

**The Highland Council**  
**Highland Council – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands**

**Report by Depute Chief Executive and Director of Housing and Property**

The following report presents a background to, and outlines the preliminary work that is required, to implement and realise the vision of a “Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands” by 2025.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 An initiative to dramatically reduce carbon emissions in Inverness and the Highlands by 2025 has been proposed by the Council’s leadership. Whilst other cities across Europe have adopted similar initiatives, they tend to have an almost entirely city-based focus. The fortunes of Inverness and the Highlands are so inextricably linked, that the visionary approach is to adopt a composite target, where the objective for one will reinforce that of the other.
- 1.2 The Council is in a good position to lead on such a project. It has excellent working relationships with a number of key stakeholders and potential partners, regularly engages with the community, plays a key role in planning decisions and the development of the region, and can demonstrate good progress in reducing its own carbon emissions over the past seven years. The Council is currently seeking re-accreditation from the Carbon Trust in recognition of its success so far as well as the programme of action and investment to reduce our emissions by a further 21% by 2020.
- 1.3 The Council has previously engaged Highland partners in reducing carbon emissions in their operations through the Highland Climate Change Declaration, now managed by SNH. UHI have expressed a strong interest in the initiative and have begun designing a proposal for a Carbon Free Institute to support the project.
- 1.4 A number of cities across Europe have been working towards becoming low or zero carbon for a number of years, for example:
  - Copenhagen, Denmark. Target of Carbon Neutral by 2025, whilst continuing to grow both economically and in terms of population.
  - Stockholm, Sweden. Target of Fossil free by 2050.
  - Freiburg, Germany. Target of Carbon Neutral by 2050.
  - Aarhus, Denmark. Target of Carbon Neutral by 2030.

Knowledge and experience can be garnered from these cities to inform and develop the vision of this initiative.

1.5 From a UK perspective, Bristol is gaining a well-deserved reputation for its carbon reduction credentials, and was named “European Green Capital 2014” this month. Through this initiative, Inverness should aim to become a future candidate for this award.

1.6 To create a Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands requires:

- A clear project definition and scope;
- Learning from experience elsewhere;
- Deliberative and well managed processes involving many stakeholders and engagement with the general public;
- Credibility and integrity with the data to use to assess the base-line position and to set targets and monitor progress against them.

As a high profile project this requires project management approaches to be deployed. Some of these themes are explored more fully below.

## **2. Defining the Initiative**

2.1 At the inception of this initiative it is important to clearly define the target of the initiative and the city boundary of Inverness. The target of the initiative will be set for 2025. This timescale will allow for the project to be ambitious and long term initiatives to be developed and implemented.

2.2 Clarity in the goal is required and this includes the language to be used. Achieving zero carbon emissions would mean no greenhouse gases were emitted from anywhere within the city boundary. However, achieving carbon neutral status would mean a net greenhouse gas emissions balance of zero or less, with any residual greenhouse gas emissions being offset by sinks of emissions such as the export of renewable energy or through woodland planting.

2.3 Achieving carbon neutral status would be more realistic given the challenges presented from fuel choice limitations and the large distances to travel in the region; while acknowledging the opportunities in the region from our natural environment and the scope to export renewable energy (a point made recently in the FHR Committee when considering UK Government data on emissions per capita).

2.4 Whilst a carbon emissions target is not set against the whole of the Highlands at this juncture, the success of Inverness in becoming carbon neutral is inextricably linked to the Highlands. Per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have reduced in the Highland region from 11.3 to 10.3 tonnes (2005-2010; DECC, 2012). This progress should be built upon, and the following six key themes focused upon to develop a Carbon CLEVER Highlands:

**C**arbon emission reduction

**L**ead by Example

**E**ngagement with others

**V**alue for money

**E**conomic benefits

**R**aise awareness and promote behaviour change

This acronym builds upon that previously agreed at a meeting of the Finance, Housing, and Resources Committee (April 2013) for the Council's Carbon Management Plan, 2013-2020.

2.5 It is proposed that the target of the initiative should be about a Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands, and given the brand of Carbon CLEVER Highlands by 2025.

2.6 Geographical Boundaries:

The city boundary of Inverness is shown in Appendix 1. This is in line with that used by the Council's Planning & Development Service. While the project overall is contained in the Highland Council's geography, opportunities to collaborate with the Highlands & Islands region and the Cairngorms National Park should be investigated as well.

### **3. Stakeholder Engagement**

3.1 To achieve such an ambitious target will require strong engagement from a wide range of stakeholders across the private, public and third sectors and including the general public. A scoping exercise is required to determine:

- which of these stakeholders need early involvement in the project, regionally these would include community planning partners such as NHS Highland, Fire and Rescue Scotland, Police Scotland, SNH, the Highland Third Sector Partnership, HIE and UHI as well as others including SEPA, Scottish Water and the Forestry Commission;
- the contribution they can make, including early and visible gains; and
- the best way to engage with such a wide variety of stakeholders.

3.2 Civic engagement will be pivotal to achieving a Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands by 2025. Carbon emissions by the public have been identified as the largest source of emissions in other cities aiming to be low carbon. A large amount of public engagement is already occurring both regionally and nationally on the issue of climate change, (e.g. Greener Scotland, WWF Earth Hour, Climate Week, Zero Waste Scotland, and Keep Scotland Beautiful) and careful consideration will be required as the best approach to compliment these.

3.3 Likewise, a number of companies in the private sector need to be identified for engagement with the project, notably SSE and membership groups such as Chambers of Commerce and the Business Improvement District (BID) in Inverness.

3.4 All Council Services will be involved in the initiative and expected to contribute accordingly. Workshops will be conducted with all Council Services between July and September to identify:

- Service ideas for the initiative;
- Service contributions to the initiative;
- Service implications arising from the initiative;
- Relevant stakeholders and how best to engage with them;
- Potential sources of funding for the initiative.

Feedback from these sessions would be presented to members as the project is defined and develops.

#### **4. Partnership Working**

4.1 Working with partners out with Highlands will be vital for achieving a Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands. Expertise can be garnered from a wide range of projects already implemented across Scotland, the UK, and Europe. Working with partners will also enable projects to be delivered which may not be possible as an individual region.

4.2 The Highland Council, and Inverness, already has strong links with the other cities in Scotland, working in partnership with them through the Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA) to achieve sustainable cities. The SCA have been extremely receptive to the idea, is keen to engage with the initiative, and funding streams may be available to assist in the realisation of a Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands.

4.3 There are also a number of governmental and non-governmental organisations that should be involved in the initiative at various stages to provide knowledge, guidance, and technical solutions, such as: Carbon Trust; Zero Waste Scotland, Resource Efficient Scotland; Transport Scotland, Sustrans; and Greener Scotland.

4.4 The project lends itself to partnership working with many of Scotland's leading academic research facilities. The University of Highlands and Islands has already confirmed its interest in the project, suggesting a supportive and advisory role. This could be achieved through the University setting up a Carbon-Free institute, providing a range of advice including scoping, planning, policy, technology, training, and education.

#### **5. Next steps and early action**

5.1 Following the identification of key stakeholders and potential partners, a series of workshops should occur to develop the scope and approach taken to achieve a Carbon CLEVER Highlands by 2025. The workshops with Services will take place over the next few months.

##### **5.2 Early and Visible gains**

For an effective start to this initiative, early and visible projects and actions to reduce carbon emissions in Inverness and the region need to be implemented. These should have a significant impact on reducing carbon emissions, be ambitious, and have a high degree of visibility. The proposed allocation for carbon reduction projects in the Council's capital programme would enable early and visible work to be taken forward.

##### **5.3 Carbon CLEVER Highlands Conference**

A conference will be planned for early in the autumn this year to encourage stakeholders and partners to make a public commitment, signing up to a Carbon CLEVER commitment for the Highlands. Low carbon or remote attendance to this conference will be stipulated.

#### 5.4 Review, Scope, and Baseline

A portfolio of the extensive work that has occurred to reduce carbon emissions in Inverness and the Highlands over the past few years should be compiled. This could be formatted as a brochure and be utilised to support funding bids. It will also be important to define the scope of carbon emissions that will be measured in this initiative, and use this to set a baseline for the project, against which interim targets can be set and progress monitored.

### **6. Resource Implications**

6.1 The development and delivery of a Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands / Carbon CLEVER Highlands by 2025 initiative will have implications for Council resources in terms of: staff time; promotional activity; and in revenue and capital investment to enable change. There will be implications too for partners. Appropriate staffing will be identified to project manage and co-ordinate the project and a bid to the Strategic Change and Development Fund will be made to support the initiative.

6.2 Implementing, and achieving the goals of the initiative over the next 12 years will require significant financial investment from the Council. However, this is expected to be matched and exceeded by partner organisations and external funders, bringing wealth and sustainable growth to the region. A further early action will be to identify the range of external funding opportunities to support a Carbon CLEVER Highlands by 2025.

### **7. Climate Change Implications**

7.1 Reducing carbon emissions will help to mitigate the cause of climate change and assist Scotland achieve the legislative requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

7.2 The Council will show leadership in taking on such a bold and ambitious target, and it is hoped this will encourage other cities and regions to follow suit.

### **8. Risk Implications**

8.1 There is a reputational risk to the Council in publishing and not achieving such ambitious goals. However, this is far outweighed by the potential success of the initiative. The initiative requires project management to be used for development and delivery, this will include risk assessments.

### **9. Legal and Equalities Implications**

9.1 There are no further Legal implications identified at this time. Equality implications will be identified from equalities screening the project plan to be developed.

## **10. Recommendations**

### 10.1 Members are asked to agree

- The goal of the initiative: A Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands; branded as a Carbon CLEVER Highlands by 2025.
- The early actions proposed: to run a series of workshops across services, to develop the scope, approach and identify stakeholders; identify early and visible projects and actions; to plan a carbon Clever conference for early autumn 2013 to encourage stakeholders to sign up to a carbon CLEVER commitment for the Highlands; to define the scope and base-line for the project; to identify the range of external funding opportunities; and to bid to the Strategic Change and Development Fund for staff resources.

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Appendix 1: Inverness City Boundary

