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Climate Commission to be formed and well-funded to undertake detailed studies and provide policy advice on how to achieve this locally. In broad terms we think our carbon emissions can be dramatically reduced by:

1. Accelerating the decarbonisation of the electricity supply

2. Continuing the transformation of our industrial sector, by focusing our economy on clean goods and services, while closing down and reducing the demand for inefficient or polluting industries.

3. Slashing transport emissions, by dramatically improving public transport and facilities for cycling and walking, promoting electric vehicles and improving rural broadband in order to reduce the need to travel.

4. Slashing domestic carbon emissions (and fuel poverty), by insulating older homes and building all new ones to high efficiency standards, with good access to public transport.

In parallel with this, by the 2030s, we want to see the remaining carbon emissions being locked up by:

1. Increasing Woodland by a factor of 4, to match the national average.
2. Creating new wetlands (eg the Great Fen Project) to start to rebuild peat
3. Reversing the loss of soil and carbon from the Fenland farms

This will make real our vision for the 2030s

The pace of change.

Many of these changes are already happening.

BEIS data shows that carbon emissions from industry reduced by 40% between 2005 and 2015, while domestic carbon emissions reduced by 30%. But carbon emissions from transport have made no progress at all: they are just as bad as in 2005.

We need to accelerate the pace of change, but in particular we need to make sure that the Combined Authority's forthcoming investments in Transport and Housing support the transition to the clean, low carbon economy, rather than locking us into the past.

Note that in our calculations, we are only including the sectors for which BEIS collates and publishes quantitative data on carbon emissions[1]. However it is clear that carbon emissions can also be reduced significantly through changes in diet (eating less red meat, more plant based food), by reducing waste and by changing preferences in consumption (eg buying services, rather than stuff).

We hope that, in due course, the Cambridge Climate Commission will attempt to quantify the changing carbon emissions in these additional sectors too, as well as developing our understanding of how to optimise carbon sequestration in soils, woodland and peat.

1 https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics#2018