

to

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	9 March 2023	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: E3447
TITLE:	Climate Annual Report & Ecological Emergency Action Plan	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Annex 1: Climate Progress Report (Climate Annual Report, part 1)		
Annex 2: Climate Action Plan & Route Map to 2030 (Climate Annual Report, part 2)		
Annex 3: Climate Strategy (Climate Annual Report, part 3)		
Annex 4: Ecological Emergency Action Plan		

1 THE ISSUE

On both the climate and ecological emergencies real progress has been made over the past year and greater ambition is driving action planning. Additional resources for climate, transport strategy and sustainability within the corporate estate are enabling us to make faster progress than in previous years. Action to increase renewable energy on the Council's estate and within the district is a particular highlight.

However – in common with all other local authorities - we cannot yet claim to be on track to deliver net zero commitments by 2030, or to reverse the decline in wildlife by the same date. In part, this is down to issues beyond our direct control, where regional or national action is needed. These are explained in the Report section below. A key issue, for example, is national-level electricity grid constraints. The recent Net Zero Review: Mission Zero made a wide range of recommendations to government on policy, powers and the funding needed to enable local government to act effectively for local citizens on this agenda.

However, there is more to be done locally and next year will see further progress, particularly through our own renewable energy programme, capital strategy, commercial strategy,

corporate landlord project and, regionally, through our participation in the development of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Retrofit Accelerator project.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 To note the positive progress and achievements over the last year on implementation of the Council's Climate Strategy. This is summarised in the **Climate Progress Report, at Annex 1**, which includes a range of climate and nature case studies and the annual carbon performance dashboard for the whole area.
- 2.2 To note the particular progress made in understanding renewable energy in Bath and North East Somerset and in the development of the delivery pipeline shown in the **renewables section of the Climate Progress Report, at Annex 1**.
- 2.3 To note the **Climate Action Plan and Route-map to 2030, at Annex 2**.
- 2.4 To note the updated **Climate Strategy, at Annex 3**
- 2.5 To note the development of the **Ecological Emergency Action Plan, at Annex 4**
- 2.6 To note that the ambition on nature recovery contained in the Ecological Emergency Action Plan will only be fully realised with external investment and through working in partnership.
- 2.7 To approve the Climate Annual Report and the new Ecological Emergency Action Plan, before submission of the report package to full Council on 16 March 2023.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Climate Annual Report is based on the three priorities for action defined for Bath and North East Somerset in the 2019 strategy: Increase in Local Renewable Energy Generation; Decarbonising Buildings and Decarbonisation of Transport. The following sections outline action and issues against the three climate priorities.

3.2 Increase in Local Renewable Energy Generation

Targets for 2030 – a minimum of 300MW renewable energy generating capacity in district (baseline 29.04 MW in 2022), with interim targets of 50MW by 2023 and 150MW by 2025; 12MW renewable generating capacity installed on Council estate to meet Council energy consumption

Area installed renewable capacity is currently approx. 29.04 MW, made up of ground-mounted solar farms at Chelwood and Wilmington Farm and roof-mounted solar installations across the district, with a pipeline of approved or in progress projects of a further 25.7MW; 6.4MW of known potential sites and an expectation of much larger sites coming forward to pre-app stage over the next year. The rate of domestic and business rooftop solar installation has doubled since we declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. On the Council's estate, a potential pipeline of 10MW has been identified, increasing confidence that the 12MW needed to cover the Council's own emissions can be delivered.

To become net zero in the Council's own operations, we have a target to install 12MW. Our current BANES Renewable Energy Development Fund (REDF) is £1.5 m over three years, focused on delivering renewables on our own estate. Significant progress has been made in this area over the

past six months, following the appointment of our Renewable Energy Programme Manager. We have already identified the potential pipeline of projects that will deliver 10MW and are confident the remaining 2MW will be delivered by 2030, subject to agreement of capital funding.

Our wider target is to facilitate delivery of 300MW of renewable capacity at district level. While there has been a sharp increase in private roof mounted solar since 2019, data collection and analysis is challenging.

The rate at which domestic and business solar PV is being installed has doubled since we declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, facilitated by the Council's promotion over the last year of the WECA's Solar Together programme. We expect this trend to continue, and for domestic solar to play a stronger role in meeting our 2030 target. Regen's report of 2018¹ identified the potential of 76.6MW from rooftop solar and this is expected to increase as technology improves. The Local Plan Partial Update, adopted in January, contains significant updates to both renewable energy and new build policy that will further enable this development.

The principal risk identified to delivery of renewables is from national-level grid constraints, which are impacting on the potential to connect new supply; to resolve this will require action at national level (by National Grid, the regulator, Ofgem, and/or the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy), and we are lobbying with WECA, as well as considering options for local action to balance new supply/demand. Next year, we will begin investigation of options for energy storage, which is an important component of a flexible energy network addressing issues around intermittency in renewable energy generation.

3.3 Decarbonising Buildings

Targets for 2030 – 65,000 domestic properties in need of retrofit; target of net zero on operation of the corporate and commercial estate.

Data and metrics for non-council buildings are challenging, as there is no requirement to measure energy efficiency of domestic properties except at the point of sale, and no mechanism for capturing independent action by property owners. Data on the Council's own estate is not yet comprehensive and further work is needed before we can baseline performance and quantify cost of delivering targets.

Legal Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for residential / commercial lettings will increase progressively between now and 2030, driving energy efficiency in the commercial estate and through the private rental sector.

To achieve net zero across the district, we have established that 65,000 domestic properties will need some degree of retrofitting work to increase energy efficiency. Without significant council housing stock as a primary focus, our priority is to influence the retrofit market (both supply and demand side) and its finance, both of which have been adversely affected by inconsistent central government funding policy over recent years.

To date, we have focused our efforts on co-developing and supporting the new WECA Retrofit Accelerator project, which will target support to the 'self-funding' retrofit market from mid-2023. In addition, we provide some limited grants and loans to eligible homeowners to undertake energy saving measures, but this is not yet at a scale that will impact on targets.

The WECA Accelerator will provide a one-stop-shop advice service and brokerage for homeowners, as well as work to develop the supply chain of retrofit contractors. WECA's delivery targets to 2025 anticipate completion of 5000 surveys across the West of England (WoE) (with approx. 150 actual homes planned for retrofit in BANES by 2025). Whilst this initiative alone will make only limited impact on our 2030 targets, the Accelerator is intended to prime the market

¹ https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/LP20162036/bnes_renewable_energy_resource_update_report_2018_publication_version.pdf

ahead of future government funding, allowing us to scale up quickly when central resources are switched on, or when other market interventions arise.

We have a new Energy Strategy and Projects Manager in posts and will be developing our strategic approach to retrofit across all tenures (owner occupiers (66%), social renters (14%) and private landlords (20%). This will focus on Accelerator promotion, support for community-based approaches, working with Planning and Conservation on a more streamlined approach for listed buildings and conservation areas, further to the recent development of the Retrofit Supplementary Planning Document; new Bath Green Homes project to showcase completed retrofit projects to other homeowners; and identification of financing mechanisms for owner-occupiers.

Whilst we are at an early stage in work to decarbonise our own corporate and commercial estate, progress has been made, highlighted by the delivery of excellent retrofitting examples such as Grosvenor House (listed building) and Charlton House, both of which include solar roofs and with further work in progress now on retrofitting two more care homes and on new buildings at the new Keynsham Recycling Hub, Pixash Lane recycling centre and Two Rivers Primary School, both of which are being built to extremely high environmental standards. For further details of these examples and more, see Annex 1 Climate Progress Report. The Council has appointed a new Head of Corporate Estate and a new Corporate Asset Management Strategy will be produced by autumn 2023, identifying both short and longer-term opportunities to decarbonise the corporate estate. A new Commercial Estate Strategy is also in development with the aim to increase energy efficiency in line with the Council's 2030 Net Zero target.

3.4 Decarbonising Transport

Targets for 2030 – 25% reduction in car and van mileage per person per year. Council fleet to be net zero.

The WoE Decarbonisation Study shows that infrastructure alone is not sufficient to achieve the shift required to get to carbon zero and that significant behaviour change and demand management is needed to reduce car dependency.

At national level, transport is the largest contributor to the UK's domestic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In B&NES, it is a close third, at 29%, not far behind energy use in non-domestic buildings.

In January 2022, Cabinet approved the BANES elements of the Combined Authority's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for submission to Department for Transport (DfT). In April 2022, the DfT confirmed the Combined Authority's five-year Settlement (£540m between 2022/23 and 2026/27.)

Of the 25 CRSTS schemes identified across the Combined Authority area, six are within BANES, creating a programme of spend in the region of £138m, including around £120m of grant funding. (Bath City Centre is one of the schemes - which will see substantial changes and improvements to bus access and improve the interchange between different modes).

The CRSTS programme is a significant uplift in capital funding relative to current levels and presents an unprecedented opportunity to help tackle the Climate Emergency. The delivery of the CRSTS infrastructure is, however, not sufficient on its own to deliver carbon neutrality by 2030. We also need significant additional investment in bus and rail services to provide decent alternatives to car use.

Considerable progress has been made locally to create safer walking and cycling routes and more liveable neighbourhoods – for full details, please see actions over the last year highlighted in Annex 1: Climate Progress Report.

Fleet decarbonisation within Council's own operations constitutes a small proportion of the Council's carbon footprint. Conversion to electric vehicles is underway, starting with 30 electric

vans, street cleansing machines and sweepers, with options being pursued to switch the rest of the fleet to electric where technically feasible.

3.5 Further Council Action, Community Leadership and Partnership Working

Action on buildings, fleet and renewables will go a long way to address our Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Further work is needed to understand and drive down our wider carbon footprint, or Scope 3 emissions². The development of the Corporate Procurement Strategy has action on net zero embedded carbon, and staff are being trained in how to use their commissioning opportunities to reduce carbon emissions from goods and services. Specialist work is also in train to analyse the Council's Scope 3 emissions, which will inform the development of this work.

The Council is driving further action across the district through the new Future Ambition Partnership and the development of a new Climate & Nature group that brings together public, business and community sectors to create new joint actions. Support for community action continues and has grown over the last year, enabling more parishes to develop action plans and more support for the Community Forums, including providing a two week showcase for community action and experience sharing during September's Climate & Nature Festival.

3.6 Ecological Emergency Action Plan

This is the first Ecological Emergency Action Plan to be developed in response to the Ecological Emergency Declaration made in 2020. Work to develop this plan was delayed by a combination of Covid and staff shortages, but staff are now in post and demonstrating their worth. It should be noted that this new plan builds on a considerable body of natural environment work by the Council and partners over a number of years.

Our vision is to 'increase the extent of land and waterways managed positively for nature'. This is aligned to the national target to have 30% of land protected for nature by 2030 – in Bath and North East Somerset this would equate to c10,500ha of land across the district.

A priority action is to produce a 'State of Nature' framework for Bath and North East Somerset, including an ecological baseline and wildlife index to measure progress against, and targets for nature recovery.

This will build on regional ambitions for nature recovery (as outlined in the West of England Nature Partnership Strategy: WENP Strategy). For example, we know that declines in wildlife populations continue: an estimated 97% fewer cuckoos and 96% fewer swifts in the West of England (Avon) than 25 years ago. In the UK we have seen long-term declines in insect species such as butterflies (46% since 1970) and moths, a 64% decline in the abundance of UK Priority Species, and a 54% decline in farmland birds since 1970.

Our priority 'to increase the abundance and distribution of key species across B&NES' is consistent with the national target to reverse the decline in wildlife by 2030.

The plan builds on our experience in securing external funding for green infrastructure projects and recognises our pivotal role in delivering nature recovery at the regional level. In the Plan we set out three broad strategic priorities to guide action for BANES to deliver the transformation required to become 'Nature Positive by 2030':

- increase the extent of land and waterways managed positively for nature across B&NES
- increase the abundance and distribution of key species across B&NES

² The Greenhouse Gas Protocol defines Scopes 1 and 2 as emissions that are owned or controlled by an organisation i.e the gas, electricity, fuel used. Scope 3 emissions are from activities of the organisation but not from sources owned or controlled by it, such as bought goods and services via contracts.

- enable more people to access and engage with nature

The plan presents a series of strategic outcomes needed for the Council to achieve a step change by 2030, along with the immediate actions that we will take to progress these. These actions will help us to:

- mainstream nature recovery in decision-making, ensuring that we are having a positive impact on nature across all service areas;
- commit to manage our own landholdings, across a range of services, in a way that actively supports nature recovery;
- deliver more for nature from existing projects i.e. Bathscape, Waterscape, Bath Riverline, Chew Valley Reconnected and Somer Valley Rediscovered;
- pursue more external investment, and establish a prospectus for investment;
- improve communities' access to and engagement with nature; and
- Improve our evidence base and monitoring of the state of nature in B&NES.

In the Ecological Emergency Action Plan Executive Summary (Annex 4), we have included a table of 10 priority actions, which have been chosen due to their potential to make a particularly significant contribution to nature recovery.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The Council's climate action plans are in keeping with the role identified for local government in the Climate Change Act 2008 and the regular reports of the UK's climate advisory body, the UK Climate Change Committee.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 The Climate Progress Report and Action Plan outlines next steps that are covered by planned 2023-24 budgets, although it is noted that business case development, particularly with regard to development of the energy programme will be undertaken and that opportunities to extend external funding will be sought.

5.2 The full extent of the ambition contained in the Ecological Emergency Action Plan can only be realised through additional external investment.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6.2 A key risk that has been entered into the Corporate Risk Register is that of the nationwide problem of electricity grid capacity constraints standing in the way of the installation of new local renewable energy. We are working at both regional and national level, along with many other local authorities, seeking action by national government to solve this problem.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 No adverse impacts have been identified in relation to equalities groups or protected characteristics under Equalities legislation. Actions in relation to promoting home energy efficiency / domestic retrofit will have a positive impact on cost of living challenges. Access to nature has been identified as a key priority for our work responding to the ecological emergency, with an emphasis in increasing social justice in access to natural greenspace. Actions linked to green social prescribing will have positive impacts for people experiencing limiting health conditions

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 This package of work directly takes forward the Council's commitments in relation to the Climate Emergency declared in 2019 and delivers our commitment to report annually on progress in doing so. It presents the combined actions of services across the Council.
- 8.2 The package also includes the first Ecological Emergency Action Plan since the Ecological Emergency declaration in 2020.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The development of both the Climate and Ecological Emergency plans has involved working across many Council services to identify and consider options for action on our net zero and nature positive 2030 goals. We will continue to explore options for further action and build these into future plans.

10 CONSULTATION

- The Climate Annual Report 2022 progress report provides details of extensive community engagement work undertaken as part of the Council's climate response.
- A workshop was held with the Climate & Nature Theme Group of the FAB Partnership in November, focusing on the Energy challenge (renewables and retrofit).
- We are currently funding CSE to deliver a pilot project involving selected communities in exploring options for renewable energy generation (sites, technologies, scales – preferences and constraints).
- The Ecological Emergency Action Plan has been developed with input from local environmental groups and residents, including a stakeholder workshop and a webinar held in September as part of the Council's annual Climate and Nature Festival.
- Our approach to Renewable Energy and the Ecological Emergency Action Plan have both been subject to early engagement with the PDS panel in October this year.
- Over half of BANES parishes were actively engaged through dedicated workshops on renewables, transport and local nature action planning as part of November's Parish Liaison meeting.
- We use regular questions in the Voicebox survey to track community views on climate and nature action.
- All reports in the package have been reviewed by Corporate Management Team and have sign off from the Chief Executive, the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

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Background papers	Annex 1: Climate Progress Report (Climate Annual Report Part 1) Annex 2: Climate Action Plan & Route-map to 2030 (Climate Annual Report Part 2) Annex 3: Climate Strategy (Climate Annual Report Part 3) Annex 4: Ecological Emergency Action Plan
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