

**The Highland Council**  
**Highland Council – 13<sup>th</sup> March**

Agenda Item	16
Report No	HC/67/13

**Carbon CLEVER Programme and Action Plan**

**Report by the Head of Policy and Reform**

This paper proposes a vision of a low carbon Highlands. It further outlines key strategic themes that need to be addressed and incorporated into the Carbon CLEVER approach to achieve a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025. The paper provides an update to Members on a number of pertinent actions occurring across Highland and outlines the potential of European funding for achieving the aims of the initiative. It is proposed that a strategy document needs to be developed to help deliver the initiative, accompanied by an action plan, and details appropriate timescales for producing this.

**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. This initiative was launched at a conference held at the Council headquarters, Inverness on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 attended by over 100 delegates from a wide range of organisations. Achieving such an ambitious target will require strong engagement from a wide range of stakeholders across the private, public, and third sectors, and the residents and communities of the Highlands.
- 1.2 There are a number of projects currently being developed and delivered as part of the Carbon CLEVER initiative, and it has been important for Carbon CLEVER from its launch to produce highly visible actions to reduce carbon emissions and promote behaviour change. Along with this action, there is also a need to develop a programme plan for the initiative that will set out a strategy for achieving its ambitious targets.
- 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 (a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands).

**2. Carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands**

- 2.1 At a meeting of the City of Inverness committee on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2014, a vision statement of Inverness as a Carbon CLEVER City was approved:

“By 2025 Inverness is a city where residents and visitors can move around the city easily by bicycle, on foot and public transport. The city is attractive, well designed and sociable. Buildings in the city have been energy renovated, and new buildings are energy efficient. Energy will be generated from a range of renewable sources in the city, and excess energy can be transmitted to surrounding areas through a smart regional grid. Land and resources in the

city are utilised for optimal economic, social, and environmental gains. Communities across the city are engaged, are highly active, and empowered.”

2.2 In a similar manner to that above, it would be useful to describe what a “low carbon Highlands” would look like. It is proposed that this could be:

“By 2025, the Highlands will be a region where its residents and visitors can move around easily by low carbon and sustainable forms of transport. The region is well connected both in terms of transport links and through digital connectivity. Buildings across the region will have been energy renovated, and new buildings are energy efficient. The growing majority of buildings in rural areas will be heated by renewable sources. Electricity will be generated from a range of renewable sources, and excess energy can be transmitted to surrounding regions through smart grids, or stored efficiently. Land and resources across the Highlands are utilised for optimal economic, social, and environmental gains. Communities across the region are engaged, are highly active, more healthy and empowered”

2.3 It is recommended that Carbon CLEVER addresses five key strategic themes in order to achieve the proposed vision outlined above. These key themes are based on reviewing other similar initiatives which have been conducted across Europe, and analysis of feedback from the Carbon CLEVER Conference held in November 2013, and internal workshops. They are:

- Economy;
- Energy;
- Land Use and Resources;
- Transport; and
- Engagement Strategy.

2.4 A carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands would benefit the region in many ways, including:

Economy:

- Increased inward investment to the region;
- Enhanced growth and increased good quality employment opportunities;
- An increasingly skilled workforce/ employment base;
- Increased recognition of Inverness as a tourist destination due to enhanced international reputation;
- Demonstrating educational and research expertise in carbon reduction;
- Resource efficient businesses with minimal waste; and
- Increased consumption of locally produced goods.

Energy:

- Energy renovated, comfortable, and attractive buildings;
- Increased renewable energy generation, including micro-generation;
- Self-sufficient energy generation with minimal energy import and reliance on fossil fuels;
- Renewable heating and infrastructure where appropriate;
- Energy storage to reduce reliance on fossil fuels during periods of peak

- energy demand;
- Affordable energy; and
- Energy and fuel security;

#### Land Use and Resources:

- Land and resources across the city utilised to realise economic, social, and environmental benefits;
- An increased amenity value of sites across Inverness;
- A resource efficient society; and
- More sites for allotments and community growing schemes enabling an increased production of locally sourced food.

#### Transport:

- Improved network and infrastructure for sustainable and active transport;
- A high transport modal share for active forms of transport – reflecting healthier lifestyles;
- Infrastructure for alternative and sustainable transport such as electric charging points and alternative fuels;
- Low emission vehicles;
- A reduction in journeys and congestion; and
- Community transport such as car clubs to reduce the need for car ownership.

#### Engagement Strategy:

- Increasingly informed, engaged and empowered communities;
- Action to support and enable behaviour change to practices which use less energy and associated carbon emissions;
- Sharing good practice in reducing carbon emissions and learning from communities within the region and elsewhere;
- Highlighting and directing to sources of funding, information, etc.; and
- Carbon Clever is inspired and sustained by our future generations through our schools, pupils and curriculum.

### 2.5 Carbon CLEVER Declaration

The Carbon CLEVER Declaration is intended to be a flagship project of the initiative. Through this, Highland businesses and organisations can make a public commitment to take action to reduce carbon emissions and contribute to Carbon CLEVER. The original scheme, the Highland Climate Change Declaration, was launched in 2010 and this project represents a refreshing and rebranding of this declaration in-line with the Carbon CLEVER initiative.

2.6 The declaration is part of the Single Outcome Agreement and as such is being developed in partnership with Highland stakeholders through the Highland Environment Forum. A working group is being co-led by The Highland Council and Home Energy Scotland and the declaration is due to be launched in April 2014.

### **3. Carbon CLEVER Action Plan**

3.1 A programme is to be developed for delivering Carbon CLEVER. This would provide a roadmap for achieving a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025. It is suggested that the programme could comprise a strategy document based around the five core themes as outlined at paragraph 2.4, supported by a three year action plan to be revised and rolled forward annually.

3.2 It is proposed that this Carbon CLEVER strategy document and action plan is brought in stages to subsequent meetings of the Highland Council as follows:

8<sup>th</sup> May 2014: Economy; Transport.

26<sup>th</sup> June 2014: Energy; Land Use and Resources.

11<sup>th</sup> September 2014: Engagement Strategy

With the final strategy and action plan, launched at a conference held in November 2014. It is also proposed that an up-date of on-going actions for the carbon CLEVER initiative is provided at future Council meetings. For May 2014 this would include progress made with partners on the Carbon CLEVER Declaration.

3.3 The action plan once completed should be regarded as a live document which is updated and reviewed regularly. This will allow Carbon CLEVER to be reactive and take opportunities as they arise. Each chapter will be written with input from stakeholders across the Highlands and Scotland, and will utilise the feedback gathered both from the Carbon CLEVER Conference, and the series of workshops that was conducted with Council Members and staff in 2013. The action plan will require consultation with relevant Council Services and Highland Stakeholders to ensure alignment with appropriate programmes, strategies, and plans e.g. Green Transport Strategy, Inverness Land Use & Transport Strategy.

3.4 The document should also outline how performance of the initiative would be assessed. Carbon CLEVER has a vision of a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025, but intermediary targets are required in order to effectively manage the performance of the initiative.

3.5 A qualitative measure of the performance of Carbon CLEVER is currently under development, and it is proposed this could be conducted as a survey of the Citizens Panel. This survey will cover a range of topics related to the strategic themes as detailed at paragraph 2.4. It will aim to ascertain the effectiveness and public awareness of the initiative, and to identify additional support and guidance that would encourage the lifestyle change required. This survey would be conducted in early Autumn 2014 with the view to have responses analysed by the proposed conference in November.

3.6 Quantitative measures of performance could include completing a baseline emissions inventory for Inverness and Highlands, and recalculating this on a regular basis to assess progress towards a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands. Council officers are currently investigating the potential of

conducting this through the European Covenant of Mayors which would involve developing, implementing and monitoring a Sustainable Energy Action Plan. There is scope for UHI involvement in setting the base-line and measuring and reporting progress. The overall progress of the initiative could also be assessed by achieving certain accolades, such as the European Green Capital.

- 3.7 Success in joining the European Covenant of Mayors and being regarded as European Green Capital before 2020 would be key milestones for the strategy and action plan.

#### **4. Initial Focus – Transport projects**

- 4.1 An initial focus of Carbon CLEVER has been on promoting and enabling cycling for a number of pertinent reasons. It is highly visible in terms of promoting a shift in behaviour, it will require a series of investments, and a number of relevant opportunities have arisen. Reducing carbon emissions from transport across Scotland and Europe over the last twenty years has proven a lot more difficult than reducing emissions from energy production. It is therefore important to recognise the challenge that this poses, and take immediate action. The actions below have been considered recently at the FHR Committee and the Inverness City Committee and are described more fully in Appendix 1.

- Arterial Cycling Routes for Inverness  
Development of arterial cycling routes in Inverness. Funding allocation to the development of the Millburn Road cycling corridor.
- Carbon CLEVER Cycles  
Development and implementation of an electric bicycle hire scheme in Inverness.
- Etape Loch Ness  
Funding is being sought to sponsor the Etape Loch Ness cycling sportive by the Carbon CLEVER initiative.

#### **5. External Funding Potential**

##### European funding

- 5.1 There are a number of European funding programmes and projects which are strongly aligned to driving the transition to a low carbon economy. Opportunities for attracting European funding, and for participating in relevant projects is being identified by appropriate Council officers. Projects would require funding and resources to be allocated by the Council.

##### 5.2 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

European Structural Funds are administered in seven year programming periods. The next period will run from 2014-2020 and as such the strategic priorities for these funds have been developed over the past few months. Priorities of particular note for delivering Carbon CLEVER are:

- Low Carbon Travel and Transport;
- Low Carbon Infrastructure Fund; and

- Resource Efficient Circular Economy.

5.3 The Highlands & Islands is viewed as a transition region in terms of ESIF funding as a reflection of the region's relatively lower GDP compared to the EU average. This status attracts a higher level of funding and will bring 173M euros of support to the region. The Climate Change Team is working closely with the Council's European Officers to develop project ideas that are in line with ESIF strategic priorities and the Carbon CLEVER initiative.

5.4 SmileGOV

This European project involves the development of energy action plans for island communities. Ward 11 and 12 Members were receptive to the idea at a ward forum in August, and this opportunity is being further investigated.

5.5 Interreg V Cross Border Programme

This programme is for projects involving the Republic of Ireland, N. Ireland and West of Scotland. (Only Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh will have access to this programme). A project is being developed with partners in Fort William, Dundalk (Republic of Ireland), and Coleraine (N. Ireland) on measures to get energy production and consumption into balance in the towns. Details on this potential project will be brought to future meetings of relevant committees.

5.6 Other external funding

The carbon clever initiative will draw on a range of internal and other external funding. Work is underway, and with partners, to identify the range of funding opportunities available and to provide this information in a user-friendly format.

**6. Implications**

Resource Implications: Carbon CLEVER is actively seeking to develop projects which are eligible for external funding. As such the Climate Change team is working closely with the Council's European Officers. The Carbon CLEVER initiative has a capital budget allowance of £1million p.a. from 2014/15. For 2014/15, £250,000 has been allocated to the Millburn Road cycling corridor, with £750,000 yet to be allocated.

Legal Implications: The Council has a duty to assist Scotland achieve its national carbon emission reduction targets as set out by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Equalities Implications: Projects and actions developed as part of the Carbon CLEVER will be screened on an individual basis for equalities implications. Both the Millburn Road cycle corridor and the Carbon CLEVER Cycles scheme aim to remove barriers to cycling, enabling a wider group of people to cycle on a regular basis.

Climate Change/ Carbon CLEVER Implications: Projects and actions developed as part of the Carbon CLEVER initiative will lead to reductions in carbon emissions, helping the region to mitigate its impacts on climate change.

Risk Implications: There is a reputational risk to the Council in approaching and not achieving such ambitious goals. However, this is far outweighed by

the potential success of the initiative. Carbon CLEVER requires project management to be used for development and delivery, this will include risk assessments and performance will be carefully monitored through a transparent process which will reduce the risks associated with the initiative.

### **Recommendations**

1. Members are asked to discuss and agree:
  - a. The vision statement of a low carbon Highlands by 2025, based on the description provided at paragraph 2.2.
  - b. The proposed strategic themes of the Carbon CLEVER initiative as outlined at paragraph 2.4, which would form the basis for drafting the Carbon CLEVER strategy and action plan.
  - c. The proposed development and associated timescales for the Carbon CLEVER action plan, paragraph 3.2.
  - d. A Carbon CLEVER Conference in November 2014.
  
2. Members are asked to note the action to date on improving active travel and external funding potential with a focus currently on EU funding for the initiative.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Author: Stephen Carr, Principal Policy Officer – Climate Change

## **Appendix 1: Initial focus – Transport projects**

### Arterial Cycle Routes

Inverness has been recognised by the Scottish Cities Alliance as Scotland's Cycling City. As such it is important to build upon the relatively high modal share of cyclists in Inverness by improving cycling infrastructure and removing barriers in the city. As such, £250,000 funding allocation from the Carbon CLEVER budget for the Millburn Road cycling corridor was approved at the Finance, Housing, and Resources committee, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014. Tenders for this scheme were received on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and the contract will be awarded in due course. A strategy for developing subsequent routes across the city centre will be developed in-line with Council strategies, and in consultation with expert stakeholders.

### Carbon CLEVER Cycles

As a contribution to the Carbon CLEVER initiative, SSE made an offer to install a pilot electric bicycle hire scheme in Inverness, Carbon CLEVER Cycles. A working group of Council staff and relevant expert stakeholders have been developing this project over the course of the past three months with the aim to have the scheme operational by late Spring 2014. A public event on the scheme was held at the Town House, Inverness on the 27<sup>th</sup> February. The project will incur upfront revenue costs of £15,000. This budget has been allocated from a policy team budget in CEX (£5,000), and applications to both the Ward 17 Discretionary budget (£5,000) and the Inverness Common Good Fund (£5,000) have been successful.

### Etape Loch Ness

The Etape Loch Ness is a 67 mile closed road cycling challenge around Loch Ness, starting and finishing in Inverness city centre. Carbon CLEVER is sponsoring this event to promote and raise awareness of the initiative. Carbon CLEVER will have a stand at this event where it will promote recent activities, most notably the Carbon CLEVER Cycles scheme. The £15,000 required to sponsor the event has been allocated from a policy team budget in CEX (£5,000), and applications to both the Highland Culture Fund (£5,000) and the Inverness Common Good Fund (£5,000) have been successful.