

The Highland Council
Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee

27 May 2014

Agenda Item	7.
Report No	CS/15/14

Carbon CLEVER in Caithness and Sutherland

Report by Head of Policy and Reform

This paper provides Members with an update on the Carbon CLEVER initiative and asks Members to consider how the initiative can be developed in Caithness and Sutherland.

1. Background

- 1.1 At a meeting of the Highland Council in June 2013, Members agreed to an initiative to achieve a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025, Carbon CLEVER. Achieving such an ambitious target will require strong engagement from a wide range of stakeholders across the private, public, and third sectors.
- 1.2 Carbon CLEVER has the aim to capture, co-ordinate and promote the good work that is being conducted across the Highlands to reduce carbon emissions and to identify a programme of work to meet the ambitions of the initiative. By doing this it will attract investment to the region, accelerating the transition to a low carbon economy.
- 1.3 The Council has a commitment in its Programme that it will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration and work with everyone to achieve a Carbon CLEVER Highlands by 2025.
- 1.4 At a meeting of the Highland Council on 13 March 2014, Members agreed that Carbon CLEVER targets five strategic themes:
 - Economy;
 - Energy;
 - Land Use and Resources;
 - Transport; and
 - Engagement Strategy.

2. Carbon CLEVER Caithness and Sutherland

- 2.1 Developing a Carbon CLEVER Caithness and Sutherland, where carbon emissions have been significantly reduced, will require local challenges and opportunities to be recognised, and understood. Challenges in the region include:
 - Distance required to travel to access services/ work;
 - Available modes of transport and infrastructure;
 - Challenges of heating homes with low carbon fuels given off the gas grid;
 - Housing type, age, and suitability to be made energy efficient;
 - Supply chain for energy efficiency measures and alternative fuels; and
 - Investment required to protect carbon stores, e.g. The Flow Country.

2.2 Opportunities to reduce carbon emissions in Caithness and Sutherland by 2025 include:

- Making businesses and organisations more resource efficient;
- Increased recognition as a tourism destination due to enhanced international reputation;
- Opportunities presented from the rollout of high speed broadband including access to services, opportunities for businesses, etc.;
- Inward investment from renewables industry;
- Alternative, and renewable forms of heating;
- Micro-renewables and community owned renewables scheme;
- New methods of delivering community transport;
- Low carbon vehicles including electric and hydrogen;
- Increased networks for active transport;
- Protection and enhancement of carbon stores, such as peatland;
- Increased recycling and less waste to landfill;
- More sites for allotments and community growing schemes; and
- Increased consumption of locally sourced food and goods.

2.3 For the Carbon CLEVER initiative to be successful and achieve its aims, it will be necessary to engage with, and work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders across the public, private and third sector, as well as communities and residents. Engaging with stakeholders will facilitate the exchange of ideas and good practice. It will also help to identify local opportunities and challenges and enable effective project development, training etc. This could potentially be conducted through liaison with Community Councils, Carbon CLEVER workshops, working with community groups etc.

3. Carbon CLEVER Declaration

3.1 The Highland Climate Change Declaration has been rebranded as the Carbon CLEVER Declaration in line with the Carbon CLEVER initiative. The Declaration is aimed at businesses, community groups and public sector organisations interested in making financial and resource savings by becoming more efficient and reducing their carbon emissions. To date, more than 40 businesses and organisations have signed the Declaration.

3.2 The Declaration will be an effective tool for empowering organisations to reduce carbon emissions and become more efficient. It will also enable progress to be captured and publicised. This collaborative transition towards a low carbon economy will encourage and inspire others, ensuring that the Highlands take a leading role in mitigating against climate change.

3.3 The commitments of the Carbon CLEVER Declaration are:

- **Reduce!** Take action to reduce the carbon emissions from our organisation and contribute to the Carbon CLEVER vision of a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands.
- **Share!** Work with signatories in the Highlands and share information to promote good practice
- **Encourage!** Motivate and work with businesses, organisations, communities and individuals to take action to reduce carbon emissions and

adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.

- Provide! Produce a short annual update of the actions taken and progress achieved towards reducing carbon emissions, so that good practice can be shared.

3.4 Signatories to the Carbon CLEVER Declaration will benefit from:

- Gaining public recognition and free promotion in print, social media and at events;
- Saving money and reducing carbon emissions by becoming more efficient;
- Access to free support and tools including funding maps, case studies and business cases to help implement real savings; and
- Being part of a Highland peer support network and having access to Carbon CLEVER branding.

More tailored support is also currently under development.

4. Flow to the Future

4.1 Flow to the Future is a project being developed by the Peatlands Partnership in the Flow Country. The aim is to restore a large area of peatland and to increase awareness and understanding of the Flow Country.

4.2 The Peatlands Partnership is independently chaired by John Henderson from Scrabster Farm and includes the Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Environmental Research Institute (ERI, Thurso), Forestry Commission Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Plantlife International, and other stakeholder organisations. The Partnership works to implement the "Management Strategy for the Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland".

4.3 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) approved funding in late 2012 to enable a full project proposal to be developed (with RSPB as lead partner). This development phase has recently finished and the proposal was submitted to HLF in February 2014. A decision will be taken by HLF in May. Should funding be approved, the project will last for 5 years from late summer 2014. The total budget will be £9.5 million, with £4.2 million coming from HLF. The match funding will be from many sources including Peatland Partnership organisations, the Scottish Government, Scottish Rural Development Programme (in part confirmed), ERDF and timber income (anticipated).

4.4 Should HLF approve funding, the Highland Council has agreed to be part of the Partnership Agreement to implement the project, along with RSPB, SNH and ERI. The Highland Council has committed £10k over 5 years from its biodiversity budget to the project, and £15k as support in kind over five years through the work of the Highland Council Countryside Ranger Service.

4.5 A key strategic theme of the Carbon CLEVER initiative is Land Use and Resources. Part of this theme will focus on how land is managed across the Highlands to act as carbon stores, e.g. forestry, peatlands, etc. The Flow to the Future project currently has a funding gap for the proposed peatland restoration work and the potential for Carbon CLEVER to fund part of this is currently being investigated.

5. Carbon CLEVER Commuting

- 5.1 Carbon CLEVER Commuting is a new initiative to promote sustainable travel throughout the Highlands, as part of Transport Scotland's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme. A key aspect of this project will be the creation of a commuting microsite and web portal, providing information and case studies to help support and encourage Highland residents to make more sustainable travel choices.
- 5.2 A range of marketing materials will be available via the portal to partner businesses and signatories to the Carbon CLEVER Declaration, which will help them to promote sustainable commuting to their staff and customers. Carbon CLEVER Commuting will be launched in May 2014.

6. Implications

Resource Implications: There are no direct resource implications associated with this report at this time.

Legal Implications: The Highland Council has an obligation to support the national effort to reduce carbon emissions to meet the targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Equalities Implications: There are no equalities implications arising from this report. Where Carbon CLEVER projects are identified, an equalities screening, and impact assessment where required, will be completed.

Climate Change/Carbon CLEVER Implications: The Council has commitments to mitigate against climate change by working to reduce carbon emissions from its own operations and for the region as a whole. The projects presented in the paper will help facilitate a coordinated approach to mitigate against climate change.

Risk Implications: There are no risks identified at this stage.

Gaelic Implications: There are no implications identified at this stage.

Recommendation

Members are invited to:

(i) Agree that the Climate Change Team work with local organisations, stakeholders and community groups to gain an insight into local opportunities and priorities to inform the Carbon CLEVER Action Plan, and to discuss how this could best be achieved; and

(ii) Discuss how to effectively promote the Carbon CLEVER Declaration to businesses and organisations in Caithness and Sutherland.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 06/05/2014

Author: Stephen Carr, Principal Policy Officer – Climate Change