

SUBJECT:	CLIMATE AND DECARBONISATION: UPDATED ACTION PLAN
MEETING:	COUNTY COUNCIL
DATE:	4 NOVEMBER 2021
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To update the plan which sets the actions which the authority will take to deliver the objectives in the Climate and Decarbonisation Strategy approved by Council in October 2019 and accelerate progress towards the commitment made by Council to reduce our emissions to net zero by 2030.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Council endorse the updated action plan attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That revisions are made to the Climate Emergency Strategy to ensure it reflects the latest data and evidence while maintaining the ten strategic objectives agreed by Council in 2019, with slight amendments to the wording of one of these objectives relating to green spaces as highlighted in paragraph 3.3 below.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Climate change is arguably the biggest challenge facing the world in 2021. With Council meeting against the backdrop of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) there is no better time to re-state our commitment and refresh the authority's action plan, setting out what we will do to decarbonise our operations as we work towards becoming net zero by 2030 while encouraging and supporting residents and businesses to reduce their own emissions.
- 3.2 On 16th May 2019 Council agreed to declare a Climate Emergency unanimously passing a motion to that effect. A strategy was subsequently developed and approved by council with responsibility for the oversight and ongoing development of the accompanying action plan sitting with a cross-party working group, involving officers and community representatives and chaired by the Cabinet member.
- 3.3 The objectives within the strategy will remain unchanged with the exception of an adjustment to the wording of the commitment on green spaces, to better reflect the action needed to address the nature emergency which we face:
- Energy and Buildings - Reduce the amount of energy that is used for buildings and street lighting
 - Renewable Energy - Speed up the move from fossil fuels to renewable energy
 - Nature Recovery and Green Spaces - Absorb carbon, to support biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, and the ability to adapt (*amended – previously just called Green Spaces*)

- What we Buy - Reduce carbon by thinking carefully about when and what we buy and the whole life costs
- Waste - Reduce waste by encouraging people to reduce, re-use and recycle more
- Active Travel - Encourage and make it easier for people to walk and cycle rather than drive
- Greener Transport - Reduce the impact of vehicles and encourage the use of electric and hydrogen vehicles
- Public Transport - Encourage people to use public transport rather than cars
- Education and involvement - Help people understand climate change and what they can do to make a difference
- Climate Adaptation - Preparing and adapting for the impact of climate change.

3.4 An update was presented to Council in June highlighting progress that had been made including:

- Purchase of electric vehicles for use by different council teams including an electric minibus and two electric road-sweepers
- Establishing libraries of things, repair cafes and a second re-use shop as part of our commitment to the circular economy
- Developing active travel routes to reduce the number of private car journeys people make for short distances
- Continued divestment of fossil fuel intensive industries by the council's pension fund

3.5 Work is currently underway to improve our understanding of the current level of emissions from our own services and to plot a path to net zero. This will recognise that each year we have a diminishing carbon budget that we must operate within necessitating trade-offs and choices between activities. This will use data produced by the Tyndall centre for Climate Change and involve collaborative work across the Cardiff Capital Region, where authorities have committed to measuring and publishing emissions in line with internationally agreed standards produced by the Climate Disclosure Project.

3.6 The revisions to the action plan contained in today's report are based on our current level of knowledge. As the above work concludes we will be in a much stronger position to target our resources at the areas they can make the greatest difference and it is expected that a further revision of the action plan will be produced mid-2022 displaying a higher degree of precision. New activity will continue to be examined by the advisory group.

3.7 The Climate Emergency Action Plan cannot be delivered by the Council alone. We need other partners to join us in helping to reduce carbon emissions across the county including public bodies and anchor institutions sitting on the Public Service Board, citizens, businesses and voluntary groups.

3.8 We must do this while continuing to provide the services which form part of the social foundations on which our communities are built. We know that this will not be easy, we need everyone to support this agenda and, as always, we are indebted to the residents of Monmouthshire for their enthusiasm, energy and expertise.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The Climate Emergency Action Plan has significant positive contributions to make to the Wellbeing Goals. In particular it has strong benefits for a Prosperous Wales, by developing a low carbon economy and thinking carefully about sustainable procurement. There are also benefits for a Resilient Wales, based on changes to the way we manage

green spaces. A Healthier Wales will be enhanced by improvements to air quality from more sustainable travel and more walking and cycling. There is also significant potential to contribute to Cohesive Communities, by working collaboratively and in partnership with our communities. There are no negative impacts on the Well-being Goals.

- 4.2 There are no significant positive or negative impacts on the protected characteristics, safeguarding or corporate parenting. The principles of Long term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement have been used throughout the development of the Action Plan.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 Through the motion, passed in 2019 Council committed to producing an action plan and keeping this up to date, so doing nothing was not an option. However, the content and extent of the action plan remains subject to a number of options, set out below:

	Option	Pros	Cons
1	Focus the action plan solely on direct MCC emissions	Easy to manage and measure Within the remit of the council	Will miss large emissions from the wider community
2	Focus on direct MCC emissions and some actions which will reduce emissions in the whole county	Many actions are easy to manage and measure Will impact on a wider range of emissions Potential to involve wider community and partners Maximises policy levers that we do have in place to influence county emissions e.g. transport, waste	Harder to measure county emissions Will require further resources
3	Broaden the action plan to address all the emissions of the whole county	Could potentially give the most comprehensive carbon reductions Potential to involve wider community and partners	Hard to measure and manage Policy levers to influence wider county emissions are not in place Emissions are beyond council control Lack of council resources to address emissions of whole county

- 5.2 The decision has been made to continue along the lines of option 2 as a pragmatic approach which incorporates our own emissions as well as some wider county emissions where we have the policy levers to do so.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Updates on progress against each of the actions are presented to the member-led Advisory Group with the Cabinet member providing periodic updates to full council.

7 REASONS:

- 7.1 To ensure that the Council updates its action plan in response to the latest data, evidence and opportunities to deliver its policy commitment and moral obligations to reduce carbon emissions and to deliver on the Climate Emergency motion that was agreed by Council.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Achieving this commitment will not be cost neutral and there are likely to be decisions that will have to be made in future which will require additional capital and revenue financial resources to be allocated. Each will carry an opportunity cost.
- 8.2 The costs for all the actions is not yet fully known, for example the cost of future net zero buildings will depend on a range of factors at the design stage. Actions will be funded in different ways, some are zero cost or will require officer time alone, some will be grant funded, some will be funded by prudential borrowing and invest to save schemes. It is anticipated that where additional funds are needed these will be subject to subsequent decision making processes.

9 CONSULTTEES:

Cabinet

Strategic Leadership Team

Community Climate Champions – via engagement event

Actions were also shaped through public consultation including:

- Online survey publicised via press release and social media,
- Community engagement event at Abergavenny Community Hub,
- Workshops with children and young people at the Monmouthshire Games and Bronze Young Ambassadors conference,
- Community engagement events at Usk Show and Monmouth Climate Futures Festival.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Monmouthshire County Council Climate Emergency Strategy

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/climate-emergency/>

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