

SUBJECT:	CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2024
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	15th MAY 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek adoption of the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy (Appendix 1) and 4 Action Plans which set out how the Strategy is to be delivered (Appendix 2).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to sign off and adopt the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and 4 Action Plans. The action plans set out how the council will address: Council Emissions, Nature Recovery, Rivers and Oceans and Communities and Climate.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees that the Action Plans are delivered by Service Area Officers/Managers and coordinated by the Chief Officer – Communities and Place. This will enable strategy ownership and delivery across all services. Progress will be reported to the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In 2019 Council agreed to declare a Climate Emergency unanimously passing a motion committing the council to:
- Strive to reduce its own carbon emissions to net zero in line with the Welsh Government target of 2030;
 - Encourage and support residents and businesses to take their own actions to reduce their carbon emissions;
 - Work with partners across the county and other councils and organisations to help develop and implement best practice methods in limiting global warming to less than 1.5 °C.
- 3.2 In October 2019 a strategy and action plan were adopted, and in November 2021 the action plan was refreshed to include the nature emergency.
- 3.3 Since 2021, other work streams have developed, including work on rivers and oceans, following the council's Motion for the Rivers and Ocean. In February 2024 the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy has been reviewed and updated to include these additional work streams and to better reflect the Community and Corporate Plan. The Strategy and 4 action plans are key to delivering council's purpose of "a zero carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life".
- 3.4 A refreshed Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group has met over the last year to learn more about these work streams and provide challenge. The Steering Group has cross-party membership and has agreed the following format for the new strategy and action plans:

Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy

Council
Emissions



Nature
Recovery



Rivers and
Ocean



Communities
and Climate



- 3.5 The delivery of the Action Plans will be led by Service Area Officers and Managers and reported on every six months to the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group.
- 3.6 The purpose and objectives of each Action Plan are as follows:

Council Emissions

Purpose:

Strive to reduce the council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030

Objectives:

- 1 Strategic – Support the collection of data and resource management
- 2 Buildings – Reduce and remove the carbon emissions from our built environment
- 3 Transport – Reduce and remove the carbon emissions from operational, business and commuting emissions
- 4 Procurement– Reduce in-direct emissions from the supply chain
- 5 Land Use– Reduce emissions from land use polices and how the Council uses its land

Nature Recovery

Purpose:

Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems resilience through the Council's operations and working in partnership with communities

Objectives:

- 1 Embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels
- 2 Provide nature-based opportunities to raise awareness, support health and well-being and encourage action for nature

- 3 Undertake land management for biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience
- 4 Influence land management to improve ecosystem resilience
- 5 Tackle key pressures on species and habitats
- 6 Support landscape scale projects and partnerships to maximise delivery
- 7 Use improved evidence, understanding and monitoring to inform action
- 8 Monitor the effectiveness of the plan and review

Rivers and Oceans

Purpose:

Work towards clean, healthy and productive rivers and ocean

Objectives:

- 1 Reduce sewage, phosphate and other chemical pollution in our rivers
- 2 Reduce plastic and other litter pollution in rivers and coast areas
- 3 Protect natural habitats along our rivers, estuaries and coast
- 4 Minimise the impacts of flooding on communities by mitigation and adaptation (rivers and coastal areas)
- 5 Raise awareness of the importance of our rivers and coasts

Communities and Climate

Purpose:

Work with communities, partners and business to reduce carbon emissions

Objectives:

- 1 Reduce energy use and increase renewable energy across the county
- 2 Reduce waste and what we buy by encouraging people to reduce, re-use and recycle more
- 3 Encourage active travel, public transport and low emission vehicles
- 4 Help people understand climate change and what they can do to make a difference
- 5 Prepare and adapt for the impact of climate change

- 3.7 The Climate and Nature 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. As a result, many of the actions within the 4 Action Plans can only be delivered through partnership.
- 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, given the financial and resource challenges that the Council, along with all public services are facing.
- 4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**
- 4.1 The Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy 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 Plans.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 Doing nothing is not an option. Addressing climate change is a key priority of the council, and we are required by Welsh Government to reduce our carbon emissions and work towards becoming net zero. However, the extent of our ambition around climate and nature remains subject to a number of options, set out below:

	Option	Pros	Cons
1	Focus solely on direct MCC emissions and our own land	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 our own land as well as some actions which will reduce emissions and assist nature recovery across 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 and land management as well as some wider county emissions and nature recovery where we have the policy levers, resources and capacity to do so.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Updates on progress against each of the actions are presented to the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group with the Cabinet member providing periodic updates to Cabinet.

7 REASONS:

- 7.1 To ensure that the Council sets out how it intends to address the climate and nature emergencies, in order to deliver its policy commitment and moral obligations to reduce carbon emissions and help nature recovery.

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.
- 8.2 The cost 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 CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Senior Leadership Team
Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group
Place Scrutiny

Summary of feedback from Place Scrutiny:

- Broadly welcome the strategy and action plans, particularly the inclusion of plastic waste, littering and Severnside waterway and coastal issues.
- Would like more data on tree and hedgerow planting and removal.
- Would like to know more about dark skies policies, and are concerned when the council leaves lights on at premises, affecting light pollution and energy use.
- Want to ensure that electric vehicles are not seen as the solution to everything.
- Important that we bring the community along with us, and concern that language used might make people feel overwhelmed.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy
Appendix 2 – Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plans

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