

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE EMERGENCY UPDATE

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Panel notes the climate action which has taken place to date.
- 1.2 That the Panel notes the scheduling of annual reports and action plans, in relation to the Council and the District's response to the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency. To align with the new reporting schedule, the current action plan delivery timeframe will be extended to April 2024.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report provides an update on recent activities undertaken to address the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency. It sets out the next steps for making progress on climate and sustainability activities and outlines the scheduling of future reports.
- 2.2 In recent consultation and engagement exercises, climate change and sustainability were highlighted as top priorities for staff, members and public alike.
- 2.3 In October 2023, the Climate Change and Nature Emergency was added to NFDC's Corporate Risk Register. Activity to reduce this risk must now be appropriately aligned.

3. ACTIVITIES TO DATE

- 3.1 The Climate and Nature Annual Reports and Action Plans published in 2022 and 2023 outline the strategic objectives and key activities needed to address the Climate Change and Nature Emergency (links to these papers can be found at the end of this report). Activities in the latter report align to internal and external aspects of four key programmes of work, namely Carbon Reduction, Climate Adaptation, Nature Recovery and Programme Management.
- 3.2 Recent key achievements include:
 - Energy assessment of key corporate/leisure sites to inform bid for funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), administered through SALIX
 - Development of business cases to improve the efficiency of council services e.g. green waste shredder, zero carbon gloves for operational staff, fleet decarbonisation
 - Commitment to buy renewably generated energy (REGOs) through corporate Laser account
 - Design and commencement of projects to be delivered through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF), including EV charging infrastructure, shared transport improvements and green skills development
 - Met requirements of new [Biodiversity Duty](#) to facilitate biodiversity net-gain
 - Supporting council housing retrofit energy efficiency and biodiversity improvements
 - Creating of an officer EV Steering Group to align the investment and activities of services with an overarching EV strategy for the district, to include policies for public, fleet, staff and housing
 - Creation and approval of an annual report, including Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan (1 year)

- Member engagement – Overview & Scrutiny Panel sessions, launch event for Town, Parish and District Councillors (March 23), all Member training (June 23)
- Staff engagement – Steering group, staff events, service team meetings
- Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) preparation and consultation
- Purchase of Parity Projects – housing energy data platform to inform retrofit requirements, resource requirements, training needs, likely cost/climate impacts
- Purchase of i-Tree – measurement and holistic valuation of tree stock, including ecosystem services and carbon sequestration
- Understanding local, national, global policy framework, climate predictions and public sector trends
- Launch of the New Forest Community Energy Pathways Programme, in partnership with Community Energy South, to support renewable energy generation within the District
- Supporting green/eco community groups within the New Forest District and the wider County to raise awareness of environmental and climate friendly activities
- Working with external stakeholders and community partners to align key strategies and identify funding opportunities where possible
- Climate change risk added to the NFDC strategic risk register
- ‘Caring for the Climate’ stand at the New Forest Show (July 2023)
- Launch of Solar Together (Phase 3) in partnership with Hampshire County Council to support residents with the purchase of solar PV/battery storage technology at group discount rates
- Extension of the ‘Greening Campaign’ into New Forest District, in partnership with Hampshire and Isle of White Wildlife Trust
- External communications on climate, nature and sustainability topics
- Ranking 2 highest of the Hampshire based authorities in the Climate Action Scorecards

4. REFLECTIONS ON PROGRESS TO DATE

- 4.1 Much of what has been achieved so far are the fundamentals of climate action and could be categorised as ‘low-hanging fruit’ – low risk/cost activities with few barriers to delivery – that lay the foundations for future, more substantial, improvements. The impact of these actions in themselves is often hard to measure as they don’t necessarily deliver direct and quantifiable carbon, cost or environmental savings. The savings that are generated over time because of these projects will be reflected in and measured through energy bills, fuel consumption, uptake of ‘green’ initiatives, and area wide emissions data.
- 4.2 Work over the last year has focussed on integrating the Climate and Sustainability Manager role both within NFDC and the wider network of partners. This included building relationships at the right levels, gathering information about past, present and future projects/priorities/risks, understanding the appetite for activities, raising awareness of key issues with officers and members, and starting to feed in climate and sustainability thinking into day-to-day activities across all council services.
- 4.3 Our recent [UK Council Climate Scorecard](#) performance (summary in Table 1 below) shows that New Forest District performed well overall, but a total score of 41% shows that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done (100% representing achievement of all climate emergency objectives). In addition to our highest performing areas, of note are our two lowest performing areas – Transport and Waste Reduction & Food. Scores across the region are consistently low in these two unitary-controlled sectors, highlighting the need to work collaboratively with HCC and other districts, taking a whole system approach, to make the necessary infrastructure and service delivery

improvements. Any opportunity to push this agenda through combined service reforms (waste) and major projects (transport) would be hugely beneficial. We need to build on the momentum of the last 12 months and continue to raise our standards across the board.

Council	Total score	Buildings & Heating	Transport	Planning & Land Use	Governance & Finance	Biodiversity	Collaboration & Engagement	Waste Reduction & Food
Winchester	49%	45%	40%	72%	40%	40%	59%	15%
Basingstoke & Deane	41%	27%	21%	25%	57%	75%	90%	8%
NFDC	41%	65%	2%	21%	31%	80%	57%	8%
HCC	35%	58%	26%	0%	26%	38%	64%	8%
BCP	34%	57%	17%	10%	47%	35%	60%	31%
Eastleigh	32%	38%	0%	30%	34%	25%	45%	38%
Portsmouth	31%	48%	28%	5%	20%	27%	54%	25%
Southampton	31%	43%	22%	23%	32%	23%	46%	19%
Test Valley	30%	48%	8%	27%	14%	35%	49%	8%
Fareham	29%	41%	-3%	33%	14%	25%	38%	15%
Hart	28%	38%	8%	24%	34%	40%	30%	8%
Gosport	25%	34%	3%	32%	9%	15%	41%	15%
East Hampshire District	21%	22%	46%	23%	11%	10%	48%	0%
Rushmoor	20%	27%	-10%	9%	5%	30%	57%	23%
Havant	16%	36%	-6%	7%	11%	0%	19%	8%

Table 1: UK Council Climate Scorecards 2023 // Hampshire Results

- 4.4 Work to address the Climate and Nature Emergency varies between councils and regions due to each area having a unique mix of risks and opportunities. Few aspects are legislated, regulated or structured which makes coordinated investment and project delivery challenging. For example, all areas must work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UK Government's net zero by 2050 target, but how we do that is up to each area and can be tailored depending on resource availability, existing contracts, political priorities and public enthusiasm. It is hoped that more explicit targets and legislation will drive progress in areas such as biodiversity net gain, EV infrastructure and development standards.
- 4.5 Internally, the pace of change and progress on NFDC's climate and nature objectives is closely linked to the delivery of the new Corporate Plan and Transformation Programme. Key decisions about staff accommodation, asset management, fleet infrastructure and resource investment will unlock opportunities to reduce emissions, decrease utility costs, improve asset resilience to extreme weather and enable nature to thrive across the corporate estate.
- 4.6 Externally, many of the significant changes will be driven by national infrastructure improvements, legislative changes and market forces, as opposed to direct local action, but partnerships across the region are strong and sustainable change will be easier and more effective if businesses and the public feel supported and encouraged at a local level. The New Forest District and our neighbouring communities will benefit from proactive community involvement and so this is something that NFDC will continue to support and prioritise through projects such as New Forest Community Energy.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 A strong base has been created since the declaration of the Climate and Nature Emergency, activity will now move beyond foundation projects to initiatives and service changes that result in significant improvements across all programme areas. The strategy, action plan and annual report to be published in 2024 will reflect this change of emphasis and provide further clarity on both internal and external priorities, including where possible the creation of challenging but achievable targets.

- 5.2 To accelerate the rate of progress, the council should seek to lead by example whenever possible and influence partners at the appropriate time. Ensuring that communications are timely, noticeable and influential is an aspect of Programme Management which could be improved to maximise the impact of activities.
- 5.3 Supporting the delivery of the new Corporate Plan and Transformation Strategy will provide the opportunity to drive progress and align climate action with the long-term sustainability of corporate assets. Embedding climate and sustainability considerations in the heart of NFDC operations will ensure that our strategic ambition and decision making is consistent with the scale of our declared commitments.

6. SCHEDULING OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE EMERGENCY ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACTION PLANS

- 6.1 Corporate utility data, area-wide emissions figures, financial budget information and other data sources reported within the NFDC Climate and Nature Emergency Annual Report is managed and produced by multiple stakeholders and various times throughout the year. NFDC climate reports between 2021 and 2023 have contained information from a mixture of timeframes which is confusing and inefficient.
- 6.2 To improve clarity and consistency in line with data availability, and align with the Corporate Plan and financial year, the report content and reporting dates have been rescheduled as outlined in Table 2.

What	When
C&NE Update to O&S (holding position until April strategy) Extend Action Plan 2023 to Apr 24	Jan 24
C&NE Strategy 2024-2028	Apr 24
C&NE Action Plan 24/25	
C&NE Annual Report 23/24	Oct 24
C&NE Action Plan 2025/26	Apr 25
C&NE Annual Report 24/25	Oct 25

Table 2: Climate and Nature Emergency Reporting Schedule from 2024

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has committed to include an annual budget of £250,000 within the Capital Programme in support of climate action. Key spend to date for the 2023/24 financial year is outlined below. Additional projects have been identified and at the time of writing this paper, spend is on track for 100% utilisation in this financial year.

ACTIVITY 2023/24	Cost
New Forest Community Energy Programme	£45,630
Electric bin lifts	£37,500
Estates decarbonisation assessments	£12,300
iTree software	£7,800
New Forest Show // Climate and Coastal exhibit	£5,000
Swift boxes on council housing	£2,000
Leading the Green Transition training (x2)	£1,920
TOTAL SPEND TO DATE	£112,150

- 7.2 Ongoing financial commitment will be needed to fully assist the Council in meeting its climate commitments.

8. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 No crime and disorder implications have been identified.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 This report seeks to raise awareness of environmental impacts and opportunities associated with NFDC's response to the Climate Change and Nature Emergency. There are no additional environmental implications lined to this report.

10. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 No equality and diversity implications have been identified as a result of this update report.

11. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 No data is being collected or affected in relation to this update report.

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

[Climate and Nature Annual Report and Action Plan 2022](#)

[Climate and Nature Annual Report and Action Plan 2023](#)