

Report to:

**TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Relevant Officer:

Scott Butterfield, Strategy Policy and Research Manager

Date of Meeting:

29 June 2022

CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the actions within the Climate Action Plan, as part of the agreed reporting cycle.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 The Committee notes the report, and requests a further update in six months;

2.2 The Committee establishes arrangements to consider the climate impacts of strategies as part of their policy development role.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 For the Committee to consider the response to date and provide input into the process.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

3.4 None

4.0 Council Priorities:

4.1 The work supports both of the Council's priorities.

5.0 Background Information:

5.1 The meeting of Council on 24th November 2021 unanimously approved the Climate Emergency Action Plan and associated monitoring arrangements, requesting that the "appropriate Scrutiny Committees" act towards the implementation of its actions. The Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee has so far overseen the progress of delivery. Considering the scope of the work, it was agreed that the Children and Young People's and Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committees will have the opportunity to have an input where relevant.

- 5.2 Since the last update, the Council has received recognition for its rapid response to fill a void in direction on climate issues. In January 2022, Blackpool’s action plan received the highest score (61%) in Lancashire from ‘Declare a Climate Emergency UK’, reflecting our position as an emerging leader in the sector. The Council has been “Commended” in the 2022 Municipal Journal awards for our work to date, and has been shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle’s 2022 “Climate Response” award, which marks excellence in our overall approach to addressing the carbon footprint of the council, our services and the town as a whole. The team presented to a judging panel earlier this month, with the outcome being announced in July.
- 5.3 To be effective, the Climate Action Plan must be owned by teams across the council. The internal Climate Emergency Steering Group now reports to a newly-formed Climate Emergency Strategic Group involving directors and portfolio holder for climate change on a quarterly basis. An associated series of meetings gathered updates from the staff involved to feed into the comprehensive update attached (Appendix 8(a)), which is summarised below:

Progress	Count	Headline actions
On schedule or concluded	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of KPIs • Review of Strategies • Establishment of Staff Sustainability Alliance • Climate included in IPA process • Roll out of Carbon Literacy Training • Linked social value indicators to environmental skills • Establishment of Climate Action Partnership • Initiation of cross boundary collaboration • Development of draft Electric Vehicle strategy • Secured funding to progress several actions, including Solar PV study for Council properties and sea defences • Concluded Grange Park tree planting programme
In progress, partly completed or behind schedule	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop “shovel-ready” projects • Develop mitigation and adaptation plan • Develop carbon costing process • Embed Sustainability Impact Assessment process

Off Track or not commenced	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of climate action fund • Development of full communications and marketing plan • Encourage Lancashire Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels • Audit on carbon data capture • Develop Renewable Power Infrastructure Strategy
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5.4 Overall, the lack of sufficient government funding, the lack of an internal dedicated climate action fund, and issues in attracting and maintaining an adequate staffing resource both in the core team and other parts of the council has constrained progress on some actions.

5.5 Whilst there are a number of actions that still require external funding and support, a number of successful bids and collaborations with external organisations are enabling progression across several theme areas set out in the climate action plan. Highlights include:

- A successful joint bid by Blackpool Council and Blackpool Transport Services (BTS) to the Department for Transport’s Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) fund for over £19 million, will bring 115 state-of-the-art electric buses to Blackpool over the next three to five years. BTS’ Rigby Road depot will be transformed to accommodate the vehicles and provide one of the cleanest, most modern bus networks in the country. The Climate Emergency Team are currently working closely with BTS to develop a bid for the £450m Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) fund which is likely to be made available next year, with the intention to make the chargers available for public use when not required for the fleet (i.e. from around 8am to midnight)
- Over £61 million of funding from the Environment Agency will be used to repair sea defences between Princes Way and Red Bank Road, and Gynn Square to Cocker Square, protecting around 4000 properties. The council has also won £342,000 of funding and a pre-allocation of Environment Agency budget to prepare a study on potential Beach Nourishment Works, and have secured £1 Million funding from the Environment Agency to improve the sand dune habitat from Starr Hill Sand Dunes to Lytham Green, providing a natural means of coast protection for 493 residential properties and 8 businesses.
- The Council have secured £25,000 of consultancy support from the “LGA Housing Advice Experts” program, enabling the development of financial models to move the BCH and BSH housing stock towards net zero.
- 600 new trees have been planted by Earthwatch, Blackpool Council volunteers and pupils from Mereside Primary Academy in Mereside as part of an initiative with Earthwatch Europe. As Blackpool’s first “Tiny Forest”, this project will contribute to

reconnecting people with nature, raising awareness and provide nature-rich habitat patches to support urban wildlife.

- 5.6 Both of the Graduate Climate Action Officers appointed in September have left their posts. One has been appointed as the Low Carbon and Sustainability Projects Officer and will now focus solely on identifying a series of “shovel-ready” projects with emission reduction at their core, and suitable models of funding. The other has taken a promotion to a role in sustainability in the private sector. Recruitment for their replacements is already underway, with an expectation that the positions will be filled by August 2022. To facilitate a request from young people to design their own participation mechanism, the Council is establishing an engagement post to lead on engagement with schools and the public. The development of a full communications and marketing plan has been delayed due to significant staff turnover in Communications. This has prevented the delivery of a number of actions in the climate action plan around campaigning, awareness raising and behaviour change initiatives. Despite further delays, it is anticipated that a full communications and marketing plan will be developed by the end of August.
- 5.7 An internal audit report (Appendix 8(b)) looked at the effectiveness of arrangements to deliver the action plan. Overall, the controls in place were considered adequate, with some risks identified and assessed and several changes suggested. Although project management, structure and monitoring arrangements established in a number of key areas, addressing the significant resource challenges that the Climate Action Plan has identified, strengthening communications efforts on climate change and in finalising performance indicators was advised. A summary progress table is attached as Appendix 8(d).
- 5.8 A set of headline performance indicators have been incorporated into the Council Plan performance reports to enable the accurate monitoring of emission reduction by the Council and across the town:

Headline KPIs	Frequency
Total CO2 emissions by the Council (tonnes)	Annual
Total CO2 emissions for Blackpool (tonnes)	Annual
% of household waste arisings which have been collected for recycling	Annual

The report from the Carbon Trust estimated, based on certain types of scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, that the total carbon footprint of the council on Scope 1 and 2 emissions, was **37,480.4 tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent (some gases, such as methane, are more damaging than CO₂ depending on the measurement period, and are included in this calculation). The true footprint will be higher as some of the categories cannot currently be measured or do not have measures in place. BEIS estimate that Blackpool’s overall footprint in 2019 was **471,400 tonnes**, although other estimates from the SCATTER tool place it at **624,123 tonnes**. A number of supporting KPIs (Appendix 8(c)) have been identified to provide further detail and context. The KPIs identified will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and include all available data. It is envisaged that as

progress is made on the journey to net zero, this will be refined and added to the indicator set as and when new data sources become available and as internal processes for capturing emissions data is refined.

5.9 We are undertaking further steps to calculate our emissions:

- A bespoke methodology through a collaboration with Lancaster University will allow us to estimate emissions from all scopes once in place from September, even where suppliers are unable to supply us with estimates;
- A bespoke “Carbon Calculator” tool will allow capital projects to assess their likely emissions in construction and operation, and allow for adjustments at the design stage.

5.10 All Council strategies have been reviewed to explore potential for further measures to support emissions reduction. This has highlighted areas which support our climate goals, areas which have the potential to offer more support in future, and other areas where the other social and economic benefits being delivered risk contradicting our climate goals. A detailed document discussing the current and potential links to sustainability policy of existing strategies will support the Committee in considering the impacts of climate change as part of its policy development role, as per the text of the original Climate Emergency Declaration.

5.11 The council established the Blackpool Climate Action Partnership in January 2022. Consisting of over 30 individuals representing key organisations from public and civil society sectors, the group meets on a quarterly basis to facilitate collaboration, learning and local level community engagement, as well as maintaining an overview of the actions in the plan. However, with some notable exceptions, the state of readiness to engage with this agenda across the town’s businesses, remains low. Further attempts to attract private sector involvement and interest are planned for July 2022 via promotion of the Partnership to the Blackpool Business Leaders’ Group.

5.12 Discussions have been held with Blackpool Youth Climate Group about how to best involve young people in the Partnership, and the agenda more generally (see 5.6), whilst Blackpool’s Green Wave, a group drawn from members of the local community with a keen interest in the issues, has met to discuss to share ideas on potential projects. Further support to the group will be provided once the new Climate Graduates are in place.

5.13 At a sub-regional level, the council has led the conversation at the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board. The intention is to link climate mitigation and adaptation to the growth and skills agendas and to progress activity on collaborative projects. At a county level, the Council has contributed a housing presentation to the environment summit held in March, led conversations about the environmental “ask” in conversations around devolution, and established a Lancashire Climate Officers Group to share knowledge and discuss funding opportunities. Nationally, the Climate Emergency lead has shared best practice from our climate assembly at various events and individual sessions with other Local Authorities.

5.14 In light of feedback from ‘Declare a Climate Emergency UK’ on our action plan, a dedicated

mitigation and adaptation action plan is currently in development. This assesses the risk of adverse effects from climate change, putting in place measure to ensure resilience to current and future impacts of climate change and potential damage, and reducing costs incurred through the increased frequency of extreme weather events.

- 5.15 The Council is rolling out Carbon Literacy Training to staff and Councillors to ensure they are aware of the issues and able to act on them in their personal and professional capacities. 15 staff have been trained across 2 pilot sessions, with further rollout planned to teams requesting it as a priority in the first instance. Staff now have climate issues identified in their IPA's as a priority focus for learning. All 42 members have been offered training, with 9 training sessions being held specifically for Councillors. 6 have so far completed the full course, and a further 5 have completed part of the course. This level of provision is unsustainable, and future courses will be subject to minimum levels of member participation.
- 5.16 Given the breadth and depth of the action plan, future updates will focus on actions with an imminent deadline or at a crucial stage of their development, as well as exploring actions that have fallen behind schedule, and giving an overview of any newly identified actions, in keeping with the dynamic nature of the plan. Sustainability considerations are now required to be included as part of project proposals following a review of the Council's Sustainability Impact Assessment tool. This is oppose to mitigating environmental impacts further down the line and incurring the additional costs.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

6.0 List of Appendices:

- 6.1 Appendix 8(a): Full list of updates on the Climate Action Plan
Appendix 8(b): Internal Audit Review of the Climate Action Plan
Appendix 8(c) Green strategy review summary
Appendix 8(d): Summary of progress on audit recommendations

7.0 Financial considerations

Impacts detailed in the report. The action plan will develop actions which deliver financial benefits over the long term wherever possible.

8.0 Legal considerations

- 8.1 None

12.0 Risk management considerations:

- 12.1 None.

10.0 Equalities considerations:

- 10.1 The Climate Team developed an Equality Analysis as part of the development of the Action

Plan, which was reported to Council alongside the Climate Action Plan. This will be reviewed and added to as new actions are identified.

13.0 Sustainability, climate change and ethical considerations:

13.1 As detailed in the report.

14.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

14.1 As detailed in the report.

15.0 Background papers:

15.1 None.