

Report to:

TOURISM ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Relevant Officer:

Scott Butterfield, Strategy Policy and Research Manager

Date of Meeting:

8 February 2023

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the actions within the Climate Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

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

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 For the Committee to consider progress 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: None

4.0 Council Priorities:

4.1 The work supports both of the Council's priorities, particularly priority 2: resilient communities.

5.0 Background Information:

5.1 Council approved the Climate Emergency Action Plan on 24th November 2021, agreeing that the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee would receive 6-monthly updates on progress.

5.2 This report is the second progress update. Since June 2022, the Council has continued to strengthen our position as a local leader in climate emergency action. In July 2022, we were 'Highly Commended' at the LGC 2022 Awards in 'the Climate Response' category, with the judges noting, amongst other comments:

"The judges were impressed at the range of measures and initiatives, and felt there were many strong examples of pragmatic leadership. They liked that the measures were clearly tailored to address local circumstances, with affordability and approaches such as Eco Coaching being great examples. They admired that the team truly seemed to be responding

to the climate change emergency like it is an emergency, and acting with urgency. But recognise that the strategy needs to catch up. The judges appreciated the reflective nature of the presentation, where the team were very honest about learning on the job in some respects, and really admired the can-do spirit of the plucky underdog”.

- 5.3 A full update on the climate action plan is attached as an Appendix. The initial draft of the action plan aimed to understand and develop a response to the agenda, meaning that some of the exploratory actions have concluded without an associated project being delivered. Since the previous update a further 18 actions have been concluded, bringing the total to 46. Work will continue on some of the concluded actions as these are now considered “business as usual”. For example, the Blackpool Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board has adopted Climate Change as a priority, discussed potential joint projects, and now discusses this work as a regular agenda item.
- 5.4 75 actions are still in progress, of which 27 are behind schedule. This is primarily due to staff turnover and recruitment and the identification and prioritisation of other actions. As a new area of focus for the Authority, some of the actions behind schedule reflect the scale of change needed to address the Climate Emergency. In particular, the further development of working relationships within and outside the council has taken more time than anticipated, as has activity to strengthen our overall approach in light of internal and external assessments.

Action status		Number of actions		Examples of headline actions
Live	Live: On track and ongoing	74	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an Air Quality Strategy • Establishment of Staff Travel Plan • Rollout of Carbon Literacy (now including the development of an iPool module) • Biodiversity promotion and tree planting • Exploring sources of finance • Engagement with government on climate policies • Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy implementation • Tree Strategy Implementation
	Live: Delayed		28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Plan revision • Development of a Solar farm at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone • Municipal waste strategy • Water Action Plan development • Renewable Power Infrastructure Strategy development
Changed		5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Blackpool Digital Connectivity Strategy changed to Implementation of district heating network, including development of net zero data centres
Concluded		47		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the Climate Action Fund • Launch of the Blackpool Climate Action Partnership • Cross-borough collaboration as a part of Fylde Economic Prosperity Board • Input into the Greater Lancashire Plan • Development of ‘shovel-ready’ projects

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- 5.5 Short-term staffing capacity issues have now been resolved via the appointment of a Low Carbon and Sustainability Officer and two new Graduate Climate Action Officers in August/September 2022, to fill vacancies created by internal and external promotions. A further one-year fixed term post funded by Headstart of Engagement Youth Climate Worker has also been filled, subject to references. This role will work directly with community to focus on the development of the Eco Schools offer and the Blackpool Youth Climate Group. It should be noted that the team continues to develop its knowledge and skills “on the job”, with recruitment to senior and experienced roles particularly difficult in this field of expertise.
- 5.6 Efforts continue to shift the Council’s culture to support our 2030 net zero goal. A Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool has been cascaded through Departmental Management Team meetings to ensure consideration of environmental issues at the project inception stage. The rollout of training to staff to develop knowledge of climate change and climate action continues, with 77 members of staff now having attended full Carbon Literacy training or a half-day session highlighting the most relevant issues. In response to comments from frontline staff, and concerns about the length of these courses, we are developing a further course tailored to their needs, in addition to piloting a new climate iPool module. Weekly “Eco Friendly Friday” articles on a range of topics are available via the council intranet.
- 5.7 Governance arrangements are now well established, with the Director of Community and Environmental Services convening the Climate Emergency Steering Group quarterly to discuss key projects, strategies and topics and to progress the climate action plan. The Strategic Group consisting of directors named in the action plan also meet with the portfolio holder for climate change quarterly. The Blackpool Climate Action Partnership met for a second time in December 2022, with some partners expressing a wish to continue discussions on specific projects outside formal meetings. The team are also supporting the Fylde Youth Climate Conference taking place in March 2023 organised by Blackpool Sixth Form College. At a regional level, the Strategy and Climate Manager is providing leadership across other councils in Lancashire to increase local cross council collaboration on the Net Zero agenda, chairing the bi-monthly Lancashire Climate Officers Group meeting, and convening a Fylde Coast Workshop on Climate Priorities and Projects in December 2022. The workshop was attended by representatives from Blackpool, Fylde, Wyre and Lancashire Councils Economic Development and Climate teams, with a range of potential cross boundary collaborative projects being discussed. The Blackpool Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board has established Climate Change as a new priority and will consider the findings of the workshop in March.
- 5.8 The council is in the process of developing two strategies supporting the delivery of the action plan. Public consultation on the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy concluded in December, which showed support for the aims and objectives of the strategy. The final document is due to be brought forward for approval imminently. The Air Quality Strategy is at an earlier stage of development, with a session of scrutiny considering the emerging priorities in mid-December, and further internal engagement taking place prior to public consultation. The draft strategy covers six main themes that will address a wider range of actions in climate action plan, such as Transport, Active Travel, Domestic Heating, Green Infrastructure, Engagement

and Communications and Business.

5.9 The Council has been clear that tackling the climate emergency across Blackpool within the timeframe established by our action plan would require investment that is significantly beyond our means. Some external funding is available from the government and private sector, and work to prepare suitable projects aligned to the requirements of the funders continues. Since the last report, the Council included projects in our Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan totalling £745k of spend on:

- An 'Eco-hub' – a Council building retrofitted with a low carbon technology, likely including solar panels and a heat pump, to produce an operationally net-zero building in Blackpool. In addition to direct carbon emissions reduction achieved, the hub will serve as a demonstrator of various low carbon technologies for Blackpool residents as well as providing support to residents to access funding available from other sources for improving domestic efficiency.
- A project operating town-wide based on the successful ERDF-funded "eco-coaches" scheme on Grange Park, which will deliver small measures and practical guidance to householders across Blackpool on how to reduce emissions and their energy costs.
- A community flood risk reduction scheme to increase the amount of rain water captured, and stored, reducing the impact on areas from heavy rainfall events.

In addition to this funding, several other projects intended for investment via the SPF Plan will include elements addressing low carbon or environmental issues, including £100k for The Edge, new office space for emerging businesses in the centre of Blackpool. Other funding received includes money from Defra for the Commemorative Project, a tree planting scheme set up to honour and remember the late Queen Elizabeth II which will allow to for 315 new trees to be planted.

5.10 Internally, the council is drawing on its own resources where possible, and has now established a Climate Action Fund to invest in initiatives that make a tangible contribution to outcomes detailed in the Action Plan. An initial £42,000 of funding has been used to establish a town-wide "Green Doctor" post in collaboration with Groundwork. The 12-month post will support residents through the cost of living crisis in a sustainable way, helping to lower domestic energy bills through energy efficiency measures, therefore saving carbon emissions. Groundwork will also provide some Council staff with training to enable them to reach vulnerable residents through the Libraries at Home service to deliver similar support. This work will also provide additional resource to the SPF-funded project referenced in section 5.9 can commence sooner than anticipated.

5.11 In addition to the Climate Emergency Action Plan, a series of internal improvement plans have been identified. A report to Audit Committee on January 19th highlighted good progress against the recommendations of the Audit Review on Climate Change, whilst we are working on addressing some of the areas highlighted by the Climate Emergency UK review of our plan. The same organisation has announced a revised methodology for assessing Council's progress in 2023 which focuses on activity, and the Climate Team is looking to address these issues proactively wherever possible, using the external challenge as a way to galvanise activity on this agenda across the council. The council also volunteered to undertake an assessment by

the Carbon Disclosure Project for the first time, which highlighted the need to develop a climate risk and vulnerability assessment along with a climate adaptation plan.

- 5.12 A particular focus of improvement in 2023 will be the gathering and monitoring of performance data across the council's scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, allowing us to quantify progress more effectively. Members of the team are attending a carbon data management course in January, and there are plans to procure a tool which automate the estimation of scope 3 emissions following the rollout of the new accounting system in April. This will then increase efforts which focus on the 80% of emissions which fall into scope 3 as a result of the procurement of services.
- 5.13 In addition to delivering the action plan, in 2023 the Strategy and Climate Team will prioritise work on climate adaptation. With the 1.5 degree Celsius target for peak global warming set by the Paris Agreement in 2015 increasingly at risk, and the consequent increase in the frequency of extreme weather events, we need to focus on short, medium and long-term actions to fundamentally shift how we plan and build our town. Further to the CDP assessment (see section 5.11), the first step will be to resume work on developing an Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan. This will review all of the council's activity to identify ways in which we can protect our community from these effects wherever possible.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

6.0 List of Appendices:

- 6.1 Appendix 6(a): Climate Action Plan overview and update

7.0 Financial considerations:

- 7.1 Impacts were considered in the development of the original actions, with project finance being considered on a case-by-case basis.

8.0 Legal Considerations

- 8.1 None.

9.0 Equalities considerations:

- 9.1 The work will seek to ensure that the Council's processes meet the relevant legislative requirements around equalities.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 None

11.0 Sustainability, climate change and ethical considerations:

- 11.1 This work is essential to delivering our climate change declaration.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 As detailed in the action plan update.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.