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## **CLIMATE CHANGE ROUTE MAP FOR THE SCOTTISH BORDERS**

### **Report by Executive Director Corporate Improvement & Economy**

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### **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**17 June 2021**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report requests that the Council approves the draft Climate Change Route Map set out in Appendix 1.**
- 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, as an organisation, and for the Scottish Borders, as a region, '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 The impacts of the response to the COVID pandemic across Council services during 2020, particularly the availability of staff, necessitated a request to extend this deadline to June 2021, and this was agreed at the 17 December 2020 Council meeting.
- 1.4 The Climate Change Route Map (CCRM) sets a strategic direction for the Council and its partners and communities to move to a net zero emissions economy by 2045, in line with the national target set by the Scottish Government.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommend that the Council approves the Climate Change Route Map set out at Appendix 1.**

### **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, as an organisation, and for the Scottish Borders, as a region, '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', subsequently extended to June 2021.
- 3.2 The 'Responding to the Climate Emergency' Report highlighted that the pressures on nature as a result of climate change are increasing, and this presents a global and generational threat to human wellbeing, the economy, species and ecosystems. As a consequence, there is overwhelming scientific consensus about the scale and potential impacts of the risks we face, and it is the duty of government and other public organisations, including this Council, to mobilise society wide resources at sufficient scale and speed to protect and enhance our environment.

### **4 CLIMATE CHANGE ROUTE MAP**

- 4.1 As the development process progressed, it was recognised that a change in the title of the proposed document would better convey its aims. The original title of 'Climate Change Action Plan' appeared to suggest a short term plan, composed of a series of immediate, very specifically defined actions. The requirement to set out a much longer term, strategic approach to support the pathway to net zero emissions by 2045, invited a change of language to reflect this generational journey of learning and change. Hence, the document is called a 'Climate Change Route Map'.
- 4.2 The document begins by establishing a baseline: an assessment of 'where we are now'. Its objective is to set the framework by which organisationally, Scottish Borders Council, and the Scottish Borders, as a region, pursue a path to net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045, while also putting in places response and mitigation measures to those changes which can no longer be pre-empted as result of changes to our climate.
- 4.3 The Route Map is based around 5 themes;
- Resilience
  - Transport Use
  - Nature Based Solutions
  - Energy
  - Waste Management

These five themes are the primary focus for our achievement of Net Zero. Within each theme, we identify 5 milestones and collate core actions against these milestones. At this early stage in the CCRM, like the Scottish Government's Update of the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032, our approach is iterative, we must learn by doing. We do not yet have the ability to pin down the detail of every goal and target. The Route Map, in common with national and local governments round the world, will evolve, being populated with developing workstreams and actions as we progress. Developing sound data and measures is an essential corollary to our

progress, with our baseline the essential foundation from which we can assess the impact of actions. The baseline will require to be regularly updated, and constant review of assessment and monitoring techniques will be required.

- 4.4 Fundamental to successful delivery is the need for constant collaboration and engagement across the full spectrum of climate change action, from basic energy efficiency measures to reduce emissions to the development of community and infrastructure climate resilience. Consideration of effective and consistent engagement and communication approaches will continue, with the critical need to embed carbon reduction and climate change messaging across all Council services. In tandem with this, internal Council corporate planning and processes will require to be redesigned to deliver the necessary outcomes to meet the net zero target.
- 4.5 Leadership and engagement must be vital twin elements of our approach. The Council has a clear community leadership role described in the Embedding Sustainable Development report, and it has a duty to use that leadership position to influence and support other agencies, businesses and citizens. As highlighted in Section 6 of the CCRM, engagement with the Scottish Borders public, communities, partners, businesses and stakeholders is an essential component of developing buy-in and effective policy approaches to climate change. The CCRM proposes creating a communications strategy to provide a framework for engagement and to establish critical interfaces through an Advisory Board. Membership of such a Board would be likely to include SBC, NHS Borders, Borders College, SoSE, Scottish Water, SEPA, SPEN, and Chamber of Commerce. It is also proposed that a Citizens Assembly/Panel is established which would have a critical function in communicating a respected/reasoned view to the Council in the development of its policy commitments and would act as a messenger to the Scottish Borders public in relation to climate change action particularly around the need for behaviour change required to deliver our Net Zero ambition. The importance of a whole Borders collaborative approach to addressing climate change and delivering our net zero objective cannot be underestimated and is critical to our success.
- 4.6 It must also be recognised that if the Route Map is to be more than aspirational, the Council and its partners will need to match good intentions by prioritising spending decisions, just as we and the public will have to adjust our behaviours. Practicality, the costs of delivering on different high level actions, and the necessity of a just transition will compel trade-offs. The full cost implications of the journey to net zero and the trade-offs which will be needed cannot be detailed currently. Thus, a large part of the importance of the Route Map lies in the framework and structures (of assembly and advisory committee), it proposes for discussion around how we manage these trade-offs, while also delivering a net zero future for the Council and for the Scottish Borders by 2045.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

The CCRM is a framework which sets an overall direction required to meet a Net Zero target of 2045. In order to deliver the transformational changes required to meet a Net Zero emissions target, it is anticipated that critical financial decisions will require to be made and adequate resources committed to ensure that this pathway is achieved. Financial implications, including anticipated benefits resulting from the delivery of future actions will be identified as implementation of the CCRM progresses. The existing Capital Plan includes some commitment to supporting these changes, but our financial plans will need to continue to develop in future years as our CCRM evolves, and any proposals requiring further approval will be presented to Council/the appropriate committee as the programme develops.

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

Risk to the Council and the region comprise 3 key issues –

- a) Failure of the Council to deliver against its legal duties under current and developing climate legislation and policy commitments within the CCRM. It is essential that appropriate skills development takes place and that adequate resource and capacity is available to deliver against these requirements. Regular monitoring and review processes will be required to ensure compliance and delivery which will include the activity of the Sustainable Development Committee.
- b) The Council has previously committed to taking action on climate change in its report to Council 'Responding to the Climate Emergency' on 25 September 2020, by agreeing to develop a Climate Change Action Plan (now Route Map). The Council will face significant reputational risk if it fails to deliver on this commitment and on the commitments proposed within the CCRM.
- c) There are also potential financial and service delivery risks associated with not addressing the need to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate. These impacts will include increased likelihood of extreme weather events, effects on transport and access to services and service delivery, security of supply of energy, food and other goods.

### **5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This has reinforced the need to ensure that a transition to a Net Zero economy must be 'just'. This means, in the Scottish Borders as elsewhere, developing policies and delivering actions which ensure the benefits of climate change action are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those less able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes.

#### 5.4 **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

The UN SDGs comprise 17 interlinked goals. UN SDG 13: 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts' is clearly the most relevant to the proposals contained within the CCRM. However, it will also support delivery against other UN SDG through pursuit of a 'Just Transition', namely: Goal 1 – to end poverty, 2 – promote sustainable agriculture, 7- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

#### 5.5 **Climate Change**

The entire purpose of this report is to establish an effective Climate Change Route Map for the Council and for the Scottish Borders region, in transitioning to net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045, and appropriate adaptation and resilience measures.

#### 5.6 **Rural Proofing**

The Climate Change Route Map is underpinned by the Council's commitment to deliver on the UN SDGs, and our duties under Equalities legislation. Thus an equalities based approach is built into the CCRM. The aim of this approach is a 'just transition' - ensuring the benefits of climate change action are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those less able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes, including in rural settings. Accordingly, the purpose and recommendations of this report are fully complementary and conducive to the objective of Rural Proofing.

#### 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.
- 6.2 The Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer has been consulted in relation the Equality Impact Assessment and is supportive of the points noted at para 5.3.

#### **Approved by**

**Rob Dickson** **Signature .....**  
**Executive Director (Corporate Economy and Economy)**

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#### **Background Papers:**

**Previous Minute Reference:** Scottish Borders Council, 25 September 2020;

Scottish Borders Council, 17 December 2020

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jenny Wilkinson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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