

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: Climate Adaptation and Coastal Protection

The council has been proactively putting actions in place to tackle climate change for some years now. Whilst we must do everything we can to minimise the emissions which will compound these issues ("climate mitigation"), we can and must take action to reduce their impact ("climate adaptation"). Planning for the risks is basic common sense but even those instances where aspects of climate change can be seen positively – for example milder winters, or hotter summers bringing increasing numbers of visitors - requires the Council to think ahead so that any impacts are dealt with in a way which protects people.

We are currently working with services and our companies to prepare our first Climate Adaptation Action Plan, to ensure we have thought through the long term implications of planning for a new climate. Building on measures already in place to ensure a rapid response to any emergencies taking place, the plan aims to ensure that we think harder, earlier about the implications of our work. For example, in how we provide shade and shelter, support better drainage and reduce hotspots through better urban design. When complete, the Action Plan will set out the Council's goals and plans for adaptation over the next five years. Once approved, it will be followed by the development of a town-wide action plan, which will aim to raise awareness and build new working relationships to adapt together.

Key work to address Climate Change concerns coastal defences. In line with the Blackpool Coast Protection Strategy we have been awarded funding from the Environment Agency to progress three protection schemes. The £61m Bispham scheme will replace the deteriorating existing

seawall between Little Bispham and Bispham and between Gynn Square and Cocker Square works will begin to protect the seawall and address lowering beach levels. The £57m Blackpool Beach Management scheme covers the areas from Cocker Street to South Pier and will address beach levels which are falling quicker than anticipated across 3km of seawall, ensuring that the life of the sea defences is prolonged and ensuring that it can deal with extreme storm events. Work on the Anchorsholme Coast Protection scheme firstly involves the contractor addressing, at their expense, defects in the sea wall by providing rock armour along the revetment. In addition to this, the seawall needs protecting by addressing beach levels as noted in the other two projects. As a result, a study and outline business case is being prepared to apply to the Environment Agency for funding of £10m to protect the integrity of the sea defences. Together, these projects will reduce the risk of coastal flooding for over 12,000 households.

Such work is evidence that, even before approval of the Adaptation Plan, we have taken steps to address the core issues at hand. Signing up to the cross-party UK100 organisation's Net Zero Pledge committed us to voluntary reporting of our work to the internationally-recognised Carbon Disclosure Project. In 2023 they recognised our efforts so far by awarding us an A for our work on climate adaptation, as part of an overall A-score when including our efforts on climate mitigation. With only 119 cities/towns worldwide receiving an A overall, this represents a good marker of progress and subsequent work will only strengthen our approach. Our participation in a voluntary DEFRA reporting arrangement has also led to the Minister for Nature formally inviting us to participate in a pilot programme.

The climate is changing but with some foresight and careful planning, together with towns around the world coming together to tackle the root cause of climate change, we can build a stronger town which is able to adapt and thrive.

Theme 2: The Green Environment

Tree planting not only enhances Blackpool's natural environment but also improves our resilience to extreme weather events and supports our pollution and emission reduction strategies. Our Green and Blue Infrastructure and Tree Strategies deliver actions which support work on Lancashire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and our new Air Quality Strategy. These strategies set out the importance of tree planting alongside other greening measures and also aim to contribute to biodiversity and build tree population resilience to pests and diseases by using a mix of species and interventions. We have identified the type of trees most suitable for certain locations where they can have the most beneficial effect. So far this planting season we have organised the planting of 124 large trees and approximately 900 smaller trees by working with Envenco and a variety of partners such as Trees for Cities and LCC Treescape, with trees planted at Claremont Park, Gynn Sunken Gardens and Stanley Park. The team has

maximised the use of funding from a variety of sources, including those aimed at delivering environmental improvements at a national level, such as the Queens Green Canopy, Urban Tree Challenge Fund, Coronation Living Heritage Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Ward Councillor funding.

Further tree planting will continue in 2024 at Kingscote Park and Devonshire Rock Garden, as well as the completion of Fisher's Field tree planting. The team has opened up opportunities for Council teams wishing to contribute whilst undertaking team building exercises, with the communications team helping to plant whips at Revoe Park and more sessions planned in 2024. In total, we expect to plant 1,995 trees this planting season, with the remaining trees being planted by Envenco, our volunteer network and also as a result of engagement with local football clubs and schools to assist in planting smaller trees.

Theme 3: Parks Play Area Improvements

Over the last few years, play areas within parks have seen several small and large scale improvements which have provided improved facilities for children to engage in outdoor activities. In 2023, a new play area was installed at the new development at Grange Park and a climbing rope assault course was installed at Fisher's Field. The Fisher's Field project is part of a larger scheme which incorporates the tree planting mentioned above, as well as a rain garden providing a sustainable drainage system for water from the roof of the new changing rooms and a seating area overlooking the football pitches. The play equipment has been selected specifically to link into the park's overall development plans and make long-term management easier, with the equipment being robust and sustainable and having improved safety features.

The mix of features in play areas are designed to challenge children at various age ranges and abilities and include new swings, climbing structures, roundabouts, educational pieces, puzzle solving features and new safety surfaces. In addition, one or two play areas will see further improvements as well as the replacement of individual pieces of equipment. This has been achieved through a mix of available funding streams such as "Friends of" group contributions, Blackpool Coastal Housing and developer contributions via Planning in addition to the Parks and Open Spaces budget.

General questions / comments

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