

CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Climate Change Board reports progress to the Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis. This report outlines overarching activities of the Climate Change Board over the last quarter. The Council's work on climate change continues to align with the Decarbonisation Plan, which is the Council's key climate change document, adopted in December 2021, confirming the Council's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2045, in line with the Scottish Government's target.
- 1.2 The Council continues to progress spend plans for the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund. The Committee is asked to consider the proposal to vary allocated funding amounts to meet schools' funding requests.
- 1.3 Argyll and Bute Council has responded to the public consultation on the Scottish Government's draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3. The finalised Plan will be published in Autumn 2024.
- 1.4 Council Officers propose the use of the new Sustainable Scotland Network's Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist to assess and support the Council's climate change capabilities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to:

- 2.1 Agree the proposal to vary / redistribute existing funding amounts allocated to three funding activities via the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund based on subscription and feedback from our schools.

- 2.2 Note the Council's Officer-led response submitted to the Scottish Government's draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 public consultation.
- 2.3 Agree to implement the Sustainable Scotland Network's Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist to support the Council's assessment and development of climate change capabilities, in line with SSN Guidance.

CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD UPDATE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The Climate Change Board reports progress to the Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis. This report outlines overarching activities of the Climate Change Board over the last quarter. The Council's work on climate change continues to align with the Decarbonisation Plan, which is the Council's key climate change document, adopted in December 2021, confirming the Council's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2045, in line with the Scottish Government's target.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to:

- 4.1 Agree the proposal to vary / redistribute existing funding amounts allocated to three funding activities via the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund based on subscription and feedback from our schools.
- 4.2 Note the Council's Officer-led response submitted to the Scottish Government's draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 public consultation.
- 4.3 Agree to implement the Sustainable Scotland Network's Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist to support the Council's assessment and development of climate change capabilities, in line with SSN Guidance.

5.0 SUMMARY UPDATES OF CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD

A – Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund

- 5.1 At the previous Policy and Resources Committee meetings held on 12th October 2023 and 7th December 2023, the Committee agreed to allocate Scottish Government Nature Restoration Funding towards three different activities including the School Biodiversity Fund (£68,000), Tree Planting Fund (£75,000) and School Food Waste Composting Fund (£60,000). Commercial Services were tasked to develop spending plans for the three funding streams, with the Climate Change Board, Education Services and Finance working together to allocate this capital funding to ELCCs, primary schools and secondary schools.
- 5.2 At end of May 2024, 28 education establishments submitted applications requesting funds to buy equipment and materials that will enhance biodiversity and tackle school food waste, creating new opportunities for children and young people to learn and take action on nature restoration and climate change. The School Biodiversity Fund was the most popular funding stream, and was over-subscribed (£116,610 has been requested by schools, against the agreed allocation of £68,000). Fewer funding requests were made under the Tree Planting Fund and School Food Waste Composting Fund, with both underspent.
- 5.3 In order to meet the funding requests submitted by our schools, the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to consider the proposed changes to the agreed amounts allocated to the three funding activities:
- I. That £48,610 of underspent funds from the Tree Planting Fund and the School Food Waste Composting Fund be reallocated to meet the overspend of funding requested via the School Biodiversity Fund.
 - II. That Council Officers continue to work with our Education establishments, seeking additional funding applications to allocate the remaining unspent balance of funds under both the Tree Planting Fund and the School Food Waste Composting Fund.
- 5.4 Both of the above recommendations will help ensure Scottish Government Nature Restoration Funds are fully allocated, whilst maximising the benefits for our children, young people, nature and climate. The identification of projects and distribution of this fund is a Council decision without recourse to Government ensuring that the project purpose meets the criteria set out by the Nature Restoration Fund.

B – Argyll and Bute Council Consultation Response to Scottish Government Draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3

- 5.5 The Scottish Government published the draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 for public consultation in January 2024. Once finalised, the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 is expected to be published in autumn 2024 and will cover a

five year period from 2024 to 2029, replacing the current Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2 which was launched in 2019.

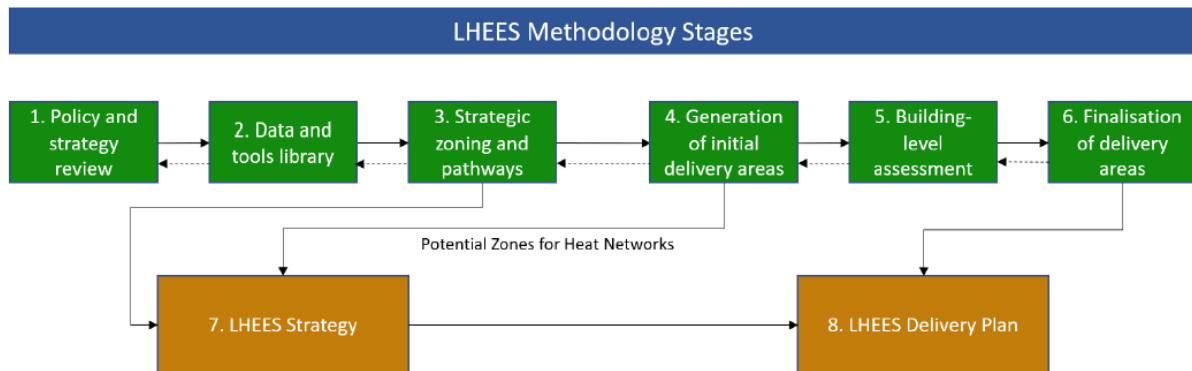
- 5.6 ELT confirmed that an Officer-led response to the public consultation was required. This was developed collaboratively, with expert input from a range of cross-Council services. Additionally, a briefing session was delivered at Climate Change Board in March 2024. The Council's consultation response was submitted ahead of the April 2024 deadline.
- 5.7 The Scottish Government will publish an analysis report, summarising findings based on all consultation responses submitted. The analysis report will be published on the Scottish Government website.

C - Sustainable Scotland Network Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist

- 5.8 Sustainable Scotland Network Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist is designed to enable senior leaders in the public sector to assess their organisation's maturity and capability in tackling the climate and nature emergencies. The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) developed this Checklist in partnership with the SSN Steering Group, SOLACE, COSLA and the Improvement Service.
- 5.9 The Checklist offers a high-level assessment of where action is needed on embedding climate emergency (and nature) responses including adaptation and mitigation in public sector service planning and delivery. The checklist equips leaders to understand legislative responsibilities and align with national and local policy developments while ensuring a just transition that delivers sustainable benefits for Scotland's people and environment.
- 5.10 The Checklist has seven themes: Strategy; Targets; Governance; Delivery; Finance; Performance; Skills. Three levels of gradings can be allocated against each of the seven themes: Foundation, Advanced and Exemplary. The Checklist also provides a prompt for bodies to identify 'Improvement Actions'.
- 5.11 SSN Guidance indicates that the Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist should supplant the 2015 Climate Change Assessment Tool as a way for public sector bodies to self-assess climate capabilities and performance.
- 5.12 The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive recently received correspondence from Scottish Government commending the Checklist and Officers of Climate Change Board also consider it to be a valuable tool in supporting net zero ambition. The Policy and Resources Committee are asked to endorse that Officers consider and use the SSN Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist to support the Council's self-assessment of climate change capabilities, in line with SSN Guidance. Further updates on the use of this Checklist will be provided at future meetings of Policy and Resources Committee.

D – Local Heat And Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

5.13 The Scottish local authorities are obligated to develop a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) in compliance with the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022. The process for formulating an LHEES is as follows:



5.14 Argyll and Bute Council's LHEES draft strategy has been finalised, and the delivery plans are scheduled for completion by the end of June. These documents have been shaped through collaboration with the LHEES Focus Group, the Climate Change Board, and the Argyll and Bute Energy Efficiency Forum. Furthermore, two specialised events were organised for internal and external stakeholders to establish the LHEES priorities.

The next proposed stages are:

- Present the LHEES strategy and delivery plan to committee in the autumn.
- Seek permission to publish a consultative draft of the strategy and delivery plan.
- A one-month consultation and engagement process would follow immediately after committee.
- The responses received during the consultation period will be reviewed, and the LHEES documents will be adjusted accordingly.
- The revised and finalised document would go to seek approval at full Council.

E - Argyll and Bute Renewables Alliance (ABRA)

5.15 ABRA met in March and received updates on three significant renewables projects. Machair Wind (www.scottishpowerrenewables.com/pages/machairwind.aspx) is a largescale offshore wind proposal being proposed by Scottish Power Renewables. The

Machair Wind Team have been engaging with communities on Islay, Jura and Colonsay and hope to expand this to Mull and Iona shortly. Malin Sea Wind (<https://malinseaoffshorewind.com/>) is an innovative floating, offshore wind proposal being promoted by ESB. Community consultation events took place in June 2024 on Islay and at Campbeltown. The expansion of the Cruachan Pumped Storage Hydro Power Station (www.cruachanexpansion.com) has been granted consent and is proposed to more than double the capacity of this power station. If successful the projects could be generating power in the late 2020s and early 2030s.

- 5.16 An update was also provided by SSE Networks Distribution on their Whole System Energy Solution work relating to the Inner Hebrides (<https://www.ssen.co.uk/about-ssen/our-works/whole-system-energy-solutions-for-the-scottish-islands/>), they are currently working on a submission in January 2025 to Ofgem. If successful, this would provide funding which would enable upgrades to island grid infrastructure to support the transition to net zero and support energy security.

F - Carbon Neutral Islands Programme

- 5.17 Following the publication of the Community Climate Action Plan for Islay, the selected island within Argyll and Bute, the government has now announced a £1m capital challenge fund aimed at supporting the objectives of the Carbon Neutral Islands work. Applications are due for submission by 30 August 2024. The Council is working with Islay Energy Trust, as the key local organisation involved in creating the Islay Community Climate Action Plan, to identify project proposals which may be suitable for submission.

G - 20 Minute Neighbourhood

- 5.18 The Council continues to support and promote the 'Love Local' message as supporting our local businesses can have both economic and environmental benefits. The new design Argyll and Bute Gift Card (www.argyllandbutegiftcard.com) is now available, and as well as being purchased online the cards can be bought at Keeping It Local in Campbeltown and Lochgilphead Post Office.

H – Argyll Countryside Trust (ACT) Update

- 5.19 Argyll is one of the UK's most afforested regions. Woodland cover accounts for over 30% of the region's land cover and 15% of Scotland's woodland resource. Over 71% is actively managed commercial conifer forestry which needs to adapt to climate impacts and play its part in addressing biodiversity loss. Therefore, as a region, Argyll is ideally placed to lead the shift towards a resilient style of forestry fully integrated into the native woodland landscape –

this will require a workforce and communities with the skills and capacity to realise that ambition.

- 5.20 ACT's rainforest 2045 targets will require a significant step change in availability of skilled woodland and herbivore managers working in Argyll's rainforest and forestry sector. There simply are not enough woodland contractors, land managers with capacity, and student, trainee and volunteering opportunities to restore rainforest sites. A Hub for woodland workforce development and growth is a crucial first step in ACT's rainforest strategy. The Hub will provide a base for:
- ACT Rainforest Squad which will ensure that there will be Argyll based contractors and volunteers with the skills, knowledge and qualifications to take Argyll's Rainforest Strategy forward.
 - A Native Tree Nursery. Through ACT's native woodland creation during 2021/22/23 and planning for 2024 seasons, there is an identified and significant need for native trees with west coast provenance. The establishment of ACT Seed Collection Programme and Native Tree Nursery will enable ACT to meet demand from its own planting projects plus when scaled up, to provide stock for other land managers in the area.
- 5.21 ACT Rainforest Hub will be focussed around Kilmory Walled Gardens and Kilmory Castle, where ACT already provide the MAKI Pups outdoor nursery for 3-5 year olds, and ACT's staff base within Kilmory Castle. The Hub will also provide a site for ACTNow's recycle project which saves bikes from landfill, repairs them and gifts them back to the community.
- 5.22 ACT's nature restoration projects have attracted funding to allow ACT to provide one new part-time and six new full time jobs in Argyll in 2024.

I - Argyll and Bute Climate Action - Community Planning Partnership Climate Change Strategy

- 5.23 The purpose of this project is to undertake a climate risk assessment for Argyll and Bute as a whole and to develop a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan comprising an integrated set of adaptation, mitigation and engagement actions for the region. Argyll and Bute Council with other Community Planning Partnership partners have provided funding for a Project Manager for two years, employed by ACT, with a Steering Group drawn from the Climate Working Group of the Community Planning Partnership.
- 5.24 The project is working closely with ABCAN (Argyll & Bute Climate Action Network) Hub, funded by the Scottish Government and also employed by ACT, taking a collaborative approach to predominantly grassroots climate change mitigation, adaptation and engagement in Argyll and Bute.

5.25 The Climate Change Working Group agreed that the emphasis should be on early production of an enabling strategy in order to allow more time to concentrate on development of the action plan with partners, following which the group approved a draft produced in spring as a working document, in support of the vision that *“We make Argyll and Bute climate ready by acting together to understand and adapt to our changing climate”*.

5.26 Key principles agreed include:

- The strategy is to support partners to identify or create opportunities appropriate to Argyll and Bute’s geography and resources, especially through partnership working, to complement action that they are already taking individually.
- The strategy can support partners to meet duties: it does not replace existing duties and does not have a mandate to create new duties.
- Outcomes from key national climate strategies and local partners have been mapped and aligned with the three CPP Transport, Housing and Community Wellbeing outcomes.
- Use of existing reporting mechanisms, principally the Public Body Climate Duty reporting requirements, where possible.
- Recognise and work within the limits of the areas where CPP partners have control and where they can seek to influence. Notably, private sector emissions may be outwith the scope of influence for the CPP, but it remains important that businesses can be supported to reduce emissions as well as enhance their resilience.
- The proposed national adaptation strategy places high expectations on the role of communities as part of an overall resilience response.
- Engagement has been predominantly with institutions and key contacts but working closely with the grassroots engagement programme of the Climate Action Network Hub work funded by Scottish Government which has greatly extended reach. The strategy project is also adding value to the Hub work.
- The project is also collaborating with the CPP and Council workstream developing Area Plans (working name).

5.27 Immediate next steps are: Ongoing engagement, including a call for evidence, and noting the importance of engaging with young people; Gap analysis, and risk and opportunity assessment methodologies aligned wherever possible with Council and other CPP partner methodologies and supported by Adaptation Scotland; Risk and opportunity assessment workshops, with the proposal to group these by CPP Outcomes.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 This report provides various updates in relation to the Council's activities in relation to Climate Change.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Policy – Meeting obligations and commitment to Climate Change.

7.2 Financial – No direct linkage.

7.3 Legal – Meeting requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

7.4 HR - None

7.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

8.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - None

8.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None

8.5.3 Islands - None

7.6 Climate Change - Direct link updating activities of the Climate Change Board and projects that will address climate change.

7.7 Risk - Not addressing impacts or causes of climate change can lead to increased cost or censure if targets are not met.

7.8 Customer Service – None.

Douglas Hendry

Executive Director with Responsibility for Commercial Services

Policy Lead for Climate Change, Renewables and Net Zero, Councillor Luna Martin

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For further information contact:

Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services
Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre
ross.mclaughlin@argyll-bute.gov.uk