SCOTTISH BORDERS LOW CARBON ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2023

Joint Report by Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Infrastructure

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

31 October 2013

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 This report proposes that Scottish Borders Council agrees the Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy 2023.

1.2 The draft strategy was considered by Scottish Borders Council on 31 January 2013. The Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy 2023 sets out a series of strategic aims and initiatives which form the first steps in the transition towards a low carbon economy for the Scottish Borders. The strategic aims and objectives are aligned to the priorities identified by the Community Planning Partnership and Single Outcome Agreement. Specific Strategic Initiatives that can achieve significant change are highlighted. Responses received during a 12 week consultation period have been incorporated into the production of the attached strategy and action plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Scottish Borders Council approves the attached Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy 2023 and Action Plan, as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.
3 LOW CARBON ECONOMIC STRATEGY

3.1 The Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy 2023 (Appendix 1) sets out the context for the transition to a low carbon economy at international, national and local levels. Movement towards a Low Carbon Economy is a key feature of European, United Kingdom and Scottish Parliaments’ policy frameworks and the development of a Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy is central to the future of the area’s economy. By acting now, the area can begin to secure the benefits of this transition and prepare for the challenges which will be faced by our businesses and communities.

3.2 The strategy outlines a series of strategic aims and initiatives to deliver the key priorities identified by the Community Planning Partnership. It is recognised that the Strategy will not be successful unless it can demonstrate progress against these priorities.

3.3 Scottish Borders Council has led the development of this strategy, but its successful delivery depends on the engagement and support of Community Planning Partners, as well as local businesses and households. The Council has a number of roles in relation to Low Carbon, underpinned by its duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. These roles are as a leader, operator and regulator in the low carbon transition.

3.4 **Internal Council Carbon Management**
The Council is committed to improving its internal environmental performance and has adopted a Carbon Management Plan which sets a clear cross-Departmental target to reduce carbon emissions from Council buildings and services by 29% by 2020.

3.5 This internal approach to carbon reduction complements the Low Carbon Economic Strategy which will support the future competitiveness of the wider economy of the Scottish Borders.

3.6 Environment and Infrastructure acts as lead Department on low carbon action within the Council and has set as a key priority to ‘Champion a Low Carbon Economy’. However, the whole Council needs to think and operate in a way that minimises carbon emissions and delivers economic growth and quality of life improvements.

4 KEY OBJECTIVES

4.1 **Vision**

A vision for a Scottish Borders low carbon future has been developed based on consultation with stakeholders:

‘By 2023 the Scottish Borders will have a more resilient low carbon economy. By supporting businesses and communities to reduce their carbon footprint our business competitiveness and quality of life will be improved.’

4.2 **Strategic Aims**

In order to achieve this vision, the Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy is framed around a series of strategic aims, which will contribute to the national aspirations set out by the Scottish Government:
1. Improve business competitiveness – by addressing resource efficiency and costs within local businesses, and by exploiting low carbon business opportunities in supply chains and new markets.

2. Improve residents’ quality of life – by addressing fuel poverty and encouraging behaviour to change towards lower carbon lifestyles, supporting individuals to develop new low carbon related skills and localisation of service access.

3. Adapt our infrastructure – to encourage a low carbon built environment that will reduce carbon emissions and is better prepared for changing weather patterns including extreme weather events.

4. Increase Community Resilience – by working with our communities to meet future climate related challenges.

4.3 Since the draft strategy was produced in January 2013 the Strategic Board of the Community Planning Partnership has agreed 3 strategic priorities for the Single Outcome Agreement. These are to:

- Grow our economy
- Reduce inequalities
- Maximise the impact from the low carbon agenda

The strategic aims of the Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy have been aligned to these priorities.

4.4 The Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy is aimed at any organisation operating in the Scottish Borders which wishes to take part in the transition to a low carbon area. It is hoped that these partners will include businesses, community and voluntary organisations, and individuals, as well as government bodies. The process of driving forward implementation of the strategy will be led by the Economy and Infrastructure Theme within the Community Planning Partnership.

5 ACTION PLAN

5.1 Appendix 2 details a series of actions which will set the Scottish Borders economy on a route towards a low carbon future. The actions focus clearly on supporting the key priorities which have been defined by the Community Planning Partnership and have been submitted to the Scottish Government within the draft Single Outcome Agreement.

5.2 The priority actions are described, with proposed timescales and lead bodies noted. It is intended that each lead body will develop the actions into well defined and planned proposals. These will then be incorporated into business plans, where resources can be prioritised to drive delivery. The Action Plan should be seen as a live document which will be updated as projects are delivered and new actions identified.

5.3 An initial set of performance indicators is set out in the Strategy document and early progress will be assessed against these. It is anticipated that these indicators will evolve through time. It is expected that the Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually to allow it to reflect shifting priorities and resources.
6 STRATEGY CONSULTATION

6.1 A 12 week consultation period was undertaken, with the draft strategy being presented to key stakeholders and community representatives between 1 February and 26 April 2013.

6.2 Presentations on the strategy, vision, objectives and actions were delivered at a range of Community Planning groups and to four Area Fora. Direct community consultation took place with all Community Councils, reinforced by a presentation to the Scottish Borders Community Council Network. The Strategy and Action Plan have been significantly amended to reflect consultation feedback and discussion with Community Planning Partners.

6.3 At a recent meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Strategic Board, partners discussed the Aims, Objectives and Strategic Initiatives set out in the Strategy, and agreed that overall these were key priorities for the Partnership.

7 IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 It is anticipated that the Strategy and Action Plan will continually evolve as new technological, financial and political drivers develop. Implementation of the strategy will be taken forward through the Community Planning process.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial
a) The Council’s revenue and capital financial plans include resources that will contribute to achievement of some of the objectives of the Scottish Borders Low Carbon Economic Strategy 2023. The Action Plan (Appendix 2) has been laid out to highlight which projects are currently resourced (those highlighted by a tint) and which are currently in the ‘Project Pipeline’ (no tint) and are not currently funded.

b) At this stage, it is only possible to provide broad cost estimates for the projects that are in the Project Pipeline (see Appendix 2). The Council, and its Community Planning Partners, will need to decide which of the actions identified in the Project Pipeline will be of a high enough priority to justify targeting resources towards them. The financial implications of the Action Plan will require to be considered alongside other priorities and be reflected in future capital and revenue plans. It should be noted that limitations on future public spending may place constraints on the delivery of the Action Plan. In view of this it is expected that the Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually to allow it to reflect shifting priorities and resources.

8.2 Risk and Mitigations
(a) Should the Scottish Borders fail to rapidly move towards a low carbon approach the risks could include:

* The resilience of the Scottish Borders to a changing climate and associated economic circumstances will be reduced
* Communities may fail to take advantage of opportunities provided by renewable energy and associated benefits
* A continuing rise in fuel poverty in the Borders
The Scottish Borders will be at a competitive disadvantage with other areas in developing low carbon industries, especially renewable energy.

(b) To try to mitigate these risks, the implementation of a low carbon strategy is essential. Scottish Borders Council can use its influence to lead this process, but it must be integrated into the functioning of all organisations. These organisations must then support local residents, businesses and communities to act.

8.3 **Equalities**
An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it has been determined that there are limited or no adverse equality implications.

8.4 **Acting Sustainably**
A Low Carbon Economic Strategy will drive the transition to a low carbon Scottish Borders which will be far more resilient to changing external circumstances. Through this process, communities will have increased knowledge and skills, and households and businesses will have positive economic, social and environmental effects.

8.5 **Carbon Management**
The adoption and implementation of a Low Carbon Economic Strategy should have a positive effect on carbon management, helping organisations, businesses, community groups and individuals to reduce their carbon footprint.

8.6 **Rural Proofing**
A full rural proofing assessment has been carried out on the proposals contained within the draft Low Carbon Economic Strategy. It has been determined that as a result of increased focus and support for low carbon activity, the level of support and range of services available to rural areas should improve significantly. For example, homes should become better insulated, more energy efficient and fuel poverty less prevalent.

9 **CONSULTATION**

9.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Head of Corporate Governance, the Head of Audit and Risk, the Clerk to the Council, HR Manager and the Head of Strategic Policy have been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

9.2 In addition, representatives from Environment and Infrastructure, Business Information Services, Housing Strategy, Property and Facilities Management, Education and Lifelong Learning and the Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer have also been consulted.

Approved by

Chief Executive                                      Signature …Tracey Logan..........
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Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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