



Report to Executive Committee

Meeting Date – 23 July 2024
Key Decision – Yes
Public/Private – Public

Portfolio – Cumberland Policy and Regulatory Services
Directorate – Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
Lead Officer – Chloe Tringham, Assistant Director Climate & Waste
Steven O’Keeffe, Climate and Natural Environment Manager (interim)
Phil Duerdin, Corporate Decarbonisation Manager

Title – Climate and Nature Strategy

Brief Summary:

The Climate and Nature Strategy sets out the objectives, commitments and programmes that the Council (we) will deliver for climate and nature. It is a position statement and should be read as a working strategy for the next three years (2024-2027).

Recommendations:

The committee is invited:

- Adopt the Climate and Nature Strategy and the supporting Carbon and Energy Management Plan.
- Note the outline for a Biodiversity Management Plan (Appendix C) which will be the basis for discussions internally and externally with partners.
- Agree the delegations for future amendments set out in paragraph 2.2.
- Note the progress on the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Note the progress on a Cumbria Community Forest Plan.
- Note the proposal for a Citizens Jury/Assembly through the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership Programme.

Tracking

| | |
|------------|----------------------|
| Executive: | 23 July 2024 |
| Scrutiny: | 16 and 17 April 2024 |
| Council: | Not applicable |

1. Background

- 1.1. The purpose of the Climate and Nature Strategy is to set out the objectives, commitments and programmes that the Council (we) will deliver for climate and nature. It is a position statement and should be read as a working strategy for the next three years (2024-2027).
- 1.2. The strategy has been developed alongside the Council's Delivery Plan, informed by the current strategies, actions and partnership work underway. It has also been informed by the work undertaken by the previous councils.
- 1.3. The public opinion and social trends on climate change are changing, a recent Office for National Statistics¹ survey estimates that 72% have made a lot or some changes to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change. Among those who had made a lot or some changes to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change the concerns that motivated them to make the changes were:
 - Effect on future generations (69%)
 - Loss of natural habitats or wildlife due to climate change (66%)
 - Energy and food supplies (55%)
 - Other people being directly affected by climate change, for example: extreme weather events or rising sea levels. (52%)
- 1.4. The Local Government Association recently commissioned YouGov to run an opinion poll on public perceptions around local climate action and;
 - two thirds of responders said they were worried about climate change with flooding, storms and heatwaves being the impacts most likely to affect their local area
 - With only 12% thinking climate change will not impact their local area

Strategy development

- 1.5. Climate policy is within the Cumberland Policy and Regulatory Services portfolio. Climate and nature present cross-cutting challenges and opportunities for our Executive Members and their portfolios.
- 1.6. The Climate and Nature Advisory Group has been directly involved in drafting the strategy as part of its brief to provide advice to the Executive on policies and initiatives. This group includes elected Members, Executive Portfolio Holders and internal officers. Co-opted members of the group bring their knowledge of nature and climate issues to assist this work.
- 1.7. Tackling the climate emergency and building environmental resilience is a whole society challenge. Adapting to the changes will need cross-sector action that includes and extends beyond the Council. If we don't rise to this challenge, it will have significant

¹ [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: climate change - Office for National Statistics](#)

impacts on health and wellbeing and is likely to affect the least well off disproportionately, widening the gap and stretching the inequalities in Cumberland.

- 1.8. As well as the risks and consequences there are opportunities for common benefits, if we join up the goals for people, for nature and for climate. As a unitary council we are in a unique position to take this fresh approach, putting sustainability at the forefront of our decision making and policy development.

Control and influence

- 1.9. The introduction explains the purpose of the strategy and sets out a model to describe the Council’s levels of control and influence (Table 1). The leadership role of Councillors is important when exercising indirect control and influence. Councillors represent their communities, bringing their views into the Council’s decision-making process. Councillors are the advocates of and for their communities (Constitution Part 1 Paragraph 3.8).

Table 1: Control and influence.

| Definition | Examples from the strategy |
|--|--|
| Direct Control: Our own actions | Council’s Assets (Buildings and land) and fleet; Operations; Workforce |
| Indirect Control: Our role in the actions of others | Procurement and commissioning |
| | Development Control; Local Plan; Transport Planning; Waste strategy |
| Influence: Through our collaboration and leadership | Community Panels and Community Networks; Town and Parish Councils; Place and thematic partnerships |
| | Communities and education settings |
| | Communications and engagement; consultation responses on national policy |

Risks, consequences and opportunities

- 1.10. The section on risks, consequences and opportunities brings together information from the national risk assessment and our partnerships for flood resilience and emergency planning.
- 1.11. The development of the strategy and related plans has highlighted the need for greater collaboration on risks and opportunities, especially around existing interdependencies such as shared assets and business continuity arrangements.
- 1.12. When reporting on risk and opportunities we will need to take an equal focus on mitigation (Net Zero, maximum of 1.5°C), adaptation (2°C), and protecting and enhancing nature.
- 1.13. As the strategy develops, through 2024/2025, we will also be exploring new information and external support through:
 - ADEPT Rapid Adaption Pathway Assessment Pilot (Expression of interest)
 - Cumbria Climate Change Risk Assessment (Request to quote through Westmorland & Furness Council)
 - [Local Climate Adaptation Tool \(Icat.uk\)](https://icat.uk)
 - Local Authority Adaptive Reporting Pilot
 - National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) when it is released later in the year

This research will inform our approach to integrating climate and nature risks into our Council Operating Model and partnership working.

Community Panels, Community Networks and Community Power

- 1.14. The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on Community Power at their meeting in February 2024. This report set out the critical role that Community Panels and Community Networks will have in tackling the climate and nature challenge as follows:

‘The depth and complexity of many modern problems from climate change to deindustrialisation or social isolation are beyond the ability of any single institution to resolve. We need an approach that recognises how Cumberland Council can ensure communities are not merely passive recipients of services or transactional customers and one which recognises their role at the heart of sustainable solutions.’
- 1.15. The Community Panels and their priorities provide an opportunity to link actions to the places that matter most to our communities, their neighbourhoods, villages and towns. So far, the panels have offered over £50,000 in funding to organisations for projects that will make a difference for climate and nature by:
 - Improving access and biodiversity
 - Providing outdoor learning sessions and community activities

- Providing energy efficiency measures in community buildings and supporting community hubs
- Protecting and conserving red squirrels
- Enabling a future play area and community orchard
- Supporting a safe cycleway and cycle parking
- Providing healthy lunches in warm spots during winter months
- Providing gardening and cooking equipment for community groups
- Funding for an allotment society to buy an orchard for community ownership

1.16. This strategy is dependent upon:

‘8 Community Panels and Community Networks working towards active, resilient and empowered communities. Where communities of interest meet communities of place to tackle local priorities.’

1.17. It is through the Community Panels and Community Networks that we will bring together the communities of interest and place, linking in the local climate and nature groups. We will also look to scale-up climate and nature actions across Cumberland through external funding with our partners. (See Paragraph 5.8)

Partnerships

1.18. Working with partners and developing new and existing partnerships remains fundamental to our way of working. The 23 partnerships listed are actively working on the climate and nature challenge. We will be mapping our representation across these partnerships and their sub groups so that we can help drive the agenda and maximise our influence, whilst being influenced by our partners.

Objectives and commitments

1.19. There are 4 objectives:

- Adapting now to the changes we can expect over our lifetimes and beyond
- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Growing the knowledge, skills ,opportunities and inspiration for change
- Supporting more sustainable places, practices, livelihoods and lifestyles

1.20. Each objective is presented with a set of aspirational commitments and aims which summarises the related work in the partnerships and programmes. As we report on the strategy, we will link these objectives and statements to the programmes listed and the related strategies and plans. This will create a link to tangible actions.

1.21. There are always close ties with other plans and these objectives and commitments have been set to maximise the opportunities for innovation and collaboration with partners and communities.

Communications and engagement

1.22. Communications and engagement are paramount for influencing behaviours. Under the objective 'Growing the knowledge, skills, opportunities and inspiration for change' we have committed to:

'build trust and inspire change by promoting positive examples of adaptation and mitigation, sharing the opportunities and choices through our proactive communications and engagement.'

1.23. Since Vesting Day we have been publishing an Environment and Climate Newsletter with the goal of growing the subscribers issue by issue. In May 2024 we published our fifth issue of the newsletter which reached 14,900 recipients. This is a growth of 5% in the number of subscribers from our first issue in July 2023. We will continue to promote the newsletter as our main source of information on the development and delivery of the strategy and programmes.

1.24. Over the same period there have been over 20 media releases relating to climate, waste and nature. To give an idea of the breadth and variety of activity a selection of recent announcements is listed:

- £250,000 of government funding has been secured for public swimming pools in Carlisle, Wigton and Workington for energy efficiency improvements.
- Substantial funding boost of £870,588 for Active Travel initiatives.
- In collaboration with the Hadrian's Wall Trail Partnership, has developed a new ramped access to a popular riverside footpath in Carlisle.
- Advising residents to be careful when driving through Caldbeck as amphibians are currently crossing roads in the area.
- Community planting for pollinators day in Whitehaven
- Successful Completion of Ravenglass Flood Alleviation Project
- Recycling Rambler hits the road
- Ash Dieback awareness raising
- Coastal Protection Act awareness raising
- Big Green Week 2024

1.25. There have also been opportunities for people to have their say on consultations with links to climate and nature through:

- Access to food survey
- Budget consultation
- Connecting Millom and Haverigg seeks to improve the transport network and related public realm, in and around Millom.
- Harrington marina and shoreline bathing water public consultation
- Place Programmes and Town Deals consultations
- Waste Collection Public Engagement Survey

- Woodland creation
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy Engagement Survey (hosted by Westmorland & Furness Council)
- Public Space Protection Orders
- Market Square and Greenmarket (Carlisle City Centre)

Themes, programmes, and plans

- 1.26. The 23 programmes are presented under their themes and again with more information in the table at the end of the strategy. Additional action planning will be incorporated into the Council's planning processes and partnership working.
- 1.27. The Carbon and Energy Management Plan is attached as an appendix (Appendix B) and is summarised in in the strategy.
- 1.28. The Natural Environment Management Plan will be developed over summer/autumn and adopted alongside the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in autumn/winter, completing the initial set. An outline of the Natural Environment Management Plan is presented in Appendix C.
- 1.29. A list of related strategies and plans, including pending documents, is included to illustrate the breadth and depth of work underway.

Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Biodiversity Duty

- 1.30. The Cumbria LNRS will outline our county's priorities for nature recovery and identify key locations that could contribute to achieving these priorities. Westmorland and Furness Council are the responsible authority for the Cumbria LNRS, with Cumberland Council, Lake District National Park Authority, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and Natural England acting as supporting authorities. There are also many other organisations involved in the development of the LNRS such as Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and many more NGOs, organisations, and individuals.
- 1.31. It is through the adoption of the LNRS, as a supporting authority, and the Climate & Nature Strategy's Natural Environment Management Plan that we will fulfil our strengthened biodiversity duty.
- 1.32. The LNRS reached a milestone in May 2024 with the publication of the initial list of 26 draft priorities for habitats in Cumbria ([LNRS Draft Priorities v1.1](#)). The next stage is to develop the measures relating to these draft priorities.

Cumbria Community Forest Plan

- 1.33. Progress is being made on Cumbria's Community Forest Plan. This forest plan has been commissioned by Cumbria Community Forest for Defra, who require this as a condition of funding Cumbria Community Forest, to enable planting at landscape scale.

- 1.34. Cumbria's Community Forest Plan will be an evidence-based statement of long-term intentions and practical delivery routes for creation of community forests in Cumbria: "Community forestry is all about involving people and enabling them to take ownership of not only planting new trees but looking after our existing woodlands and green spaces for future generations."- Community Forest Trust (2024)
- 1.35. The purpose of the Community Forest Plan is to:
- To provide a management framework for delivery of forest benefits to place-based communities in Cumbria, and wider environmental benefits and public goods.
 - To identify groups experiencing specific barriers to accessing woodland and woodland activities and opportunities for transformative benefits through Cumbria Community Forest for these groups, with a specific focus on neurodivergent communities.
- 1.36. A successful plan would be adopted by local planning authorities: Cumberland Council, Lake District National Park Authority, and Westmorland & Furness Council; and integrated into new local plans as they are prepared. Local authority adoption has been key to the delivery of earlier Community Forest Plans in locations around England.

Monitoring, reporting, and reviewing

- 1.37. We will measure the overall progress against this strategy through the Cumberland Council Plan Delivery Plan. Each programme will have milestones and targets for deliverables, reported to the relevant boards and partnerships, all captured in monitoring reports. A performance report summarising progress will be presented quarterly to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.38. The quarterly newsletter will highlight delivery with a focus on local projects and initiatives. We will develop place-based monitoring through the Climate and Nature Advisory Group, and this will underpin our performance reporting.
- 1.39. Work is still underway with partners on the ZCCP Cumbria Decarbonisation Plan, and many topics require further investigation. We are committed to reviewing and updating this strategy to ensure that it remains relevant and significant. At the very least, we will review the strategy annually, reporting any significant changes through the Portfolio Holder reports to Council.

2. Proposals

- 2.1. The proposal is to adopt the strategy and management plan as part of the hierarchy of strategies and plans under the Council Plan.
- 2.2. Climate and nature topics are informed by research and innovation; implemented predominantly through external funding. It is important that the strategy and related

management plans remain current as new opportunities develop. With this in mind the following delegations for future amendments are proposed:

Table 2: Delegations for amendments

| Change | Example | Delegated to |
|---------------|--|---|
| Major | Material changes to the objectives, programmes and targets. | Director in consultation with Portfolio Holder. |
| Minor | Material changes to partnerships, risks, consequences and opportunities. | Assistant Director in consultation with Portfolio Holder. |
| Minor updates | Adjustments to baselines, facts and figures. | Senior Manager in consultation with Portfolio Holder. |

2.3. The content on the website for climate and nature will be updated once the strategy is adopted. A designed version of the final strategy will be produced.

3. Alternative options considered

3.1. An alternative option would be to develop separate strategies and plans as follows:

- Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Plan
- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Plan
- Biodiversity Strategy and Plan
- Carbon and Energy Management Strategy and Plan

Combining climate (mitigation and adaptation) and nature topics into a single strategy (with supporting plans as appendices) is the preferred option. This approach reaffirms the importance of place, everything happens somewhere, particularly when delivering interventions for mitigation, adaptation and nature recovery as they are often significant decisions attracting a good deal of public interest.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1. The report provides the committee with an overview of the development of the strategy and the outcome of the consultation work undertaken. The recommendations are:

- Adopt the Climate and Nature Strategy and the supporting Carbon and Energy Management Plan.
- Note the outline for a Biodiversity Management Plan (Appendix D) which will be the basis for discussions internally and externally with partners.
- Agree the delegations for future amendments set out in paragraph 2.2.
- Note the progress on the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Note the progress on a Cumbria Community Forest Plan.

- Note the potential topics for a Citizens Jury/Assembly through the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership Programme set out in paragraph 5.14.

5. Implications:

Contribution to the Cumberland Plan Priorities -

- 5.1. The Cumberland Council Plan has 'environmental resilience and climate emergency as an area of focus, this draft strategy sets out how we are going to deliver against this challenge.
- 5.2. The Cumberland Approach identifies sustainability as a fundamental principle for shaping our approach to service delivery, working with partners and engaging residents. The Council Plan defines sustainability as:
'The climate and environmental emergency will be at the forefront of our decision making and policy development. We will encourage others to do the same and set an example in using resources sustainably, looking for low carbon or carbon neutral alternatives in what we buy and how we work. We will make a fair and just transition to a more sustainable Council and Cumberland.'

Relevant Risks and explain how risks can be mitigated –

- 5.3. The relevant risks are managed through the Risk Management Framework as follows:
- Overarching Corporate Risk for Climate Change
 - Directorate and Service Risk Registers
 - Programme and project risks through the Programme Management Office
- The treatment of these risks is in line with the risk tolerances.

Consultation / Engagement –

- 5.4. The Community Engagement Framework is being used to guide our approach to engagement and consultation. It is through improved community participation that we can build trust and understanding, which can help better shape the delivery of the strategy and decision-making.
- 5.5. The Carbon and Energy Management Plan was discussed at the Business and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (16 April 2024).
- 5.6. The draft strategy was discussed at the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee (17 April 2024).
- 5.7. An online survey on the draft strategy generated 54 responses. We have also received responses from local groups and partners (5.10). A summary of the responses and the changes made to the strategy is presented in Appendix D.

Climate and nature local groups

- 5.8. Cumberland has over 14 active local groups working on climate and nature. Many of these groups are part of the Cumbria Sustainability Network, supported through the Zero Carbon Cumbria Programme.

5.9. A workshop took place on 5 June 2024 with 7 groups, the key points were:

- Attendance at the workshop did not imply endorsement of the draft strategy.
- Some attendees accepted that the document was a working strategy, but others would not be endorsing the document as there were too many gaps and deficiencies.
- A regular meeting with the sustainability groups for Cumberland would continue to develop the strategy and help build collaborative working to address the gaps and deficiencies, namely:
 - A clear target year and pathway to net zero
 - Need for more ambition and more positive and aspirational language
 - Stronger framework for driving large-scale change
- Community Power and the climate and nature challenge needs further investigation for development. The group felt a more direct channel of communication with the council is needed for Cumbria Sustainability Network groups via establishing regular meetings.
- The following topics need more development in the strategy:
 - Public Transport
 - Waste reduction
 - Building standards
 - Decarbonising existing buildings
 - Nature recovery
 - Pensions and investments
- Carbon literacy should be made mandatory for councillors and officers.
- More needs to be done to raise awareness of the climate crisis and the necessity of taking mitigation/adaptation action.
- Use the work developed by organisations like ADEPT (Blueprint Coalition), UK100 and Friends of the Earth to accelerate climate action and learn from other councils.

Engagement with partners

5.10. We have received responses from the following partners:

- Lake District National Park
- Cumbria Action for Sustainability
- Cumbria Local Nature Partnership
- Cumbria GeoConservation Group
- Environment Agency
- Solway Coast National Landscape

5.11. The Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership was briefed on the draft strategy on 11 June 2024. Partners were thanked for their contributions to the consultation and the emphasis was placed on the document being a working strategy to be improved through further collaboration.

Economic Summit

5.12. The Economic Summit (29 February 2024) created a great opportunity to discuss the draft objectives and programmes through the two climate and nature workshops. The workshops were attended by representatives of 31 different organisations and the engagement on the two questions generated feedback that will inform both this strategy and the emerging Economic Strategy. The two questions were:

- How can our work on climate change and nature help us to unlock and generate opportunities for residents, businesses, social enterprises in addition to community and voluntary sectors?
- What additional actions for climate change and nature will help us to unlock and generate opportunities for residents, businesses, social enterprises in addition to community and voluntary sectors?

Potential Citizens Jury/Assembly

5.13. There are resources available through the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership Programme (ZCCP) to deliver a Citizens Jury/Assembly. Citizens Assemblies and Juries are a way of bringing together citizens to try and work through complex issues and make recommendations in an attempt to influence policy.

5.14. The proposal is to organise two Citizens Juries or an Assembly in Cumbria on a particularly important issue that is key to successfully addressing climate change. The topic or topics will be agreed through the ZCCP over summer.

Engaging with young people

5.15. The development of the strategy has benefited from the Youth Summit, the Copeland Youth Panel (2021) and recent engagement with young people on possible solutions to encourage climate awareness and action.

5.16. We will be taking the opportunity to engage with the Whitehaven Youth Summit in July, the outcome of this summit will be considered by the Climate and Nature Advisory Group.

Legal – The Committee’s terms of reference include the consideration of all powers and duties the council has relating to environment.

The Climate and Nature Strategy relates to the exercise of Executive functions and is therefore a decision of the Executive as to its adoption.

The Council has a duty under s.3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to ensure the Council makes arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The proposed strategy should therefore represent best value for Cumberland.

It is anticipated that the delivery of the strategy and accompanying management plans will require legal advice on a case-by case basis.

Finance –There are no direct financial implications within the recommendations for the draft strategy and related plans. A criteria for action planning, based on the Financial Procedure Rules, has been part of the development of the strategy. As projects are developed to deliver the strategy detailed business cases will be needed setting out the costs and savings as well as the potential for external funding.

The 2024/25 Budget sets out the following programmes and plans that are linked to the strategy:

- Transformation Programme
- Capital Programme
- Asset Management Plan and fleet investment

Information Governance – Climate and nature topics give rise to Environmental Information Regulations 2004 requests. We will review these requests annually to see if we can routinely publish more information through the updates to the strategy.

Impact Assessments –

Have you screened the decision for impacts using the Impact Assessment?

The strategy has been screened using the Impact Assessment tool. The screening has been updated with the information from the survey.

Author & Lead Officer Contact details:

Name: Chloe Tringham
Email: Chloe.Tringham@cumberland.gov.uk

Name: Steven O’Keeffe
Email: steven.okeeffe@cumberland.gov.uk
Phone Number: 01228 817258

Name: Phil Duerdin
Email: Phil.Duerdin@Cumberland.gov.uk

Background papers:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

Carbon and Energy Management Plan (Business and Resources OSC agenda item on 16/4/24)
Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership: Summary of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Cumbria
Available online at: <https://zerocarboncumbria.co.uk/about/reports/cumbria-greenhouse-gas-emissions-report/>

Appendices attached to report:

- A. Climate and Nature Strategy
- B. Carbon and Energy Management Plan
- C. Outline for a Natural Environment Management Plan
- D. Summary of consultation feedback and changes made.