

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of meeting: 8th November 2022

Subject of report: Climate Emergency Action Plan update and 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 approve the updated Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan (subject to final editorial amendments by officers), and:

- Re-confirm their commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2030 through the actions described.
- Note the Action Plan information on carbon emissions and progress on existing projects to tackle climate change, which are also summarised in this report.
- Endorse the development of a Climate Performance dashboard that will be used to monitor progress on the Action Plan.
- Request that the Executive Member write to the new prime minister and relevant minister to:
 - Confirm our commitment in local government to action on climate change;
 - Reiterate the council's opposition to fracking and urge the government to reverse their recent decisions on this issue;
 - Seek that they take seriously the role of central government in properly funding a transition away from fossil fuels;
 - Request increased, longer-term funding for other actions to enable a low carbon economy and healthy community.

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 The report sets out proposals for an updated Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. It requests that elected members approve the document and re-confirm their commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2030 through the actions described. Progress updates on emissions and current projects are provided for context.

1.2 Information is provided on a new Climate Performance dashboard that will be used to monitor progress on the Action Plan and which will be publicly available via the council's website. Members are asked to endorse this dashboard.

2. Policy

2.1 The proposals in this report support the council's Corporate Plan vision of becoming a 'greener' council which will "*lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.*" This vision is underpinned by a priority action of becoming a carbon neutral council and area by 2030.

3. Details

3.1 Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan:

3.1.1 In November 2019, North Somerset Council published a Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. Progress updates have been provided to Council on a six-monthly basis since that date.

3.1.2 Following feedback on the existing plan, Council agreed in March 2022 that an update was required. The purpose of the update is to respond to internal and external feedback and commentary on the original document, and:

- To reflect national and local changes and progress made since 2019.
- To create a document that more effectively communicates the reasons for our prioritisation of the climate emergency and what we are doing to tackle it.
- To ensure that the principles and themes in the document align with all of the work required. This includes the addition of a new theme of low carbon business and skills.
- To improve our ability to report and monitor progress.

3.1.3 The updated Strategy and Action Plan has been created primarily through internal consultation and is attached for review at Appendix A.

3.1.4 Key principles of the Action Plan, each underpinned by a suite of actions, are:

- To become a net zero carbon council
- Decarbonise transport
- Decarbonise the built environment
- Low carbon business and skills
- Renewable energy generation
- Resource and waste
- Adaptation and resilience
- Replenish our carbon stores

3.1.4 The principle of "low carbon business and skills" is a new addition to the plan. It reflects the importance of tackling emissions created by businesses, and also the opportunities and skills and training needs in relation to the growing green economy. Further information is provided on p38 – 39 of the Action Plan.

3.1.5 Subject to final editorial changes by officers, members are asked to approve the revised Strategy and Action Plan and to re-confirm their commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2030 through the actions described.

3.2 North Somerset Council emissions

3.2.1 Historic information and a progress update on emissions created by North Somerset Council are provided on p23 – 24 of the Action Plan. This considers direct emissions from our buildings and vehicles; electricity consumption; and all other indirect emissions such as business travel, commuting, fuel use etc.

3.2.2 The table below summarises total emissions and their sources. The trend overall since 2018 - 2019 is downwards, however the 2021 – 2022 financial year saw an increase from 2020 - 2021:

	Total GHG emissions for period (tonnes CO ₂ e):				Change since base year	
	Apr 2018 - Mar 2019	Apr 2019 - Mar 2020	Apr 2020 - Mar 2021	Apr 2021 - Mar 2022	Tonnes CO ₂ e	%
Direct emissions	4,631	4,338	3,904	4,442	- 190	- 4%
Electricity consumption	4,281	3,915	2,426	2,287	- 1,994	- 47%
Indirect emissions	6,811	7,611	5,892	6,529	- 918	- 13%
Total	15,723	15,864	12,222	13,257	- 3,502	-22%

3.2.3 The increase in council emissions in 2021 – 2022 can be attributed in part to the relaxation of Covid-19 lockdowns, including:

- The re-opening of buildings such as libraries and leisure centres.
- Additional requirements to increase the ventilation of such buildings, which increase heat loss and energy requirements.
- The return of some staff to working in council offices, which has increased commuting.

3.2.4 More positively:

- Upgrading of streetlights has reduced electricity consumption for streetlights by 47% since 2018, leading to a saving of 984 tonnes of carbon.
- The 'greening' of the national grid continues to reduce emissions created through energy consumption.

3.2.5 Despite the overall downwards trend, emissions remain above the target levels required if the organisation is to achieve its goal of carbon neutrality by 2030, highlighting the need for additional action. Further information on this point is provided on p24 of the Action Plan.

3.3 North Somerset area emissions

3.3.1 Information on area emissions across North Somerset is provided on p19 – 22 of the Action Plan.

- 3.3.2 Total emissions have decreased by 265 kt CO₂e (15%) since 2005. This is a significant change but remains insufficient to meet our climate ambitions.
- 3.3.4 Transport accounted for 45% of North Somerset's emissions in 2020. This is higher than the national average of 30%. Our adopted Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4) is clear about the shared need to enhance our transport decarbonisation programme.
- 3.3.5 Central government is updating its requirements for Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and for the first time will include the need for all transport schemes and LTPs to include mandatory Quantifiable Carbon Reductions (QCRs) to quantify emissions reductions from transport interventions. This triggers the need to undertake a new LTP based on a carbon assessment of transport, as all future transport funding from government will be reviewed via the required new LTPs. Separate reports will be brought on this matter.
- 3.3.6 The domestic and non-domestic buildings sectors make up 24% of North Somerset's emissions each. Emissions from both sectors have decreased by just over 30% since 2005, but this is primarily due to the reduced carbon intensity of the electricity grid. Much more is required in terms of funding, advice and skills to enable retrofit.

3.4 Climate change project updates

- 3.4.1 This section provides selected highlights in relation to climate change actions and projects, grouped by action plan themes:

A net zero carbon council:

Net zero council buildings

- 3.4.2 In November 2021, NSC was awarded £672,562 of Community Renewal Fund (government grant) to deliver a placemaking research project, which included a decarbonisation feasibility study programme across schools, council and public assets. The 'Enabling Thriving Places' project has enabled these studies to be carried out across 30 public buildings which included:

- Leisure centres
- Schools
- The Town Hall
- The Playhouse
- Somerset Hall
- Children's Centres
- Libraries

- 3.4.3 The council has been working with a team at Bristol City Council to undertake decarbonisation audits of these buildings, exploring the potential for renewable technologies to replace existing gas boiler central heating and non-renewable sources of electricity supply. Included in this work were a series of engagement sessions with building managers and community leaders to progress carbon literacy awareness, renewable and retrofit technical knowledge and understanding of energy efficiency within our buildings and communities. These were carried out with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) in collaboration with other community partners.

3.4.4 This work is now being developed alongside the building energy efficiency audits previously carried out across 33 council buildings. Project planning is underway to utilise these audits to inform future works to improve the sustainability and future-proofing of our buildings and public spaces, as well as the rising cost of energy.

Carbon Literacy

3.4.5 In July 2022, the Council was awarded the Carbon Literacy Silver Award for meeting a target of training 15% of the workforce. NSC is one of only three councils in the country to have achieved this accreditation, and the only council in the South West. Further information on carbon literacy can be found on p13 of the Action Plan.

3.4.6 The next target will be to achieve Gold accreditation which will require us to train 50% of the workforce and meet other specific criteria. Further information about carbon literacy is [here](#).

Decarbonisation of transport:

3.4.7 The Council continues its work towards transport decarbonisation, to help with cost of living pressures and to maximise the co-benefits of living and travelling differently. This includes but is not limited to delivery of our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), MetroWest, active travel network (including the Pier to Pier Way), progressing our Place and Movement Framework, a suite of Active Travel Action Plans, our EV Strategy and the Traffic and Parking Framework. An overarching 'Transport Narrative' is being developed with our West of England neighbours to create a consistent message about the need to decarbonise and our progress towards improving transport options for everyone.

3.4.8 The EV salary sacrifice scheme has launched, giving qualifying employees an option to lease an electric car at a fixed monthly cost, with no initial upfront costs, making savings on their tax and National Insurance contributions. The scheme has been operating since August, with one delivery completed, one order awaiting delivery and 15 others ordered and approved. The council's salary sacrifice scheme for purchase of bikes and electric bikes also remains popular.

Decarbonisation of the built environment:

3.4.8 The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) has been commissioned to carry out a series of Home Energy Roadshows across the area to provide free energy efficiency and retrofitting advice to residents. These events commenced in August 2022 and will run through to the end of 2023.

3.4.7 Work is continuing within the housing team on retrofitting opportunities. In 2021, 48 park homes and 50 Alliance properties (affordable homes) received home energy improvements. In 2022, a Domestic Retrofit Caseworker was appointed to support this work in North Somerset.

3.4.8 LED streetlighting replacements have reduced energy use by over 50%. In 2021/22, over 1,200 tonnes CO₂e were saved compared to 2018/19.

Low carbon business and skills:

- 3.4.9 We are committed to ensuring that individuals, groups and businesses have the opportunity to learn more about reducing their environmental impact. Through our Business Carbon Support programme, companies in North Somerset who applied to the programme were offered 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 enterprises and 17 businesses across North Somerset signed up to this offer.
- 3.4.10 We are working with the North Somerset Enterprise Agency and Future Leap to create a network of North Somerset Businesses who would like to improve their environmental performance.
- 3.4.11 North Somerset SMEs have benefitted from previous rounds of the West of England Green Business Grants since early 2021. Applications for grants have now closed, but businesses can still apply for a free carbon survey which will help identify energy saving improvements.
- 3.4.12 The NSC Procurement Strategy 2021 to 2025 now includes procurement plan guidance specifically developed to assess and ensure our supply chain's response to the Climate Emergency. Existing contracts are being reviewed to implement improvements where possible.

Renewable energy generation:

- 3.4.13 In 2021 North Somerset took part in the Solar Together Scheme, a bulk buying scheme which allowed residents to purchase rooftop solar PV installations at a reduced rate. To date, 292 installations have taken place through this scheme. Discussions are underway with partners about the possibility of re-running the initiative in 2022/23, particularly as the rising cost of energy may increase interest in renewable sources.
- 3.4.14 In early 2022, the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) delivered a series of 'Generating renewable energy' workshops in six areas of North Somerset (Congresbury, Kenn, Nailsea, Puxton, Tickenham, Yatton) to engage the community in identifying the potential for local renewable energy generation. An outline of the workshops were then transferred to the commonplace platform and shared with the wider communities for comment. The results of these workshops are [here](#).

Resource and waste:

- 3.4.15 We are the best performing authority in the South West and second highest unitary authority in England. We continue to work with our NSC waste and recycling team and local community groups and organisations to maintain our high recycling rate of 60.4%, which placed us 7th out of 341 English local authorities in the overall recycling performance league table.

Adaptation and resilience:

- 3.4.16 Following the release of the Local Government Association Adaptation Risk Register in early 2022, work on a refreshed North Somerset Climate Adaptation plan is

underway. The current plan has not been updated since 2011, and many significant developments have occurred since then.

- 3.4.17 North Somerset's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is currently in development to support the area in becoming resilient to tomorrow's climate and ready to respond and adapt to local flooding.

3.5 Performance management of climate actions

- 3.5.1 Linked to the creation of the refreshed Action Plan, North Somerset's Business Intelligence Team has developed a Climate Emergency Performance dashboard.
- 3.5.2 The dashboard will be updated quarterly, with results reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and on a six-monthly basis to Full Council.
- 3.5.3 The dashboard and results will be publicly available on the council's web pages. This will improve the council's accountability in relation to climate actions.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The updated Strategy and Action Plan has primarily been subject to internal consultation (including members).
- 4.2 Briefings on this report and the Action Plan have been provided to the Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy and Scrutiny Panel (PCOM) and to the Members Working Group. In addition, an all-member briefing hosted by PCOM was held on 28th October.
- 4.3 Interested individuals or groups are encouraged to provide further feedback on climate initiatives and activities by e-mailing climateemergency@n-somerset.gov.uk

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 The recommendations of this report do not in themselves have direct financial implications. The Action Plan includes a section on financial considerations and existing and potential funding support for initiatives.
- 5.2 To deliver net zero carbon and to transition to a low emissions area, additional funding will be required. Where this requires funding from council budgets, proposals will be subject to normal financial governance and decision-making, including the preparation of costed business cases. The business cases will also need to consider the potential costs of inactivity on climate change, including lost revenue and impact to life.

6. Legal powers and implications

- 6.1 The recommendations of this report do not in themselves have legal implications.
- 6.2 As initiatives within the Action Plan are further developed, there may be legal implications for the council. These will be considered through formal governance arrangements and decisions as required by the council's constitution.

7. Climate Change and environmental implications

7.1 The aim of this report and the Action Plan is to address the Climate Emergency and deliver a carbon neutral council and area by 2030.

8. Risk management

8.1 The Climate Emergency is recognised as a key corporate risk which the Strategy and Action Plan will help to address.

9. Equality implications

9.1 No specific Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this progress update. Individual projects will be subject to EIAs as required.

10. Corporate implications

10.1 The climate emergency is a cross-cutting issue and a corporate priority; all services will be required to assist in delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan.

10.2 Directorate Action Plans for the Climate Emergency are in place across all services.

11. Options considered

11.1 Not to update the Strategy and Action Plan: this was rejected for the reasons set out in the report above.

Authors:

Libby Watts
Climate Emergency Project Officer

Jenny Ford
Head of Development & Placemaking

Appendices:

- Appendix A: North Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan (draft for approval)

Background papers:

Please see <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/council-democracy/priorities-strategies/climate-emergency> for further data and project information on the climate emergency