

CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE - COUNCILLOR JANE HUGO

Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Climate change
- Energy and environment
- Flood and water management
- Coastal defence schemes and sea water quality
- Strategic waste management
- Parks and green environment
- Life Events (including cemeteries and crematorium, registrars and Coroner's support)

Introduction

The cabinet member will present the report to Council and report on any key issues.

Theme 1 – Increasing recycling through our Waste Strategy

Work is ongoing to prepare for central government's Resources and Waste Strategy and the Environment Bill. After delays due to Brexit and the pandemic, a new timeline for delivery of the main elements has been produced. These relate to the introduction of a separate weekly food waste collection, packaging reforms including Extended Producer Responsibility, introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme (all 2025), and delivery of universal free garden waste collections, and the consistency of recyclable materials (timescale to be confirmed).

In order to deliver these strategic aims and objectives, Blackpool Council and ENVECO have assembled two Waste and Environment Project Delivery Groups, one focused on the circular economy activities as listed above and the other around climate change. The council has also constituted a Waste Services Strategic Board to develop a governance framework and maintain oversight of the project delivery groups.

The project groups will focus on the review of kerbside collections in the first instance, including separate food waste collections, a review of the paper/card collection methodology, green waste collections and the deposit return scheme, including on-street bin provision.

Whilst the challenges to deliver on these strategic ambitions do carry risk and uncertainty, particularly around issues such as funding and procurement, there is also the opportunity to make step-changes to services in order to increase recycling and improve services to residents, businesses and visitors. These could include options like providing a bin for paper and cardboard which will increase clean material capture rates, separate trade waste food

collections and potentially recycling other waste streams such as textiles and small electrical items at the kerbside. Consideration also needs to be given to impact that a deposit return scheme may potentially have on the composition and amount of recyclable materials presented for collection at the kerbside.

The Lancashire Waste Partnership also continues to work co-operatively across the county to ensure a coordinated response to implement the necessary changes. Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council have developed a waste processing strategy which outlines how the two major waste processing plants would be used in the medium-term to achieve these improvements. Lancashire Renewables, the waste operating company jointly owned by Blackpool and Lancashire County Council is already in the process of making the required changes to the waste processing operations in order to meet these challenges at the two facilities. Located in Thornton and Leyland, these modifications include the installation of anaerobic digesters and percolators which, in the process of treating food waste, would generate electricity as a by-product – enough to power both plants, realising significant savings on energy.

The aim of the outline waste processing strategy for Lancashire is to achieve the best environmental and social outcomes possible from the waste management, within the realistic processing, financial and carbon options available.

Theme 2 – A co-operative approach to developing Heat Networks

Blackpool Council and its project partner, Community Broadband Network have been successful in securing Innovate UK Fast Followers funding to progress studies around the non-technical barriers to the deployment of a heat network at scale in Blackpool. Innovate UK is the UK's innovation agency and only awards funding to projects which are considered to further collective knowledge on tackling some of society's key challenges.

In the UK approximately 40% of energy consumption and 20% of greenhouse gas emissions arise from the heating and hot water supply for buildings. Although most focus of late has been on reducing this through measures such as air source heat pumps, the Government is looking to Local Government to designate new heat network zones by 2025. Essentially a central heating system which covers multiple properties, they deliver cost effective, low carbon heat in the form of hot water or steam, from one or more centralised heat sources to the end user through a network of insulated pipes. These are then connected to individual properties, with user controls allowing the heat to be varied and hot water to be drawn much like a central heating system. Although they are more common in continental Europe, there are thought to be over 2,000 heat networks and communal heating schemes of various sizes in the UK, serving 200,000 dwellings and 2,000 commercial and public buildings.

The Climate Change Committee has estimated that around 18% of UK heat could come from heat networks by 2050, making them a key part of the pathway to decarbonising heat. Benefits include reduced Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions reductions for the UK, fewer heating sources

which require maintenance, and potentially lower costs in the long term. However, installation is disruptive, the technology is unfamiliar to many in the UK, and clear legal agreements are needed around maintenance and development responsibilities.

The opportunity in Blackpool is to use the Ethically-Powered Data project to deliver a significant scale heat network at the Enterprise Zone. The project seeks to use ultra-fast transatlantic internet links and proximity to renewable power sources to deliver data processing centres on the Enterprise Zone at Blackpool Airport. By specifying that the data centres should use liquid immersion technology, the heat which is currently considered a by-product of data processing can be captured and re-used for heating. As the use of this heat would displace carbon emissions incurred by electricity or gas heating, the heat network would be operationally net carbon negative, making a hugely significant contribution to climate targets.

Part of the funding is to be used to consider how a co-operative model, along the lines of the one used for Blackpool's Fibre Network, could deliver further advantages to those involved in developing and using the heat network. Other opportunities exist to explore heat networks in Blackpool, particularly around businesses and the visitor economy, but these need to be considered in light of the potential impact on highways and whether stakeholders favour the advantages of heat network solutions. In time, a decision will also be needed on whether to adopt Heat Networks as a default option for major new developments. The InnovateUK project is due to run until the end of June 2025, during which time it will seek other funding sources for the delivery of the scheme.

General questions / comments

Councillors will have the opportunity to raise questions / comments on any matter in the Cabinet Member's portfolio.