

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **7th December 2021**

Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update**

Portfolio Areas: **Cllr Lynn Daniel**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Adam Williams** Role: **Climate Change Specialist**

Contact: **Email: adam.williams@swdevon.gov.uk**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Hub Committee APPROVES the updated Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan (as set out at Appendix A of the presented agenda report).

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and an updated Action Plan was developed and presented to the Council on 8th December 2020 which was then adopted.
- 1.2 An update was provided to Hub on 8th June 2021 and to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd June 2021
- 1.3 This report provides the second update on progress on the action plan since its adoption.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was adopted on 8th December by Council. It was noted that the Action Plan will be a continually evolving document and that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Strategy and Governance, in consultation with the lead Member for Growing Our Natural Environment, to make revisions to the Plan as and when deemed necessary
- 2.2 It was resolved on the 8th December that performance against the Action Plan was to be monitored on a six-monthly basis.

- 2.3 The first update was provided to Hub Committee on 8th June 2021 and to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd June 2021.
- 2.4 At Hub Committee, among other things, officers were asked to raise the matter of proposals for wind and solar energy sites with the Joint Local Plan Team. Officers were informed that a tender to scope out the plan area's capacity for new renewable energy sites was discussed at the JLP Management Board on 6th September 2020 and a paper was subsequently taken to the partnership board in December 2020 for any specific commissioning work needed in the future. Paragraph 151 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that plans should consider 'identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources'.
- 2.5 The issue of onshore wind was also raised by Members at Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Member's attention is drawn to the outcomes of the Devon Citizen Assembly which will also form the basis for actions concerning onshore wind in the final Devon Carbon Plan. 89% of Devon Citizen Assembly supported the principle of onshore wind. Officers of the partnership are currently drafting actions following the recommendations of the Citizens Assembly (topics included onshore wind, retrofitting and encouraging less car use) with a view to sharing drafts at the end of year before a public consultation takes place in spring 2022. Members are assured however, that this does not take away any of the Councils powers was the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.6 Hub members also requested that it would be beneficial if the format of the plan was revised to separate those Actions that were within the control of the Council and those that were not. This has been done and the updated version can be found at Appendix 1.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The report sets out progress to date on delivery of the action plan in line with the adopted strategy.

4. Progress Update

- 4.1 Appendix 1 contains a revised version of the Action Plan with the latest position on each individual action, new actions and changes to actions marked in red. At the 8th June Hub Committee members had requested that the action plan should highlight areas where the Council has a direct role to play or an indirect/influencing role. The revised action attempts to consolidate this with additional columns to identify the level of

influence, key partners and also the level of impact a proposed action is likely to have.

- 4.2 The revised action plan also includes current operational actions as well as various data sources to monitor key metrics related to the strategy and action plan. The appended action plan also colour codes actions based on their status, orange refers to actions in progress, green is completed and red are suggested for deletion.
- 4.3 Key progress has been made in the following areas since June;
 - a. The Council benefitted from a funding opportunity to either initiate or enhance their enforcement procedures in association with the minimum energy efficiency standard (MEES) regulations. The Council's application to the PRS MEES Compliance and Enforcement Competition was successful and we (SHDC and WDBC combined) received a grant allocation of £44,331. The work will involve gathering all the available information and data on the private rental housing market, so that we can target the relevant landlords and promote compliance. Improving properties in private rental sector will help the council's climate change agenda. Recruitment of an officer to carry out the work failed – no suitable applications were received– so we are now talking to local energy groups to support delivery of the required work and for energy groups to provide advice to landlords. The Council will retain the enforcement responsibility.
 - b. The Council continues to hold funding under the Government's Green Homes Grant (GHG) scheme and continues to work towards the delivery of the scheme. The grant will be used to deliver energy saving measures for eligible households and will be delivered during 2021/22. However, due to major supply chain difficulties nationally and locally we are reviewing our approach to delivering these grants. The installations will reduce fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions from the households benefitting from the grants. A range of metrics including lifetime financial and carbon savings will be calculated and reported back at the end of the project.
 - c. Monthly Climate and Biodiversity Newsletters have continued to be produced and released monthly and subscriber have grown month on month from 149 in October 2020 to 391 in October 2021. These newsletters are also sent to Town and Parish Councils and added to the updated Climate Change and Biodiversity Website.
 - d. The Community Forum have continued to meet following the last update. Organising and collating events for Great Big Green week, a national week of climate action in September, became a focus for the forum over the summer with 7 events organised by forum members taking place throughout the

Great Big Green week. The next focus of Forum will be to help with the production of a WDBC Town and Parish Council guide/toolkit for Net Zero.

- e. The next engagement campaign with Carbon Savvy, South Hams District Council, Torridge District Council and North Devon Council was developed and took place during the COP26 fortnight (1 November – 13 November 2021). The focus of the campaign was shopping, titled Shop4good, the campaign follows new research that shows consumer interest in sustainability has increased significantly since the pandemic, and suggests consumer buying power may be doing more to help the climate than originally thought. Since shopping makes up a big part of our carbon footprints, the campaign highlights ways to reduce this and tasks participants to consider this impact and complete a carbon emissions footprint calculator to enter a prize draw.
- f. Completed a feasibility study into the Councils role around EV charging as well as reviewing opportunities for solar and battery storage on our car parks.
- g. Completed Carbon Literacy Training for SLT and ELT in partnership with Torbay Council. The next steps will be to collate the commitments made by trainees and include this as part of a revised action plan when the Devon Carbon Plan is completed and adopted.
- h. Worked with the Devon Climate Emergency partnership to secure funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) through the South West Energy Hub to include Tamar Energy Fest, run by Tamar Energy Community, as part of the COP26 Regional Roadshow. The Councils Climate Change Specialist was on hand during the event on Saturday 13th November to answer queries and talk about the Councils approach to decarbonisation and the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership.
- i. The Council has entered into The Devon and Torbay Residential Chargepoint scheme. This is a scheme that would enable the Council to install electric charging points at one more location in the Borough with the grant funding. Subject to the necessary surveys being carried out, a 22kW dual charging point will be installed at Pilgrims Drive car park, Bere Alston. Devon Climate Emergency are working on producing a map of all the publically funded charge points in Devon.
- j. Commissioned Exeter University to conduct an update of the Councils Greenhouse Gas emissions, data collection has been completed and is in the process of being analysed. This new baseline will then lead into a new piece of work to develop an Operational Emissions Decarbonisation Plan.
- k. Scoping work started for a 'DEV32 plus' initiative. The climate emergency and need for urgent action towards net zero is an important material consideration in the planning process. This is recognised by the Secretary of State and explicitly

supported in a recent appeal at Dartmouth where the Inspector said *"It seems to me folly to build new houses now that will commit the owners to potentially expensive and disruptive alterations as the UK moves to decarbonise the heating of its housing stock."* He refused the development concluding that there was a *"failure to address positively the challenge of climate change and the failure to demonstrate that there would be a net gain for biodiversity"*.

Current planning policy, at both local and national level, is out of step with the urgency of the climate challenge and we are keen to go further than our current Joint Local Plan (JLP) policies and Supplementary Planning Document. In advance of the plan review we are preparing an interim planning policy document to explain how we will use the climate emergency as a material consideration in the planning process. It will set out exactly what new development should provide in terms of mitigation, adaptation and resilience to positively contribute to a sustainable future in line with the Climate Change Act 2008 and more recent Government announcements. As part of this work additional toolkits such as the Net Zero Carbon Buildings Toolkit which will be produced to support applicants. To ensure the document has appropriate weight in the decision making process it will be subject to consultation and be formally adopted by the JLP Councils.

- l. Completed a borough wide survey with CoCars and CoBikes to review the scope for shared EVs and Bikes for in the area. The next steps will be to discuss opportunities with CoCars and CoBikes.
- m. We have received our Renewable Energy of Guaranteed Origin (REGO) Certificate for our energy supply 2020/2021 certified by the Carbon Trust.

5. Plans for short term (next 6 months)

- 5.1 The Action Plan will continue to be delivered and developed alongside delivery of 'A Plan for West Devon' and supporting thematic plans.
- 5.2 Over the next 6 months we will expect to see a final version of the Devon Carbon Plan now that the Citizens Assembly has concluded which will trigger an update of our own action plan, bringing in actions from that plan as well as its monitoring indicators.

6. Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1 Hub Committee is recommended to note the updates provided within this report and its appendix and support the progress

made so far with a view to being provided a further update in 6 months' time.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	
Risk	N	
Consultation and Engagement	Y	There has been no direct consultation and engagement with regard to this report however the update includes details of a range of events that have involved engagement with partners and the community, such as our ongoing running of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum, which aligns with the principles of the West Devon Borough Council Consultation and Engagement Strategy.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Natural Environment, Built Environment, Communities, Homes
Equality and Diversity	N	No direct implications
Safeguarding	N	No direct implications
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	No direct implications
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	The provision of energy efficiency measures will have a positive impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the households.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

A - West Devon Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update

Background Documents:

Adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy