
CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN TIMELINE

Report by Executive Director, Finance & Regulatory

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

17 December 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the development of a Climate Change Action Plan and proposes a slightly amended timeline for the delivery of the Plan.**
- 1.2 At its meeting of 25 September 2020, Scottish Borders Council agreed a series of recommendations contained within the report 'Responding to the Climate Emergency'. One of the recommendations agreed was that the Council set out a clear plan of action to reduce our carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases, such a plan to return to Council for consideration before the end of March 2021.
- 1.3 A timeline has been developed which sets out the details of the preparatory actions required to deliver such a plan. These actions include the identification of strategic themes, provision of planning workshops for each theme, assessing and identifying an approach to both corporate and regional emissions baseline development and maintenance, structuring corporate governance and reporting processes across climate change issues, and developing proposals for Council wide staff training and engagement.
- 1.4 It has emerged from this planning approach however, that the original March timescale cannot now be achieved. It is requested that in order to produce a robust strategic approach to the development of a net zero pathway within a Climate Change Action Plan, that the timescale is extended by 3 months, with an Action Plan presented to Council in June 2021.
- 1.5 It should be emphasized that re-scheduling Council's consideration of the Climate Action Plan does not inhibit Council's ability to progress existing Climate Action. For example, the Energy Efficiency Programme continues to deliver carbon and cost savings through a programme of energy efficiency and renewable energy retrofit. It does mean that the strategic overview of activity will be delayed in being brought before Council, but it is considered that the benefits in taking limited additional time to strengthen the Climate Action Plan meaningfully outweigh any deficits caused by the delay in presentation of the Plan.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommend that the Council agrees the Climate Change Action Plan Timeline, in particular that a Climate Change Action Plan is considered by the Council before the end of June 2021.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 25 September 2020, Scottish Borders Council agreed a series of recommendations contained within the report 'Responding to the Climate Emergency'. One of the recommendations agreed was that the Council '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 the end of March 2021'.
- 3.2 Significant preparatory work has been undertaken by a core group of staff within the Council's Sustainable Development Group, and the attached timeline for this work (Appendix 1) has been produced.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 A number of key steps have been identified in the production of a Climate Change Action Plan, with considerable effort invested in assessing the impact of Scottish Government policy drivers, guidance and support. Much activity has also focussed on engagement with partners around strategic climate change priorities for the Scottish Borders, particularly the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Regional and Borderlands Growth Deals, and relationships with the South of Scotland Enterprise Energy Transition Group.
- 4.2 The key stages of Climate Change Action Plan production have been identified in the Timeline and are structured around 3 phases – Analysis, Planning and Implementation. As can be seen from the Timeline, significant progress has been made in the assessment of approaches used by other public bodies, scoping of the Action Plan, identification of 4 strategic themes and the investigation of an appropriate emissions baseline methodology against which progress can be measured. The Timeline sets out the steps required in order to produce an Action Plan which can be presented to the Council in June 2021.
- 4.3 The Analysis Phase of the process has been essential to allow detailed specification of activity required in the Planning Phase. It became evident during the Analysis that a number of circumstances which had been in place at the time of writing of the 25th September report 'Responding to the Climate Emergency', had changed. An example of this was the extension to the timescale for the development of a Borderlands Energy Masterplan, which was referenced in the 25th September report. It was previously expected that this process would have provided emissions baselines for each of the relevant Local Authorities by March 2021, however, this will not now be available until later in the year, therefore work is developing to establish an initial standalone baseline for the Scottish Borders.

- 4.4 A widespread issue which has affected the original timeline for the production of a Climate Change Action Plan is related to the availability and capacity of staff across all Council services. Many teams are still being redeployed and focused on COVID related work, and for those who have stepped down from emergency response roles, increasing service delivery demands and potential backlogs require to be addressed. These circumstances have affected not only Council staff, but also many external partners, resulting in reduced availability of officers to progress key elements of the Planning Phase of the original Timeline.
- 4.5 In light of these issues, it is apparent that the original March timescale cannot now be achieved. It is proposed that in order to deliver a robust strategic approach to the development of a net zero pathway within a Climate Change Action Plan, that the original timescale is extended by 3 months, with an Action Plan presented to Council in June 2021.
- 4.6 Officers will keep the Sustainable Development Committee and Elected Members generally updated in relation to progress with the development of the Climate Action Plan through to the end of June 2021.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs directly attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

There is a limited reputational risk to the Council in extending the deadline for the production of a Climate Change Action Plan. However, the priority is to produce a Climate Action Plan which provides the strongest possible basis for progress. It is considered that outcomes will be improved by taking some additional time to develop a stronger Action Plan than would be achievable in the limited timeframe which now exists.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

No Integrated Impact Assessment has been prepared on the basis that the present report is concerned solely with the timing of a future Council Report and Climate Action Plan. An Integrated Impact Assessment will be required in relation to that future report and Climate Action Plan.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

Re-scheduling of the Council's consideration of the Climate Action Plan does not inhibit Council's ability to progress existing Climate Action. It does mean that the strategic overview of activity will be delayed in being brought before Council, and this may consequently mean a small delay in the development of the Climate Change Action Plan, and the concerted and accelerated action in combatting Climate Change which that report is intended to engender. However, it is considered that the benefits in taking limited additional time to strengthen the Climate Action Plan meaningfully outweigh any deficits caused by the delay in presentation of the Plan.

5.5 Carbon Management

As per para 5.4, it is considered that the benefits in taking limited additional time to strengthen the Climate Action Plan meaningfully outweigh any deficits caused by the delay in presentation of the Plan.

5.6 Rural Proofing

The present report does not concern a new or amended policy or strategy. The substantive covering report to the Climate Action Plan will require to be assessed for impact in this regard.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

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

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, and the Service Director HR & Communications, have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

David Robertson

Executive Director (Finance and Regulatory)

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 25 September 2020

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