

Cabinet

15 July 2015

County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan-Durham's Vision for a Low Carbon County



Report of Corporate Management Team

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Purpose of the Report

- 1 To inform Cabinet of the progress of the Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan and seek formal adoption of the documents. The report also includes information on key projects which are developing and progress against our main carbon reduction target.

Background

- 2 In December 2013 a consultation programme and drafts of the County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan were presented to Cabinet. Since then a consultation exercise has been undertaken on the content of the documents, key indicators have been selected and a number of projects have been initiated to achieve the goals. The Environment Partnership's Climate Change Steering Group has been involved and the documents cover the aspirations of both the Council and the Partnership.

The Climate Change Strategy

- 3 The Strategy sets out a clear vision and objectives to establish County Durham as a low carbon county. It acts as a bridge between the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Climate Change Delivery Plan. Its aims are:
 - i. to reduce the county's emissions by 40% by 2020 from 1990 levels,
 - ii. to adapt to a changing climate and ensure that individuals and organisations are more prepared for the challenges of a more extreme environment.

4 These aims are assigned in more detail across seven themes:

1. Public Sector Performance
2. Low Carbon Economy
3. Built Environment
4. Natural Environment
5. Transport and Infrastructure
6. Community Engagement
7. Impacts Beyond our Boundaries

The Climate Change Delivery Plan

- 5 The Delivery Plan takes the strategic objectives and translates them into projects and actions. It details projects that are happening on the ground and key actions that are important to making progress in the seven themes. These are drawn from organisations and communities across the County and demonstrate action on various aspects of climate change.
- 6 The Strategy and Delivery Plan are available from the document library.

Consultation

- 7 The consultation process involved amongst others, statutory consultees, Council Members, the disability partnership, schools and Durham University. Opinions and areas of proposed activity were also sought via the website and a promotional event in Durham marketplace.

Key responses from the consultation showed:

- The majority of respondents thought that climate change was an important issue and our targets and aspirations were appropriate.
- The delivery of the strategy should aim to be as fair and equitable as possible and projects need to be inclusive.
- Individuals and communities need to be made aware of the issues and be empowered to take action.
- Pupils at Durham schools are aware of the broad issues and think climate change is important. There was a mixed response as to whether they thought their school was doing work on climate change, which given the level of engagement, was surprising, and is more likely to reflect observations and communications rather than a lack of actual actions.

- 8 It was also apparent that climate change is a broad topic and it is difficult to engender action across such a wide ranging remit. Further engagement with stakeholders across the document's themes will focus on aspects that are of specific interests to a particular community, considering issues such as fuel poverty, flood readiness, transport etc. depending on local needs. There is more information on the consultation in Appendix 2.

Recent Durham County Council Projects and Key Developments for 2015-16

- 9 Since LGR, Durham County Council has become recognised nationally for taking a lead in reducing carbon emissions and achieving resource efficiencies. It was highly commended in the Low Carbon category in the LGC awards in 2012 and 2014 and won the Greenbuild award for Behavioural Change in 2014. Examples of progress include:
- a) By March 2014, Durham County Council's Carbon Management Plan coordinated actions to reduce our carbon emissions by more than 16% compared to our 2008/9 baseline. Since 2010, the reductions achieved have helped to avoid energy and fuel costs in excess of £18.5 million compared to the business as usual predictions.
 - b) Following the success of the building mounted solar PV panels in 2012, the Council is currently developing a solar farm at Tanfield. The system, due to be constructed in early 2016, will have around 15,000 panels and will be used to provide power to our data centre and export electricity to the grid. Additional feasibility work to identify sites suitable for renewable energy will be taking place in 2015/16.
 - c) 99% of the municipal waste collected no longer goes to landfill. Waste which isn't reused, recycled or composted now goes to an energy from waste plant and is used to generate energy rather than producing methane.
 - d) For many years the Council has operated a sustainable procurement policy, enhancing the environmental, social and economic value of many of our contracts. Of particular relevance to climate change is our sustainable timber policy, recognised to Gold standard by the World Wildlife Fund. Deforestation is a significant contributor to climate change and by following the policy, we are confident our wood comes from sustainable sources.
- 10 A summary of further achievements across key areas of service is included in Appendix 3.
- 11 Going forward, the County Council and its partners in the Climate Change Steering Group will be working on key projects that are detailed in the Delivery Plan. A snapshot of these are:

a) European Regional Development Fund

Between 2015 and 2020, Durham will be offered approximately £16 million to support Low Carbon Economy projects. 60% of project costs can be funded from Europe and Durham County Council and partners are looking to support or deliver projects in areas such as:

- Business Energy Efficiency
- Community Energy
- Biomass Supply Chain
- Green Infrastructure and flood prevention
- District Heating

Working with the NE LEP and partner organisations, a programme of potential projects is being prepared for submission once the ESIF Operational Programme has been published by Government. It is hoped that projects could be approved by the end of the year.

b) Renewable Energy

The Council is currently investigating the possibility of significant investment in renewable technology on its estate and at key strategic sites such as Aykley Heads. These investigations are at early stages, but if successful, they will both reduce the carbon footprint of the County and bring in substantial revenue for the authority.

c) Energy Efficiency

Through the Warm up North regional partnership, the authority will continue to seek to address domestic energy use and fuel poverty. In schools, there is also an active Schools Carbon Reduction programme engaging with pupils across the County and encouraging energy efficiency.

In 2015/16 Durham County Council will be beginning a programme to work on community buildings involved in asset transfers to help groups improve the energy efficiency of their buildings.

d) Flooding and Adaptation

A partnership approach is being promoted that delivers both physical improvements and community resilience to extreme weather events, prioritising those most at risk.

Climate Change Steering Group

- 12 The group is currently making the transition from that which prepared the Strategy and Delivery Plan to one that will be more active in delivering projects across the County.
- 13 The group has decided to prioritise its early projects in the following areas which are also identified as Sustainable Communities Strategy objectives:
 - a) Making communities more aware and resilient to the impacts of extreme weather events
 - b) Making the Council, homes and businesses more energy efficient
 - c) Improving infrastructure to support sustainable travel.

Main Carbon Reduction Target and Reporting

- 14 The strategy sets out a Countywide target for reducing carbon emissions:

“By 2020, reduce carbon emissions (from domestic, commercial, and transport sources) across County Durham by 40% from a 1990 baseline.”
- 15 The longer term target is a 55% reduction by 2031, and there is a national target of 80% by 2050 (both from 1990 levels). Meeting these targets will require continual movement away from using fossil fuels in heating and electricity generation.
- 16 The most recent data (see Appendix 4) shows that County Durham has reduced its emissions by just over 40% and is on course to meet the 2020 target. There is however, a risk that emissions may rise again in line with economic trends, and monitoring and review of targets as set out in the plan will continue and will be updated when appropriate.
- 17 Progress on the Strategy and Delivery Plan will be reported annually to the Environment Partnership and RED Strategy Board.
- 18 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received regular updates on climate change work and it is proposed to continue these arrangements as the Strategy and Delivery Plan begin to be rolled out.

Recommendation

- 19 1) That Cabinet endorses the County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan, recognising the ongoing achievements the Council is leading on in this area.

- 2) That Cabinet continues to support the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role in monitoring progress.

Background papers

20 Copies of the Strategy and Delivery Plan are available in the document library.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance –

Individual projects are likely to have finance implications but many will provide a financial return for the authority. Any significant funding implications will be reviewed on their own merits.

Staffing –

No immediate implications

Risk –

Failure to address climate change will create increasing risks in the future.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty –

Climate change impacts tend to have a greater impact on less wealthy and more vulnerable people. The strategy will help prevent or reduce these impacts. An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken on the draft Strategy and additional concerns raised through the consultation have been incorporated in the final documents.

Accommodation –

None

Crime and Disorder –

None

Human Rights –

None

Consultation –

Carried out in 2014 as detailed in the report. See Appendix 2 for more information

Procurement –

None

Disability Issues –

The consultation identified that by not taking action, disabled people are likely to be more vulnerable to expected impacts. It also recognised that certain projects and schemes can have impacts (both positive and negative) and will need to pay particular attention to these issues as they progress.

Significant projects will undergo Equalities Impact Assessments and this will help identify risks and opportunities.

Legal Implications –

None

Appendix 2: Consultation

An in depth consultation has taken place to develop the documents. Prior to the consultation draft, AAP's, partners and key organisations were engaged in shaping and writing the main themes of the documents. A consultation plan was agreed with the Council's Consultation Officer Group (COG) which set out the following proposals.

A main web based consultation and survey monkey questionnaire took place over 8 weeks from the beginning of July till the end of August. It also involved a targeted consultation of key groups such as:

Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Business Durham, Durham Local Food Group, Housing Associations, Parish Councils, AAP's, Faith in Community group, Humanist group, O&S-Environment and Sustainable Communities, Durham Community Action, Civil Contingencies Unit, and the Environment Agency.

In addition, specific consultations/workshops were held with key stakeholders. These included:

- Durham University-a staffed stall was used to attract opinions of students at the University library
- Schools-a comprehensive consultation was held with a number of schools. More details are provided below
- The Disability Partnership via DCC Equalities team-a workshop was held at County Hall.
- Member training seminar-Climate Change in your Community.

These workshops took the most relevant sections of the consultation and time was spent looking at detailed aspects of climate change relevant to each audience. Earlier in the year we also ran an event promoting renewable energy in Durham Marketplace to engage with the public on some of the headline consultation questions.

There has been on-going engagement with AAP's throughout the consultation and a number of partnership projects are now being delivered.

In total we received almost 100 representations and generally, people recognised the importance of the subject and understood the links and issues around climate change. There was acknowledgement that even if they considered themselves fairly resilient to the challenges, others in their community could be adversely affected.

There was a desire amongst the respondents, that as far as practicable, the projects should be fair and inclusive and ensure that those most likely to suffer the worst impacts (fuel prices, ill health, risks, etc.) should be prioritised. Whilst national campaigns will be directed by central Government, Durham should try to reach sections of the community who will be affected or miss out on opportunities.

Climate Change as a topic can be very broad, and it is natural for people to concentrate on aspects that are of interest to them, A central coordinated group, such as the Climate Change Steering Group will be vital in bridging the gap between national policy and local issues identifying local needs and opportunities and work with partners and existing groups to deliver optimum results.

The schools consultation involved over 200 pupils, mainly aged between 12 and 15 and was co-ordinated by the Council's OASES team. It was a combination of face to face workshops/forums and survey monkey questionnaires.

The responses from the young people showed an appreciation of the issues concerned and a broad understanding of how they can reduce emissions and prepare for some of the impacts. The most surprising result was that only 1/3rd of pupils thought their school was helping them learn about climate change, despite their other responses indicating that they were well informed.

The responses were positive and reflected the effort of partners to engage with young people and involve them as part of the solution. It is proposed to continue to engage with schools and young people as part of the delivery of the climate change programme.

Appendix 3: Durham County Council Low Carbon Projects

A summary of current and recent projects that Durham County Council have been involved in:

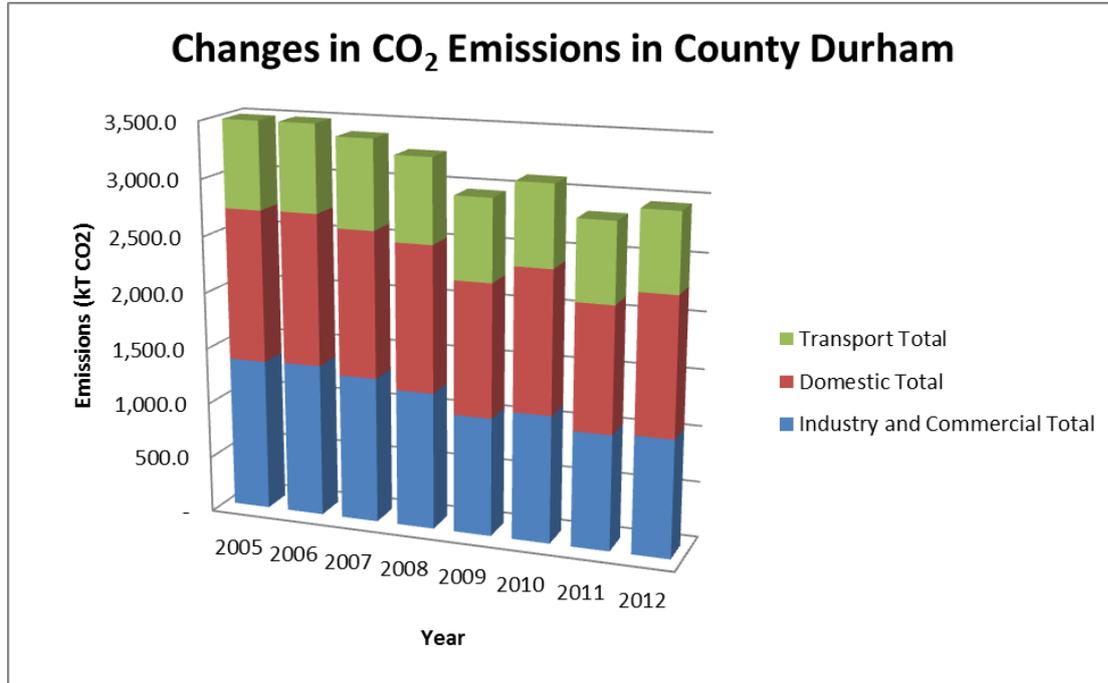
- a) By March 2014, Durham County Council's **Carbon Management** Plan coordinated actions to reduce our carbon emissions by more than 16% compared to our 2008/9 baseline. Since 2010, the reductions achieved have helped to avoid energy and fuel costs in excess of £18.5 million compared to the business as usual predictions.
- b) We have undertaken a review of our estate and implemented a programme of installing energy efficiency measures to viable sites. These measures have included LED lighting, boiler controls, PIR sensors and system optimisations.
- c) **Renewable Energy** Durham County Council has taken over management of the 100kW hydro–electric scheme at Freemans Reach for the next 35 years.
- d) In 2012 the Council installed Solar PV units on 35 buildings with a capacity of over 850 kW. These installations generated 721MWh of electricity and generated almost £200,000 income in 2014/15.
- e) Following the success of the building mounted solar PV panels in 2012, the Council has recently received planning permission for a 4MW solar farm at Tanfield. The system will have around 15,000 panels and will be used to provide power to our data centre and export electricity to the grid. Additional feasibility work to identify sites suitable for renewable energy will be taking place in 2015/16.
- f) Biomass boilers have also been incorporated at sites including the Green Lane offices, Killhope and a number of schools.
- g) **Transport.** Durham County Council has introduced pool cars (including a number of electric vehicles) at its main offices and carried out improvements to the efficiency of its fleet of vehicles. It also offers staff incentives such as loans for public transport and a salary sacrifice cycle scheme to encourage more sustainable travel.
- h) A new rail station proposed at Horden (Peterlee) will improve access for passengers on the Durham Coast Line and will contribute towards modal shift and reduce the area's dependence on the car for travel.
- i) Durham County Council is carrying out a programme to upgrade more than 41,000 street lights across the county. This will replace existing light fittings with the latest light emitting diode (LED) lights which will reduce energy consumption by up to two thirds, alongside

a dimming programme. The programme is part of the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project which will reduce carbon emissions and save almost £24 million over 25 years.

- j) **Housing.** From April 2014 to March 2015 there were a total of 2042 referrals to Warm up North across County Durham, leading to 423 energy efficiency measures being installed in 404 properties.
- k) **Engagement.** Officers will be working with members of the community groups who have taken over buildings as a result of the asset transfer process to help the new managers understand energy issues and help them reduce their energy costs.
- l) Durham has been delivering a successful Eco-Schools programme for many years and has over 100 schools taking part. It also runs a schools carbon reduction programme working with schools directly to lower their carbon emissions. To date the programme has achieved an impressive 12% reduction in emissions from primary schools.
- m) The Council has supported local groups such as Chilton and Oakenshaw in developing their own local groups looking at energy projects
- a) **Waste.** 99% of the municipal waste collected no longer goes to landfill. Waste which isn't reused, recycled or composted now goes to an energy from waste plant and is used to generate energy rather than producing methane.
- n) **Procurement.** For many years the Council has operated a sustainable procurement policy, enhancing the environmental, social and economic value of many of our contracts. Of particular relevance to climate change is our sustainable timber policy, recognised to Gold standard by the World Wildlife Fund. Deforestation is a significant contributor to climate change and by following the policy, we are confident our wood comes from sustainable sources.

Appendix 4: Recent Performance on Emission Reduction

Graph showing annual progress on emission reduction in Durham. The 1990 baseline is approximately 5,000 kT, and the 2020 target is 3,000kT.



The increase in emissions in 2010 and 2012 were common across local authorities and were due to a number of factors such as cold winters and an increase in coal being used by power stations to generate electricity.