RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Report by Chief Executive

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

25 September 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's strategic direction on the issue of climate change, and to provide a lead to our partners, to businesses, communities and people in the Scottish Borders. The report considers that the Council should declare a Climate Emergency, reflecting its commitment to action on the issue.**

1.2 The act of declaration has a vital role to play in building public awareness that we are in a climate emergency situation which places unprecedented demands on all individuals, communities and businesses, as well as public bodies. The report also acknowledges that while a Climate Emergency declaration issued by a council can be a powerful catalyst for action, it must be paired with a clear action plan and an appropriate commitment of resources.

1.3 In responding to the climate emergency, there is an urgent need to review how the Scottish Borders can make a step-change in activity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change. This needs to be done in a way that is positive for the people and the economy of the Scottish Borders and builds on the strengths and assets of the region. This report provides an initial overview of some of the challenges and opportunities for the Scottish Borders as a whole in supporting the national endeavour to end Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045. It also considers the Council's responsibilities in responding to the climate emergency as an organisation.

2 STATUS OF REPORT

2.1 At its meeting of 31 January 2020, the Sustainable Development Committee, chaired by Councillor Aitchison, heard presentations from:

- Mr Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability at the University of Edinburgh, entitled 'Responding to the Climate Crisis – Urgency, Embedding and Lessons Learned'; and
- Mr Ian Aikman, the Council's Chief Planning and Housing Officer, called 'Climate Action – Playing #OurPart'.

In response, the Committee agreed to recommend to Council that Council considers a report on the climate emergency as soon as possible. This report is presented in response to that recommendation.

2.2 An earlier iteration of this report, Responding to the Climate Emergency, was scheduled to be considered by Council at its meeting of 26 March 2020. As a result of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not been

possible to bring the report to Council until now. The present report has been updated to reflect the current context, and activity since March 2020.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 **It is recommended that Council:**

(a) **Recognises and declares a Climate Emergency; and**

(b) **Agrees:**

    i. **as soon as possible, to set a target for achieving a reduction in the Council's carbon emissions, which is at least consistent with the Scottish Government's target of net zero by 2045 and the intermediate targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets)(Scotland) Act 2019;**

    ii. **to build upon the work we have undertaken to date, and to align our policies to address the Climate Emergency;**

    iii. **to set out a clear plan of action to reduce our carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases, such plan to return to Council for consideration before March 2021;**

    iv. **to assess the resource requirements placed on the Council by the aforementioned plan of action and to investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment;**

    v. **to work collaboratively with Community Planning Partners, and other stakeholders, including businesses and the public in developing the Scottish Borders' response to the Climate Emergency;**

    vi. **that the Sustainable Development Committee oversee development of the plan to be presented to Council before March 2021, and oversee the development and implementation of the plan agreed by Council in responding to the Climate Emergency;**

    vii. **that the Sustainable Development Committee develop recommendations on a collaborative and inclusive regional dialogue on climate action to be included in the plan to be considered by Council before March 2021.**

4   THE GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

4.1   On 8 October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a stark warning that the world must halve CO2 emissions by 2030 if we are to avoid global temperature rises of more than 1.5C. The Net Zero report by the UK Committee on Climate Change advised that Scotland could achieve net-zero emissions (whereby any remaining emissions are balanced by solutions such as forestry or bioenergy with carbon capture and storage) by 2045. It noted that this would require a substantial increase in effort across all sectors of the economy.

4.2   In May 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) issued a report warning about the damage human beings are causing to the planet. The IPBES report shows that the pressures on nature are increasing, and that the loss of species and ecosystems is not only catastrophic for species but also a global and generational threat to human well-being. The Scottish Government's Scottish Biodiversity Strategy sets out the framework for national action to meet the Aichi targets. This is reflected in the Council's Local biodiversity Action Plan and this links to the Council's Biodiversity duty.

4.3   The IPCC and IPBES reports highlight that unprecedented transformative change is essential if we are to address the twin challenges of climate change and global biodiversity loss. At the same time, both reports suggest that it is not too late to act, provided that all countries act quickly and decisively to address these fundamental challenges.

4.4   Recognising the impact that the global climate emergency will have on every community and every business, Scotland has set ambitious targets as part of its Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets)(Scotland) Act 2019, which received Royal Assent on 31 October 2019. The primary objective of the Act is to raise the ambition of the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places duties upon public bodies which require that that a public body 'must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets (known as 'mitigation'), in the way best calculated to help deliver any statutory climate change adaptation programme, and in a way that it considers is most sustainable'.

4.5   The 2019 Act builds on the 2009 Act by setting a legally-binding "net-zero" target of all greenhouse gases by 2045 (five years before the UK, as per the recommendation of the UK Committee on Climate Change), with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040.

4.6   Scotland's Climate Change Plan sets out a comprehensive view of how all aspects of society across industry, transport, energy, buildings, heating and land use will need to change if we are to reach our vision for growing the economy, improving the wellbeing of the people of Scotland and protecting and enhancing our natural environment. The Scottish Government has committed to updating the Plan in light of the new targets, albeit that the original timeframe of within six months of the Climate Change Act receiving Royal Assent has been delayed by COVID-19.

4.7   The Climate Change Act also puts into law the requirements for the transition to a net-zero economy to be "just". Last year the Scottish Government established a Just Transition Commission to advise on a how to achieve a net-zero economy in a way that is fair for all by following the internationally recognised principles that requires all actors to:

- plan, invest and implement a transition to environmentally and socially sustainable jobs, sectors and economies, building on Scotland's economic and workforce strengths and potential.
- create opportunities to develop resource efficient and sustainable economic approaches, which help address inequality and poverty.
- design and deliver low carbon investment and infrastructure, and make all possible efforts to create decent, fair and high value work, in a way which does not negatively affect the current workforce and overall economy.

4.8   Much of the climate emergency response focuses on reducing emissions (mitigation). Due to the complexity of how our atmosphere works, many of these interventions will take decades for the climate benefits to be realised. In the meantime, it is essential that we also concentrate on resilience and adaptation actions to address the ongoing impacts of climate change such as 'hotter dryer summers, warmer wetter winters and increased flooding' that we are all starting to experience. The Second Scottish Climate Adaptation Programme 2019-2024 was published in September 2019 and sets out how Scotland will prepare for the challenges of a changing climate.

4.9   Achieving net zero by 2045 is an immense challenge that will require structural changes at all levels of society. There are many profound changes that need to happen including how we use our land to reduce carbon while producing food, and protecting and enhancing biodiversity, amongst other benefits; how we decarbonise heat, transport and electricity while maintaining secure, reliable supplies at a fair and affordable cost; and how the transition to a low carbon economy can be positive for society, the economy and the environment.

4.10   The COVID-19 pandemic and associated policy response has sharply accelerated demands for a global, national and regional responses which are grounded in wellbeing and sustainability. The recommendations of the Scottish Government commissioned Advisory Group on Economic Recovery and Scottish Government's response in its Economic Implementation Plan have reinforced the need for a paradigm-shift towards a greener, net-zero and wellbeing economy, including prioritisation of sector and local economic plans to deliver a green recovery, where the coincidence of emissions reductions, the development of natural capital and job creation are the strongest achievable.

4.11   The Infrastructure Commission's Key Findings Report (January 2020) is predicated on the ambition of an inclusive net zero economy, while in July the Just Transition Commission issued 'Advice for a Green Recovery'. The latter's recommendations include:
- Boosting investment in warmer homes
- Backing buses and supporting the supply chain
- Helping the rural economy by helping Scotland's nature
- Aligning skills development – for young and old – with the net-zero transition.

4.12   In responding to the challenge of climate change, the Council has two fundamental responsibilities:
   a) The first responsibility is to deliver a comprehensive reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and climate adaptation across the Council as an organisation. As noted in the Embedding Sustainable Development Report, just as leading private sector organisations have found that there is a strong business case for sustainable development in enhancing profitability and shareholder value, so there is a

corresponding benefit for public sector organisations from sustainable development, with climate action a core objective.

b) The second responsibility is to provide leadership and to influence climate action across the Scottish Borders region. This recognises that, in spite of the Council's scale as the region's largest public sector body, its direct influence is limited by the fact that it is not accountable or responsible for all that takes place within the region. Notwithstanding, there are two very significant attributes possessed by the Council, which give it a unique influence:

    i. The first of these attributes is its involvement in a spectrum of activity which either directly or indirectly influences the actions of others. This includes planning, transport and procurement. Taking the last item as an example, the Council spends approximately £180M per year on goods and services from third parties, and how it spends that money can shape the decisions and actions of others. The Council's Sustainable Procurement Charter is an important framework for this influence.

    ii. The second attribute is the Council's democratic character. The democratic character of local authorities invests them with a uniquely powerful voice which, by being representative of the local electorate, has particular resonance in influencing the behaviours of others.

In responding to the Climate Emergency, a Scottish Borders Council plan of action will need to address both of these fundamental responsibilities.

5 THE SCOTTISH BORDERS CONTEXT

5.1 As an organisation, the Council has undertaken some significant activity to mitigate its carbon emissions. This activity includes –

- Street lighting LED replacement programme (SLEEP)
- Programme for fleet vehicle transition to electric
- Installation of electric vehicle charge points
- Energy efficiency programme across the Council estate
- Support for active travel and access routes/long distance paths
- Implementation of Sustainable Procurement Charter
- Improving recycling rates and reducing landfill as a result of improved recycling and residual waste being treated and turned into a fuel rather than being sent to landfill.

At the same time, it cannot be ignored that the Climate Emergency places a whole different order of demand on the organisation, which the Council must address with increased focus and vigour, recognising that doing so will have a transformative impact upon how it does its business. In developing its response to this challenge, on 29 August 2019, Council formally committed to implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals as they relate to local government in the Embedding Sustainable Development report. UN SDG 13 specifically commits signatories to 'take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts'. At the same time, Council established a Sustainable Development Committee, and has since appointed an Executive Member of Sustainable Development to reinforce member leadership and oversight of this vital area.

5.2 As a region, the Scottish Borders has some distinct challenges and opportunities in reducing and, ultimately, ceasing its contribution to climate change, and in living with the effects of climate change which it is already too late to pre-empt.

5.3   On the one hand, there are significant challenges in decarbonising transport across a large rural area, decarbonising off-grid heating systems without exacerbating fuel poverty, and decarbonising activity in industrial installations and businesses across the region without negatively impacting on employment and productivity.

5.4   On the other hand, the Scottish Borders is well placed to capitalise on the country's requirement for bio-energy and carbon sequestration with nature-based solutions such as woodland creation and peatland restoration alongside carbon capture and storage all acting as negative emissions solutions. There is much good work already underway. This includes, for example, the Charlesfield anaerobic digestion plant, biomass installations at farm and estate level, and ongoing energy efficiency upgrades of domestic properties aimed at tackling local fuel poverty and innovation in design and construction being delivered by local Registered Social Landlords. But much more is needed. Business as usual will not put us on the trajectory to reduce emissions and transform our economy. Action will need to be scaled up across the region in order to meet the demands of our present predicament.

5.5   We are already experiencing the impacts of climate change with hotter dryer summers, warmer wetter winters, more intense rainfall and more flooding. More frequent extreme weather events such as heatwaves and floods are likely to cause disruption across the region, with substantial increases in the likelihood of coastal flooding in low-lying areas.

5.6   Appendix A summarises some of the main opportunities and challenges across key sectors of the economy that would enhance resilience and put the region on a transformative trajectory towards a net-zero economy.

5.7   Commitment to sustainable development including climate action has been constrained by a perception that action represents a cost and a restriction on wellbeing. Increasingly, however, contrary to this perception, evidence points to a virtuous circle of benefits from such action. For example, the Paris Agreement will support a worldwide market for low carbon goods and services, as other countries have also committed to reducing their carbon footprint. Analysis by the International Finance Corporation indicates that the Paris Agreement will help open up $23 trillion worth of opportunities for climate-smart investments in emerging markets between 2016 and 2030. The Agreement will enhance the long term international competitiveness of low carbon business in Scotland by ensuring that more eco-friendly business practices are adopted elsewhere.

Ambitious climate action across key economic systems—energy, cities, food and land use, water and industry—can lead to higher productivity, more resilient economies and greater social inclusion.

Specific opportunities exist in renewable energy technologies; and manufacturing, low-carbon engineering and green finance, development of key technologies such as hydrogen and carbon capture and storage, and the embedding of circular economy principles are all critical opportunities.

It has been shown that companies taking the strongest climate action outperform their peers in stock market value and financial performance, supported by an increasing consumer awareness and demand for ethical products.

5.8   The Council is working with its partners in the South of Scotland and Borderlands through:

- a South of Scotland Energy Transition Group, chaired by Jeremy Sainsbury of South of Scotland Enterprise; and
- development of a Borderlands Energy Masterplan as principal objective of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

Both initiatives are aimed at optimising:
- the South of Scotland's/Borderlands' contributions to national ambition for net zero carbon; and
- inclusive growth opportunities for our region through encouraging commercial investment and job creation, while also alleviating the impact of high energy prices on low income households.

5.9 Specifically, the Borderlands Energy Masterplan will include data collection, measurement, mapping and modelling across Borderlands at a level which supports the strategic priorities of partners, including regional decarbonisation. The recommendations of this report are framed with a view to the Council's own Climate Action Plan benefitting from this work. Baseline data is expected to be available by the end of March 2021.

6 THE COUNCIL'S #PART

6.1 In November 2018, the Councils of two major cities, Bristol and Manchester, passed motions declaring a 'climate emergency' and setting targets aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030 and 2038 respectively. Since then, there has been a wave of Climate Emergency declarations by Councils of all political complexions across the UK including, for example, Preston, Maidstone, Newcastle, Leeds, and Cardiff. The Scottish Government has made a similar declaration, while for UK Government, Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the former environment secretary, and Andrea Leadsom, the former business secretary, have both acknowledged the climate emergency and the need for urgent action. By the end of July 2020, over half of the UK's local authorities had declared a climate emergency. Across Scotland, 20 councils have declared a Climate Emergency, including all of our partner councils in the City of Edinburgh and South East Region, in Borderlands (including Carlisle City, Cumbria and Northumberland County Councils) and in the South of Scotland. Meanwhile, Glasgow City Council has unveiled plans to become the first UK city to reduce its greenhouse emissions to net-zero, aiming to reach the target before 2045.

6.2 Importantly, the climate situation that this Council and citizens and communities everywhere face is characterised as an 'emergency', not because councils and other public bodies have made declarations, but because the urgency and scale of the climate challenge is a matter of objective and verifiable evidence, demonstrated conclusively in the IPCC Report and other reports.

6.3 The Council has an indispensable role to play in responding to that emergency. Like other Councils, this reflects its scale and influence over key areas such as planning, transport and energy. But the Council also has a vital community leadership role described in the Embedding Sustainable Development report, and it has a duty to use that leadership position to influence other agencies, businesses and citizens.

6.4 Accordingly, as a matter of leadership and as an example to others, it is proposed that Council should acknowledge the fact of a Climate Emergency expressly. A Climate Emergency declaration issued by a council can be a powerful catalyst for action if paired with a clear action plan.

6.5 It is clear that rhetoric and bold headlines will not deliver a step change in combating climate change nor on the ambitious targets which the situation

demands. This must be built on a clear set of actions, which collectively amount to a Scottish Borders Council contribution to responding to climate change, which is, at least, commensurate with national targets, and where practically achievable, exceed those targets.

6.6   Plainly, this is not an overnight task. The reality of the Climate Crisis is that it calls for the complete re-orientation of policy and strategy to help support a transition from a fossil fuel local economy to a clean energy one. It means challenging every aspect of how we currently go about our business, and changing how we live, travel, and work.

6.7   In fulfilling its role, the Council should seek to:-
- Reduce the Council's carbon emissions in line with national targets, with the aspiration to exceed targets where practical
- Work in partnership towards delivering a carbon neutral Scottish Borders including moving to a low carbon fleet alongside the promotion of sustainable travel and transport
- Encourage, where practical, the use of renewable energy generation, carbon sequestration and energy storage
- Reduce the risks from the changing climate by
  o adapting to the effects of climate change to ensure service delivery,
  o minimising carbon emissions in service delivery,
  o working with partners towards measures, which are sustainable and equitable, to increase preparedness and resilience of people and places.

6.8   While the Council's plan for 'responding to the Climate Emergency' will need to be agreed by Full Council, the Sustainable Development Committee has a vital role in overseeing the development and implementation of the plan. As earlier noted, significant activity has been delivered or is already underway (with the Council's Energy Efficiency Programme, in particular, comprising a suite of measures designed to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint). However, the necessity of a step-change to the scale, pace and co-ordination of efforts lies at the heart of this report and it follows that the enhanced oversight and scrutiny afforded by creation of the Sustainable Development Committee is also needed.

6.9   A critical element of a plan of action will be to establish the Scottish Border's contribution to a whole-Scotland approach to reducing emissions. At the end of 2019, the Scottish Government issued a consultation on the role of Public Sector Bodies in tackling climate change. The consultation asked how the public sector can raise ambition and deliver joined-up action on climate change. A step change in our approach is needed – but what do we need in order to get there? In responding, the Council acknowledged that, if it and other public bodies are to meet the climate challenge, then councils must set ambitious plans and 'will' the means to deliver on those plans. At the same time, however, guidance is needed on aligning public body functions and roles with delivery of commitments in the Climate Change Plan and Climate Change Acts. Therefore, Scottish Government guidance should clarify and improve understanding of the vertical alignment of public sector bodies with national emissions inventories and emission reduction plans.

6.10   Around the world, including in the UK with Climate Assembly UK and Scottish Government's Big Climate Conversation, there is widespread recognition that the public and communities need to be engaged in shaping climate action. Engagement improves understanding and collective ownership. As the Council develops its own approach to climate action, it should consider how to facilitate a collaborative and inclusive regional dialogue on the Scottish Borders' response to the Climate Emergency. Establishing such a public

dialogue should form a key strand of work for the Sustainable Development Committee in developing a Climate Action Plan.

6.11 More broadly, as a region, the Scottish Borders is a significant generator of renewable electricity, and has a potentially significant role in energy crops, and in hydrogen production, as well as in carbon capture and storage. For example, forestry is an important sector in the region which is likely to contribute to Scottish Government's targets for increased woodland cover, set out in the national Climate Change Plan. The forestry sector is worth nearly £1billion to Scotland's GVA. These are striking economic opportunities, which are yet to be fully exploited. The Council must work with partners, notably, South of Scotland Enterprise, and above all, businesses and communities to maximise these opportunities, promoting quality and skilled employment, training, and opportunities for businesses around, for example, local processing, tourism and recreation, as well as garnering the benefits of carbon reduction. The pursuit of opportunities in the 'green energy' sector should be seen as a facet of inclusive economic growth, as well as complementary to sustainable development objectives.

6.12 As a land owner and land manager the Council can make a valuable contribution through management of its greenspace. Targeted tree planting (e.g. guided by Surface Water Management Plans) could provide a range of benefits such as storing carbon, reducing surface water run-off and providing a cooling effect to our towns and settlements, thereby building resilience in the local environment and buffering our communities from the impacts of climate change. Creation of ponds, wetlands and management of rivers and burns could also augment local flooding measures and provide a cooling effect. Greenspace management, such as through reduced mowing regimes, can also play a part in minimising emissions.

6.13 It is clear that there is much to be done, and that the Council and the region as a whole face an unprecedented series of challenges, as well as some significant opportunities. This report is intended to represent a small step in meeting those challenges and garnering the opportunities by setting a clear direction for the Council and a lead to our partners, to businesses, communities and people in the Scottish Borders on the issue of climate change.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 **Financial**

While no costs arise directly as a result of this report, it is possible that costs may arise as a result of specific activity recommended to Council in responding to climate change. Equally, it is well-established that whole life cost savings can be made through environmentally responsible actions such as cutting down on waste – for example, reducing wasted electricity through inefficient heating and lighting, or reducing the amount of rubbish taken to landfill. Furthermore, the Scottish Borders' natural 'transition' assets (e.g. wind and physical geography) should mean that the region is well-placed to benefit from the opportunities presented by the developing 'green technologies' market. Any cost or savings implications will be reported, as appropriate, in relation to each area of activity where they arise as a consequence of the pursuit of climate action.

7.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

There are three key risks and mitigations which require to be considered in light of this report.

a) **Risk 1**

i)   The first is self-evidently that a failure to respond effectively to the Climate Emergency risks precipitating those very outcomes, which climate action is intended to avert. In a Scottish Borders' context, the developing risks associated with climate change have already begun to manifest themselves in changing weather patterns, and the resulting flooding and storm damage.

Mitigation

ii)   Mitigating the adverse effects of climate change necessitates the Council committing to an effective plan of action to minimise and mitigate the negative impacts of carbon and other greenhouse gases. However, some negative consequences of climate change are already 'built in', so an effective plan of action must also deliver adaptations to meet those consequences of climate change which cannot be reversed. Flood management solutions are a practical example of this activity.

Regular scrutiny of progress will provide further valuable mitigation with the Sustainable Development Committee playing a vital role in oversight and scrutiny.

b)   **Risk 2**

i)   Another risk is reputational. Failing or explicitly declining to declare an emergency in the face of overwhelming evidence would be injurious to the Council's reputation, as well as incompatible with the commitment of the Council to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 29 August 2019.

Mitigation

ii)   By showing leadership on the Climate Emergency and commitment to effective action on climate, the Council will minimise the risk to its reputation which would flow from a failure to acknowledge or act on the evidence of a Climate Emergency.

c)   **Risk 3**

i)   As a region, the Scottish Borders fails to maximise the inclusive economic growth opportunities offered by its natural resources, such as physical geography (e.g. wind and location).

Mitigation

ii)   By fully embracing the need for action and providing leadership and an example to others, the Council will enhance the prospects of Borders businesses and the wider community being able to garner the advantages of transition to a zero carbon economy, by accessing the region's significant regional renewable energy generation, geographic location to primary urban centres and other transition assets.

7.3   **Integrated Impact Assessment**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out on this proposal, but will be carried out as required in relation to the Council's actions which emerge from the plan to respond to the Climate Emergency.

It is should be noted that the recommendations of this report are consistent with the UN SDGs to which the Council committed on 29 August 2019, and are entirely animated by sustainability in seeking to protect the interests of future as well as present generations.

7.4 **Acting Sustainably**

Reduction of carbon emissions is a core objective of sustainable development, specifically, UN SDGs Goal 13 – Climate Action and Goal 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy. The purpose of this report is to embed commitment to climate action into the very fibre of the Council and how it makes its decisions, and delivers services.

7.5 **Carbon Management**

The Council adopted a [Low Carbon Economic Strategy](#) in 2013. More recently, the Energy Efficiency Programme was established to identify, design and implement technical interventions to decarbonise our built estate and reduce our utility cost base. This report seeks to augment these efforts. The Energy Efficiency Programme will continue to examine ways in which we can support the Scottish Government's carbon aspirations while generating economic benefits to the Scottish Borders.

7.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report does not create a new or amended policy or strategy. It is consistent with the UN SDGs which represent commitments to sustainable development in all contexts, including rural contexts and an equalities based approach based upon responsiveness to needs across the board including in rural settings. If rural impacts emerged as a consequence of recommended actions for the Council in responding to climate change, those impacts together with appropriate mitigations would be reported as appropriate.

7.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

8 **CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, the Monitoring Officer / Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

8.2 Work is being undertaken with Corporate Communications to develop both internal and external communication plans around the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and associated plan and actions.

Approved by

Tracey Logan
Chief Executive   Signature …………………………………..

Author(s)

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Background Papers: Embedding Sustainable Development 29th August 2019
Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council 29th August and 26th September 2019

Scottish Borders Council – 25 September 2020

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Sector	Overview of challenges and opportunities
Power	*Challenges:* As we introduce more renewable energy sources we will need to transition from a hub and spoke model of energy generation and transmission to a distributed generation model. This generates challenges in providing appropriate infrastructure to accommodate this generation and keep the grid balanced as renewable energy generation can be unpredictable and inconsistent. The existing networks will have to be developed to accommodate new demands, such as electric vehicles and localised production of energy to be fed into the existing networks (wind, solar, wave, biomass, hydrogen). *Opportunities:* *Renewable Electricity:* Support development of the whole **renewables** industry: wind, wave and tidal energy, solar, hydro, biomass including potential for circular economy such as farm waste to create biofuel. Support the development of grid balancing services including battery storage and an interconnected smart grid to balance generation and consumption. This could provide a stimulus and provide opportunities to develop Big Data and Internet of Things industries. *Gas Replacement Opportunities*: Scottish Gas Networks have a strategic vision to phase out natural gas and move to the incorporation of bio-gas and hydrogen. This is supplemented by major technology companies developing industrial and domestic hydrogen boilers to replace gas units. Hydrogen is an alternative to petrol & diesel motor vehicles. The gas infrastructure is in place within the country to make the change from natural gas to hydrogen. The Scottish Borders has a distribution gas main running through the region and with the wind power in the area could become an area of hydrogen production for Scotland and maximise the sustainability and economic opportunities. The Scottish Borders could be a significant contributor of **carbon capture and storage**
Transport	*Challenges:* More frequent extreme weather events (such as heatwaves and floods etc) are likely to cause disruption across the transport network. Nature based solutions will complement traditional engineering measures to maintain connectivity. Vehicles - phasing out of internal combustion engine vehicles and increasing use of **electric vehicles** (EVs). Rapid development and placement of infrastructure such as EV charging points. This is an area, where the Council is making progress. Funding applications for active travel through Sestrans need rural proofing, and the new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency has a key role to play in transport as it does in the other areas listed. *Opportunities:* Effective low carbon transportation. EVs have a key role, and there is a need to increase the charging offer to increase uptake. With the Borders Railway established, there is huge potential embodied within extension of the Borders Railway to Carlisle and an east to west link within the Scottish Borders

	Potential around **e-bikes for commuting** (will need the right infrastructure). We are a long way behind continental Europe (Denmark, Holland on infrastructure and ambition.) Encourage investment in **active travel infrastructure** such as paths and off-road routes near to where people live and work Promotion of sustainable 'slow' tourism - in respect of transport, it is also about encouraging visitors to make longer stays, use public transport to and within destinations, promoting hire or electric cars and ebikes and stimulating more visitor experiences based around walking and cycling.
Heating, housing and development	*Challenges: 80% of Scotlands housing stock for our 2050 population is already in place.* Decarbonising Scottish heating will be particularly challenging and will need transformation of our current housing stock, attitudes towards renewable technology and current heating supply. Specific challenges for Scottish Borders relate to off-gas grid. In addition, fuel poverty is very significant consideration. The increasing effects of climate change, including the consequences of more intense rainfall events will put existing and planned built development and infrastructure at risk. Significant risks exist in relation to changed rainfall patterns and sea level rise leading to flooding and coastal erosion enhanced flooding due to sea level rise. If, sea level rises by nearly 1 metre as per pessimistic predictions, between now and 2100, substantial increases in the likelihood of coastal flooding in low-lying areas are likely. Rental housing for short-term lets does not require implementation of new environmental standards. *Opportunities:* Reduction in fuel poverty levels and therefore potentially child poverty levels. Sustainable modern housing. For example, Eildon Housing Association has completed the first of three low-energy Passivhaus homes in the Borders. Designed by John Gilbert Architects the project forms part of a broader pilot programme intended to deliver innovative homes using a variety of different construction methods to compare costs, schedules and tenant feedback. Undertaken in partnership with Scottish Borders Council, the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and Glasgow School of Art, the completion dovetails with planning consent for a further ten properties at Westruther which are due to begin construction in March for completion by spring 2021. For the region to become a 'demonstrator' of new and innovative technologies and systems with the Borderlands Energy Masterplan offering a UK and Scottish Government supported initiative to maximise the low carbon and economic potential of the region's significant and expanding net energy contribution. Opportunities around management of the Council' Estate including buildings and Greenspace- that could reduce carbon emissions and provide adaptation (e.g. reduced inputs into Greenspace management and greater biodiversity and multiple benefits such as natural flood management (trees and wetlands) and shading and cooling (trees):
Industry	*Challenges:* The transition of Business/Industry to sustainable energy and circular resources is a challenge, particularly when viewed from the perspective of short term investment vs long term savings.

	Ensuring that the transition of Business/Industry is 'just'. *Opportunities:* The Scottish Borders should seek to put itself in the van of low carbon business opportunities. The development of a green business park through the Edinburgh City Deal at Tweedbank, and Borderlands present opportunities to develop this selling point. The Council should seek strategically to co-locate industry within the region, based on balancing the re-use of wasted energy from industrial applications (heating & cooling). The Council will need to engage in a dialogue with Scottish Government around the tools required to effect such a strategy.
Land Use	*Challenges*: Land use is already being affected by climate change and increasingly with 'hotter dryer summers, warmer wetter winters and more flooding' . Uncertainty over shape and size of future rural funding support. Funding has traditionally come through government, and there is a need to look at bringing in carbon funding from private business on top of government funding. *Opportunities:* How land is used has an essential role to play in the transition to a net zero carbon economy as well as building resilience to a changing climate. Promoting nature-based solutions for example through woodland expansion, managing flood risk and peatland restoration. The Scottish Borders was one of two areas to be involved in the Scottish Government's Land Use Pilot Project, providing important learning in this area. The Council is working with Scottish Forestry on a regional strategic woodland creation project to explore opportunities for new woodland through integrated land use and delivery of wider local benefits such as employment, local processing, access & tourism, natural flood management and community involvement learnings from these initiatives need to be utilised. At the same time, the uncertain context for future rural funding, and the establishment of the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency provide an opportunity to promote the Scottish Borders as a developmental region for assessing the potential of different land use approaches. Increasing resilience of coastal and river habitats to manage erosion and coastal flood risk will also be important. The Council has adopted a Local Biodiversity Action Plan with its partners to deliver actions across the region with a focus on Natural Capital and the delivery of ecosystem services including carbon storage in woodlands, peatlands and grasslands. This provides a framework for action to build resilience in our natural environment and contributes to the delivery of the Council's Biodiversity duty. Clear synergies exist between Climate Action and the Food Growing Strategy recently approved by Council. Exploiting this interrelationship will help deliver extended benefits across wellbeing, inclusion, and skills development, as well as sustainability goals, and carbon reduction.
Marine	*Challenges*: Development must be sustainable with caution required in assessing developments for their impacts. Any potential development of these areas undergo significant scrutiny by statutory bodies and the public. *Opportunities;* The production of power from wind, wave and tidal technology has huge potential in Scotland with over 6,000 km of coastline. Less obtrusive technologies like tidal and wave energy generation may be possible in the region.

| | Coastal waters off the coast of Berwickshire offers some potential to develop the blue carbon sector. Marine and coastal habitats that are natural stores for carbon. There is some tension however between some marine developments and activities and the protection of environmental assets to meet other objectives, including for biodiversity. |