

An Adaptation Route Map for Oxfordshire

Lead organisation:

Sustainability West Midlands

Project Delivery team: Alan Carr (Climate Change Adaptation Lead), Morgan Roberts (Project Officer)

Customers:

**Future
Oxfordshire
Partnership +**



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

WM Sustainability Roadmap themes addressed:



Project Duration:

May 2024 – January 2025

The Project:

[Using our experience](#) of supporting local authorities with climate change adaptation, SWM was commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) to produce a Climate Change Adaptation Route Map for the county, alongside a range of other supplementary pieces of work.

Aims

- To co-create a Route Map with a range of stakeholders that prioritises actions that need to be taken to help Oxfordshire adapt to climate change impacts.
- To provide a more detailed plan for adapting OCC's own services.
- To produce a climate change risk assessment that aids as an evidence base for the above.
- To provide an economic appraisal of the Route Map and to identify headline economic impacts that could occur in Oxfordshire (conducted by [Paul Watkiss Associates](#)).

SWM's role

Through stakeholder engagement, frequent liaison with OCC's Climate Action Team and our own experience and knowledge gained from the delivery of other related projects, we were responsible for producing outputs that helped fulfil the aims outlined above, including extensive stakeholder engagement. SWM project managed the work, overseeing and delivering outputs but also managing the work of Paul Watkiss Associates as described.

The Outputs:

Through extensive engagement and research, the following outputs have been delivered:

- The main resource: a Climate Change Adaptation Route Map for Oxfordshire.
- An adaptation delivery plan for OCC services.
- An eight-page summary of the Route Map.
- Excel spreadsheet versions of each action plan to allow for filtering and monitoring.
- A 'best practice in adaptation planning' document, outlining what good looks like in other localities.
- A report summarising the economic appraisal and potential economic impacts in Oxfordshire from climate change.



River near Oxford (Unsplash)

By way of stakeholder engagement, we:

- Ran an online capacity building training session with ~50 participants to upskill them on the issue of climate adaptation.
- Ran an in-person workshop with ~30 stakeholders to introduce the importance of climate adaptation and to hear how they have been impacted by severe weather and what they believe needs to be done to effectively adapt to climate change.
- Conducted 15 one-to-one online meetings with various stakeholders both internal to the council and from other organisations to ask in-depth questions about climate adaptation, by way of a follow-up to the workshop.
- Ran an online survey alongside the above to capture the views of a wider range of stakeholders.
- Presented at the online Sustainability Leads Monthly Meeting (a meeting of all councils in Oxfordshire) and an online meeting of Oxfordshire portfolio holders.

Challenges

- Due to good progress having already been made in Oxfordshire on this topic (not least through the publication of a [Climate Vulnerability Assessment](#)), many of the stakeholders we engaged with were

already invested in the Route Map process. While this was largely positive, it means that many stakeholders had strong and often opposing views, meaning that compromise and negotiation was key in ensuring that the Route Map was reflective of as wide a range of perspectives as possible.

- Concurrently, many members of the FOP are currently experiencing challenging times with regards to capacity and budgets, and it was difficult to justify allocating actions to them. We were required to compromise by not specifically allocating actions to individual organisations so that the Route Map could be taken through the sign off process and allow for further discussion later about taking some of these forward.
- The work we have supported OCC with is very much a starting point, and the next step is responding to the actions that have been identified in their adaptation plan.



Sunset near Didcot, Oxfordshire (Unsplash)

In the Future:

We are keen to continue working with the FOP and OCC to help support their work on adaptation. Unlike most traditional consultancies, we do not deliver a piece of work and then disappear forever, expecting the client to get on with it. We will continue to engage with stakeholders on this agenda to help develop their forthcoming adaptation planning.

Accolades:

“Building on our existing work on climate change adaptation, SWM have worked with stakeholders in Oxfordshire to develop a clear Route Map detailing what we need to do to create meaningful change. We appreciated their flexible approach to the project and their extensive stakeholder engagement programme, helping to ensure the Route Map was co-created by those that know Oxfordshire the best. We hope to work with SWM again in future.” Tom Layzell, Climate Adaptation Policy and Project Lead, Oxfordshire County Council.

Contact Details:

For further information on the project or to work with us in one of a variety of ways, please [see our consultancy page](#) or contact the SWM team on enquiries@swm.org.uk.