

## ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

13 JULY 2021

### REPORT – CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

**Cabinet Member(s):** Cllr C R Slade - Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change.

**Responsible Officer(s):** Andrew Busby - Corporate Manager Property, Leisure & Climate Change. Jason Ball, Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

**Reason for Report:** To receive an update an update on the Climate Change Action Plan from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

**Recommendation:** That the Environment PDG notes and accepts this report as an update on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency – documenting progress with the Climate Action Plan (to reduce the Council's carbon footprint) and the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.

**Financial Implications:** The financial implications associated with this report are the costs of the overall Climate and Sustainability Programme, budgets specifically linked to the Council's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** Budgets specifically linked to the Council's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan.

**Legal Implications:** Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019 and as part of that commitment, the Council is to produce a carbon footprint in line with Environmental Reporting Guidelines published by HM Government. With regard to the Climate Emergency, the Environment Policy Development Group (PDG) is the initial owner of this policy activity and considers how best to determine the Council's own policy response(s) such as may then be subsequently recommended to Cabinet and Council. [Link to declaration decision](#).

**Risk Assessment:** Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) is provided separately.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** There are no equality impact assessment implications associated with this report.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Please refer to **Annex A** which shows the Council's Corporate Plan Aims (Table 1) and Climate Strategy priorities (Table 2).

**Impact on Climate Change:** The role of the Climate and Sustainability Specialist in support of the corporate officer team is central to the Council's Climate and Sustainability Programme by actions such as the development of strategic positions and delivery of projects through internal, community and partnership work.

## 1.0 Introduction / Background

1.1. The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and aims to be climate neutral by 2030. Climate neutrality is a term used to describe the aim of actions that organisations, businesses and individuals take to achieve a balance, for any

given period, for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into or removed from the atmosphere. The goal of climate neutrality is to achieve a net zero climate impact.

- 1.2. Following the recent climate change declaration by Councils across Devon, there are now two emerging work streams:
  - an internal organisation focus to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero;
  - the wider agenda to enable emission reductions across the Mid Devon district.
- 1.3. Clearly, the first is a process the Council can manage / monitor / influence and control to a significant degree, as it relates to our own assets and operational base. For the wider agenda linked to the whole Mid Devon area, we will work as a partner with local businesses, organisations, community groups and other residents to support the district’s journey to achieve net zero.
- 1.4. Throughout each of the priority areas within our Corporate Plan, there is now a strong emphasis on local level sustainability.
- 1.5. This report is divided into community and corporate strands (some overlap is possible). Jason Ball as our Climate and Sustainability Specialist now leads the development of the Council’s climate and sustainability programme, working with colleagues and councillors, particularly Andrew Busby - Corporate Manager Property, Leisure & Climate Change; and Colin Slade - the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.

## 2.0 Performance

- 2.1. Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) is provided separately. Annex A shows tables to summarise actions and progress in achieving the Council’s Corporate Plan aims and Climate Strategy priorities.
- 2.2. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has begun to review the Council’s Climate Action Plan - projects and activities achieved and planned thus far, funds allocated, etc. Work will prioritise the most imminent and impactful projects, identify gaps, develop the plan, and cost the plan.
- 2.3. A timeline for costing the Climate Action Plan was provided to Scrutiny Committee 15 March 2021 as outlined below: updates are due in July, September and December of this calendar year.

**Table 1 – A Timeline for Costings**

Split by work stream	tCO2e impact scale (approx)	Approximate time required	Date for draft	Date for submission to Env PDG
Baseline	20402			
HOUSING, ENERGY AND ASSETS	3196	3 months	Jun-21	<b>Jul-21</b>
INTERNAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES	2615	2 months	Aug-21	<b>Sep-21</b>
TRANSPORT AND VEHICLES	202	2 months	Nov-21	<b>Dec-21</b>

### **3.0 Community and partnership activities**

3.1.1. The Council is a partner within Devon Climate Emergency Response Group (DCERG) and a signatory to the Devon Carbon Plan (DCP). The Climate and Sustainability Specialist role includes working with the DCERG Tactical Group and the over-arching Response Group (the Chief Executive also receives Response Group communications).

3.1.2. Partnership work serves 2 main purposes:

- Seek to ensure strong strategic alignment.
- To facilitate communications and key updates e.g. current projects.

3.1.3. The Interim Devon Carbon Plan – notes from the public consultation.

- There is strong public support for action on climate change in Devon. Three-quarters (76%) of respondents “broadly support the Plan”. (Total 1,322 individuals and organisations).
- The public wish to see Devon become net-zero carbon as soon as possible but recognise that doing so is very challenging.
- The consultation results show strong support (at least 81% of respondents) for the Key Outcomes and Priority Actions presented in each section of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan.
- The Tactical Group agreed / recommended to get the Interim Devon Carbon Plan published as soon as possible, whilst keeping it open to consultation and therefore democratically mandated etc.
- Consultation continues with a Citizens’ Assembly (Devon Climate Assembly) of 70 people who demographically represent Devon with sessions 23rd June to 25th July.

### **3.2. Engagement: The Mid Devon climate and sustainability website. (Corporate Plan aim: env 10).**

3.2.1. This will: 1) share updates on the Council's carbon reduction work; 2) provide information to residents, businesses, members and others; and 3) share and signpost resources, opportunities, events and local groups active on the climate, sustainability and biodiversity agenda.

3.2.2. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist is working with colleagues to launch and cultivate this resource.

### **3.3. Engagement: groups and partnerships. (Corporate Plan aim, env 10).**

3.3.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has attended meetings and workshops e.g. a group discussion with Sustainable Tiverton; webinars and workshops for the *Connecting the Culm* project (the Council is a partner); South West Energy Hub events; a presentation about the Devon Local Nature Partnership’s project on Nature Recovery Networks.

3.3.2. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has corresponded with parishes, ward members, and officers at Devon County Council / other local authorities.

### **3.4. Project: Electric Vehicle charging points. (CS priority: 3. CP aim: env 02.)**

3.4.1. As part of the Council's Climate Strategy 2020-2024, the Council seeks to facilitate the roll-out of electric vehicle (EV) charger locations across the district. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has worked with colleagues and councillors to develop and assess a list of potential EV charging locations (rapid chargers that can top up a modern EV by 80% in 40 minutes). A report to Cabinet presented an evaluated set of 3 options for this, to facilitate decision-making and aiming to achieve at least 5 to 15 additional EV charging locations through procurement during 2021. Each of the current options would be powered by renewable electricity.

3.4.2. Primary outcomes of supporting EV charging within the Mid Devon district and in relation to Climate Change impact:

- to reduce energy consumption and climate impact per vehicle / per mile;
- to enable the potential for renewable energy sources to be utilised in powering personal transport within the district;
- to help reduce localised air pollution caused by transport;
- to boost EV driver confidence in recharger availability across the district.

3.4.3. Fully electric vehicles run with higher efficiency than those with internal combustion engines. The UK's electricity generation mix is becoming lower-carbon each year, which means electric vehicle journeys, can get 'greener' through this process or by switching to greener power suppliers.

3.4.4. The Energy Saving Trust has said:

- 'The switch to battery electric cars, vans, buses and motorbikes is a vital part of the Road to Zero strategy and any further policies introduced to accelerate decarbonisation.'
- 'The UK's renewable energy capacity is continually growing with electricity grid emissions predicted to fall by around 90% between now and 2050.'

3.4.5. Current EV charger provision can be viewed on this map:

<https://www.goultralow.com/ev-charging-point-map/>

3.4.6. Western Power Distribution (WPD) has been informed of the potential extra power capacity needs in Mid Devon, linked to this project. Published plans for WPD's Green Recovery scheme indicate support for 250% growth in EV rapid charging capacity within their network.

### **3.5. Strategy. Housing sustainability and Zero Carbon. (CS priority 2+3. CP aims h01, h03.)**

3.5.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has worked with the team writing the new Mid Devon Housing Strategy and asked them to consider how it will help deliver the Council's 2030 Net Zero ambition and incorporate the aims and priorities of the Mid Devon Climate Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

3.5.2. Strategy documents such as this could be used to encourage high housing standards in the private landlord sector and targets for the Council to improve

and build a more sustainable housing stock in line with its own 2030 Net Zero target; noting co-benefits from sustainable design, materials and performance e.g. thermal stability required as part of Climate Adaptation, healthy living environments; a boost to habitat resilience, connectivity and biodiversity; promote sustainable neighbourhoods and infrastructure.

**3.6. Project: Housing Advisors Programme. (CS priority: 1. CP aims: env02, env 05, h01, h02, h03, c04.)**

3.6.1. The Forward Planning team has secured £20k funding through the LGA's Housing Advisors Programme to develop an assessment tool to model various low carbon interventions and consider how they can be implemented at scale, using the Post Hill site in Tiverton as a pilot study. The framework assessment tool will:

- Help deliver the need for sustainable, affordable homes that meet local needs
- Help respond to the Council's climate emergency declaration, and facilitate a green recovery following COVID-19.
- Help address fuel poverty issues across the district, which have become more acute during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Be scalable and transferable across schemes in Mid Devon and elsewhere

**4.0 Corporate activities**

4.1.1. The Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG), was set up after Cabinet approval on 23 April 2020 and the group members continue to meet to consider topics including, but not limited to, climate and biodiversity. Further meetings will take place on alternate months to the Environment PDG to enable a regular feedback cycle (**CS priority: 1. CP aims:n/a**).

4.1.2. The most recent meeting took place 15 June 2021, discussion included:

- Examples of sustainability work by other authorities.
- Community / parish wildlife projects, tree aftercare, citizen science etc.
- A community action grant for climate and sustainability projects.

4.1.3. Prior to this, the group met on 15 April 2021, topics of discussion included:

- Council practice for Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and the potential for 'amenity' (in relation to legislation and best practice) to include the contribution of trees to benefits such as biodiversity support and carbon capture.
- The Climate and Sustainability Specialist proposed a set of annual net emissions targets for the Council to adopt, based on a model trajectory to Net Zero by 2030; and demonstrated a method to monitor our trajectory of actual emissions versus annual target emissions from 2019 to 2030.

**4.2. Working across service areas. (CS priorities: all. CP aims: all.)**

4.2.1. Jason Ball as our Climate and Sustainability Specialist has agreed, in consultation with Andrew Jarrett and Andrew Busby, to apply a Programme

Management approach to develop and deliver the cross-cutting *Climate and Sustainability Programme*.

- 4.2.2. The programme will develop a roadmap to Net Zero to realise and look beyond the 2020-2024 Climate Strategy.
- 4.2.3. The programme would develop the necessary organisational capability, planning and practices for an integrated approach to sustainability.
- 4.2.4. This will require top level oversight and utilise recognised methods such as Managing Successful Programmes and Prince2 (existing skills within teams).
- 4.2.5. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has proactively engaged with a range of teams and Policy Development Groups. He will attend and arrange further cross-team meetings with key officers to explore opportunities, connections, ideas and challenges from different perspectives and service areas within the council. We view each team representative as a 'Climate Connector' for the council to ensure a joined-up approach for our journey to Net Zero by 2030.
- 4.2.6. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist is working with the engagement and learning teams to set up training for members and staff. Based on 3 strands:
  - Common understanding / clarity of mission. Presentation resources on key topics in climate and environmental sustainability. Hosted on the Learning Hub. Short, incisive, concise.
  - Development. Webinars and site visits as an informal way to engage officers, highlight areas for further training, and trigger action.
  - Specialist e.g. carbon literacy, emerging national policies, decision-making tools.

#### **4.3. Land Use and Landscape Scale Perspectives on Climate Mitigation and Adaptation. (CS priorities: 1 and 2. CP aims: env03, env07, env08, env09, h03, c04.)**

- 4.3.1. Early discussion about a strategic perspective on the natural environment indicated a potential programme area to develop (linked to the Climate Change Strategy) to help address emerging future obligations on biodiversity gain, Nature Recovery Networks, etc. In a nutshell:
- 4.3.2. Explore how to realise the potential (social, economic and environmental) benefits of carbon banking and biodiversity banking as part of a strategic approach to Mid Devon land and habitat management.
- 4.3.3. To support this a bid was submitted to the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) in order to run a pilot project.

#### **4.4. Priority: large scale tree planting. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env07.)**

- 4.4.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist is exploring funding opportunities. We asked Devon CC to include Mid Devon in the county bid for the treescapes fund; this awaits the next phase. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has invited parishes and District Councillors to propose high-potential project sites (parish / district / private landowners where access for planting etc, is agreed).
  - Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF). Bids must be via Devon County Council. Mid Devon can propose projects to include in the bid.
  - Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf). Open to all.

**4.5. Procurement: Greener Electricity. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env02.)**

- 4.5.1. The Cabinet on 04 March 2021 approved a proposal by Andrew Busby - Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change to procure a further 50% of our electricity via the 'Green Basket' under the LASER Framework for renewable energy. For an additional 50% of the Council's annual consumption it would cost circa £8k or 2.3% on top of current costs.
- 4.5.2. Provided the 100% Green Tariff is entirely additional, hypothetically the savings would be around 183 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) of Scope 2 emissions.

**4.6. Greener operations: the Council's vehicle fleet. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: none).**

- 4.6.1. The Transport Manager has worked with the Climate and Sustainability Specialist on a report to promote the adoption of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) in the fleet with electric vehicles as a priority to replace selected small cars and vans. This would reduce Scope 1 emissions and save on fuel costs. Options and costs have been presented to relevant managers.

**4.7. Project: Mid Devon District Council's proposals for hydro-electric power on the River Exe at Tiverton. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env02.)**

- 4.7.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has begun to review and support this project. Current work includes flood risk assessment data modelling.
- 4.7.2. Work is underway to address and resolve issues behind planning objections.
- 4.7.3. Western Power Distribution has been informed of the plan to connect 150kWp generation capacity.

**4.8. Project: Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). (CS priority: 1, 2. CP aim: env01, env02, ec01.)**

- 4.8.1. A brief update.
- Phase 1: Heat Decarbonisation Plan. Work is underway to assess and devise solutions for 4 key council buildings: Phoenix House, and the 3 leisure centres.
  - Phase 1: £310,821 grant being spent. Work in progress to install energy-efficiency and low-carbon improvements at the 3 leisure centres.
  - Phase 2: no bid; grant fund exhausted within 2 weeks.
  - Phase 3: the Heat Decarbonisation Plan would inform a Phase 3 bid.

**4.9. Project: Archetype housing - energy efficiency and low carbon performance. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env01, env02, c04.)**

- 4.9.1. The Housing team will work on exemplar homes typical of Council stock (beginning with 2 buildings this year) to optimise energy performance and retrofit energy solutions. This project will inform costed plans to improve the rest of the Council stock of this type.

## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1. That the Environment PDG notes and accepts this report as an update on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency – documenting progress with the Climate Action Plan (to reduce the Council's carbon footprint) and the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.

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**Circulation of the Report:** Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change, Leadership Team.

**List of Background Papers:** The previous climate change report update, [Environment PDG 09 March 2021](#). [Link to paper](#).