

Background paper: Environment Policy Development Group. Topic: Climate Strategy priority 1, corporate culture etc. Title: **Guidance: climate and environmental sustainability statements.**

Date of Meeting: 10 October 2023.

1.0 Cabinet endorsed Environment PDG recommendations, for the PDG and NZAG to liaise with Corporate Management Team (CMT) to:

- formulate a method for a Climate and Sustainability Statement that can be consistently applied to all business cases
- devise a consistent approach to climate change impact statements noted on committee reports

2.0 Final draft guidance was circulated to this PDG and all PDG Chairs. Environment PDG may now recommend it to Cabinet. The guidance would be a 'living' corporate reference document for the Council.

Content is provided below. The guidance document will include a title page with a contents table and version control.

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Related papers: none.

Guidance: climate and environmental sustainability statements

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Version Control

Version	Contributor initials:	Approval by:	Approval date:
Draft 0.1 03 March 2023	JPB. AB.	Corporate Management Team (CMT) consulted then circulated to Environment PDG.	in progress
Draft 0.2 14 June 2023	JPB. Cllr NB.	CMT approved for consideration by Environment PDG for approval.	in progress
QA Final Draft	CMT.		in progress
Final			

1. Background

“We will aim for Mid Devon to be carbon neutral by 2030 and all decisions made by the council will be considered in light of the climate crisis.”

Mid Devon District Council [Climate Emergency Declaration](#) June 2019.

This guidance supports a consistent approach to considering the climate change crisis in the way we manage and facilitate decision-making across all teams and work themes. Doing this well is part of delivering on the Council’s commitments made to Mid Devon’s communities and its obligations under UK law (such as the Climate Change Act 2008).

Cabinet has resolved the following:

- That Environment PDG and Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) consult with CMT and the C&S Specialist to devise a consistent approach to climate change impact statements noted on committee reports. Feedback to inform a Recommendation to Cabinet.
- That Environment PDG consult with Corporate Management Team (CMT) to formulate a method for a Climate and Sustainability Statement that can be consistently applied to all business cases. Feedback to inform a Recommendation to Cabinet.

2. Guidance: committee reports

Reports to committees such as cabinet and policy development groups require a summary paragraph “Impact on Climate Change” along with other assessments such as Equality.

Please note:

- A reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions is **climate change mitigation**.
- Action to improve resilience to climate change risks is **climate change adaptation**. Adaptation could relate to matters such as flood risk, raised temperatures or the frequency of extreme weather events.
- Typically climate change adaptation benefits are not easily quantified, but should be tangible e.g. reduced flood risk. Some aspects can be quantified e.g. land area (km²) managed to bring benefits and reduce flood risk.
- Activity at a strategic or programme level tends to deal with broad aims / outcomes, and might not lend itself to quantifiable measures.
- However, reports specific to a project or business case are expected to assess their climate change impact, and actions to address climate change (mitigation or adaptation) in a tangible manner.
- Whole life-cycle impact assessments are important for some projects such as construction, where often the biggest impact relates to embedded carbon in materials and methods.

Your climate change impact statements on a Committee report should have the following key elements:

1. Where there are quantifiable impacts (good or bad) these must be provided. Estimated emissions must be expressed as tCO₂e (tonnes of CO₂ equivalent).
2. Where there are no quantifiable impacts, but there are benefits or costs related to climate change, these must be provided.
3. Make it clear whether the impact is positive (beneficial) or negative (harmful) and the activity duration (short-term or long-term).
4. Please be clear on the scale / reach and the magnitude / weight of the effect.

Absence of a statement is not acceptable – please include something, even if you need to say there will be no impact or difference made. Estimates are fine, but please provide caveats. Keep assessments brief and give detail in the report or supporting material.

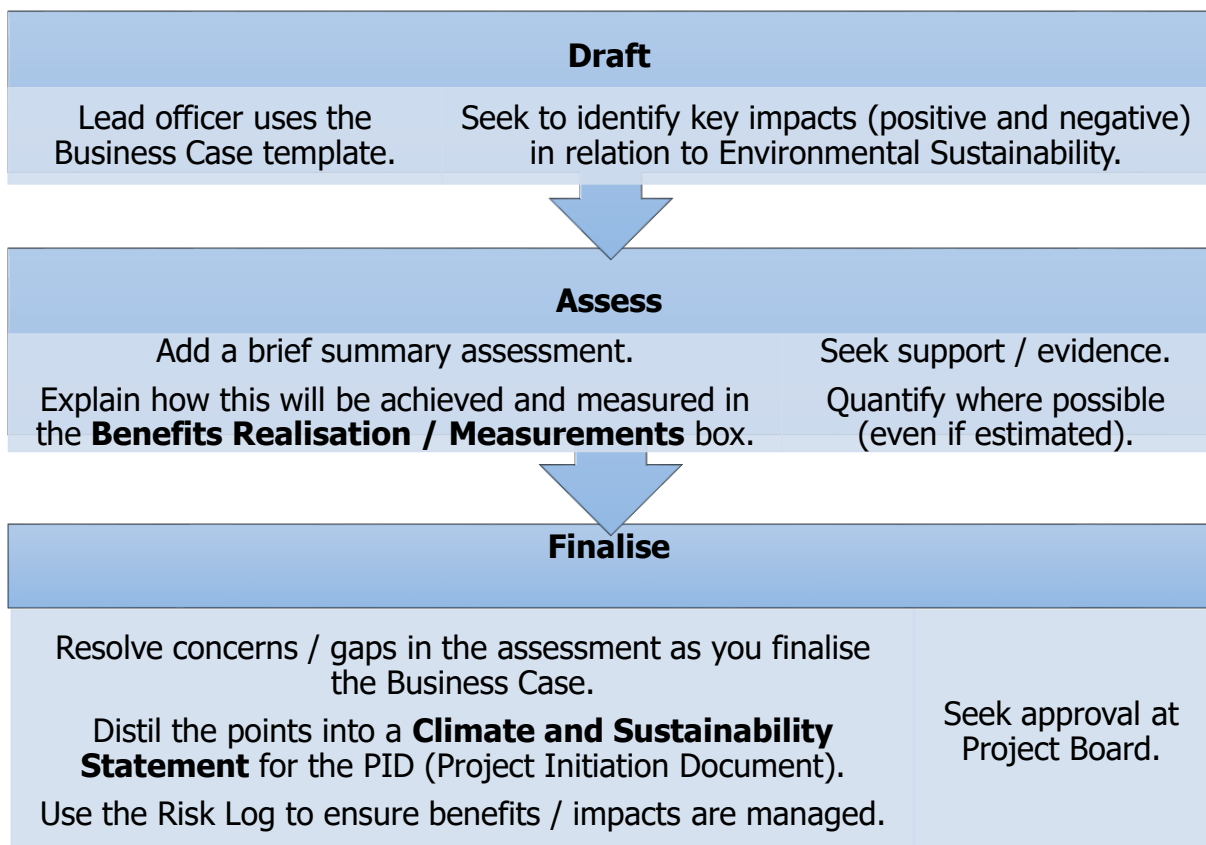
3. Guidance: Climate and Sustainability Statements for business cases

All business cases must use the PRINCE Business Case template on SharePoint. A business case or project proposal typically has a developmental phase as you prepare and submit it (before approval) and a delivery management phase (after approval) to ensure the approved goals are delivered and the benefits realised.

Add your Climate and Sustainability Statement as a brief summary assessment in the **Climate and Sustainability Statement** box on the Business Case form. Put relevant objectives in the **Benefits** box. Explain details - how this will be achieved and measured - in the **Benefits Realisation / Measurements** box. A process flowchart is shown below.

An approved project must be listed on the Council's Climate Action Plan (where relevant), with emissions expressed as tCO₂e allocated to scopes 1, 2, or 3 (or a combination). The Project Manager should add a KPI (or an item on the Risk Log) as relevant to impact management and related goals and decisions. Project reporting could include e.g. Red-Amber-Green (RAG) indicators.

Process Flowchart (business case)



A Climate and Sustainability Statement should cover all the environmental benefits and impacts affected by your proposal. Climate change considerations might typically include:

- energy performance in buildings;
- renewable energy investment or procurement;

- improved efficiency in work arrangements or upgrades to systems;
- transport needs / modes / changes;
- embodied carbon linked to manufacture, transport and lifecycle of materials;
- embodied carbon linked to construction;
- preparations appropriate to the increased likelihood of extreme weather events.

Sustainability considerations additional to climate might include, for example:

- consumption of resources such as materials, chemicals, PPE, goods, water;
- water, land or air pollution, e.g. [air quality management](#) plans;
- natural capital;
- ecological effects on e.g. breeding habitats, hibernation sites, connectivity.

Climate change impacts, benefits and risks are often related to other issues such as landscapes and ecology, but even if those are assessed or managed separately or by other organisations, the climate-related aspects should still be given consideration (e.g. a project to avoid soil erosion could be considered with regard to climate change risks and 'climate change adaptation' in parallel to other bodies / partnerships concerned with farming and food security; whilst emissions from the loss of *sequestered carbon* held by soils and habitats comes under 'climate change impact').

Back your conclusions with background research, and indicate how you will provide evidence to shape and verify your assessment. Be proportionate to the project scope and Council requirements e.g. will you consult with colleagues to check assumptions and estimates, would hyperlinks to best-practice guidance suffice, or will the project require independent reports by suitably qualified consultants?

Key elements at each phase.

Developmental Phase (before approval)

- **Scope**
- **Purpose / Process / Activity**
- **Context**
- **Wider considerations e.g. procurement implications.**

Management Phase (after approval)

- **Monitor / verify the results.**
- **Report back to the Project Board on actual impacts/benefits.**

4. Resources

Seek help where needed. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist provides support across all teams. Colleagues are on hand to share project experience and expertise.

Why do we consider the climate impact of projects and the way we work?

Making decisions in a way that supports the Council's net zero 2030 target is vital, because the right choices can speed up our ability to cut the Council's carbon footprint.

Monitoring the Council's Carbon Footprint.

The Council reports its 'Carbon Footprint' or 'Greenhouse Gas Inventory' - an assessment of its climate change impact as an organisation, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_{2e}). The tCO_{2e} is based on the Global Warming Potential (GWP) of different greenhouse gases over a 100-year period in comparison to carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Carbon Footprint reports, a progress chart and headline figures are published at <https://sustainablemiddevon.org.uk/our-plan> and updated annually.

Does this really matter to the Council?

Yes, working to address climate change and environmental sustainability is a high priority to the Members, and surveys consistently show a huge majority of our communities care too. The Council's recognition of a climate emergency was widely welcomed in Mid Devon communities and this echoed the response across Devon.

The Council's environmental sustainability obligations are underpinned by legislation (e.g. [Environment Act 2021](#), [Climate Change Act 2008](#), [NERC Act 2006](#)). For example, [we must](#) seek to [conserve and enhance biodiversity](#). The Council's statutory duty to address climate change means adaptation and mitigation considerations are woven into the way we operate and how we work in partnership to influence Mid Devon as a whole. Sometimes communities or the Council can push further than minimum requirements, e.g. in Neighbourhood Plans and the Local Plan. The Council is a signatory partner to the [Devon Carbon Plan](#).

How can we find the right background information?

The UK Government website is a useful starting point.

- [Local government, climate change and the environment \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-climate-change-and-the-environment)

Some information is provided within the Council's own reports (e.g. Environment Policy Development Group), strategy documents (e.g. Housing Strategy), policies (e.g. climate emergency planning policy statement) and plans (e.g. Climate Action Plan).

- [Studies and Data – Devon Climate Emergency](#)
- [Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2023 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2023)
- [Energy and climate change: evidence and analysis \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-climate-change-evidence-and-analysis)
- [Agriculture and climate change \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/agriculture-and-climate-change)

- [The UK climate change statistics portal](#)

Free data tools

- [Community carbon calculator \(impact-tool.org.uk\)](#) including Mid Devon data.
- [Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool \(local authorities\) - Local Partnerships](#)

Official data and guidance on carbon footprints and the climate impact 'emissions factors' of different fuels, foods, transport types, activities, etc can be found via government agencies and government departments e.g. [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#) (DESNZ), Defra, Department of Transport.

The [Climate Change Committee](#) (CCC) is an independent review body for the UK which advises and challenges progress with policy and delivery.

Adaptation information and assessments of climate change risks can be found via the MetOffice, Environment Agency and advisory bodies.

- [Environment Agency and climate change adaptation \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP\) - Met Office](#)
- [UK climate maps and data - Met Office](#)

Useful research findings and facts can often be found published online by academic centres e.g. Centre for Alternative Technology, Grantham Institute, University of Exeter. External expertise and guidance could provide valuable reference material and there is a range of knowledge exchange hubs, partnerships and programmes out there.

- [Climate, environment and waste | Local Government Association](#)
- [Climate Adaptation Toolkit - Local Partnerships](#)
- [South West Net Zero Hub \(swnetzerohub.org.uk\)](#)

Examples of impact statements

A: Reports.

Impact on Climate Change: *For the homes in our management, repair and improvement strategies are informed by the need to reduce carbon emissions with a decarbonisation programme; the need to reduce fuel poverty is also a key consideration.*

The example above was appropriate for the scope of the report. (An assessment of the works programme would need to provide figures on the emissions reduction achieved.)

Impact on Climate Change: *The improvements made substantial energy savings of 3,975,431 kilowatt-hours (kWh) in electricity and a 1,854,450 kWh saving in gas. This saved a third on annual energy expenditure -*

approximately £95k. The council also benefitted from a reduction in maintenance costs, helping to free up budgets.

The poor example above quantified energy and cost savings, but the emissions figures should have been stated (kgCO₂e or tCO₂e) so this did not assess climate impact.

Impact on Climate Change: *The recommendation to seek to increase the proportion of renewable power consumption (currently circa 50%-55% of electricity on half-hourly metered supplies is on a renewable tariff) aligns with the Council's climate emergency policy and net zero 2030 target. The LASER framework offers green tariff options such as 'green basket' and renewable energy sources, and LASER can provide advisory and facilitation services for power purchase, trading and portfolio management. To continue the LASER framework would not preclude or prevent the Council from implementing measures to reduce and offset carbon emissions from gas and electricity consumption.*

The example above was used on a Cabinet report on energy procurement; it comments specifically on how the report recommendations would affect / enable Council policy. More detail in the report and annex provided estimates of associated greenhouse gas emissions. Such as:

Our standard tariff electricity has greenhouse gas emissions of 0.261 kilograms of CO₂ equivalent (kgCO₂e) per kWh unit. This would total circa 544 tonnes CO₂e per year if the Council had not sourced a renewable tariff for some sites (noted below).

Together the summary and further details enabled Members and Officers to evaluate the impact of the decisions and options in the report.

B: Project Proposals

A hypothetical example of a short summary statement for a project or decision:

Practical implementation of our policy could reduce climate impact by circa 28 tonnes of CO₂e by avoiding an additional 4,000 car commuter journeys per year.

A hypothetical example of more detailed explanation in the body of the report:

We estimated the climate impact (benefit) of avoiding 4,000 journeys based on commuting emissions of 7.0 kgCO₂e per day in an average car travelling 16.1 km each way. $4,000 \times 7 = 28,000$ kgCO₂e or 28 tCO₂e.