

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

REPORT TO: POLICY COMMITTEE
Date: March 2020
TOPIC: ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE
REPORT BY: ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE LEAD MEMBERS / HEAD OF PLACE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council's [Corporate Plan](#) was [adopted](#) at the full Council meeting on 24 September 2019. The four Corporate Priorities are:-
- Financial Security
 - Focus on delivering the best for the customer
 - Cherishing and protecting the environment
 - Planning for North Devon's future
- 1.2 Whilst the Environment priority is broad based one of the key foci of work is currently responding to the Climate Emergency. The [Climate Change Act 2008](#) introduced the UK's first legally binding target for 2050 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 levels. On 27 June 2019 the UK government [amended the Climate Change Act](#) and set a legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050. In response to the latest report from the UN's [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC), local authorities and other organisations in Devon have [declared climate emergencies](#) that aim to decarbonise the County by 2050 at the latest. Work is currently underway to substantiate the most appropriate Devon wide net zero deadline, which is likely to be somewhere between 2030 and 2050.
- 1.3 This report presents Policy committee with an indicative outline of what the draft Climate and Environment Action Plan will cover for its consideration as a basis to be further developed by the Climate Action Team for engagement with partners and the wider community.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members are requested to:
- 1) Note the setting up of a member and officer working group to oversee the development and delivery of the Climate and Environment Action Plan,

- 2) Consider the outline of the draft Climate and Environment Action Plan and give a view on it as a basis for further developed by the Climate Action Team for engagement with partners and the wider community.
- 3) Subject to 2 above recommend to Strategy and Resources that the proposed draft plan format is approved for consultation.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To meet the Council's responsibilities under the Climate Declaration. Members of the Climate Action Team working party consider it important that partners and the community is given the opportunity to shape the Action Plan before it is developed further.

4 REPORT

4.1 What is Climate Change?

- 4.2 [climate change explained](#), on the GOV.UK website, gives a good summary of climate change; its causes and impacts and what is being done to tackle it.

- 4.3 Climate change refers to a large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns and average temperatures across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to the climate.

4.4 How are humans changing the climate?

- 4.5 In the 11,000 years before the Industrial Revolution, the average temperature across the world was stable at around 14°C. The Industrial Revolution began in the mid-1800s when humans began to burn fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas for fuel. Burning fossil fuels produces energy, but also releases greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous monoxide into the air.
- 4.6 Over time, large quantities of these gases have built up in the atmosphere. For example, the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere rose by 40% during the 20th and 21st century and is now over 400ppm (parts per million). This level of carbon dioxide is higher than at any time in the past 800,000 years.
- 4.7 The Paris Agreement of 2016 for the first time brought all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so. As such, it charts a new course in the global climate effort. The Agreement set a target of no more than 2°C global warming above pre-industrial temperatures, but also an aspirational target of no more than 1.5°C. That is because many participating countries – especially island nations particularly vulnerable to sea level rise – felt that even 2°C global warming is too dangerous.
- 4.8 There had not been a lot of research into the climate impacts at 1.5°C vs. 2°C, and so the United Nations asked the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

(IPCC) (the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change) to publish a special report summarizing what it would take to achieve the 1.5°C limit and what the consequences would be of missing it.

- 4.9 The IPCC report concludes that a world with 2°C of global warming will lead to more heat-related deaths, smaller crop yields, worse extreme weather events, slower economic growth, more people in poverty, and increase the population facing water stress by up to 50% compared to a 1.5°C world. And the impacts will get progressively worse if temperatures warm beyond the 2°C limit.
- 4.10 We're currently on track for more than 3°C global warming by 2100.
- 4.11 The key simple critical point from the report is that we need to cut carbon pollution as much as possible, as fast as possible.

4.12 Climate Declaration

- 4.13 In response to the report from the IPCC and Government action, local authorities and other organisations in Devon have declared climate emergencies that aim to decarbonise the County by 2050 at the latest. Work is currently underway to substantiate the most appropriate Devon wide net zero deadline, which is likely to be somewhere between 2030 and 2050. This report sets out the current position.
- 4.14 Members of the Devon [Local Resilience Forum](#) agreed on the 9th May 2019 to form the [Devon Climate Emergency Response Group](#) (DCERG) and a supporting [Tactical Group](#). The DCERG endorsed the Climate Declaration on 22nd May 2019 and North Devon District Council became a signatory at full [Council](#) on the 24th July 2019.
- 4.15 The main actions the signatories to the Declaration are committing to:
1. review organisational carbon reduction plans within 6 months
 2. collaborate on the production and implementation of a Devon Carbon Plan
 3. lobby for national policy changes and resources to implement the Devon Carbon Plan
 4. agree to collectively review community-related risks from a 1.5-degree warmer world.
- 4.16 This report is responding to the commitment number 1, to review carbon reduction plans. North Devon Council does not currently have a carbon reduction plan.

4.17 Net Zero Task Force

- 4.18 The DCERG appointed a specialist [Net-Zero Task Force](#) to develop the Devon Carbon Plan. This Task Force consist of 12 people with expertise in areas relevant to carbon reduction and is drawn from economic, environmental, health and academic organisations, and chaired by a leading climate expert. Options drawn up by the Task Force will be tested and refined at a series of [citizens' assembly](#) meetings scheduled to take place spring 2020. The Devon Carbon Plan will seek to implement transformational change including:
- Deploying more renewable, decentralised and smart energy systems
 - Retrofitting energy-efficiency measures into our existing buildings

- Constructing zero-carbon new buildings
- Travelling less and using improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure more often, and using electric and hydrogen vehicles
- Changing our consumption to use less, re-use more and choose low-carbon options
- Challenging all economic sectors to review their practices and the values of those they do business with
- Divesting from fossil fuels
- Changing our dietary patterns and reducing food waste
- Changing agricultural practices to reduce emissions associated with farming operations, manage soils sustainably and replenish soil carbon
- Encouraging carbon storage such as through tree planting, the use of wood in construction and peatland restoration
- Empowering the people of Devon with the knowledge and skills to act collectively.

4.19 **Climate Impacts Group (leading on adaptation)**

4.20 The DCERG has also formed the [Climate Impacts Group](#) to review the risks from climate over the coming decades. The Group is chaired by Devon and Cornwall Police and the initial review is expected to be complete by early 2020. Four activities are underway:

- **The Met Office** is producing a reasonable worst case scenario (RWCS) of climate change effects for 2030 and 2050 and providing evidence to back up these predictions.
- **The Environment Agency** is developing evidence of what the impact will be in terms of sea level rise, flooding, drought, heatwave, etc. for the 2030 and 2050 RWCS.
- **University of Exeter** is assessing knock on risks and impacts such as social, political and economic impacts. e.g. impact on agriculture and tourism, reduction in economic activity.
- **Health** to produce a report on likely impacts on public health for the RWCS at 2030 and 2050, in terms of excess deaths due to events such as heatwaves, drought, severe weather, pressures on provision of services, increase in vector borne disease, and plant and animal disease effects which may have knock on effect on human health.

4.21 **North Devon Council Action**

4.22 A member working group called the Climate Action Team has been established to advise the Council on what it needs to do to respond to the Climate Emergency. Members and officers have developed a draft plan as a tool to engage with partners and the community. The draft plan is not meant to capture what the

Council could or should be doing but to initiate discussion and debate as what everyone with a stake in North Devon can do to contribute to tackling climate change.

- 4.23 The plan is currently organised under a number of themes, recognising that none of them are completely discrete but relate to each other.

Climate Action Plan Themes		
Overarching		
Waste, Recycling and Resource Management	Energy and Renewables	Natural Environment
Built Environment	Travel and Transport	Community and Local Economy
Awareness, Engagement and Behaviour Change		

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Internal resource will be required from all teams across the Council to contribute to the programme both in the formulation and delivery of the Plan

6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 (Please detail if there are/are not any equalities implications anticipated as a result of this report. If so, please complete the Equality Impact Assessment Summary form available on Insite and email to the Corporate and Community Services Team at equality@northdevon.gov.uk).

7 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Article or Appendix and paragraph	Referred or delegated power?	Key decision?
Article 7.12	Appendix 4, para 17	No

9 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 9.1 This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

11 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

11.1 The author confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

Lead Members: Councillor Caroline Leaver, Councillor Netti Pearson

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Date: 28 February 2020

Reference: