

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 12 April 2022

Subject of Report: Climate Emergency Progress Report

Town or Parish: All

Member Presenting: Executive Member of Climate Emergency and Engagement

Key Decision: No

Reason: Not an Executive Decision

Recommendations

- Members note the progress with specific initiatives within the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan
- Members note the proposal for an update to the Climate Emergency and Action Plan update, and provide any comments.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 The report provides a progress update on a few key activities related to the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. An annotated version of the climate emergency action plan, giving brief descriptions of progress is attached to this document (Annex 1).
- 1.2 Embedding Climate Action across the whole organisation is progressing well, however, monitoring policy changes and climate actions against greenhouse gas emissions is still challenging (this is seen locally and globally).
- 1.3 The North Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan is now over two years old and much has changed since that time. It is therefore appropriate to update the plan and this work will be concluded in time for the next six month progress report. Work will not pause during that time.
- 1.4 While a progress report is produced every six months, updated emissions data for North Somerset Council and area are produced once annually due to data availability. These will next be included in the next six-monthly update, however the following paragraphs give a recap on emissions data and core messages from the [previous progress report](#).
- 1.5 Emissions for North Somerset Council's own operations have seen a year-on-year decrease. Total Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions have reduced by 23% since the 2018/19 financial year. Those emissions within our Scope 1 and 2 target have decreased by 42%.

- 1.6 Emissions estimates for the area of North Somerset currently only go to 2019, they rely on publicly available datasets. This means that it is not possible yet to observe the impact of our Climate Emergency declaration or strategy. However, between 2005 and 2019, very little reduction has been observed in North Somerset, and most of the change can be attributed to improvements made to the electricity grid. It is clear that significantly more work is required to change current trends.
- 1.7 Emissions for the area of North Somerset continue to decrease but not at a fast enough rate. The main cause for reduced emissions is the reduction in carbon intensity of grid supplied electricity. Road transport remains the largest single sector, with emissions tending to increase over time.
- 1.8 For the area of North Somerset, 43% of greenhouse gas emissions are due to Transport, 24% are domestic emissions and 24% are non-domestic (commercial, industrial and public sector). The remaining 9% is split between Waste, Agriculture and Land Use. Transport is a key sector for emissions reductions for a number of reasons:
- it has very high emissions which have stayed high for a long time;
 - the technology to significantly reduce emissions already exists
 - walking, cycling, public transport and electric vehicles
 - investment is required to make these more accessible but less than for decarbonisation of all buildings
 - the significant co-benefits of reducing the number of polluting cars on the roads
 - improved air quality – currently an estimated 40,000 people die a year in the UK due to air pollution
 - improved health and wellbeing from active travel
 - increased footfall in local businesses where walking supported
- 1.9 Behavioural change is going to be an important factor in significantly reducing emissions in North Somerset, and across the UK. This means that we cannot rely entirely on low carbon fuels and technologies. The Committee on Climate Change estimate that nearly 60% of the changes needed rely on societal and behavioural changes. Engaging with our businesses and communities will be crucial in this.

2. Policy

North Somerset Council declared a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and part of this motion included reporting to Council every six months on progress. In November 2019, we published the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan and in February 2020, we published the Corporate Plan 2020-24; choosing the term 'greener' as one of three key themes. This means that we will include climate change as a deciding factor in all policy and strategy decisions going forward.

Budget approval made in February Full Council meeting have recognised the commitment to addressing the nature and climate emergency. A number of these projects are aimed at adapting to climate change – reducing and preparing for the impacts – rather than reducing greenhouse gas emissions. To summarise, this included the following:

- Buying land to develop a number of North Somerset nature parks for wildlife and biodiversity to thrive. In addition to helping our protected species flourish the land will be a valuable recreational and educational resource.
- Funding more work on Weston super pond at Weston Villages to reduce flood risk further in the area, giving homes a better level of protection.

- Funding more active travel initiatives which will benefit cyclists and encourage a better mix of travel options in neighbourhoods.
- Work planned to maintain sea defences in the coming year at Clevedon and Weston.
- Funding work to reduce emissions from Council buildings and seeking sustainable suppliers for Council energy use.
- Investing additional funding into a sales re-use recycle area at Backwell recycling centre to maximise the environmental benefits of the scheme.

In the last year, a number of policies and strategies have been developed and updated which support responding to the Climate Emergency, some key examples below:

- The **Recycling and Waste Strategy** was adopted in February 2022. Reducing the amount of waste produced by following the waste hierarchy and progressing towards a circular economy, where waste is treated as a valuable resource rather than disposed of will support our transition to being a zero carbon area.
- The **Active Travel Strategy** was adopted in July 2021. The aim of the ATS is to create a 10-year plan to enable, promote and increase walking, cycling and other active travel modes such as running, wheeling and scooting. It sets out an aspiration for active travel in North Somerset which is encapsulated by the vision statement for this Active Travel Strategy: 'Making walking and cycling the natural choice for a cleaner, healthier and more active North Somerset'.
- North Somerset Council now uses updated **Climate Emergency Procurement Plan Guidance**. The Council spends around £140m per year with suppliers and many of the services that we provide are delivered through these suppliers. There is therefore a huge opportunity for Procurement and Contract Managers to support the Council's resolution and Strategy. The Procurement Plan is a key stage in the procurement process and sets out the detail of how the procurement will operate. This is the stage in the process where environmental risk and opportunities should be considered.
- The **Parking Standards** Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in November 2021. It requires a level of electric vehicle charging infrastructure to be provided at all new developments in North Somerset which puts North Somerset ahead of both national government initiatives, as well as the majority of other Local Authorities. It also introduced a 'Parking Needs Assessment' which looks to promote low-car developments in sustainable locations by incentivising developers to deliver excellent Active and Public Transport provision in exchange for a lower number of parking spaces. It also included the promotion of car club vehicles and far more extensive cycle parking guidance in line with LTN 1/20, as well as greater numbers of cycle parking spaces at residential development, to ensure that alternatives to private vehicle ownership are as attractive as possible.
- North Somerset Council is preparing a new **Local Plan** with a 15 year plan period 2023-2038. Once adopted it will replace the current development plan which comprises the Core Strategy, Site Allocations Plan and Development Management Policies and which has an end date of 2026. The **Local Plan Preferred Options** document will be consulted on between March – April 2022. Promotion of sustainable development and addressing the climate emergency are at the heart of the Local Plan strategic priorities.

North Somerset Council is also working closely with the West of England Combined Authority. The Combined Authority are currently updating their Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. The West of England Transport Decarbonisation Study is due to be published on the 8th April 2022.

3. Details

3.1 Highlights of last six months:

3.1.1 Care Home Innovation and Sustainability Grant

The Innovation and Sustainability Grant is a good example of innovative partnership working. Regular engagement between the Adult Social Care team and residential and nursing homes highlighted the main concerns providers had relating to the recovery from the pandemic.

A fund of £600,000 was ringfenced for residential homes and nursing homes to apply for funding to help with projects relating to the three major themes of - innovation, climate emergency or community asset. Bids were invited between November and December 2021 and 18 of the 64 applications received related to climate emergency action. Bids included the following projects:

- 9 providers looking for solar panels
- Smart heating controls
- Electric vehicles and charging points
- Loft insulation
- Window replacement to improve insulation and energy efficient appliances
- Whole Home energy efficiencies project
- Electric bikes for staff

Some providers have also requested newer, more efficient boilers and we are working with them to ensure non fossil fuel boilers and improved energy efficiency are considered first where possible.

This is a demonstration of our action plan commitment to work with our contractors and service providers to support them in reducing their carbon footprint, take advantage of renewable energy sources, consider an electric fleet, and reduce their use of single-use plastic.

3.1.2 Pier to Pier cycle path

Construction work has begun to build missing sections of the keenly awaited cycle route between Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare. The £3.1m Pier to Pier Way, which is jointly funded by North Somerset Council, National Highways, Department for Transport via Sustrans and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, is set to open in the summer.

The Pier to Pier Way will provide an important active travel route, that will welcome walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, and is expected to serve 70,000 one-way trips a year. It is estimated that this will result in approximately 145 tonnes of CO₂ savings every year.

This is a demonstration of our action plan commitment to develop and secure funding for projects to grow the walking and cycling network across the district.

3.1.3 SEE Monster

This one of a kind installation and user experience will be a showcase for renewable energy generation, a learning environment about weather and demonstrating the first ever re-use of a North Sea oil platform to be on land and for free public access. To host this in Weston-super-Mare is an opportunity to lead and champion action on climate change and low carbon lifestyle. Work has begun to ensure the event has a lasting legacy for its community in Weston, and that the user experience is in keeping with a council who has declared a climate emergency and takes the responsibility seriously as a visitor experience.

3.1.4 Winterstoke Hundred Academy Expansion

The project is to provide additional pupil places through the delivery of a new secondary school. This will meet the growing need for pupil places in North Somerset as a result of general population increases and to factor in potential housing developments. The project will target net zero carbon in regulated energy¹, a 10% biodiversity net gain and BREEAM excellent, which is only achieved by the top 10% of projects.

The following are the key measures which have been incorporated into this design to achieve this

Reduce demand

- The building form has been optimized for heat load reduction
- The u-values have been optimized for heat loss reduction and overheating prevention
- Operable window strategies are employed to cool the spaces in the summer

Increase efficiency

- LEDs are specified throughout the school
- Daylight and occupancy sensors have been included to reduce the lighting load
- Heat recovery has been added to the classroom ventilation systems to decrease the heating load
- Air source heat pumps are employed to provide the low temperature hot water.

Renewable Energy

- PV panels are to be added to the roof to cover at least 15% of the regulated energy.

3.1.5 UK Community Renewal Fund

North Somerset Council, in partnership with local organisations, received more than £2.8m of government funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund.

Enabling Thriving Places in North Somerset is one of four projects delivering this investment in skills, communities and businesses, and supporting people into employment.

£672,562 was awarded to deliver a placemaking research project. This will inform the interventions, projects and spaces to build social fabric, boost recovery and resilience, and create places where people want to work, visit and live. The project includes a decarbonisation feasibility study programme across schools, leisure and public buildings which is taking place in partnership with Bristol City Council.

The decarbonisation programme also includes engagement work with those building management teams and local residents. A [competition](#) will be running during until the end of April to win a whole house retrofit plan with the Centre for Sustainable Energy's Future Proof team discussing home retrofit at events across North Somerset. Residents will be able to enter the competition online or in our libraries. The Future Proof team will be attending the following events:

- Clevedon Market – 7th April

¹ Regulated emissions are those arising from the operation of the building systems, i.e. heating, cooling, ventilation (emissions which can be controlled at the design stage) as opposed to unregulated emissions which are those arising from items plugged into the wall which the design team can have no control over

- Eat:Weston – 9th April
- Nailsea Farmers Market – 16th April
- Portishead Library Earth Day event – 22nd April

The Enabling Thriving Places in North Somerset project reflects our commitment to becoming a carbon neutral council through reducing emissions in Council buildings and working with service providers to reduce theirs as well as our commitment to reducing emissions from the built environment through working with schools and residents to improve energy efficiency in existing buildings.

3.2 Become a Net Zero Carbon Council:

3.2.1 Carbon Literacy

The Climate Emergency Action Plan states that the council needs to take a leadership role across the area to encourage, support and enable others to reduce carbon emissions.

One of the ways North Somerset Council is meeting this challenge is by bringing Carbon Literacy training to members and officers across the Council, ensuring that everyone is aware of the risks and opportunities of climate change in their day-to-day activities. The training has received fantastic feedback. In December 2020, the Council was awarded the Carbon Literacy Bronze Award which is a visible 'badge' that shows we are both committed to Carbon Literacy and serious about establishing and maintaining a low carbon culture.

This year we set targets within the Annual Directorate Statement commitments for 15% of the workforce to become Carbon Literate and 100% of senior officers to have received the training. The training was also used to produce directorate action plans which are now being finalised to be written into the directorate commitments for the coming year. Almost 15% of the workforce have now taken the course.

The feedback received most often on Carbon Literacy training is whether we can deliver it to residents and businesses within our communities. The Community Renewal Fund (CRF) Enabling Thriving Places programme includes Carbon Literacy training for community groups which will be delivered between April and June 2022. We are also delivering a pilot programme of Carbon Literacy and Carbon Monitoring to local businesses, which began in March 2022.

3.2.2 North Somerset Council owned buildings

Decarbonisation of the Council's own buildings is an important priority. Decarbonisation is the term used to encompass work to reduce energy use of a building and stop the use of fossil fuels for heating. This might include the introduction of renewable energy generation, but the priority is to reduce energy consumption first. Energy efficiency improvements will begin shortly, following audits completed 2020/21. Energy efficiency improvements will reduce energy costs as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

The CRF Enabling Thriving Places programme includes the production of decarbonisation plans for 25 buildings including leisure centres, schools and other public buildings. This work will be complete by June 2022 and will enable investment into the decarbonisation of our buildings.

A decarbonisation road map is currently being commissioned for North Somerset Council's own estate. This will enable decarbonisation projects – such as improved

insulation and replacement of gas boilers with renewable technologies – to be planned alongside routine maintenance and improvement work.

The libraries team have been successful in their bid to Arts Council England / Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport for funds for capital improvements at Clevedon Library. The work will include measures to help lower the carbon footprint on site, as well as to transform the library to enable more flexible use of the space and facilitate community hub development. Environmental sustainability of the site will be improved through installation of energy saving improvements to include replacing gas heating with an air-sourced carbon efficient system, replacing lighting with LED alternatives and improving loft insulation. An estimated 50% reduction in energy consumption is predicted. The project helps the Library Service to meet the objectives set out in the Libraries Strategy 2021-31, which includes a response to the Climate Emergency

3.2.3 Ecosia Search Engine

During COP26 in November, internal North Somerset Council communications placed an emphasis on climate action. We took part in Carbon Literacy Action Day, training a number of staff and councillors; staff shared their own experiences and progress with reducing carbon emissions and we held an all staff webinar looking at various actions happening across the area.

A change was also made to the search engine used on North Somerset Council systems. We now use <https://www.ecosia.org/>, which is a search engine that uses advertising revenue generated by internet searches to plant trees where they are needed most.

There are over 15 million worldwide active users already using Ecosia as their search engine of choice, and as a result over 136million trees have been planted, at more than 9,000 planting sites around the world. Up until the end of February 2022, over 180 trees had been planted as a result of North Somerset Council's Ecosia searches.

3.3 An energy efficient built environment

3.3.1 Business Support

From January to March 2022, companies in North Somerset were invited to book a free package of business carbon support made up of Carbon Literacy training, a carbon baseline assessment report and carbon reduction plan. The support was specifically designed for small to medium sized enterprises and will help businesses to understand:

- climate change and what it means for their business
- measures to understand and calculate greenhouse gas emissions
- actions to reduce emissions.

A total of 17 businesses are being supported with over 200 employees through this support programme.

North Somerset business can also currently apply for the third round of Green Business Grants through the West of England Combined Authority. Green Business Grants help small and medium enterprises make energy-saving improvements to their buildings and business operations. The grants of up to £15,000 pay for 50% of eligible capital costs.

As part of the LGA's Economic Growth Advisers Programme, a team from Eunomia are supporting development of the action plan to support North Somerset's SMEs' green economic recovery. In Autumn 2020, North Somerset Council adopted a new Economic Plan. Three foundations underpin the 16 commitments that we hope will deliver economic renewal and growth. One of the key foundations is that economic recovery in North Somerset should be 'green'.

The main objectives of this work are for North Somerset Council to understand which SME sectors have the highest carbon emissions and are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; and to own a tangible action plan of SME engagement to understand how the Council can enable reduction of the emissions within different sectors, adoption of net zero pledge and investment in future skills to support business growth. The outputs of this work are due to be complete in March 2022.

3.3.2 Improvement to domestic properties

The **Green Homes Grant** (LAD1b) scheme has been extended to June 22 and North Somerset Council has received additional funds for a further 24 park home improvements.

Retrofit – the challenges of accelerating a retrofit programme are acknowledged i.e. contractor numbers, training providers, builders merchant supply issues, retrofit coordination & householder technical advice and support, business growth and local authority roles. Encouragingly, sub-regional work has started through work with both the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to build the local supply chain. The work to establish the various building blocks will take time but its critical each element is sufficiently advanced with capacity before delivering a programme.

It's estimated around 250,000 homes across the West of England require measures to achieve net zero carbon emissions.

CSE net zero homes – the next steps involve mapping demand, funding and training opportunities leading to driving growth across sectors e.g. apprenticeships and the long term coordination and design of process.

WECA Capacity Building Fund has funded the recruitment of Domestic Retrofit Caseworker solely for North Somerset Council which will considerably enhance our work locally. The funding includes training which will increase technical expertise which can be applied to own stock also. Supporting future funding bids will be valuable.

North Somerset Council has commissioned a **Stock Condition Survey** which includes a specific energy model to focus on mapping interventions based on property type, income and carbon reductions. The report is due Spring 2022.

A draft **Housing Strategy** has been developed which includes home energy projects; a sub-regional Retrofit Strategy; an Affordable Warmth Delivery Plan, Private Rented Sector intervention.

The ongoing energy cost crisis has increased number of households in fuel poverty; therefore, providing additional support to Warmer Homes, Advice and Money (WHAM) has been priority. The CCG have been approached for further funding to target fuel poor households to improve home energy efficiency. Short term funding to help with costs does nothing to reduce carbon, better insulated homes is the answer.

Greater focus on promoting and education of home energy improvements will be encouraged, subject to resources.

3.4 Renewable energy generation

3.4.1 Renewable Energy Consultation

Six North Somerset town and parish councils are currently taking part in a detailed engagement process. Led by **Centre for Sustainable Energy** they reached out to local communities to identify projects that they would welcome, and the sort of ownership and development structures that could be controlled, to some extent, by planning policy. The parishes – Nailsea, Tickenham, Yatton, Kenn, Congresbury and Puxton – were selected due to the potential for wind turbines. The engagement process seeks to increase the participants' knowledge and awareness of the design, development and installation of renewables through the production of a community energy plan, which outlines the mix of energy generation and energy saving technologies that they think is appropriate for their area. This in-depth intervention has three phases, and is delivered over several days, which allows the participants time to process complex decisions, reflect and test their views with friends, family and colleagues, and build comprehensive conclusions. Find out more here:

<https://communityenergyplan.commonplace.is/>

3.4.2 Solar Together

In autumn 2021, North Somerset Council took part in the WECA Solar Together scheme. Solar Together is a bulk buying scheme which allows residents to purchase rooftop solar PV installations at a reduced rate.

The whole scheme, which ran across North Somerset, Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire [will have] resulted in over 1,300 installations including solar PV and additional battery storage where residents already had PV installed. In North Somerset, 292 solar PV installations took place including 173 which included battery storage and an additional 53 batteries were installed in other homes.

It is estimated that these installations will lead to savings of over 300 tonnes CO₂e per year in North Somerset. WECA and the Unitary Authorities are currently reviewing feedback received from residents and other performance indicators to decide whether to repeat the scheme in future rounds.

3.5 Repair, reuse, reduce and recycle

3.5.1 Waste Strategy

North Somerset Council adopted a new Recycling and Waste Strategy in February 2022. The key principle of the waste strategy is to reduce waste with minimal environmental impact. North Somerset achieved a recycling rate of 60.6% in 2019/20 (percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting), which placed North Somerset Council in the top 10 for recycling rates in England and the highest in the South West. We want to increase this recycling rate to 70% by 2030 while also significantly reducing the amount of residual waste produced and sending none of that residual kerbside collected waste to landfill by the end of 2022.

Reducing the amount of waste produced by following the waste hierarchy and progressing towards a circular economy, where waste is treated as a valuable resource rather than disposed of will support our transition to being a zero carbon area.

There is still more progress to be made in encouraging more residents to take up food waste recycling which is estimated to be 27% of the average household black/general waste bin.

3.6 Replenish our carbon stores

3.6.1 Green Infrastructure Strategy

The North Somerset Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy has now been adopted. The overall aim of the Strategy is to protect and enhance the GI network within North Somerset, in order to maximise the multiple benefits (ecosystem services) that the natural environment delivers, which are essential to the survival and wellbeing of humanity, and also in helping to tackle the nature and climate emergency. It aims to raise awareness of the importance and multiple benefits of GI and sets out actions (within an Action Plan) that can be undertaken by the Council and partners to both protect and enhance GI.

Simply put, the protection, enhancement and provision of GI should ensure that green spaces are bigger, better and more joined up which will help us all address the Climate and Nature emergency in North Somerset.

3.7 Reduce emissions from transport

3.7.1 Vehicle to Grid (V2G) Trial

This cutting-edge work Vehicle to Grid is part of the next step in energy supply management. In 2021 North Somerset Council commissioned a Government funded project with Cenex and Virta called Vehicle to Grid (V2G). V2G charger technology enables the option to sell surplus electricity from our NSC Nissan vehicle batteries back to the electricity grid, helping to supply energy at times of peak demand. At peak times, the grid sometimes has to increase the amount of fossil fuels used to produce electricity, so V2G chargers can reduce this. Car batteries can be charged and discharged based on different signals — such as energy production or consumption nearby.

Following the trial period from October to December 2021, it is estimated that with 15 vehicle to grid chargers, North Somerset Council could reduce emissions by a total of 42 tonnes CO_{2e} per year through a combination of replacing petrol/diesel miles with electric and exporting electricity during peak times.

3.7.2 Gritters running on Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO)

North Somerset road gritters, as well as other highway support vehicles, plant and tools, now run on Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO). Using HVO in place of diesel reduces the greenhouse gas emissions associated with fuel use by approximately 90% and an expected 150 tonnes CO_{2e} will be saved each year through this measure. HVO also burns more cleanly meaning a reduction in air pollutant emissions and vehicle maintenance. This measure has been tried and tested by some other local authorities but this is a first for North Somerset. There may be some opportunities to extend this to other vehicles in the future.

3.7.3 Banwell Bypass – approach to carbon

Banwell Bypass is being designed and planned PAS2080, which is the standard for carbon management in infrastructure. Embodied or construction phase Carbon is

being calculated using the National Highways Carbon Tool and is based upon measurements of the design.

Carbon emissions from the use of the road is being calculated using the DEFRA Emissions Factors Toolkit and is based upon the traffic modelling. Carbon is considered on a regular basis as the design is being progressed and is a key part of all design decisions.

We have calculated the carbon footprint twice so far:

- A high level estimate was made during options assessment to help inform the decision on bypass route;
- A baseline estimate was made based upon the details of the bypass that were included in the tender for the contract.

These estimates have helped to identify the parts of the design that produced the most carbon and where carbon savings can be made in design. Examples to minimise embodied carbon include reducing earthworks volumes by designing a single carriageway road rather than a dual carriageway and by building the cycleway at the toe of the highway embankment, minimising lighting of the road.

We will calculate further carbon footprints

- at planning submission so that we can assess the success of the design in reducing the carbon footprint
- at the end of detailed design; and
- at the end of construction to confirm how successful measures in construction have been.

3.7.4 Proposals and consultations for Weston residents

As part of a changing era for town centres, North Somerset Council has been consulting with residents, visitors and businesses on a new vision planned around residential streets across Weston's town centre. The new proposals, covering between Alfred Street, Ashcombe Road, Locking Road and Gerard/Milton Road, will look at:

- Reducing traffic speeds, for safer streets
- Introducing parking measures, offering better resident access
- Improvements for greener streets, with better walking and cycling routes

A number of engagement events have already taken place both indoors and outdoors looking at local issues and design ideas. Online consultation is running between late February and March.

3.8 Adapting to climate change

3.8.1 LGA Adaptation Toolkit

The UK average surface temperature has already warmed by 1.2°C since the pre-industrial period, and is predicted to warm further by mid-century, even under an ambitious decarbonisation scenario. It is important that climate action in North Somerset is not restricted to reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also to preparing for and adapting to changes in our climate.

In January 2022, the Local Government Association released a new Local Authority Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit to support. North Somerset Council are now working with this toolkit to develop and update existing climate change adaptation

plans. These plans will help to improve the resilience of Council services and North Somerset communities in the coming decades.

3.8.2 Flood Risk Management Plans

The Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy was published in 2020. Consultation of Flood Risk Management Plans by the Environment Agency is now complete and will be published soon. Local Flood Risk Management Strategy including a Flood Resilient North Somerset module is being developed.

3.9 Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan Update

The North Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan is now over two years old and much has changed since that time. It is therefore appropriate to update the plan and this work will be concluded in time for the September six month progress report. Work will not pause during that time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen dramatic and widespread changes across the world, with reduced travel, increased homes working and economic impacts on residents and businesses everywhere.

Internationally, we saw the UN Conference of the Parties (COP26) in 2021 where countries agreed to an annual ramping up of ambition as opposed to the previous five year cycle. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has released parts of its Sixth Assessment Report, showing the climate change is widespread, rapid and intensifying. This report will be complete during 2022. Nationally, the Government has adopted the sixth carbon budget and published the Net Zero Strategy and Transport Decarbonisation Plan and various other plans and strategies relating to decarbonisation. The Committee on Climate Change have released reports showing that the UK is off target with delivering on its ambition climate promises and has not moved quickly enough on climate change adaptation.

Locally, and regionally many things have also changed, not least the mobilisation of North Somerset Council staff to responding to the Climate Emergency. Understanding across the council of the part that we can play in implementing and influencing climate action has increased during this time. The Council has also been working closely with neighbouring authorities and the West of England Combined Authority and shared learning can be incorporated into any update.

This year has also seen the publication of a league table of local authority climate action plans. While not all of the feedback from this scoring system was accurate, it has provided North Somerset Council with some useful feedback and will be used to inform our update.

3.9.1 Feedback from Climate Emergency UK League Table

Climate Emergency UK is a group which exists to support UK Local Authorities which have declared a climate emergency and are developing and updating action plans to deliver on their ambitions. They are currently focusing on creating a database of UK Local Authority climate & ecological emergency declarations and action plans to help interested parties quickly identify best practice.

The scoring system developed by Climate Emergency UK looked at the published plan at a single moment in time and didn't take into account the wide range of successful council projects already under way which are reducing carbon emissions across North Somerset.

It is difficult to compare the action being taken by councils across the UK as they each have their own approach to tackle climate change, but highlighting the need for everyone to act now is the right message. However, the results of the analysis give us good insight to required changes and have helped to identify opportunities where we can learn from other councils.

3.9.2 Outline of the Updated Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan

The updated plan will be presented as a formal strategy document with more explanation of the why we are prioritising responding to the Climate Emergency:

- The implications of climate change on a local, national and international scale
- The impact climate change is having on the most vulnerable in our communities
- The scale of the response required to meet national and international commitments
- The co-benefits of climate action

The updated plan will remove reference to the seven key principles as laid out in the original plan; these principles do not align with all of the work required to respond to the Climate Emergency. Instead, the following themes will be introduced, subject to further development. These align more closely with work required, planned and currently underway as well as with plans of our neighbouring authorities.

- Cross-cutting actions & Council organisation
- Transport
- Buildings / Built Environment
- Business & skills
- Renewable Energy
- Resources & waste
- Green infrastructure, Carbon Sequestration & Nature Recovery
- Adaptation & Resilience

The plan will include a section for each theme with an explanation of the relevant emissions, vulnerabilities and opportunities for that theme. At the end of each section there will be a table of actions which will include an explanation of the action, co-benefits of the action, named team / committee responsible for the action and SMART targets. There will also be a table showing progressed and completed actions and an explanation of whether an action is discrete or continuous – for example a discrete action may be to complete a specific active travel scheme and a continuous action might be to support schools to encourage active travel.

3.9.3 Improved monitoring, reporting and decision making

The current action plan format does not easily support progress reporting. Monitoring the success of climate policy and action against changes in emissions is a considerable challenge across the world. The Committee on Climate Change estimates that 60% of the changes required in their “Balance Pathway” towards Net Zero rely on societal or behavioural changes and these types of changes are particularly difficult to monitor.

The updated action plan will need to identify different measures of success and methods of reporting progress – for example:

- Quantitative emissions reporting – this is the overall change we are aiming for. However, for the area of North Somerset these can only be reported on annually, and with a two year lag so earlier signalling is required.

- Quantitative activity reporting – things which will have a direct impact on greenhouse gas emissions – for example the amount of energy consumed or miles driven– these can be reported on more regularly but bespoke data collection may be required.
- Quantitative action reporting – things which will have an indirect impact on emissions – for example the number of businesses receiving sustainable business training, the number of renewable installations or homes insulated.
- Qualitative progress reporting – progress on specific projects and changes.

Where possible target dates will be defined, and quantitative targets will be identified using local or national research. Many of these are either already in place or in development, but will be laid out clearly within the updated Climate Emergency Action Plan.

A North Somerset Council Programme Management Office is currently under development and one of the objectives for the office is to improve the climate governance in individual project delivery and service planning. To ensure that all projects are delivered with emissions reduction and climate resilience at their core. One method that is being considered for making these improvements is the Cornwall Decision Wheel which is based on Doughnut Economics. This means that environmental impacts such as greenhouse gas emissions, climate adaptation, and biodiversity are considered alongside human impacts such as fuel poverty, community and equalities. The wheel is currently being reviewed and adapted to North Somerset requirements and will be trialled in the coming few months.

4. Consultation

Updates on progress have been sought from the Officers Working Group as well as other relevant officers. This report has been shared with the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Engagement and the Director of Place. Feedback was sought from the Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy Scrutiny Panel; the Climate Emergency Steering Group and the Cross Party Climate Emergency Working Group before Full Council in April.

5. Financial Implications

This report is for progress update only, there are no financial implications.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

This report is for progress update only, there are no legal implications.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The details in this report relate directly to the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. Projects described within this report and Annex 1, aim to support the transition to a zero carbon Council and area, through reduction of fossil fuel consumption; increasing renewable energy generation and improving communications and awareness around the Climate Crisis.

8. Risk Management

As projects are developed, detailed risk appraisals will be undertaken to anticipate and mitigate barriers to delivery. There will inevitably need to be consideration of risks and the agreement of compromises to achieve overall ambitions for North Somerset.

9. Equality Implications

No specific Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this progress update. However, Climate Emergency actions decisions will be assessed individually as required.

10. Corporate Implications

The Climate Emergency is a cross-cutting issue and a corporate priority; it is a key priority within the Corporate Plan and impacts everything the council does. It will be at the forefront of any future transformation programmes.

11. Options Considered

The February 2019 motion specifically required the preparation of a report on how to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. The council has chosen to prepare a positive Action Plan that identifies a set of initiatives, projects and policy changes that can help achieve that ambition.

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Appendices:

Annex 1 – North Somerset Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress April 2022

Background Papers:

Climate Emergency Strategy:

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-02/North%20Somerset%20climate%20emergency%20strategy%202019.pdf>

Climate Emergency Action Plan:

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-02/North%20Somerset%20climate%20emergency%20action%20plan.pdf>

Climate Emergency Baseline Evidence reports:

https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Climate%20Emergency%20Baseline%20Report%20-%20July2020_0.pdf

https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Climate%20Emergency%20Baseline%20Report%20-%20July2020_0.pdf

Previous progress report:

https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s1530/21%20Council%20Report%20NSC%20ClimateEmergencyProgressSept2021_Final.pdf