

Information Digest



To: Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Date: 3 June 2020

Climate Change Update

**Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity
Councillor Joe Porter**

**Head of Democratic & Community Services
Mark Forrester**

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress since the Council declared a climate emergency and to outline a series of key actions for 2020/2021.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the actions taken to date.
- 2.2 To note the proposed actions for 2020/21 set out in 7.7.1 – 7.7.8 (below).

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Council declared a climate emergency on 10th July 2019 and committed to work with partners across the district and region towards making the Staffordshire Moorlands carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3.2 Following the passing of the motion and subsequent creation of a new Cabinet post with specific responsibility for driving the Council's climate change agenda an initial plan was developed.
- 3.3 A Climate Change sub-committee has been established and agreed terms of reference and a work programme.
- 3.4 Work has been undertaken by the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and officers to organise training sessions, secure Council and district data, consider key tools to inform and support Council targets, identify opportunities across Council service areas to take action, and to start to develop joint work and partnerships with other local authorities and organisations.
- 3.5 A series of key actions are proposed for 2020/21 and are outlined in the report. It is proposed that, given the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, priority consideration is given to progressing those actions which can support a green recovery to the effects of the pandemic.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Corporate Plan Aim: To protect and improve the environment and respond to the climate emergency – Objective meeting the challenges of climate change.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 To note the proposed actions at 2.1 and 2.2 above. (Recommended)
- 5.2 To amend the proposed actions.
- 5.3 To take no action. (Not recommended)

6. Implications

6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

No specific implications

6.2 Workforce

No specific issues from the report and recommendation.

6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

No specific issues from the report.

6.4 Financial Considerations

The financial implications of any proposed actions will be considered as part of development of the business case for identified projects, or as part of the strategic reviews outlined at section 7.6 of the report, and included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

6.5 Legal

No specific implications

6.6 Climate Change

The report sets out the approach to development of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

6.7 Consultation

A significant level of staff, stakeholder and community engagement is expected to take place in the process of developing the climate change plan delivering organisational change and project activity.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The expectations of the Council's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the District could far exceed the Council's current powers and resources.

The Council, as with High Peak Borough Council and many other Councils, is seeking to achieve carbon neutrality 20 years sooner than the current UK target date of 2050 – given the key role of Government policy this adds to the challenge.

When setting the Council's climate action plan, including CO2 reduction targets and trajectory, the Council will have to make

some significant assumptions about the impact of future regulatory change and other Government policy interventions.

The Council has not had for some years a specialist officer dedicated to the climate change/sustainability agenda. In relation to specific projects the Council will need to access technical expertise. This could be addressed through partnership work with other authorities and tapping into Government supported initiatives.

Mark Trillo

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**Web Links and
Background Papers**

Committee and other reports referred to within the report

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7. Detail

- 7.1 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement commits the global community to take action to “hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”. Cumulative emissions of CO₂ from human activity are the principal driver of long-term global warming. It is the relationship between CO₂ and global temperatures which means that staying within a given temperature threshold requires that only a certain total quantity of CO₂ is released to the atmosphere. This is the global carbon budget.
- 7.2 The UK Climate Change Act now legislates for a commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with five yearly carbon budgets to set actions and review progress.
- 7.3 On 10th July 2019 recognising the serious threat posed by climate change, the responsibility our institutions, businesses and communities have to eliminate net CO₂ emissions and also the need to take immediate measures to prepare for climate change impacts, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council declared a climate emergency.
- 7.4 Based on analysis by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, Staffordshire Moorland’s ‘fair’ contribution towards the Paris Climate Change Agreement would be to:
1. Stay within a maximum cumulative carbon dioxide emissions budget of 5.0 million tonnes (MtCO₂) for the period of 2020 to 2100. At 2017 CO₂ emission levels, Staffordshire Moorlands would use this entire budget within 7 years from 2020.

2. Initiate an immediate programme of CO2 mitigation to deliver cuts in emissions averaging a minimum of -12.4% per year to deliver a Paris aligned carbon budget. These annual reductions in emissions require national and local action, and could be part of a wider collaboration with other local authorities.
 3. Reach zero or near zero carbon no later than 2043.
- 7.5 Since the declaration of a climate emergency by the Council a number of 'enabling' actions have taken place:
- 7.5.1 Training: (1) Four climate science lectures delivered by Keele University to Members, Parish Councils and Council staff; (2) The Council has an agreement with Keele University to provide training for staff.
 - 7.5.2 Data: (1) The Council has access to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy estimates of carbon emissions by sector (2005 – 2017); (2) The Council has data for fleet vehicles, staff travel and energy supplies but further work is required before detailed analysis of this can take place.
 - 7.5.3 Tools: The Council has access to: (1) Carbon budget tool - produced by the Tyndall Centre and funded by the government this tool identifies the District Carbon budget and CO2 reduction trajectory to align with the UK commitment; (2) SCATTER – a tool being developed to model locally the impact of policy measures by key sectors (business, transport, housing etc.); (3) A form has been created for the Modern Gov. report management system for managers to use to set out the climate change implications of all report recommendations.
 - 7.5.4 Powers, blocks and enablers: All Heads of Service have contributed to an initial assessment of the powers the Council has, the opportunities, the blocks, the potential enablers and the potential for the Council to take action now to reduce greenhouse gases and respond to climate change. Some of the key issues identified are outlined in 7.6 below.
 - 7.5.5 Partnership and Engagement: Discussions involving the Portfolio Holder have taken place and meetings held to lay the foundations for future partnership and joint work on climate change, including the following: 1) Attended a meeting of the Climate Action Group; (2) Spoken to a meeting of the Parish Assembly; (3) Met Cllr Connor Wildman (Staffs CC Cabinet Support Member) and Cabinet Members in Newcastle and Stoke –on-Trent; 4) Met with Mark Gibbons (regional Senior Energy Projects Officer) to explore technical and business support for local projects such as solar farms and EV charge points; 5) Met with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to develop a formal partnership to deliver the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Nature Recovery Network/Wilder Staffordshire Campaign; 6) Met with Professor Zoe Robinson of Keele University to explore the possibility of the University providing expert support to SMDC and other Staffordshire Councils; 7) Hosted the Zero Carbon Britain Course (30th/31st Sept); 8) Attended the inaugural and second meeting

of the Staffordshire Climate Change Network; 9) Meeting with Lafarge to understand their challenges and to secure their engagement; 10) Met with Keith Hollins Chief Executive Officer at Staffordshire University Academies Trust to gain support for the development of the Eco Schools initiative; 11) Canal and Rivers Trust to explore blue belt initiatives; 12) Marshes Hill Common Friends Group to consider how we can further support their work; 13) Met with the Environment minister and MPs to discuss the plans for the Staffordshire Moorlands; 14) Portfolio Holder invited to become a full member of the DEFRA Local Adaptation Advisory Panel; 15) Zoom meeting with 100 local councillors about climate change action post-Covid19; 16) Joined Staffordshire Wildlife Trust sphagnum planting days at The Roaches to restore peatland habitat; 17) Interviewed by Sporting Communities youth panel on climate change; and 18) Engagement with various parish and town councils on their local approach to climate change.

7.5.6 The Council's Climate Change sub-committee has been established and agreed a work programme and timetable

7.6 During 2020 there is a significant opportunity to ensure the Council's commitment to net zero CO₂ emissions is embedded in key plans and policies as they are reviewed or developed. The opportunities identified to date are:

7.6.1 The 10 year fleet replacement programme - this is an opportunity to plan the purchase of more fuel efficient vehicles with an ambition to use Electric Vehicles or non CO₂ producing vehicles towards the end of that period.

7.6.2 Procurement strategy update – this is an opportunity to ensure products and services with zero or lowest greenhouse gas impacts are favoured in purchasing decisions.

7.6.3 Asset Management Strategy – this is an opportunity to consider measures to save energy costs when replacing plant or machinery, energy efficiency measures and possible investment in photovoltaics.

7.6.4 Energy: APO Framework – Total Gas and Power are the Council's current energy suppliers, at the end of the contract period there is an opportunity to consider switching to a green energy supplier.

7.6.5 AES parks management contract – an opportunity to include appropriate action to encourage biodiversity and resilience (e.g. by reducing mowing, encouraging wild flowers and trees).

7.6.6 Treasury Management Strategy – an opportunity to consider investments in green energy and other projects.

7.6.7 A new Facilities Management Contract – an opportunity to consider practices and products that can reduce our CO₂ footprint.

7.6.8 Local Plan, Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan – The next stage, developing from a strategy to a delivery plan, will provide amongst other things: (1) an evidence based assessment of the physical landscape helping to identify the most appropriate sites for tree planting, peatland restoration, enhancing biodiversity, and green corridors to support resilience to climate impacts; (2) the opportunity to deliver schemes both large and small which join up over the years to maximise the benefits of this work.

7.6.9 Transfer of the 12 SMDC countryside parks to the management of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, including a 5 year management plan (including tree planting, habitat enrichment) – taken with the Green Infrastructure Plan this provides an opportunity to build a delivery partnership with Staffordshire’s leading conservation group

7.7 Proposed actions for 2020/21, which will also be considered as appropriate by the Climate Change sub-committee and relevant committees, are as follows – it is recommended that, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, priority consideration is given to those actions which would support a green recovery to the impacts of the pandemic:

7.7.1 Include the key opportunities (7.6 above) to address climate change and include them as part of the commitments in the Climate Change Plan for 2020/21.

7.7.2 Secure data on the Council’s CO2 emissions – travel, buildings, operations and procurement – and use this to inform the Council’s CO2 reduction targets and performance management.

7.7.3 Deliver staff training as required – priorities include training for key staff to be able to assess and report the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the Council’s operations, policies and plans in order to inform decision making.

7.7.4 Undertake investigative work and, where possible, feasibility testing of the most obvious large scale projects which a council might undertake, including:

- Green energy – the potential for Council investment in solar energy projects and wind farms.
- EV charge points.
- Local offsetting of greenhouse gas emissions.

7.7.5 Continue to develop partnerships with other councils (specifically Staffordshire County Council) – seek to use common frameworks, tools (including the Tyndall Centre Carbon Budget tool) and the opportunity to share costs/expertise.

7.7.6 The Council’s Heads of Service to encourage staff over the course of the year to identify and take practical actions to reduce CO2 emissions – by encouraging suggestions, investigating measures, sharing good

practice across the organisation, flagging good ideas which require authorisation.

- 7.7.7 Encourage local community initiatives to tackle climate change – the intention is to establish a small grant fund of £10,000, with the aim of mobilising community support. The grant will be called the Staffordshire Moorlands Community Climate Change Fund. The proposed priorities for the fund in 2020/21 will be the establishment of Eco schools (this will be considered by a separate report after schools return to more normal operation following the Covid-19 pandemic).
- 7.7.8 Support the work of the Council's Climate Change sub-committee and produce a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan within the timescale to ensure agreed measures can be included within the budget for 2021/22.