

County Council

17 July 2019

**Climate Change Emergency Update
Report**



Report of Corporate Management Team

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Councillor Carl Marshall, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration

Councillor John Clare, Council Climate Change Champion

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To outline the range of measures that may be necessary to achieve new targets for carbon reduction by the Council and countywide, and provide an update on the work already underway.
- 2 To consider countywide consultation and engagement on this report, to ensure, as far as possible that residents, schools, businesses, community and public organisations can shape and contribute to the proposed measures.
- 3 To approve for consultation the outline governance arrangements which, subject to consent from the County Durham Partnership, would establish a new Environment and Climate Change Partnership Board and a web based Climate Change Network to help ensure an inclusive process in realising these ambitious targets.
- 4 To note the proposal to report back to Cabinet early in 2020 on the findings of the consultation, together with a more detailed action plan, shaped by this feedback.

Executive summary

- 5 On 20 February 2019, Durham County Council declared a Climate Change Emergency with ambitious targets to reduce its own carbon emissions by 60% by 2030 (from a 2008/9 baseline) and to investigate what further actions are necessary to make County Durham carbon neutral by 2050 (from a 1990 baseline). The resolution required a report within six months on the measures required to meet these targets and accordingly the report and update set out in **Appendix 2** is intended to fulfil this requirement.
- 6 On 12 June 2019 the Government announced plans to legislate to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 to include legally binding net zero carbon targets. Whilst this will create some financial savings through increased energy efficiency, the Committee on Climate Change who advise Government have indicated that it would have net costs of 1-2% GDP (although these cost expectations remain the same as it was for 80% reduction due to technological advances). Clearly this is a substantial commitment which affords, in due course, an opportunity for considerable additional resource as well as changed policy and regulations. This will be essential in the delivery of many of the measures outlined in this report.
- 7 The Council currently contributes less than 3% of all carbon equivalent emissions across the county from its activities and assets. Progress since the 2008/9 baseline has been good, with a 40% reduction to date from 2008/9 levels. The new target of 60% by 2030 will however present challenges, as many of the “easy” wins have been implemented. Nevertheless it is suggested that the Council is not limited by its targets and every effort to exceed them will be made.
- 8 The proposals contained within this report reflect a “whole Council” approach in achieving its targets, and not only include a range of technical delivery projects (such as a solar farm at Tanfield Lea, or minewater heat at Louisa Leisure Centre, currently being developed for European funding), but also seek to embed a culture of “carbon consciousness” across the Council through a new carbon section on the Implications Appendix for all Council reports, staff and elected Member training, and initiatives within specific service areas such as fleet where hitherto reductions have been limited. New buildings, including the Council’s new headquarters would be built to high energy efficiency standards and utilise low carbon technologies. The existing Carbon Programme Management Board would oversee this implementation.
- 9 Good progress has also been made with the county target with a 52% reduction achieved from 1990 levels to date. The greatest reductions have come from the industrial and commercial sector, which the Council

has supported through advice and support. The domestic energy sector has also seen reductions aided by both the overall decarbonisation of the grid and through local initiatives such as home insulation schemes. Transport has seen less of a fall, and there remains challenges in moving away from fossil fuels.

- 10 A range of measures are proposed in this report to achieve countywide targets including a programme of externally funded investment in low carbon transport infrastructure, such as projects including park and ride, Durham bus station and a bid for electric vehicle charging infrastructure in community locations (at least 100 charge points) currently being made. A programme of tree planting and peatland restoration, is also underway, with further bids active which combined can make a significant contribution to carbon offsetting.
- 11 It is proposed to seek approval from the County Durham Partnership to give more prominence to climate change through broadening the membership of the existing Environment Partnership to include stakeholders who can have the greatest impact on carbon reductions, thereby allowing greater focus on this area of work. The new Environment and Climate Change Partnership would also oversee a web based network which would provide advice and support and shares best practice.
- 12 The Council resolution in February 2019 calls on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 and 2050 targets possible. The Government's own proposal to adopt a net zero target for 2050 should lead to not only additional resources, but also new policies and regulations. The report outlines some of the further Government measures that are necessary including:
 - A coherent, stable national energy policy with financial incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency measures including re-introducing grants that have been withdrawn;
 - National building regulations to encourage consistent standards to low carbon homes and buildings;
 - Include low carbon projects as one of the priorities in the Shared Prosperity Fund, fully replacing the loss of potential European Grant (currently £16 M earmarked for County Durham).
- 13 Subject to Members' views it is proposed to undertake widespread consultation on this report across the business, community and public sector and with residents. This is to ensure the action plans that emerge are as comprehensive as possible and harness a collective approach to tackling this issue.

- 14 To further highlight the existing and future potential of utilising low carbon technologies, a number of organisations are providing exhibits prior to and after today's Council meeting. These come from a broad spectrum of sectors from fleet and transport, to businesses and domestic opportunities.
- 15 Final costed action plans incorporating consultation feedback would be formally reported in winter 2019/20, although, given the urgency of this issue, a series of the project initiatives described in this report would continue to progress in advance of that date. Furthermore, the action plan would need to be revised and updated on a regular basis in the light of new technological, policy or resource opportunities.

Recommendations

- 16 Council is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the Climate Emergency Update report set out in full in **Appendix 2**.
 - (b) Approve wider consultation on the measures outlined in this report, including with elected Members from mid-September to the end of October; to help inform an action plan to be reported to Cabinet in early 2020.
 - (c) Note that alongside this consultation, progress will continue to be made against several of the schemes identified in this report.

Background

- 17 On 20 February 2019, Durham County Council declared a Climate Change Emergency with ambitious targets to reduce its own carbon emissions 60% by 2030 (from a 2008/9 baseline) and to investigate what further actions are necessary to make County Durham Carbon neutral by 2050 (from a 1990 baseline).
- 18 The Council Resolution on 20 February also called for a report within six months with the actions the Council will need to take to achieve the new 2030 target and supplying an initial report on what actions would be required to achieve a carbon neutral County Durham by 2050.
- 19 This report, attached as **Appendix 2** has been produced within five months, to deliver on the Council Resolution, and presents a series of actions and themes setting out how these targets may be met. It is in a format and approach approved and supported by the Council's Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 30 April 2019.
- 20 The report builds on the work already achieved through the County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan (2015-20) which covered countywide issues, and the Council's Carbon Management Plan (2015-20) which sets out ways to reduce its own carbon emissions.
- 21 On 12 June 2019 the Government announced its intention to revise the Climate Change Act 2008 and set a new legally binding target of net zero by 2050. It is estimated by the Committee on Climate Change (established to advise Government) that the net costs of this would be 1-2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Clearly this may provide the prospect not only of additional resources in County Durham, but also national policy and regulations to ensure implementation.
- 22 The report explores:
 - (a) What the Council needs to do to achieve its targets
 - (b) What the County as a whole needs to do
 - (c) What measures may be necessary at a national level.

How the Council Would Meet its Targets

- 23 The Council currently contributes less than 3% of all carbon equivalent emissions across the county from its activities and assets. In 2008/9 it emitted 63,461,400 kgCO₂e. Progress since the 2008/9 baseline has been good, and is currently at 42,309,845 kgCO₂e or 40% reduction to date from 2008/9 levels. Whilst part of this success can be attributed to

a national decarbonisation of the electricity grid (through increased use of renewables), locally the Council has undertaken a substantial programme of retrofitting 59,881 streetlights with energy efficient LED lighting, adding solar panel arrays to 38 buildings, made 16 of its larger buildings more energy efficient, and introduced Eco Smart Schools programme providing advice and support in a wide range of energy efficiency measures across 240 schools in the county.

24 In order to achieve a 60% reduction a further 21,151,555 kgCO₂e per annum needs to be achieved. This will present challenges, as many of the “easy” wins have been implemented, offsetting (such as tree planting) is not counted, there is an old building stock across schools and offices, and technology is not currently in place for larger fleet.

25 To help inform this report a series of staff workshops were held from across all sectors of the Council including Children’s Services, Resources, Regeneration and Local Services and Adult Services. This generated a range of ideas and proposals that have informed the drafting of the report.

26 Initiatives and projects already in progress include:

- Development of a solar farm at Tanfield Lea to supply nearby Council buildings;
- Test boreholes at Louisa Centre to explore the feasibility of from minewater heat, which if proven will support a bid for European structural funding;
- Assessing and increasing electrification of fleet including pool cars, and pedestrian sweepers and bin hoists;
- Energy efficiency and LED lighting projects across a range of Council buildings.

27 Further measures included in the report include:

- A whole Council approach, including assessing climate change implications on all reports, training of staff and members;
- Continuance of the street lighting energy reduction project (subject to assessment) to a potential 15,000 extra street columns (3,000 tonnes per annum);
- A highly energy efficient (A rated) new headquarters, including an ambition to achieve carbon neutrality through offsetting;
- Carbon impact assessments, including low carbon options for construction projects which will help prepare for any national advice on building regulations.

How the County Would Meet its Targets

- 28 Similar to the Council target, good progress has also been made across the County with a reduction from 4,697,500 tonnes to 2,266,177 tonnes ie 52% from 1990 levels to date. The greatest reductions have come from the industrial and commercial sector, where there are some excellent examples of work being undertaken, for example by Lanchester wines at Greencroft Industrial estate who have installed wind turbines, solar panels and undertaken energy saving initiatives to achieve carbon neutrality. The Council led Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP) has provided advice to 168 small business, and overall renewable energy has increased 14% in the last 4 years. Domestic energy has also seen reductions aided by the overall decarbonisation of the grid, but also involving local projects such as home insulation schemes. Transport has seen less of a fall, and challenges remain in moving away from fossil fuel modes.
- 29 The move to eliminate (or offset) the remaining 2,266,177 tCO₂ is an ambition that the County cannot achieve on its own. Indeed the Council resolution in February 2019 calls on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 and 2050 targets possible. The report covers a range of the asks from Government including:
- Produce a national energy policy including financial incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency re-introducing grants that have been withdrawn;
 - Provide consistent planning national advice and regulations to ensure that developers build to low carbon/neutral standards;
 - Provide long term financial support to councils for schemes that involve high upfront investment such as geothermal energy schemes, charging points and other infrastructure programmes. In particular, the European funding for low carbon schemes (currently earmarked at £16 million for County Durham), subject to Brexit, should be replaced for example through the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 30 Notwithstanding the above, the Council, working with partners across the county, can also play a significant part. The Council has also become established as a leader in the field of low carbon, sitting on several national Government advisory bodies with a reputation for leadership across Europe, the UK and the region. In addition, work with partners such as Northern Power Grid, Durham University and Northumbrian Water has led to successful joint funding bids, free expertise from researchers and students and exciting new opportunities for collaborative working.

- 31 Schemes currently planned (subject to grant support) include:
- Expansion of the Business Energy Efficiency Project providing advice and support in energy efficiency to small and medium enterprises across the county;
 - Solid Wall Insulation Innovation Project to 220 properties at South Moor, Ramshaw, Cockfield and Ferryhill incorporating innovative insulation, smart energy controls and sustainable heating advice;
 - Programme of investment subject to funding in low carbon transport infrastructure, for projects including park and ride, Durham Bus Station (subject to a successful North East Transport bid);
 - Planting of over 64 hectares of woodland through the Durham Woodland Revival Project, and an extensive programme of peatland restoration.
- 32 The County Durham Plan (<http://www.durham.gov.uk/cdp>), sets out a range of future development needs and planning policies for the county until 2035, and was approved for submission to the Secretary of State by Council on 19 June 2019. The Plan proposes 24,852 new homes and 302 hectares of new employment land for business and industry. Such development ultimately carries a carbon footprint, however plan policies seek to ensure that new development minimises carbon emissions through its design, incorporation of renewable energy where possible. Clearly there may be changes in national guidance or regulations on planning which can be incorporated into formal reviews of the Plan in due course.

Governance and Inclusivity

- 33 In order to meet the Council's targets it is proposed to continue with the Carbon Management Programme Board for oversight and implementation of Council projects, and it is suggested that membership is reviewed to incorporate "gap" areas such as schools and transport. Clearly any key decisions would need to be made through the Council's usual decision making process involving Cabinet.
- 34 The current responsibility for the delivery of countywide target falls to a subgroup of the Environment Partnership which in turn reports to the County Durham Partnership. Given the emergency declaration, and the fact that this is the most pressing environmental issue of our time, it is proposed that climate change is given greater prominence in a new Environment and Climate Change Partnership. This is much more than a name change, as its structure in turn would reshape to include representatives from all sectors that could make a difference. This would include representation from:

- The Council's Climate Change Champion
- Youth representatives
- Business, industry and economic development
- Domestic and community sector
- Transport Sectors
- Natural environment and biodiversity.

35 It is recognised that climate change impacts on all residents, businesses and organisations across the County, and all have a role to play in meeting the targets. For this reason it is proposed to establish a County Durham Climate Change Network where, through an online platform, all interested parties can sign up to find more information on the role they can play, receive news and updates on developments, contribute ideas and share best practice. Key issues will be reported from this to the Environment and Climate Change Partnership.

36 The Council's Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have had a strong track record in overseeing the delivery of previous County and Council carbon reduction plans and this is set to continue going forward.

Consultation and Next Steps

37 With 97% of the county's carbon emission targets being outside the Council's direct control, it is clear that they can only be addressed through an inclusive process, harnessing the skills and enthusiasm from across the community and business sector in the county. Whilst this report is a start, five months has not been sufficient to achieve the "buy in" that would be essential to success.

38 For this reason, it is proposed that the draft report be used as a basis for consultation in Autumn 2019. The report has been drafted to include a series of questions to allow for this. Consultation would be open to individuals as well as organisations, and will be wide ranging including Area Action Partnerships, schools, Town and Parish Councils, businesses and community organisations. A series of workshops for key stakeholders will also be undertaken encouraging contribution from transport, business and domestic sectors that all have a role in carbon reductions. The exhibits available before and after today's meeting, illustrate well the broad nature of work and initiatives that need to be progressed.

39 It is proposed to undertake this consultation from mid-September to the end of October 2019 and to report these findings to Cabinet in early 2020 in the form of an action plan. It should be emphasised that this would not delay implementation of several of the schemes detailed in

the plan, but rather serve to allow additional contributions to be included.

Conclusion

- 40 The draft report set out in **Appendix 2** responds to the requirement from Full Council to set out how the ambitious carbon reduction targets can be met. The Government has also indicated its intention to legislate for a national net zero target, raising the potential for resources to be available to help achieve this.
- 41 Whilst the report details a range of specific schemes, it does not have all the answers, instead it provides indications of where the remaining carbon reductions may come from, subject to resource availability. Wider consultation will help refine and develop these plans still further.
- 42 In essence the approach is what Greta Thunberg in her speech to UK MPs (23 April 2019) referred to as “cathedral thinking”. “We must lay the foundation while we may not know exactly how to build the ceiling.”

Background papers

- None.

Other useful documents

- County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan (2015-20)
- Durham County Council Carbon Management Plan (2015-20)
- Committee on Climate Change Net Zero: The UKs contribution to stopping global warming

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Appendix E of Appendix 2 details a wide range of legal policy drivers for this report. Most relevant is the Climate Change Act 2008 which established a UK commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels and the Paris Agreement (to which the UK is a signatory) which aims to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to limit the increase to 1.5° C to prevent dangerous climate change. On 12 June Government announced plans to legislate to revise the Climate Change Act and adopt a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Council resolution made on 20 February asks for a report to consider what actions are necessary to achieve a carbon neutral position by 2050 ie higher than current national legislated targets. This report addresses the issue.

Finance

The report describes “projects in progress that are already funded by the Council and Partners. To date, the Council’s work on carbon reduction has generated significant savings and income (around £700,000 per annum) with considerable success in attracting external funding from European and UK grant sources as well as reductions in energy costs through efficiency.

The report describes a wide range of further measures that need to be implemented in coming years to achieve the targets. Many of these would need to be subject to further technical and financial assessment, with options for funding coming from the Council (typically on “invest to save” basis), national Government (especially in the light of net zero carbon 2050 targets), European and other external funding.

It is proposed to consult on these broad areas, assess costs and utilise the findings to inform a more detailed action plan presented early in 2020 for Members consideration.

Consultation

It is proposed that the report in Appendix 2 be subject to wide consultation in Autumn 2019, and a communication plan will be developed for this purpose.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None identified.

Climate Change

This is the first Council report where this implication is being considered. The report outlines the ways in which ambitious targets for carbon reduction may be met.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

Whilst having no direct staffing implications, the report does cover staff training and awareness as well as promoting a “carbon conscious” through the Inspire Advocates Programme.

Accommodation

Considerable progress has been made in introducing renewable energy (solar panels) across Council buildings and depots as well as making offices more energy efficient. The report covers the high energy efficiency rating of the new headquarters and an ambition to achieve a carbon neutral HQ.

Risk

Key risks to achieving the targets are identified in the Appendix 2 report and include Government support and policy, resources and the greater challenge posed for carbon reductions in rural areas such as County Durham.

Procurement

There are major opportunities through procurement to influence carbon reductions. This may be in public transport contracts or purchase of fleet and equipment. The role of procurement is detailed in the Appendix 2 report.