

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny**

Date: **15th February 2022**

Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update**

Portfolio Areas: **Cllr Lynn Daniel**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Adam Williams** Role: **Climate Change Specialist**

Contact: **Email: adam.williams@swdevon.gov.uk**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the update on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and an updated Action Plan was developed and presented to the Council on 8th December 2020 which was then adopted.
- 1.2 An update was provided to Hub on 4th December 2021, the last update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee was on 22nd June 2021.
- 1.3 This report provides the second update on progress on the action plan since the previous Overview and Scrutiny update in June 2021

2. Background

- 2.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was adopted on 8th December by the Council. It was noted that

the Action Plan will be a continually evolving document and that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Governance and Assurance, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, to make revisions to the Plan as and when deemed necessary

- 2.2 It was resolved on the 8th December that performance against the Action Plan be monitored on a six-monthly basis.
- 2.3 The most recent update was provided to Hub Committee on 7th December 2021 and to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd June 2021.
- 2.4 On 10th January the first meeting of the Council's Natural Environment Hub Advisory Group was held. The Group considered an update on the Plan for West Devon Natural Environment Delivery Plan and a presentation on the updated Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 2.5 The Group also reviewed the outcomes of the Devon Climate Citizens Assembly organised by the Devon Climate Emergency partnership to deliberate some of the more contentious issues in the Devon Carbon Plan.
- 2.6 The advisory group provided comments on the draft actions which are proposed to form the final version of the Devon Carbon Plan in response to the Citizen Assembly resolutions. The actions, subject to any amendments arising from the consultation with partners, will be subject of public consultation in spring 2022.
- 2.7 The advisory group requested that officers feedback that there were concerns expressed regarding the potential adverse (and potentially disproportionate) impacts of proposals on rural communities in general and it was requested that this should be reflected as the Devon Carbon Plan as a whole develops'. The main points raised were;
 - i. The actions around housing stock and road use need to re-iterate the recognition of the impacts borne by rural communities, particularly as the housing stock is often the most expensive to treat and towns and villages poorly connected where car use is often vital. Members also questioned why the Citizens Assembly were tasked to only review the use of cars and not on reviewing whether future transport needs could change through increased home working and perhaps locating wellbeing/employment hubs where space could be used for work and collaboration.
 - ii. On the actions around the Tourist Levy, when such a measure is investigated, consideration should be paid to

small tourism businesses, particularly farm businesses which are needing to diversify to keep their families' livelihood secure. The action wording could reflect this, such as investigating levy thresholds and exclusions.

- iii. Regarding retrofit, people living in listed buildings often struggle with the costs of retrofit alongside the issues relating to visual appearance and preservation which doesn't seem to have been reflected in the resolutions and by extension the draft actions. Suggest that these issues could form part of the advisory service and in the introductory paragraphs to the retrofit section.
- iv. The landscape, visual and amenity impacts of windfarm development was raised, members would like re-assurance that these issues will be considered as part of the Land Use Framework identified in a new action. There was support for looking at alternatives to land based wind farms which are difficult to deliver in rural areas and for developing any such proposals close to the end user rather than relying on grid capacity.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The report sets out progress to date on delivery of the action plan in line with the adopted strategy.

4. Progress Update

- 4.1 Appendix 1 contains a revised version of the Action Plan with the latest position on each individual action, new actions and changes to actions marked in red. The amendments reflect the view of Members of Hub Committee at the meeting of 8th June when it was requested that the action plan should highlight areas where the Council has a direct role to play or an indirect/influencing role as well as highlighting impact levels for individual actions.
- 4.2 This revision of the action plan provides details on the latest position on each individual action as well as providing an estimate on action impact level as well as providing detail on the organisation responsible as well as key partners.
- 4.3 This revised action plan now includes operational actions to bring together all the work related to the climate emergency into one place, as well as data sources to monitor progress on key metrics, such as carbon emissions, EV registrations, financial and grant funding expenditure. It is expected that a redesign and a refresh of the strategy will be conducted upon the publication of the Devon Carbon Plan, expected in August 2022.

- 4.4 The appended action plan also colour codes actions based on their status, orange refers to actions in progress, green is completed and red are suggested for deletion. In line with delegated authority granted to the Director of Governance and Assurance, action 2.1 in appendix 1 is to be removed.
- 4.5 Key progress has been made in the following areas since June;
- a. The Council benefitted from a funding opportunity to either initiate or enhance their enforcement procedures in association with the minimum energy efficiency standard (MEES) regulations. The Council's application to the PRS MEES Compliance and Enforcement Competition was successful and we (SHDC and WDBC combined) received a grant allocation of £44,331. The work will involve gathering all the available information and data on the rental market, so that we can target the relevant landlords and promote compliance. Improving properties in private rental sector will help the council's climate change agenda. Recruitment of an officer to carry out the work failed – no suitable applications were received– so we are now talking to local energy groups to do the required work and for energy groups to provide advice to landlords. The Council will retain the enforcement responsibility.
 - b. The Council continues to hold funding under the Government's Green Homes Grant (GHG) scheme and continues to work towards the delivery of the scheme. The grant will be used to deliver energy saving measures for eligible households and will be delivered during 2021/22. However, due to major supply chain difficulties nationally a review of the process has been needed and we have now secured a locally approach to delivering these grants. Since then we have now approved grants with an average grant allocation of £ 11,643.4 so far with most applicants using a local installer based in Plymouth.
 - I. Currently there are twenty grants currently approved in West Devon totalling £ 232,868 (including 14 air source heat pumps) out of a total budget of £600k. There are more surveys being booked and planned, so further requests for approvals are expected.
 - II. Applications are still being accepted and all existing applicants have been written to just before Christmas, encouraging them to take up the revised offer. Further communication has been sent in January encourage residents to apply.
 - III. We are working with partners in Community Energy to support the leads we have generated. Discussions are also being had with BEIS for a time extension to complete the project, we are confident the grant

allocation we have will remain secured and spent on measures across the borough.

- IV. West Devon is also part of the Devon Sustainable warmth project, which is a consortium of Devon Authorities and is the next green home grant phase. West Devon has been allocated £500k and is due to start in the spring.
- c. Monthly Climate and Biodiversity Newsletters have continued to be produced and released monthly and subscriber have grown month on month from 149 in October 2020 to 370 in January 2022
- d. The Community Forum have continued to meet following the last update. Organising and collating events for Great Big Green week, a national week of climate action in September, became a focus for the forum over the summer 2021 with 7 events organised by forum members taking place throughout the Great Big Green week. The Forum also helped with the production of a WDBC Town and Parish Council guide/toolkit for Net Zero which has since been published on the Councils climate change and biodiversity website
- e. The next engagement campaign with Carbon Savvy, South Hams District Council, Torridge District Council and North Devon Council was developed and took place during the COP26 fortnight (1 November – 13 November 2021). The focus of the campaign was shopping, titled Shop4good, the campaign follows new research that shows consumer interest in sustainability has increased significantly since the pandemic, and suggests consumer buying power may be doing more to help the climate than originally thought. Since shopping makes up a big part of our carbon footprints, the campaign highlights ways to reduce this and tasks participants to consider this impact and complete a carbon emissions footprint calculator to enter a prize draw.
- f. Completed Carbon Literacy Training for SLT and ELT in partnership with Torbay Council. The next steps will be to collate the commitments made by trainees and include this as part of a revised action plan when the Devon Carbon Plan is completed and adopted.
- g. Worked with the Devon Climate Emergency partnership to secure funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) through the South West Energy Hub to include Tamar Energy Fest, run by Tamar Energy Community, as part of the COP26 Regional Roadshow. The Councils Climate Change Specialist was on hand during the event on Saturday 13th November to answer queries and talk about the Councils approach to

decarbonisation and the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership.

- h. The Council has entered into The Devon and Torbay Residential Chargepoint scheme. This is a scheme that would enable the Council to install electric charging points at one more location in the Borough with the grant funding. Subject to the necessary surveys being carried out, a 22kW dual charging point will be installed at Pilgrims Drive car park, Bere Alston.
- i. Commissioned Exeter University to conduct an update of the Councils Greenhouse Gas emissions, data collection has been completed and is in the process of being analysed. This new baseline will then lead into a new piece of work to develop an Operational Emissions Decarbonisation Plan.
 - a. Scoping work started for a 'DEV32 plus' initiative to prepare an informal planning policy/guidance document which sets out specifically how the LPAs will use the climate emergency and the Climate Emergency Declarations as a material consideration in the planning process, in addition to the implementation of the JLP and SPD.
 - b. Completed a borough wide survey with CoCars and CoBikes to review the scope for shared EVs and Bikes for in the area. The next steps will be to discuss the opportunities with CoCars and CoBikes with a view to looking at potential test sites.
 - c. The Climate Change website has undergone an overhaul to include the strategy and action plan, tips for residents and businesses as well as the current newsletter.
 - d. Developed and published a guide for Parish and Town Councils and Net Zero in collaboration with the Climate Change Community Forum.
 - e. Completed a feasibility study into the Councils role around EV charging as well as reviewing opportunities for solar and battery storage on our car parks.
 - f. Secondment opportunity to be created to develop our Fleet Transition Strategy to Electric Vehicles. The secondment will be short term and the main purpose of the role will be to ascertain the Charging infrastructure needs (including at depot(s)), Fleet procurement, Working practices as well as setting out an implementation programme.
 - g. Discussions have taken place with Fusion to develop a programme of solar PV installation on all WDBC leisure

centres. A full proposal will be presented to members when it's finalised.

- h. On 1st Feb, Hub Committee considered an update report regarding opportunities for Natural Woodland regeneration at Council sites at Harrowbeer Lane, Yelverton and Bedforde Bridge, Horrabridge. A total of 8.2Ha across the two sites will see, after 5 years, around an 80% increase in biodiversity.

5. Plans for short term (next 6 months)

- 5.1 The Action Plan will continue to be worked on in accordance with 'A Plan for West Devon', the Councils new Corporate Strategy. Integrating carbon reduction and increasing biodiversity will be embedded within the strategic approach with a shift over the next year to turn our focus towards our operational carbon reduction target to reach net zero by 2030.
- 5.2 Over the next 6 months we will expect to see a final version of the Devon Carbon Plan which will trigger an update of our own action plan, bringing in actions from that plan as well as its monitoring indicators.
- 5.3 The Councils Greenhouse Gas account for 20/21 will be finalised and work started on a decarbonisation plan across Scopes 1, 2 and 3.

7. Implications

| Implications | Relevant to proposals Y/N | Details and proposed measures to address |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Legal/Governance | N | |
| Financial implications to include reference to value for money | N | |
| Risk | | |
| Supporting Corporate Strategy | | Natural Environment, Built Environment, Communities, Homes |

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|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Equality and Diversity | | No direct implications |
| Safeguarding | | No direct implications |
| Community Safety, Crime and Disorder | | No direct implications |
| Health, Safety and Wellbeing | | The provision of energy efficiency measures will have a positive impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the households. |
| Other implications | | |

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - West Devon Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update