

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD



TO:	Health and Wellbeing Board
FROM:	Martin Eden, Strategic Director of Environment & Operations
DATE:	21 st June 2022

SUBJECT: Climate Emergency Action Plan

1. PURPOSE

To brief the Health & Wellbeing Board on progress with development and implementation of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

That the Board notes the report.

3. BACKGROUND

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030. In February 2020 the Council published an Action Plan, setting out how that ambition would be achieved. Following a hiatus created by Covid-19 the Action Plan was updated in December 2021 and a Working Group comprising Heads of Service from each Department across the Council was set up to continue to develop and implement the Action Plan, with Laura Wharton, Consultant in Public Health as representative for Public Health. A revenue budget of £300,000 was allocated to support implementation of the Action Plan.

The Working Group's priorities for year 1 are:

- Citizens' Inquiry on Climate Change;
- Decarbonisation of Council buildings and assets;
- Alternative vehicle fuels for Council fleet;
- Alternative vehicle fuels for business mileage;
- Introduction of an on line staff training and awareness programme for climate change;
- Tree Planting and development of a tree and woodland strategy;
- Carbon sequestration;
- Promotional campaigns linked to Climate change

Sub-groups have been established to lead on each priority. Public Health is leading on the Citizens' Inquiry, which will be held over summer and report in October this year. The recommendations will inform the Action Plan and future communications and engagement with residents and other stakeholders.

Communication with residents and stakeholders will be on the Citizens' Inquiry and food waste to begin with. Other campaign topics will be identified by the Working Group through the year. The intention is to provide regular updates on the implementation of the Action Plan.

The focus in this first year will be on establishing business cases that will direct expenditure in future years. Work is already underway with the Energy Saving Trust to investigate options to decarbonise the fleet, which will inform the business cases behind the vehicle replacement

programme in the coming years. The Council currently has 3 electric vans on its fleet.

Council staff travel over 1 million miles by car for business purposes every year. A sub-group is reviewing how some of this travel can be decarbonised, for example, by introducing electric pool cars for staff.

The Council has undertaken a number of energy efficiency measures in its buildings over the past few years and has just concluded a programme of works funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme that should cut emissions by 250 tonnes of CO₂ a year. A more systematic approach to estate decarbonisation will consider how whole buildings might be decarbonised, starting with the highest consuming site, which are the leisure centres, market halls and main civic buildings. The Council will engage with consultants and the NW Net Zero Hub on this aspect of the Action Plan.

Supported by a grant from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, the Council planted almost 7,000 trees in 15 locations around the Borough in the 21/22 planting season. Further suitable sites are to be identified to continue with the planting programme this year and into the future. The new Tree Survey Officer will lead on the production of a Tree and Woodland Strategy to find the right location for new planting and to bring existing woodland into management. Other landowners may have tree planting ambitions and the Council will endeavour to establish what those are.

Large parts of the Blackburn with Darwen countryside is upland peat, which, when in good condition, sequesters large amounts of carbon dioxide. Conversations have been started with Lancashire Wildlife Trust to find out who is doing what in terms of restoration works in the Borough, what funding is available and whether the Council has a role to play in this work.

The Council is participating in Phase 2 of a study to develop Authority Based Insetting (ABI) as an alternative to traditional offsetting for UK local authorities. ABI would provide a mechanism that matches projects that have a carbon reduction element with finance from an investor looking to reduce emissions from their activities. Projects tested to date include building retrofit and greener resurfacing for a bypass, as well as tree planting and peatland restoration. ABI may, therefore, provide an alternative means of funding some of the projects in the Action Plan.

All of this work will be supported by staff training. Members of the Working Group received Carbon Literacy training in early June and an e-learning module is being developed to introduce all staff to climate change and outline their role in helping the Council meet its carbon neutral ambition. Support is also provided by climate policy in the emerging Local Plan and the revised Procurement Strategy, which requires contracts below £1m to consider how they can deliver the contract in a way which contributes to the Council's carbon neutral target and implement any financially reasonable measures to do so and contracts over £1m to provide a contract-specific Carbon Reduction Plan with the measures that will be applied when performing the contract.

The Action Plan is a working document that will be reviewed and updated annually. It will try, as far as possible, to quantify the carbon reduction implications of the individual actions. It will also, in time, reflect the ambitions and actions of other sectors in the Borough, as Climate Change will not be addressed by the Council alone. Business, including utility companies, the public sector, especially the NHS, which is responsible for 5% of the UK's emissions, and the third sector all have a role to play in reducing emissions from their own activities, adapting their assets and services to the changing climate change and taking advantage of the opportunities, such as new jobs, arising from it. The Council will be working at whatever scale is appropriate, whether local or regional, in the pursuit of a carbon neutral borough.

4. RATIONALE

Climate change has been recognised as one of the gravest threats ever faced by humankind. It needs to be addressed in an urgent manner.

This was recognised by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council in 2019 when it Declared a Climate Emergency, one of 300 local authorities to do so. In making the Declaration, the Council committed to preparing and implementing an Action Plan. This report provides a summary of the Council's initial priorities and proposed work plan for the 2022/23 financial year.

5. KEY ISSUES

The world is not on track to limit global warming to below 1.5°C, which means that every action to cut emissions, no matter how small, is important. The role of the Climate Emergency Working Group is to develop and implement specific measures and to embed climate considerations in everyday business to reduce emissions wherever technologically and financially feasible. All Members and officers need to have regards to the impact on climate change in the implementation of services.

Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and more extreme weather events bring increased risks of heat waves, droughts, flooding and poor air quality, influencing the quality of lives and health. The Council may need to adapt services to the changing climate, as well as working to cut emissions.

The Council has direct control over only a small percentage of emissions in the Borough and so must work with residents and other stakeholders to influence emission reduction in other sectors. Some changes may be reliant on action by central Government.

The Climate Emergency Working Group reports to the Executive Member for Growth & Development and Corporate Leadership Team, as required. An annual progress report is submitted to Executive Board.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications arising from this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs of developing and implementing the Climate Emergency Action Plan will be met from the Climate Change budget.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications arising from this report.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications arising from this report.

10. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications arising from this report.

11. CONSULTATIONS

None

CONTACT OFFICER:	Gwen Kinloch
DATE:	12 th May 2022
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Climate Emergency Action Plan https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/environment/pollution/climate-change

