
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

21 January 2020

Cabinet

Title: Climate Change

Purpose: To provide an update on progress on tackling climate change in North Ayrshire.

Recommendation: That Cabinet: i) Notes the progress made in implementing the Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2017-2020; ii) Agrees the proposed target year of 2030 to achieve net-zero emissions across North Ayrshire; iii) Notes the ongoing "Climate Change: Just Cool It" consultation; and iv) Notes the proposal to review the consultation findings to inform the Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2020-2023 which is currently being developed for future Cabinet consideration mid-2020.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report in October 2018 recommending immediate action be taken to reduce global warming, before the impacts of climate change become irreversible. This report has led to global declarations of a Climate Emergency, with governments and leaders being called upon to take action.
- 1.2 North Ayrshire Council has been proactive in tackling climate change, achieving almost 40% emission reduction since the 2005 baseline year, by consuming less fossil fuels and producing less waste across North Ayrshire through a number of initiatives including energy conservation and increased use of renewable energy sources. A coordinated approach across all services has been key to the successful implementation of emission reduction projects. The focus on clean energy is a key element of the draft Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy which aims to position Ayrshire at a nationally strategically important location for renewable energy power generation.
- 1.3 The current Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy (ESCCS) 2017-2020 has continued to drive progress in actions detailed in thematic workstreams, setting an emission reduction target of 40% by 2030. The Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in June 2019 has raised this aspiration to become a net-zero emission local authority.

- 1.4 An online consultation 'Climate Change: Just Cool It,' was launched in August 2019, seeking views on climate change from young people and those who live or work in North Ayrshire. The consultation is due to close in February 2020, following engagement with schools and community groups throughout North Ayrshire, with the responses used to develop the next Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy (ESCCS) 2020-2023.
- 1.5 The third ESCCS (2020-2023) is due to be published in Summer 2020, with actions identified to achieve the net-zero emission reduction target. It is proposed that this target be achieved by 2030. It is further proposed that two new workstreams are included in the strategy, to support climate change adaptation and emission absorption opportunities.

2. Background

- 2.1 The United Nations Climate Change (UNCC) Paris Agreement's goal is to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to limit the increase to 1.5 °C. A report published by the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) has advised that there are only 10 years remaining to reduce emissions before climate change impacts become irreversible. Therefore, on 11th June 2019 North Ayrshire Council declared a Climate Emergency, committing to act on climate change and achieve net-zero emissions.
- 2.2 Net-zero emissions requires a balance between emissions released and emissions absorbed from the environment. Therefore, the Council must lead the way in:
 - Reducing emissions from buildings (domestic and non-domestic), transport and waste
 - Implementing methods to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere
- 2.3 The Scottish Government has announced plans to achieve net-zero emission across Scotland by 2045 (five years earlier than the UK Government, based on advice from the IPCC stating Scotland has more areas of land available to plant trees). The recent Scottish Government consultation (The role of Public Sector Bodies in tackling climate change) proposes that all Scottish local authorities publish a date by which they will achieve net-zero emissions, as part of the mandatory reporting duties. Some local authorities have published statements confirming target years of 2030, 2045, 2050 or 'as soon as reasonably practicable.'
- 2.4 North Ayrshire Council has been pro-active in reducing carbon emissions since establishing the Carbon Management Plan in 2005. Subsequently, the first Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy (ESCCS) was published in 2014 and was updated in 2017.
- 2.5 The ESCCS 2017-2020 builds on the success of the first strategy and sets an area wide target to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2030 (based on a 2005 baseline year). In order to achieve this ambition, a series of priorities were identified within five thematic workstreams (Affordable Warmth, A Green Economy, Transport & Travel, Natural & Built Environment and Sustainable Operations).

2.6 Some examples of achievements and successes delivered through the ESCCS and other strategies which have had a positive impact on climate change are given below:

- The current carbon reduction figures are 39.9% reduction across the Council's estate and 44.6% reduction North Ayrshire wide. The area wide emissions include those from industrial and commercial, domestic, and transport sectors.
- Successfully securing approximately £10.5million of funding to provide external wall insulation to 2,231 homes through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme: Area Based Scheme to reduce heat loss and subsequent heating requirements.
- Installing our first low carbon heat networks fuelled by biomass boilers during the redevelopment of two sheltered housing units in Dalry and Stevenston.
- Installing solar PV panels on roofs of 290 Council houses, saving tenants on average £188 per year.
- Investing nearly £1m in energy efficiency measures such as boiler replacement, LED lighting and enhanced controls to 14 non-domestic properties through the Non-Domestic Energy Efficiency framework.
- The Council's operational vehicle fleet now incorporates 10 electric vehicles and a number of low emission vehicles
- Our sustainable business travel arrangements and employee car pool scheme have contributed to a reduction of almost 900,000 miles driven per year on business. An increasing number of miles actually driven are now being facilitated by the pool of low emission and electric vehicles. This has contributed to a significant carbon emissions reduction.
- Installing a number of publicly accessible electric vehicle charge points to support and encourage the uptake of electric vehicles across North Ayrshire.
- The Council continues to be one of the highest performing for household waste recycling in Scotland with 54.6% achieved for 2018 (greater than the national rate of 44.7%).
- A Plastic Waste Prevention Plan has been developed to support North Ayrshire Council's ambition to become a 'Plastic Free Council' by 2022
- Working as part of the Clyde Valley Residual Waste Partnership to establish a 25-year contract with Viridor, delivering a solution to divert waste from landfill following the closure of Shewalton landfill site in March 2018. The solution recovers additional recyclates with the remaining non-recyclable waste delivered to a new Energy Recovery Facility to recover heat and produce electricity from the waste.
- Successful implementation of the enhanced waste and recycling service, and implementation of a "Birth to Potty Real Nappy" initiative
- Working in partnership with third sector organisations on Arran to progress Circular Economy opportunities on the island

2.7 In order to meet the required levels of emission reduction throughout North Ayrshire to achieve the net-zero target, a continued coordinated approach is required. Development of the ESCCS (2020-2023) is underway, taking cognisance of the most recently published climate change reports and continuing this cross-service approach.

2.8 An online consultation 'Climate Change: Just Cool It,' was launched in August 2019, seeking views on climate change from young people and those who live or work in North Ayrshire. A further 67 responses were collected from the recent Annual Youth Conference, and work is underway within primary schools to gather opinion through the Primary School Energy Challenge project. Feedback received so far from the consultation affirms respondents' views that climate change is a serious issue, and that setting a target to achieve net-zero carbon emission by 2045 is not ambitious enough.

Several respondents would welcome information on what the Council is currently doing to tackle climate change, and there is a call to create a Climate Change Steering Group, to provide representation on decision making platforms across the Council. The ESCCS (2020-2023) will include specific actions to address the views and requests received from this exercise, and future carbon reduction projects will be influenced by this consultation's output.

- 2.9 Following initial review of the ongoing consultation, it is proposed that the Council sets the target year to achieve net-zero carbon emissions as 2030. This is an ambitious goal based on emission data available and is within the 10-year timeframe set by the IPCC to prevent irreversible climate change. Based on current annual reduction trends a 73% reduction in emissions is projected by 2030 (based on a 2005/06 baseline year). We should seek to address this shortfall and support the reduction trend by investigating carbon absorption solutions, developing renewable energy generation opportunities and investing in new technologies to deliver low carbon heat and energy supplies across domestic, non-domestic and transport sectors.
- 2.10 The ESCCS (2020-2023) which is being developed will also contain new actions within the existing workstreams, to support the decarbonisation of the heat and transport networks, further economic opportunities and eradicate fuel poverty. Progress has already been made to forward the Climate Emergency agenda and move closer to achieving net-zero emissions, for example:
- Engaging with Strathclyde University to develop proposals for a solar farm project
 - Refreshing the business case for solar and wind projects
 - Securing funding to undertake a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (producing a high-level plan to decarbonise the heat network and remove energy efficiency as a driver for fuel poverty across North Ayrshire)
 - Progressing work place charging point installations to increase the volume of electric vehicles in the Council's fleet
 - Investigating the feasibility of introducing competitive utility rates through an Energy White Label for North Ayrshire residents.
- 2.11 Following the Climate Emergency declaration, it is also proposed that two further workstreams be included in the ESCCS (2020-2023):
- Climate Change Adaptation
 - Emission Absorption
- 2.12 In October 2019, an Elected Members' event was held to highlight the value of adapting to the impacts of climate change. The event, facilitated by Adaptation Scotland, focussed on how climate impacts are affecting North Ayrshire communities, and how to identify local priorities. Adaptation is also a key feature in Zero Waste Scotland's Climate Change Assessment Tool (a continuous improvement tool used to assess climate change practices within organisations). It is therefore recommended that an Adaptation workstream be included in the next ESCCS together with appropriate actions to complement Adaptation Scotland's Capability Framework.
- 2.13 Carbon emissions can be absorbed naturally through trees (during photosynthesis) or by using technical solutions such as carbon capture and storage (CCS), where carbon dioxide from electricity generation and industrial processes is prevented from entering the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is collected, transported and stored securely in

depleted oil and gas fields. The Council will not be able to achieve net-zero emission status without absorbing emissions, therefore a range of actions must be investigated in the next ESCCS. Some work is already underway in this regard with officers across the Council working to identify available suitable land, secure funding and investigate any commercial viability for tree planting. There is also an opportunity to further engage with primary schools in partnership with the Woodland Trust's Tree Planting programme. It is envisaged this will enhance the Primary School Energy Challenge, currently delivered to primary schools in North Ayrshire to encourage more sustainable behaviours in energy, waste and transport.

- 2.14 Further areas being developed for incorporation into the ESCCS (2020-2023) include expanding the Council's work on generating renewable energy. This has the potential to meet a variety of Council objectives, specifically reducing carbon emissions, tackling fuel poverty, generating income and supporting local jobs and businesses. A previous action within the Renewable Energy Strategy resulted in the production of business cases for solar and wind projects which were cost prohibitive at that time. The proposals are being updated to include current market values to assess viability.
- 2.15 An Electric Vehicle (EV) strategy is also being developed to support and encourage the uptake of EVs throughout North Ayrshire. Officers have recently begun working with external partners to investigate the feasibility of a proposal to generate renewable electricity to supply an Electric Vehicle charging hub and utilise battery storage opportunities. Cabinet will receive a future report outlining and seeking approval of the Electric Vehicle Strategy when finalised.
- 2.16 Action on climate change is resource intensive, made even more challenging by the removal of government subsidies for renewable technology. There are significant opportunities through the Ayrshire Growth Deal and regional economic work to lever external investment for both major renewable energy projects and local community solutions. The Corporate Sustainability team will continue to identify and secure external funding opportunities in order to best serve the community, as with the recently awarded Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) funding to develop a 20 year energy efficiency and heat network decarbonisation strategy; the Home Energy Efficiency Programme: Area Based Scheme (HEEPS:ABS) funding to install external wall insulation to privately owned/rented homes; and Charge Place Scotland funding to install electric vehicle charge points across North Ayrshire.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the successes and progress made in implementing the Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2017-2020.
- 3.2 That Cabinet agrees the proposed target year of 2030 to achieve net-zero carbon emissions across North Ayrshire.
- 3.3 That Cabinet notes the ongoing "Climate Change: Just Cool It" consultation the findings of which will help inform the Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2020-2023 which is currently being developed for future Cabinet consideration mid-2020.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 The planned consultation activity and preparation of the third iteration of the Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy will be funded from existing revenue budgets. Any funding requirements for new initiatives identified through the ESCCS update, including business cases to be taken forward where appropriate, will be considered when the document is presented for approval.

Human Resources

4.2 None

Legal

4.3 None

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The proposed new Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy will include actions to alleviate fuel poverty for those on the lowest incomes within North Ayrshire, supporting children and young people to have warm homes. The consultation with children and young people aims to empower them to share their views on tackling climate change within North Ayrshire.

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 The proposals contribute directly to the new Council Plan priority outcome of 'A Sustainable Environment' by encouraging action to further reduce emissions in North Ayrshire.

Key Priorities

4.6 The proposals contribute directly to the new Council Plan priority outcome of 'A Sustainable Environment' by encouraging action to further reduce emissions in North Ayrshire.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The 5 pillars of community wealth building will be considered in the further development of the forthcoming Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2020-2023.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation is being undertaken with the public and young people to gather views on climate change. Responses are being monitored and used to develop the ESCCS 2020-2023. The consultation will close in February 2020.

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Background Papers

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