

The Highland Council
Highland Council – 5th September 2013

Agenda Item	12
Report No	HC/32/13

Carbon Clever Highlands – Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands by 2025

Report by the Chief Executive

The following report provides a summary update on the work that has been conducted so far to implement and realise the vision of a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025, Carbon Clever Highlands, since the Council approved the initiative on 27th June 2013.

1. Background

1.1 At a meeting of the Highland Council in June 2013, Members agreed to an initiative to achieve a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025, branded as Carbon Clever Highlands.

1.2 Whilst other cities across Europe have adopted similar initiatives, they tend to have an almost entirely city-based focus. The fortunes of Inverness and the Highlands are so inextricably linked, that the visionary approach has been to adopt a composite target, where the objective for one will reinforce that of the other.

1.3 The following report provides a summary update for the work that has been conducted so far to implement and realise the vision of a Carbon Clever Highlands, since June 2013.

2. Carbon Clever Highlands Conference

2.1 The Carbon Clever Highlands conference is now arranged for the 8th November 2013. The Council chamber and appropriate committee rooms have been booked and the event is currently being planned. The aim of the conference will be to:

- Bring Highland partners and stakeholders together - asking them to commit to the vision of a Carbon Clever Highlands;
- Conduct breakout sessions to draw on the expertise and experience of other places with low carbon visions, our partners and stakeholders; and to
- Officially launch the initiative.

Low carbon or remote attendance to this conference will be encouraged.

3. Service Workshops

3.1 All Council Services will be involved in Carbon Clever Highlands. Workshops will be conducted with appropriate officers in each Council Service in September to identify:

- Service ideas for the initiative;
- Service contributions to the initiative;
- Service implications arising from the initiative;
- Relevant stakeholders and how best to engage with them; and
- Potential sources of funding for the initiative.

Feedback from these sessions will be presented to Members in due course. In addition consultation with our 125 green ambassadors will be arranged to gather their views and ideas as well.

4. Identification of Early and Visible Projects and Funding sources

4.1 Since June, work has been conducted to identify early and visible projects and funding sources for the Carbon Clever Highlands initiative. This has involved identifying the EU support for the initiative, Scottish Government programmes as well as opportunities from our own operations.

4.2 EU support

Future funding potential

On 27 June the UK Government announced that the Highlands & Islands will receive £174m from the European Regional Development and Social Funds (ERDF & ESF) for 2014-2020. As reported separately to this meeting the Government proposes to merge the four Funds into three Thematic Funds:

- Competitiveness, Innovation and Jobs;
- Low Carbon, Environment and Resource Efficiency; and
- Local Development and Social Inclusion.

The proposed thematic fund for low carbon, environment and resource efficiency provides direct opportunities for the Carbon Clever Highlands initiative. We have developed three strategic low carbon project ideas for the Highlands and Islands area: Energy Efficient Street Lighting; Decarbonising Highland & Island Transport; and Carbon Clever Communities. These ideas are currently being discussed and developed with partners.

4.3 At the North Sea Commission (NSC) General Assembly, the Convener ensured a continued focus on regional energy planning as a means of delivering a shift to a low carbon economy.

4.4 SmileGOV

This European project involves the development of energy action plans for island communities. Ward 11 and 12 Members were receptive to the idea at a ward forum in August, and this opportunity is being further investigated. The development of energy action plans for islands could be designed to be pilot Carbon Clever communities.

4.5 European Mobility Week

Inverness is in the process of signing up to European Mobility Week 2013 (16th-22nd September) "Clean Air – It's your move". Through this scheme the use of sustainable and active transport in Inverness will be promoted.

4.7 STEP-UP

This European project involves four partner cities: Glasgow, Ghent, Gothenburg, and Riga. It aims to help cities with smarter energy planning and to help cities reach their carbon emissions targets. Highland Council was interviewed in July in order to give this project direction which provides learning outcomes for the Highlands.

4.8 Scottish Government and national programmes

Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets Programme

This Programme is funded directly by Scottish Government and aims to encourage sustainable and active travel to school by improving safety and removing barriers to walking and cycling. Projects totalling an estimated £52,040 were approved at a meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3rd June 2013.

4.9 Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Funding

Scottish Government funding of £16,122 has been claimed by the Highland Council through the Transport Scotland “Smarter Choices, Smarter Places” initiative. This money will be used this financial year on “smarter measures” to promote active and sustainable transport, such as local mapping and signage, personal travel planning, and local branding of active and public transport.

4.10 Climate Challenge Funding

The social enterprise, Everything Baby Highland, has been awarded £90,171 from the Scottish Government’s Climate Challenge Fund. The grant will be utilised to open a shop in Inverness selling second-hand baby goods and parenting support to Highland families. These activities will reduce carbon emissions and as such the Council Leader met with the group to discuss the concept and how the Council can offer support.

4.11 Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA)

Participation through the SCA in researching and preparing a paper on the benefits and opportunities of a collaborative approach to retro-fitting non-domestic buildings.

4.12 Highland Council action

Carbon Trust Standard

In August, the Council achieved re-accreditation for the Carbon Trust Standard. This award publically recognises the Council’s continued progress in reducing carbon emissions as well its commitment to making future reductions.

The accreditation process entailed:

- Scrutiny of the Council’s carbon emissions data;
- Calculation of the carbon emissions reductions over a four year period;
- Site visits – this year conducted in Fort William; and
- A written report covering Governance, Accounting, and Carbon Management.

The Council will hold the Carbon Trust Standard until April 2015.

4.13 Transport Infrastructure for Growth (TIG)

This transport strategy has been developed by the Council’s TECs and

Planning & Development Services, and HITRANS to support the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan. Transport partners from across the public and private sector have been consulted with to identify the transport priorities for the Inner Moray Firth area and, importantly, the transport infrastructure and initiatives required to support new and existing communities. A Transport Appraisal document will accompany the new Development Plan, which sets out the background evidence for transport improvements. This will be presented at a meeting of the PED committee in September and provides an opportunity to identify green travel options.

4.14 Highland Climate Change Declaration (HCCD)

The HCCD is a Council and Scottish National Heritage managed initiative encouraging partners to measure, reduce, and report on their carbon emissions. A paper is being prepared for the Highland Environment Forum which will propose the rebranding of the HCCD in alignment with the Carbon Clever initiative. This would be launched at the Carbon Clever Highlands Conference.

4.15 Citizens Panel

A review of citizen's panel feedback from the 2013 survey will be carried out to identify if there are any public perception indicators we can use as part of our approach to measuring our performance on being Carbon Clever.

4.16 There is a large body of work being conducted at the Council which will either directly or indirectly contribute to the Carbon Clever Highlands initiative. To ensure that this is being effectively identified at the Council, the committee reporting template has been revised to include a section on Carbon Clever implications. Further to this, workshops in September will identify Service contributions to the Carbon Clever Highlands. The next round of committee papers will be screened by the Climate Change staff in Policy Team to ensure links to Carbon Clever Highlands are being highlighted.

5. Resource Implications

5.1 The Carbon Clever Initiative builds on the work already done through our carbon management plan (this has evolved since our first energy management plan in 2006) and our adaptation strategy (2012); but transforms it in scale, pace and ambition. Instead of working towards incremental change, the Initiative will mean a fundamental change on how Highland organisations and the general population use energy in their homes, buildings and transport. It will affect how we deal with our waste, our land use planning, our environmental education and support green economic growth. It presents opportunities for new ways of engaging with communities and for partnership working regionally, nationally and internationally.

5.2 Immediate resource implications are for staff time to create the project plan, seek external support and funding and gather pace in promoting the Initiative. To do this two new posts are required in the Chief Executive's Service Policy Team; the post of climate change team leader (HC10) and climate change co-ordinator (HC8). This will increase the climate change team from 2 to 4 posts. Staffing requirements are likely to change over time and as partner and other

contributions are identified, so it is recommended that these posts are temporary initially for 2 years. The total cost, including a small allowance (up to £8,000 for promotional work) is £160,000 spread over three financial years. The profile of staff costs is expected to be £37,000 in 2013/14, £76,000 in 2014/15 and £39,000 in 2015/16. The phasing over three years would be 25% in year 1, 50% in year 2 and 25% in year 3. It is recommended this is funded from balances.

- 5.3 This use of balances would reduce the projected balances position from £17.777m as reported to FHR Committee August 2013, to £17.617m prior to any other uses that may arise during the remainder of the year. At this time, this forecast remains above the 3% target level (£16.4m) the Council has set as its strategy for retaining balances.
- 5.4 Implementing, and achieving the goals of the initiative over the next 12 years will include projects in the approved capital programme and potentially through any proposals made to the Strategic Change and Development Fund. Any such proposals would be considered by Council using the criteria and process as agreed at the meeting in June 2013. However, any Council investment is expected to be matched and exceeded by partner organisations and external funders, bringing wealth and sustainable growth to the region. External funding opportunities to support Carbon Clever Highlands are being identified through Service workshops.

6. Climate Change/ Carbon Clever Implications

- 6.1 Reducing carbon emissions will help to mitigate the cause of climate change and assist Scotland achieve the legislative requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.
- 6.2 The Council is showing leadership in taking on such a bold and ambitious target, and it is hoped this will encourage other cities and regions to follow suit. This paper is a review of some of the work that is being undertaken at the Council to realise the vision of a Carbon Clever Highlands.

7. Risk Implications

- 7.1 There is a reputational risk to the Council in aiming for such an ambitious goal and failing to achieve it. However, this is far outweighed by the potential success of the initiative. The initiative requires project management to be used for development and delivery, this will include risk assessments.

8. Legal and Equalities Implications

- 8.1 There are no further Legal implications identified at this time. Equality implications will be identified from equalities screening the project plan to be developed.

9. Recommendations

1. Members are asked to note:
 - i. the early progress that is being made on the Carbon Clever Highlands initiative; and
 - ii. the initiative will transform our current approach to carbon management in scale, pace and ambition.
2. Members are asked to approve the contribution from balances of £160,000 over three financial years from 2013/14, with approximately 25% in 2013/14, 50% in 2014/15 and 25% in 2015/16. This contribution would support the recruitment of 2 temporary posts in the Chief Executive's Service Policy Team.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 26-08-2013

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Background Papers: [Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands, presented at the Highland Council on 27th June: Item 18 HC-22-13.](#)