

## Climate Change Panel – Discussion Paper

### Initial Resource Requirements

26th November 2019

#### Introduction

- Following on from Highland Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration, it is now timely for the Panel to consider what resources might be agreed to be directed towards delivering the key areas of work required in order to achieve greatest impact, and access to Scottish Government funding. This should be our most immediate focus.
- Our aspiration should be to reposition Highland as a Low CO2 area and develop a framework around this vision - making best use of our natural resources, , offering opportunities for Carbon friendly investment/offsetting, identifying key projects and leading on more carbon efficient public services. We need to look at Highland assets e.g. renewables, forestry, land-base (scale of area) and what we can offer the rest of the country. Where could we be, and what should we be doing?
- It is intended to bring a report to the December Council, setting out the resource requirements, which can be funded from the Council's Change Programme. Members of the panel are asked to discuss and agree the resource requirements.

#### Priority Work Streams and Resource Requirements

- One of the most important early actions for the Council, particularly as we run up to the end of the financial year, is to position the Council's climate change work programme as closely as feasible with the Scottish Government Programme. This will ensure that funding opportunities can be identified early and presented to Scottish Government as "shovel ready" projects. There is already a lot of work going on throughout the Council, particularly through the Change Programme (e.g. Grey Fleet project, Integrated Transport, Asset Rationalisation, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure, Energy), so we should ensure we are positioning ourselves to get the greatest benefit. The best way of achieving this outcome is to seek external assistance in pulling together the various strands of work underway and matching those against the SG Programme. This short piece of work is estimated to cost a maximum of **£25k**, which will effectively be a spend to save, given the significant funding streams that SG has committed to. Part of this work will also cover the development of the wider vision to reposition Highland as a low carbon area.
- Members will recognise the scale of the challenge and ambition within the Council. Members will also recognise the significant pressures being placed on a depleted resource within the Climate Change team. Whilst the restructure of the Council, and particularly improving the synergies and working arrangements with the energy team will go some way to addressing the issues, Officers feel that a more fundamental strengthening of our climate change response team is essential. We believe that the prominence of climate change requires a Climate Change Manager to lead the work, supported by a minimum of 2 officers. It is proposed, subject to Panel Members' agreement to seek Change Fund funding for this purpose in the December paper to Council. This team will deal with a wide range of

potential opportunities, including accessing funding and partnership working, for example in such areas as:

- Tree planting and peat restoration (The vision is that we become a carbon sink for Scotland and beyond)
  - Co-ordination of work with planners to revise our planning policies and also thinking how we can decarbonise our city and town
  - Research into Hydrogen projects.
  - Energy Projects
  - Working with our Environment Team, SNH and other partners to bring about biodiversity gains.
  - Planning for Inverness carbon neutral by 2025.
  - Behaviour change (schools etc)
  - Insulation opportunities for north homes
  - Cruise Ship facilities
  - Oil Rig powering
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- It is also proposed to seek £20k to complete carbon baseline work for the region . This will help us to understand how far away we are or how close we are to achieving net zero as a region.
  - It is also proposed to seek a contribution of £15k for each of the next 3 years to support the employment of a project manager to oversee the Highland Adapts initiative. This will be jointly funded by Community Planning Partners. The Outline Business Case has already been completed and is co-funded by Community Planning Partners.
  - It is also seen as opportune to host a Climate change seminar in Spring 2020 – 1 or 2 days with high-profile keynote speakers. It is proposed to seek a £10k fund to organise and facilitate this.

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26 November 2019