

SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD – COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

Meeting date: 24th September 2020

From: Angela Jones

Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure Directorate

Update: Cumbria Climate Change Group & Carbon Management

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the work of the Cumbria Climate Change Group, zero carbon Cumbria, the successful Carbon Action Fund Lottery Bid.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an outline of current Carbon Management activity and proposed next steps.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The government is aiming for the UK's carbon emissions to be net zero* by 2050. This target is enshrined in law through the Climate Change Act. Many sectors and organisations are exploring ways to reach net zero earlier than 2050. For example, the National Farmers Union is working with the agricultural sector to develop a plans to be net zero carbon by 2040.

**net zero carbon refers to balancing the amount of CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide) released into the atmosphere with the amount either offset (by planting trees for example) or captured and stored.*

- 2.2 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has set an aim of limiting warming to 1.5C globally. The IPCC is clear that warming beyond this limit would lead to severe impacts on human populations, the natural environment and agriculture.
- 2.3 In April 2019, Cumbria County Council, all six District Councils and the Lake District National Park Authority formally adopted the Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy. Incorporated within this strategy is the following key aim:

To become a “carbon neutral” County and to mitigate the likely impact of existing climate change.

2.4 Responding to increasing concerns about the issue of climate change the Cumbria Climate Change Group was brought together in June 2019 to oversee joint action to achieve the aim set out above.

3.0 The Cumbria Climate Change Group

3.1 The Group came together in June 2019 to begin planning steps towards achieving a net zero carbon for the county.

3.2 The Group reports to the Cumbria Chief Executives Group and Public Health Alliance and provides regular updates into the Cumbria Leaders Board on progress.

3.3 More than 60 organisations have joined the group working closely and in partnership across the public, private and voluntary sectors and span a vast range of disciplines. There is strong representation from community groups and the Cumbria Youth Alliance.

3.4 The key aims of the Climate Change Group are to:

1. Propose a shared definition of “carbon neutral”
2. Propose a target date by which this is to be achieved (that is in line with a maximum warming of 1.5C)
3. Commission an independent baseline carbon audit for the County and agree ongoing monitoring mechanisms
4. Identify leadership for developing action across key topics + sectors
5. Establish a programme of action by key partners
6. Lead joint campaigning to encourage wider public awareness and action.

3.5 A Cumbria carbon baseline report has been completed (see 4.0 below). The group will now focus work around key aim number 4 above to begin mapping out sector specific programmes and action across, transport, energy, business and industry, housing, waste and agriculture.

4.0 Cumbria Carbon Baseline Report

4.1 The group commissioned an independent report setting out Cumbria’s baseline carbon footprint. It provides an assessment of the amount of carbon emitted from different activity in the county such as transport and energy consumption.

- 4.2 The report provides a reference point on which to base future programmes to cut emissions. It sets out a number of scenarios and pathways to achieving a net zero carbon position as a county. 2037 is recommended as a challenging but achievable date that is in line with IPCC recommendations that warming be limited to no more than 1.5C.
- 4.3 Different sectors and organisations will now start to understand their own carbon footprints, set individual and achievable targets and measure progress.

5.0 Climate Action Fund – Lottery Bid

- 5.1 Led by Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) the Climate Change Group has worked together to bring in £2.5m (over 5 years) of funding from the Lottery's Carbon Action Fund. The funding will provide resources to drive work forward supporting the key aim of net zero by 2037.
- 5.2 The funding success has recently been made public and work is beginning to put in place a project programme and timetable.

6.0 Carbon Management Activity – Cumbria County Council

- 6.1 The Council has commenced a number of key activities to support its response to the Climate Change agenda and to meet the net zero carbon target through establishing a baseline and identifying a series of projects and programmes to support this area.
- 6.2 To support the council's approach to Carbon Management/Decarbonisation the key area of policy, particularly relating to planning has seen the introduction of 'environment' within the Senior Manager – Environment and Regulatory Services role indicating the broadening of this role's focus and remit to capture environmental issues including climate change. In addition to this strengthening of the Senior Manager role a clear 'Sustainability' element to the role of the Manager Development Control and Sustainable Development within the Economy and Environment Department has also been introduced with key activity encompassing the pilot Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The introduction of a Corporate Carbon Management/Decarbonisation Team is currently being assessed to support the significant change within the organisation required to deliver a net zero carbon Authority across the entire council.
- 6.3 The Council's Commercial Investment and Property Team has commissioned a Carbon Management Plan for the Council's Corporate Portfolio of land and buildings. This management plan is set to be considered by Cabinet in October and sets out the baseline emissions from the corporate portfolio, key areas of investment to reduce the carbon footprint of the estate and where necessary, opportunities to invest in new

renewable technologies to offset the Council's emissions associated with the corporate estate and an investment plan and programme to achieve a net zero carbon position in the future.

- 6.4 The new Property Asset Management Strategy 2020-2025 to be considered by Cabinet in September establishes a number of key principles relating to the future planning of the Council's significant resource of land and buildings. A key principle focusses on the 'sustainability' of the Council's assets in both design and ultimate disposal. There is a clear emphasis on the need to decarbonise the Council's estate and the adoption of the Carbon Management Strategy as referenced in paragraph 6.3.
- 6.5 A programme of Carbon Literacy is also in development to increase understanding of the Climate Change challenge and the role of the Council, its Members and employees to support the transition to net zero carbon. It is intended to be rolled out later this financial year.
- 6.6 A refreshed Highways Asset Management Strategy 2020-2025 was approved by Cabinet in July 2020. This Strategy recognises the impact of climate change and will ensure that all mitigation measures are considered when dealing with the direct and indirect impact of highways maintenance on the environment and our communities. This includes consideration of whole life carbon costs, appraisal of materials, products and treatments on highways for environmental impact, nature conservation and biodiversity including risk assessment and mitigations for the effects of extreme weather on highways infrastructure assets. A key focus for responding to climate change includes the use of intelligence and data to improve our ability to respond to seasonal and adverse weather events; to increase usage of environmentally friendly and recycled products such as waste plastic; working with partners to improve air quality and reduce our carbon footprint and to explore opportunities for electric vehicle charge points.

7.0 Cumbria LEP – Clean Growth Sector Panel

- 7.1 The LEP has identified the importance of clean growth to the future economy of Cumbria in the draft Local Industrial Strategy. A Clean Growth Sector Panel has been established and a work programme is being developed that identifies the opportunities within Cumbria for low carbon energy generation together with measures for contributing to energy reduction. The most significant opportunities in Cumbria relate to the proposed licensing for off-shore wind investment and potential for new nuclear, including the development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

8.0 Borderlands – Energy

- 8.1 One of the priority themes in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal is 'Encouraging Green Growth'. The aim is to become a carbon neutral region

by adopting a whole system approach to investing in green energy, coupled with plans to maximise the benefit from the outstanding natural resources, to support a vibrant economy driven by clean growth.

- 8.2 An energy masterplan is being progressed to support the development of this ambition. £1.1m is being invested through the Deal for the development of the Borderlands Strategic Low Carbon Energy Master Plan (BSLCEMP). The purpose of the master plan is to provide the strategic direction, develop a framework to guide investment decisions and a platform for engagement to underpin the Borderlands ambition of economic growth driven by an energy transition and becoming an early adopter of a net zero carbon region in the UK before 2045. The procurement process is underway to appoint consultants to undertake the masterplanning work.

9.0 Cumbria Transport and Infrastructure Plan (CTIP)

- 9.1 Working jointly with Cumbria LEP, a new transport and infrastructure plan is to be developed over the coming months. The emerging objectives of the CTIP are:

- Clean and Healthy Cumbria - Promoting the role of active travel and digital infrastructure as an enabler of sustainable economic growth.
- Connected Cumbria – Making the case for improved transport networks across and to Cumbria in order to support economic growth and opportunities for businesses and communities.
- Community Cumbria – Promoting integrated approaches to transport, supporting opportunity and renewal within towns and communities across Cumbria

- 9.2 Decarbonisation and improving sustainable travel infrastructure to enable modal shift away from the car will be an important aspect of the CTIP with a particular focus on cycling and walking infrastructure. To support this, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are to be developed for Barrow, Carlisle, Penrith, Kendal, Whitehaven and Workington.

10.0 Environment and Regulation

- 10.1 Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership (CSWP) – the joint partnership leading on waste management across the County including the County Council and the 6 District Councils. Climate Change and Carbon Management is a Priority 1 activity on the work programme for the CSWP:

- Close relationship secured with Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) and locality groups including coordination of projects which examine the environmental impact and contribution of waste and resources
- Relevant information flow, and close working relationship with the Waste and Recycling workstream of CCWG

10.2 Waste Reduction programme – a key aim of the programme is to reduce the amount of waste produced in Cumbria through reduced material use, promoting greater product re-use, and improving recycling rates. As well as waste reduction there is an inherent requirement to reduce carbon emissions:

- To reduce food waste through increased awareness of food waste management techniques;
- To reduce garden waste through increased composting at home;
- To reduce bulky waste through increase reuse and repair of household items;
- To reduce textile waste through increase reuse and repair of clothing.
- Support business to develop products and services which support a circular economy

Linking carbon management activities with waste reduction and the public health priorities.

10.3 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) – The Environment Bill (2019-2021) published on 30 January 2020 introduced new statutory requirements for local authorities to deliver biodiversity net gain and also to produce Local Nature Recovery Strategies. It supports delivery of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan (January 2018) which includes a commitment to develop a Nature Recovery Network.

On 21st July 2020 DEFRA announced they will be investing over £1m this year in 5 Local Nature Recovery Strategy areas. The County Council has been asked to act as the Responsible Authority for the Cumbria LNRS pilot. The key elements of the work to be undertaken are the mapping of local habitat and species data; producing a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities; producing a Local Habitat Map identifying suitable locations for delivery of identified outcomes. It is expected that the work will be completed with the Evaluation Report by March/April 2021.

10.4 Planning for the Future – White Paper 2020 – currently out for consultation. The paper sets out 24 different proposals in a radical reform of the current planning system, headed under three pillars of – Planning for Development; Planning for Beautiful and Sustainable Places; Planning for Infrastructure and Connected Places.

Local Plans will be required to zone areas as either Growth, Renewal or Protected. The requirements for sustainability appraisal and environmental assessment will be made simpler.

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Appendices

No appendices.

Previous Relevant Council or Executive Decisions

No previous relevant decisions.

Background Papers

No background papers.

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