

Agenda Item	22
Report No	HC/33/19

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** The Highland Council

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**Report Title:** Climate Change Update

**Report By:** Director of Development & Infrastructure

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following the Council's recent declaration of a climate and ecological emergency, this report provides Members with a short update on progress and highlights some of the next steps in meeting the commitments made through the declaration.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- Note the contents of the report.
  - Note that an update report will be brought back to Council in September 2019 once the Climate Change Member's panel has met and agreed an action plan.

### 3 Background

- 3.1 At a meeting of The Highland Council on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, following a motion brought by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Margaret Davidson, Members agreed that the Council declare a climate and ecological emergency.
- 3.2 This paper provides Members with details of actions undertaken since this declaration was made, sets out plans for action over the coming weeks, and provides an update on some critical workstreams.

### 4 Climate and Ecological Emergency - Update

- 4.1 The Council has adopted the following position on climate change, following the declaration of a climate and ecological emergency on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019:

*Highland Council recognises the serious and accelerating changes to the world caused by climate change and therefore declares a climate and ecological emergency*

*The Council will establish a Climate Change panel with responsibility for the following reporting back to full council on progress;*

- 1. Inform ourselves on what the Council is currently doing to reduce our carbon footprint.*
- 2. Revisit the Carbon Clever declaration made by the Council in 2012 with a view to updating and reinvigorating those commitments working towards a carbon neutral Highlands by 2025.*
- 3. Consider and recommend any new targets and priorities for the Council's Corporate Plan by June 2019.*
- 4. We realise we can achieve far less by working alone so we commit to listening to and involving Highland citizens in all that we do and to involve them in the preparation of our new carbon reduction plan.*
- 5. Promptly, we will target areas for behavioural change, such as plastic reduction. These areas to be selected by public consultation*

- 4.2 The declaration of a climate and ecological emergency has necessarily resulted in an increased focus on climate change action across the organisation. A summary of the key actions and work currently being undertaken are noted below:

- **Climate Change Seminar** – preparations for a climate change seminar for Members on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019 are well underway. This event will provide Members with a detailed overview of the Council's emissions reduction progress to date, will detail work currently being progressed, whilst highlighting some of the key challenges which will need to be addressed over the coming months and years in order to achieve our climate change commitments. A verbal update on the outcomes of the seminar will be provided to Members at the Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019.
- **Climate Change Adaptation Workshop** – it has been recognised that Highland would benefit from a more joined-up approach to addressing the challenges posed by climate change and extreme weather events over the coming years. To this end, the Climate Change team have arranged a workshop with Community Planning Partners on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, which will be led by Adaptation Scotland and Climate Ready Clyde, with a view to seeking consensus about how to progress adaptation strategy development for the region.
- **Climate Change Panel** – over the coming weeks, a cross-party Climate Change Panel will be formed - a variety of options in terms of how the panel will be constituted, as well as appropriate governance arrangements, will be explored at the Members seminar and over summer 2019. It is envisaged that this group will have full oversight and scrutiny of climate change efforts across the organisation, and will perform a critical function in ensuring that the Council takes due cognisance of our enhanced commitments in respect of the climate and ecological emergency. It has also been proposed that the Council surveys its Citizens' Panel about climate change, with a view to gathering opinion from Highland

residents regarding where our key areas of focus should be, and how we can best engage and support the people and communities of Highland in terms of meaningfully tackling climate change. The Panel will have a key role in the development of this survey and the analysis of the results.

- **Council Programme & Corporate Plan** – following a review of Local Voices, Highland Choices and the draft Corporate Plan, it has been recognised that both documents require some revision to embed the enhanced commitments of the organisation with regards the climate and ecological emergency. The Climate Change Panel, once established, will review both documents and propose appropriate amendments to reflect the Council's updated position in respect of climate change to a meeting of The Highland Council later in 2019.

4.3 A summary of other work being undertaken to address the Council's climate change commitments are set out at **Appendix 1** to this report.

## 5 Implications

5.1 Resource – It is important to recognise that the increased focus on climate change and ecology will inevitably impact all policy areas as well as the everyday business of the Council. The current resourcing levels of the Climate Change team (1 x Climate Change Officer, 1 x Climate Change Coordinator, both seconded 0.5FTE to the Change Programme) is likely to be insufficient to achieve the increased ambition of the Council. Work will be undertaken over the summer to scope out what level of additional resource is likely to be required to achieve the commitments set out within the climate and ecological emergency declaration, with a view to developing a business case for a request to the Change Fund later in 2019. In addition, achieving meaningful progress in respect of climate change and ecological action will require a series of projects and actions to be delivered, many of which will have an associated cost. These projects will need to be reviewed on a case by case basis to ensure they achieve best value for money and maximise carbon emissions reductions.

5.2 Legal - The Council has a legal duty to assist Scotland achieve its national carbon.2 emission reduction targets as set out by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. As of financial year 2015/16, the Council is required to mandatorily report to the Scottish Government on action taken to tackle climate change. The reporting covers action taken within the Council's own estate, but also action taken by the Council to work with its partners and communities to tackle climate change. The Council is also required to report on its Biodiversity duty every three years to the Scottish Government.

5.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – Potential legal, equalities and rural implications vary due to the wide range of actions and projects being undertaken and are considered on a project specific basis as an integral part of the project assessment process.

5.4 Climate Change/Carbon CLEVER - the actions and projects outlined in this report will reduce carbon emissions across the Highlands, and within the Council's own estate, supporting the ambitions of the Carbon Management Plan 2013-2020 as well as national emissions reduction targets.

5.5 Risk – risk implications are considered on a project-specific basis as an integral part of the project assessment process. Climate change is also recognised as a Corporate Risk, and it is therefore important that efforts are made to reduce its impacts - the projects and actions detailed within this report will do so.

5.6 Gaelic - opportunities for the inclusion of Gaelic are considered as an integral part of the project planning process.

Designation: Director of Development & Infrastructure

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Author: Keith Masson, Climate Change Officer

## Appendix 1

- **Change Programme** – the Change Programme contains a number of projects which could result in a significant reductions to our corporate carbon footprint. The Climate Change team is directly involved in three of these, namely: Grey Fleet (Staff Travel); Waste Management; and Energy & Renewables. The other projects which would benefit from the climate change team being involved in delivery are as follows:
  - Transport
  - Transient Visitor Levy / Tourism Developments
  - Asset Management, Property Rationalisation & Investment
  - ICT Development / Digital
  - Workforce Planning
  - Redesign
  - Income Generation
- **Carbon Management & Energy** - a refresh of the Council's carbon management plan to reflect increased ambition both internally and nationally is in progress, and behaviour change will be critical in terms of our ongoing efforts to reduce emissions from our energy and water consumption, staff travel, waste and fleet. The Council is also, through the Change Programme, developing an energy strategy and action plan, which will focus on three key areas, namely: energy efficiency (reduction in energy consumption); energy generation (focus on renewable energy); and behaviour change (reducing spend and emissions through behavioural interventions). Energy consumption, including street lighting, accounts for around 75% of the Council's carbon footprint, and tackling our energy use is therefore critical in achieving our climate change commitments.
- **SALIX Energy Efficiency Funding** - The Council was recently successful in securing the largest ever SALIX loan awarded in Scotland (£3.5m interest free) to invest in energy efficiency measures across our estate. The loan match funds the Council's self-financing investments in energy efficiency to create a £7m energy efficiency fund. The fund is ring-fenced for investment in projects that will reduce the Council's energy spend and carbon emissions. This will include switching internal and external building lights to efficient LEDs, installing solar photovoltaics and upgrading inefficient oil boiler systems to lower carbon alternatives.
- **Waste Strategy, Behaviour Change & Biodiversity** – The Council currently spends approximately £1M per annum dealing with its own waste. A review of current internal policies and practices is necessary to ensure the Council is complying with current waste legislation and is managing its resources effectively. The Waste Strategy Working Group recently agreed that resource should be identified to manage the development and implementation of a corporate internal waste strategy which focuses on minimising waste and increasing recycling rates, which will support the Council's wider climate change agenda. In addition, The Highland Council was the first Council in Scotland to develop and approve a single use plastics (SUP) strategy and action plan. Work to reduce our impact in respect of SUP is now well underway, largely through the Council's Eco Officer network, Catering teams and Procurement unit. The Council will also be contributing to the refresh of the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan over 2019/20.
- **Staff Travel / Grey Fleet** – work is ongoing through the Change Programme's Staff Travel project to reduce corporate emissions and spend related to business travel. This will involve the increased roll-out of car club provision, increasing the utilisation of our existing fleet whilst also taking opportunities to rationalise the fleet wherever possible. It will become increasingly important to expedite the shift to electric vehicles within our car club and white fleet over the coming years, ahead of the ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles coming into effect in 2032. Efforts are being made

to maximise external funding provision in respect of the acquisition of new low carbon vehicles through Transport Scotland's Switched On Fleets initiative, as well as the roll-out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the region.

- **Carbon CLEVER 2025** – the original aim of the Carbon CLEVER initiative was to achieve a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highland by 2025. In order to assess progress against this ambition, it will be necessary to baseline and benchmark where we currently are in terms of the emissions profile of the region. A carbon baselining study has already been undertaken for the Inverness area (a copy of the report can be found [here](#)) but baselining work is required for the rest of Highland. Opportunities are being explored with partners to secure funding to allow this work to be completed, which will be beneficial in terms of setting future targets and identifying critical areas of focus.
- **Annual Climate Change Reporting** – The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (“the Act”) introduced binding targets and legislation to reduce Scotland’s emissions by 42% by 2020, and by 80% by 2050 against a 1990 baseline. In addition, the Act places specific duties on public bodies relating to climate change. The Act requires that a public body must, in exercising its functions, act:
  - In the way best calculated to contribute to delivery of the Act’s emissions reduction targets;
  - In the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programme; and
  - In a way that it considers most sustainable.

In 2015, the Scottish Government introduced an Order under the Act requiring all 151 Public Bodies to submit an annual report to Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN), detailing their compliance with the climate change duties detailed above. Work is currently underway to collate data and draft the Council’s climate change return for the 2018/19 reporting year. Given the volume of data and evidence to be collected, this process normally takes around 3 to 4 months each year, with the report being presented to the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee in November.