

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Report No</b>	<b>CCC/10/23</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Climate Change

**Date:** 17 May 2023

**Report Title:** Communications & Engagement Update

**Report By:** Depute Chief Executive

### 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on developing an internal Communications & Engagement Strategy to support the delivery of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan. This paper also outlines the proposed approach to the organisation's first internal communications and engagement phase.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to:-
- i. **Agree** that officers proceed with the delivery of the first phase of communications and engagement, in accordance with the approach outlined within this report; and
  - ii. **Note** a detailed internal Communications & Engagement Strategy and Action Plan will be developed for consideration at a future Climate Change Committee.

### 3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – Development and delivery of the internal Communications & Engagement Strategy will be led by the Climate Change & Energy team (CCET). The CCET will collaborate with the Council's Corporate Communications team to promote good news stories that will raise the Council's profile by showcasing successful climate action. The Corporate Communications team will continue to lead external communications relating to climate change through traditional and social media activities.

Any new or refreshed branding will require dedicated communications and graphic design resource.

A business case will be developed regarding developing and implementing a behavioural change app/platform.

- 3.2 **Legal** – The Council has several requirements for reporting against its climate change obligations, in addition to being required to directly support Scotland’s target to end its contribution to climate change no later than 2045.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – To build a resilient, climate ready Council, it will be essential to raise awareness, build understanding through training, and persuade service areas of the benefits of taking positive climate action. The workplace is where people will learn the skills to address climate change and make informed decisions. This will promote significant cultural change in the workplace, at home and in their communities.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – Through effective communication, engagement, and training, we aim to incorporate climate-conscious behaviours, decisions, and actions across the Council to engrain sustainability throughout Council culture and operations.
- 3.5 **Risk** – Failure to proactively address the climate and ecological emergency across all service delivery carries significant reputational risk, particularly considering the political ambition at both local and national levels around the climate change agenda. Engagement and training will be essential for all council personnel to achieve the behavioural change necessary to address the scale and urgency of the climate emergency. Climate change is identified as a risk on the Corporate Risk Register; the Corporate Risk Management Group is a mechanism that can facilitate messaging around risk and resilience.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – Consideration will be given to using Gaelic in print and publications as communications and engagement materials are developed.

## 4 Background

4.1 An internal Communications & Engagement Strategy is in development to support the delivery of the Net Zero Strategy. This aims to increase staff, and Members’ awareness and commitment to necessary action to help deliver our emission reduction targets and become climate ready.

### 4.2 Timeline

The table below outlines the timeline for the development of the strategy:

Activity	Timeline
<b>Climate Change Committee meeting</b> - Consider high level Net Zero strategy and route map	17 May 2023
<b>Highland Council meeting</b> - Net Zero strategy and route map presented to Council for ratification	29 June 2023

<p><b>Develop a fully costed action plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Net Zero Strategy Group will be responsible for developing a detailed, costed action plan which will focus on how the different services will meet the carbon reduction targets the Council sets.</li> </ul>	<p>By end of 2023</p>
<p><b>Develop a detailed Communications &amp; Engagement Strategy and Action Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An internal Communications &amp; Engagement Strategy and Action Plan will be developed aligned to the aims of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan.</li> <li>- This will be developed with the Net Zero Strategy Group, thematic groups, and the Council's Corporate Communications Team.</li> </ul>	<p>Early 2024</p>

## 5 Communications & Engagement Strategy – Proposed Outcomes

5.1 The Scottish Government's Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change (PES) is structured around three key pillars: **Understand**, **Participate**, and **Act**. The Council's Net Zero Communications & Engagement Strategy will align with these pillars. Proposed outcomes are outlined below:

### 5.2 Understand

All members of staff and elected Members:-

- understand Climate Change, the causes and impacts currently experienced, along with regionally modelled predictions of what we can expect in the coming years;
- know the Net Zero Strategy and the Council's carbon reduction targets;
- understand the opportunities and co-benefits for the Council in delivering the Net Zero Strategy; and
- are aware of the support, guidance, and advice the Climate Change & Energy Team can provide to support the delivery of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan.

### 5.3 Participate

- Staff and Elected Members actively shape just, fair, and inclusive policies that promote mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- Staff and Elected Members participate in events, campaigns, and initiatives relevant to Climate Change and the Net Zero Strategy.

#### 5.4 **Act**

- Every Service takes ownership of the Net Zero Strategy, ensuring individual team members understand their role in achieving our climate change ambitions.
- Though promoting a culture of low carbon and sustainable behaviour throughout the Council, staff and Elected Members are empowered to embrace their role in transitioning to a net zero and climate-ready Highland Council.
- A carbon-aware culture is embedded at all levels with climate change at the heart of decision-making.
- Action on climate change is normalised at all levels, with the Council embracing the positive changes that result.

### **6 First phase of Communications and Engagement**

The first phase of the Communications and Engagement Strategy (to the end of December 2023) will focus on:-

#### 6.1 **Developing Positive Messaging which emphasises the Co-Benefits of Delivering the Net Zero Strategy**

The CCET is developing 'quick wins' that can facilitate the delivery of positive climate action across Council services to reduce carbon emissions. The team will focus on areas where there is mutual benefit to the services through the reduction of emissions e.g., cost savings and will engage with senior management to secure buy-in for change.

#### 6.2 **Developing an Engagement and Action Plan Focused on Activity Relating to Schools**

Further information is outlined in section 7 of this report.

#### 6.3 **Relaunching the Eco Officer Network**

Will be critical in facilitating the delivery of key messaging, awareness raising and supporting engagement initiatives throughout the organisation. Further information is outlined in section 8 of this report.

#### 6.4 **Supporting Behavioural Change**

Through raising awareness of climate change issues and climate action through developing and implementing an online app/platform. Further information is outlined in section 9 of this report.

#### 6.5 **Developing and Delivering a Series of Drip Campaigns or Events**

To help foster a culture of sustainability across Council services. This will include campaigns/events designed around regional, national, and international initiatives such as Clean Air Day, national Climate Weeks, and the global Earth Hour initiative. The purpose of the campaigns/events is to build momentum and to facilitate meaningful climate engagement and conversations with people who have yet to engage on the topic. Further information is outlined in section 10 of this report.

## **7 Education**

- 7.1 Across the Highlands, we have 199 schools, including 29 secondary schools, with 30,650 pupils. Younger people have been at the forefront of demanding faster action on climate change and have a crucial role in contributing towards the Council's and Scotland's climate change ambitions.
- 7.2 The CCET will work in collaboration with Education & Learning, pupils, and parents to develop an engagement and action plan focused on activity relating to schools.

## **8 Relaunching the Eco Officer Network**

- 8.1 A network of internal climate ambassadors (the Eco Officer Network) was launched in January 2018 to support and implement low carbon behaviour change initiatives throughout the organisation.
- 8.2 The network was active before the COVID pandemic, with campaigns running each quarter focusing on a different theme regarding energy, waste, water, and travel. Volunteers were asked to commit up to two hours per month to undertake various actions to support positive behaviour change and help colleagues understand the positive impact they could make individually throughout the organisation.
- 8.3 The network supported an annual programme of events and campaigns focused on climate change, including Highland Climate Change Conferences, Earth Hour, Cycle to Work Week, Climate Conversations with staff, initiatives on energy saving, waste and transport through the Highland Council's Green Impact and Energy Sparks programmes while tapping into national campaigns such as Climate Week.
- 8.4 Relaunching the network will be critical in facilitating the delivery of key messaging, awareness raising, and supporting engagement initiatives throughout the organisation.

## **9 Embedding Behaviour Change**

- 9.1 Evidence submitted from the Scottish Government as part of The House of Lords, Environment and Climate Change Committee report on "In our hands: behaviour change for climate change and environmental goals"<sup>1</sup> states: "It is clear from the available evidence, including recent assessments from the Climate Change Committee (CCC), that technological advances and solutions on their own will not be sufficient to meet our statutory emissions targets. The CCC has estimated that "over 60% of the measures needed for Scotland to reach net zero emissions will require some degree of behavioural or societal change"<sup>2</sup>."
- 9.2 The Scottish Government uses the Individual, Social and Material (ISM) Tool<sup>3</sup> to consider behaviour change to reduce emissions as part of its policymaking. ISM takes insights from across the main behavioural science disciplines and turns them into a practical tool for policy process.

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<sup>1</sup> The House of Lords, Environment and Climate Change Committee report on "[In our hands: behaviour change for climate change and environmental goals](#)"

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government, Net Zero Nation, [Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change](#)

<sup>3</sup> [ISM User Guide](#)

- 9.3 Behavioural change will be crucial to delivering the aims of the Net Zero Strategy. This will be particularly important in achieving our built estate and energy, transport, and waste ambitions.
- 9.4 Behavioural change will be supported through raising awareness of climate change issues and the importance of climate action by developing and implementing an online app or platform. The CCET is reviewing different bespoke behaviour change platforms or apps that could reinforce internal messaging and support climate literacy.

## 10 Campaigns

- 10.1 The CCET is developing a 12-month calendar of campaigns or events to help foster a culture of sustainability across Council services. Types of campaigns include:-
- Information/awareness raising (resources and opportunities available, critical threats and climate change impacts)
  - Behaviour change (steps and actions people can take)
  - Global, national and local initiatives (such as Earth Hour, Climate Week)
  - Call to Action (join our climate conversations, sustainability workshops, and sign up to be a climate ambassador/champion)
  - Consultation/participation (share views on the Council's progress so far, share ideas and feedback for campaigns and sustainability projects)

## 11 Key Audiences

- 11.1 Key internal audiences for the first phase of communications and engagement are outlined in the table below:-

Elected Members	HR & People Development
Executive Leadership Team	Education & Learning
Senior Leadership Team	Fleet & Travel teams
Eco Officer Network	Waste Strategy & Operations
New & existing members of staff	Property & Housing

## 12 Key Messages and The Types of Communication

- 12.1 Creating key messages will depend on the target audience, therefore communication will be tailored accordingly to ensure effective and inclusive messaging.
- 12.2 The framing of climate change messaging and the extent to which risk should be underlined will also be considered. Risk messaging and heavily scientific messaging can sometimes cause 'psychological distancing'. Communication and engagement will build trust, challenge misinformation, and provide clear, consistent, information to inspire practical action.

12.3 Generally, two-way communication is considered the most trustworthy and persuasive form of communication as it allows people to help shape changes that will affect them. The CCET has supported workshops and meetings, offering valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of embedding behaviour change across services.

12.4 However, a balance between two-way and one-way communication is recommended for the best results. One-way communication, such as policies, will be necessary to incentivise action.

### 13 Key Communication Channels

13.1 The table below outlines the proposed internal channels that will be used:

Communication channel	Type of Communication	Key teams
Climate Change Committee workshops and meetings	Two-way	CCET
Cross-service meetings	Two-way	Executive Leadership Team, Senior Leadership Group
Eco Officer Network (events, engagement opportunities)	Two-way	CCET
Staff Intranet	One-way	CCET/Corporate Communications
SharePoint project page	One-way	CCET
Direct email	One-way	CCET
Ad hoc climate themed Workshops	Two-way	CCET
Create Trello board to manage different campaigns and projects and highlight progress and actions taken.	Two-way	CCET and any participating teams/contacts
Briefings (Members and Staff)	One-way	CCET

### 14 Aligning Internal Communications with External Communications

14.1 The CCET has an internal communications focus and will work with the Corporate Communications team for broader reach.

14.2 Additionally, both teams are keen to identify good news stories to raise the Council's profile by showcasing successful climate action.

## **15 Developing a Suite of Promotional Content**

15.1 Promotional content will be produced on an ongoing basis to showcase successful climate action and to increase collaboration and engagement across the Council. This will include:-

- case studies;
- best practice guides;
- bitesize nuggets of information - quick wins for positive climate action such as simple steps people can take; and
- visual storytelling through multimedia communications such as infographics, videos, blogs, podcasts

## **16 Measurement and Next Steps**

16.1 The Climate Change and Energy team will undertake regular evaluation to evaluate the success of climate change communications. Measuring impact will help build an evidence base of the communications techniques with different services. Suggested measures may include but are not limited to: -

- percentage of carbon reduction across service areas showing behaviour change;
- rate uptake and completion of training by officers and elected Members;
- number of hits over a designated period to the Climate Change and Energy sections of the Intranet/SharePoint site;
- event attendance and participation in climate-themed initiatives;
- increase in membership of Eco Officer Network and interaction of ambassadors; and
- awareness of brand identity

## **17 Branding**

17.1 In developing the Communications & Engagement Strategy, consideration will be given to creating new or refreshed branding. This will include the Carbon CLEVER branding and the Eco Officer Network

Designation: Depute Chief Executive

Date: 2 May 2023

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