

## The Highland Council

### Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee – 25 September 2014

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	NBS/22/14

## Carbon CLEVER

### Report by Head of Policy and Reform

#### Summary

This paper provides an update on the Carbon CLEVER initiative and asks Members to consider how the initiative can be developed in Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey.

## 1. Background – Carbon CLEVER

- 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, Carbon CLEVER. This initiative was launched at a conference held on 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2013. Achieving such an ambitious target will require strong engagement from a wide range of stakeholders across the private, public and third sectors, and residents and communities of the Highlands.
- 1.2 A cross cutting theme of the Highland Council's Programme for 2012-2017, Working Together for the Highlands, is that it will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration and work with everyone to achieve a Carbon CLEVER Highlands by 2025.
- 1.3 At a meeting of the Highland Council in March 2014, Members agreed that Carbon CLEVER should address five strategic themes: Economy; Energy; Transport; Land Use and Resources; and Engagement Strategy. Members further agreed that a programme plan should be drafted based on these, and this is being presented in stages to meetings of the Highland Council.

## 2. Carbon CLEVER in Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey

- 2.1 Developing a Carbon CLEVER Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey, will require local challenges and opportunities to be recognised and understood. It will be necessary to engage with, and work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders across the public, private and third sector, as well as the communities and residents of the Highlands. Challenges in the region include:
  - Distance required to travel to access services/ work;
  - Available modes of transport and infrastructure;
  - Challenge of heating homes that are off the gas grid;
  - Housing type, age, and suitability to be made energy efficient; and
  - Supply chain for energy efficiency measures and alternative fuels.
- 2.2 Opportunities to reduce carbon emissions in Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey by 2025 include:
  - Making businesses and organisations more resource efficient;
  - Increased recognition as a tourism destination due to enhanced international reputation, such as increased footfall to the Cairngorms National Park;
  - Opportunities presented from the rollout of high speed broadband including access to services, opportunities for businesses, etc.;

- Inward investment from renewables industry;
- Alternative, and renewable forms of heating;
- Micro-renewables and community owned renewables schemes;
- New methods of delivering community transport;
- Low carbon vehicles, including electric and hydrogen;
- Increased networks for active transport;
- Protection and enhancement of carbon stores e.g. peat land;
- Increased recycling and less waste to landfill;
- More sites for allotments and community growing schemes; and
- Increased consumption of locally sourced food and goods.

2.3 Given the geography of the Highlands and in particular Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey, it will be necessary to develop a plan to ensure that engagement occurs regularly with those best placed to help ensure the aims and targets of Carbon CLEVER are achieved. This could potentially be conducted through liaison with community councils, bespoke workshops, etc.

2.4 The Carbon CLEVER programme plan recognises the excellent work the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) does to ensure that the unique aspects of the park are cared for, sustained and enhanced. The Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017 sets out how the park will be managed. This includes a commitment to become a low carbon National Park which is a key theme throughout the plan. The plan recognises that the CNPA is well placed to contribute to climate change mitigation. Firstly through the significant stores of carbon contained within the peat, soils, and woodland of the park. Secondly by supporting businesses and communities to reduce emissions, generate renewable energy, and plan for a changing climate, and finally by supporting visitors to the park to travel by sustainable modes of transport.

### **3. Project updates**

3.1 There are a range of projects and actions being developed and implemented as part of Carbon CLEVER. Many of these will have important implications for Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey.

#### **3.2 Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund**

At a meeting of the Highland Council in June 2014, Members approved the development of a Carbon CLEVER Community Grant fund with an allowance of up to £200k per annum. This grant fund will enable communities to implement Carbon CLEVER projects that are relevant and important to them. By working closely with communities to understand their circumstances and aspirations it will be possible to reduce carbon emissions and to identify future opportunities. This process of working towards a shared goal should support community cohesion, enhance self-reliance and build community resilience. The grant fund will enable local communities to finance capital investment in a way that improves outcomes for local communities.

3.3 To extend the reach and increase the impact of the grant fund an Ideas Bank will be created. This will enable ready-to-go projects to be replicated by other communities and allow good practice to be shared.

#### **3.4 Collaborating on Resource Efficient Services in Nairn**

Collaborating on Resource Efficient Services in Nairn is a project being developed by Resource Efficient Scotland (RES). The aim of the project is to explore the feasibility of how public sector organisations and venues can work together to realise improvements in resource efficiency, taking into consideration local circumstances and opportunities.

- 3.5 RES is a national programme delivered by Zero Waste Scotland to help private, public and third sector organisations to cut costs by implementing resource efficiency actions. RES suggests organisations based in Scotland could save £2.9 billion a year by using resources more efficiently. Previous studies have shown that local areas have the potential to achieve significant savings through organisations working collaboratively to achieve economies of scale and the sharing of resources and responsibilities.
- 3.6 This project will facilitate a series of workshops and resource efficiency audits to develop a resource efficiency action plan that will outline findings and recommendations. This approach has the benefit of directly engaging and encouraging collaboration between organisations, whilst providing an opportunity for cross-sector learning and sharing of good practice.
- 3.7 Local Energy Economies Consortium (LEEC)  
LEEC is co-ordinated by Community Energy Scotland covers the Highlands and Islands. The Climate Change team, Chief Executive's Office, is actively involved in the initiative and the Highland Council is a key stakeholder.
- 3.8 LEEC has the ambition to turn Scottish communities into local energy economies, based on the principles of: local generation; local demand; local supply; and local finance. Through this approach energy would be generated and used locally, bringing economic benefits to the community and reducing energy costs. LEEC has funding to carry out feasibility studies, progressing projects to the stage where they are investible. This will enable projects to access finance such e.g. £20 million Local Energy Challenge Fund.
- 3.9 Carbon CLEVER Declaration  
The Highland Climate Change Declaration has been rebranded as the Carbon CLEVER Declaration in line with Carbon CLEVER. The Declaration is aimed at businesses, community groups, and public sector organisations interested in making financial and resource savings by becoming more efficient and reducing their carbon emissions. To date, 50 businesses and organisations have either signed, or are in the process of signing, the Declaration.
- 3.10 The Declaration will be an effective tool for empowering organisations to reduce carbon emissions and become more efficient. It will also enable progress to be captured and publicised. This collaborative transition towards a low carbon economy will encourage and inspire others, ensuring that the Highlands take a leading role in mitigating against climate change.
- 3.11 Carbon CLEVER Commuting  
This is a new initiative to promote sustainable travel throughout the Highlands, as part of Transport Scotland's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme. A key aspect of this project will be the creation of a commuting microsite and web portal, providing information and case studies to help support and encourage residents to make more sustainable travel choices.

3.12 A range of marketing materials will be available via the portal to partner organisations and signatories to the Carbon CLEVER Declaration which will help them to promote sustainable commuting to their staff and customers. Carbon CLEVER Commuting will be launched in Autumn 2014.

3.13 Carbon CLEVER conference

The Carbon CLEVER conference will be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014. “Working Together for a Low Carbon Highlands” is an opportunity for public, private, and voluntary sector organisations to come together to reflect on progress, share good practice, and identify opportunities for future collaborations. It will highlight progress the Highlands has made so far in becoming low carbon, and continue to map out the direction of future work. It will focus on the success that can be achieved through collaboration.

#### **4. Implications**

4.1 Legal Implications: The Highland Council has an obligation to support national efforts to reduce carbon emissions to meet the targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

4.2 Resource, Equalities, Risk and Gaelic Implications: There are no resource, equalities, risk, or Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4.3 Climate Change/ Carbon CLEVER Implications: Projects and actions developed as part of the Carbon CLEVER initiative will lead to reductions in carbon emissions, helping the region to mitigate its impact on climate change.

4.4 Rural Implications: Climate change will provide challenges and opportunities for rural communities in Highland. It is important that the impact of these challenges is minimised, and the potential opportunities maximised.

#### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- (i) Agree that the Climate Change Team work with local organisations, stakeholders and community groups to gain an insight into local opportunities and priorities to inform the Carbon CLEVER Programme Plan, and to discuss how this could best be achieved;
- (ii) Discuss how to effectively promote the Carbon CLEVER Declaration to business and organisation in Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey;
- (iii) Discuss the potential benefit of a Carbon CLEVER Community Grants Fund in Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey and how a Highland ideas bank would be best utilised for organisations in the local area.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

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