

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Climate Change Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday 3 November 2022 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken
Ms S Atkin
Mr J Bruce
Mrs B Campbell
Ms S Fanet
Mr D Fraser
Mr J Grafton

Mr P Logue
Mr D Louden (remotely)
Mr R MacKintosh
Ms M Nolan (remotely)
Mr K Rosie
Ms K Willis

Non-Members also present:

Mr C Ballance
Mr C Birt
Mr B Boyd
Mr R Bremner
Mr K Gowans
Mr A Graham

Mr D Gregg
Ms M Hutchison
Mr D Macpherson
Mr J McGillivray
Mrs T Robertson

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Acting Depute Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
Ms N Wallace, Service Lead -Environment, Development and Active Travel
Mr N Osbourne, Climate Change & Energy Team Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms Roslyn Clarke, Climate Change Co-ordinator, Performance and Governance
Mr J Perry, Climate Change Co-ordinator, Performance and Governance
Ms F Daschofsky, Project Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms I MacMillan, Project Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms R Anderson, Mechanical Design Engineer, Performance and Governance
Mr R MacDonald, Energy Manager, Performance and Governance
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
Mrs O Bayon-Vazquez, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr P Rawcliffe. Head of People and Places, NatureScot

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.

Mr K Rosie in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs P Munro.

2. **Declarations of Interest** **Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. **Presentation – National Parks** **Taisbeanadh – Pàircean Nàiseanta**

There was a presentation by Mr Pete Rawcliffe, Head of the People and Places Activity, NatureScot, on the Scottish Government's National Parks Consultation.

Key messages from the presentation were as follows:

- there would be at least one new national park by 2026 which could include coastal and marine areas;
- new national parks could be very different from existing ones;
- no areas had been identified at present but nominations would be sought against criteria in the second half of 2023;
- it was necessary for all parks to lead nature recovery and a just transition to net zero; and
- input was sought on the Naturescot consultation before 30 November 2022.

Other issues covered included key stages and timescales, the differences between new and current national parks, the proposed approach for selecting new areas, details on the consultation, and the impacts of park status on communities.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- information was sought, and provided, on how widely the consultation had been circulated, with particular reference to Community Councils, and a summary was provided on the full consultation process, which initially would concentrate on higher level, strategic topics, rather than detailed geographic issues. Naturescot would be happy to further discuss how best to engage with Community Councils;
- assurance was sought, and provided, that Highland Council's position would not be weakened if more than one area was proposed as a national park;
- information was sought, and provided, on the criteria that would be used to longlist areas, how the proposals would be evaluated and the further consultations that would be undertaken; and
- concern was expressed about reported higher levels of bureaucracy that could result from national park status and information on this and the financial advantages and disadvantages of national park status were summarised, including, for example, increased ability to source long-term funding, increased investment in employment, and issues around the creation and governance of separate planning authorities.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** a workshop be held prior to the consultation closing date of 30 November 2022.

4. **Edinburgh Declaration** **Foillseachadh Dhùn Èideann**

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/01/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The Committee **AGREED** that Highland Council sign the Edinburgh Declaration.

5. **Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan** **Ro-innleachd agus Plana Gnìomha Net Zero**

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/02/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- support was sought and received for the risks section of the report to be strengthened to reflect that failure to proactively address the climate and ecological emergency across all Service delivery would result in catastrophic climate and ecological breakdown and extreme disruption to the systems people depended on for food, water, shelter and safety;
- an explanation was sought, and provided, on the scope of the work underway to develop a revised emissions baseline for the Council. The Scottish Government was currently developing guidelines in respect of area wide emissions and a steer would be taken from that as to the best approach;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that the Climate Change and Energy Team would endeavour to circulate the Council's report for 2021/22 to Members for comment prior to submission;
- information was sought around the timeline in relation to the work being undertaken by the Shared Procurement Service. It was explained the work would be commissioned in the coming weeks and it was anticipated the analysis would be produced relatively quickly thereafter;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that work was underway to develop a high level Net Zero Strategy and route map by the end of March 2023; and
- whilst the Council's revenue and capital budgets were under pressure, workstreams that required investment but earned a positive return in terms of improving the climate and the Council's financial position should be considered as an opportunity.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- progress to date, and **AGREED** that action plans detailing workstreams for each thematic group would be presented to the Climate Change Committee as part of Net Zero strategy workshops;
- that all employees and Elected Members would have a role to play in delivering Net Zero and that significant resources from across the organisation would be required to develop and deliver a Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan for The Highland Council;
- additional resource was now in place within the Climate Change & Energy Team to facilitate the accelerated effort of the Net Zero thematic groups; and
- workstreams to be prioritised over the coming months.

6. **Net Zero Strategy: Workshop Programming** **Ro-innleachd Net Zero: Prògramadh Bùth-obrach**

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/03/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- support was expressed for a two-day all-Member workshop as detailed in Option 1 set out in the report and it was confirmed there would be the opportunity for Members to participate remotely and for the sessions to be recorded;
- the papers for the thematic groups should be circulated well in advance to allow Members sufficient time to read the documents and prepare questions;
- there was a need for a theme principally about food production on the grounds that this was responsible for a high percentage of global warming gases and the importance of the Council considering where it could influence this was seen as a critical aspect of its Net Zero Strategy. It was confirmed that a separate piece of work was being undertaken focusing on food production more widely than within the Council and this would be presented to Members in due course;
- there was also a need for clearer communication about the remit of the Committee with the wider public in terms of the initial focus being about the Council and its own operations but also the essential need to work with external stakeholders; and
- Audit Scotland should be invited to make a presentation on its recently published report 'Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change' to give Members an understanding of the wider context local authorities were working under with their net zero strategies and the challenges that lay ahead. It was confirmed that an approach would be made to Audit Scotland on this matter.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the proposals on net zero strategy workshops and **AGREED** Option 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the opportunities for further training requirements;
- iii. **AGREED** the need for Carbon Literacy training for Members;
- iv. **NOTED** the current proposal for knowledge sharing on National frameworks & strategy; and
- v. **NOTED** the current proposals for presentations from external partners and that Audit Scotland would be invited to make a presentation on its report 'Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change'

7. **Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Commercialisation Options** **Roghainnean Malairteachaidh Bun-structar Charbadan Dealain**

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/04/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- a position statement was requested as to what stage discussions had reached with the Council's public sector partners and, in relation to the Council's partnership working with private sector organisations (such as hotels restaurants etc), how options would be split up between them;
- the geographical distances between locations in Highland and the sparse population would inhibit many other providers from entering the market;
- it was questioned what incentives there were for private investors to provide mixed hubs, especially in remote and rural parts of the Highlands;
- clarity was sought as to the proportion of pure electric vehicles in Highland; and
- when building new charging hubs ideally these should be built off grid or powered by renewable energy to insulate the Council from increased energy prices as well

as being a more greener option.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the need to attract commercial investment to meet the surging demand in EV charging and changing funding landscape;
- ii. **NOTED** the progress to date on the Pathfinder Project which investigated alternative delivery models for EV public infrastructure; and
- iii. **APPROVED** progressing the project to Discovery Phase, and then to a formal procurement procedure, based on the findings and recommendations from the Discovery Phase.

8. **Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Network – Tariff Review** **Lìonra Bun-structair Charbadan Dealain – Ath-sgrùdadh Taraif**

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/05/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- concern was voiced at the level of the proposed tariff. Whilst the report suggested that the rate would bring it in line with other Scottish Local Authorities, a comment was made that the current highest tariff in Scotland was from East Lothian Council who were charging 50p per KW and Highland Council's proposal was just under 75% higher and similar comparisons were made to other local authorities. This was also a higher rate than the majority of tariffs in the private sector. Comparison was made to the average cost in the UK too for both the slow and rapid chargers and, whilst the Highland rate would be lower for the slow charger, it was considerably higher for the fast charger;
- even Option 2, which suggested a lower tariff than what was recommended, stated that that the tariff would be a higher unit price than fossil fuel vehicles;
- the higher outlay costs of electric vehicles meant that owners needed to recoup savings elsewhere. If Option 3 was approved there was a danger that the current momentum of increased use of electric vehicles would be halted. However, it was also pointed out that those buying electric vehicles were aware that free charging, as an incentive, would eventually come to an end but this would likely encourage more commercial competitors to come into the market;
- the tariff was also inequitable for those without home charging, consequently having a detrimental effect on the least affluent;
- in Highland, to go about on day-to-day business, you needed access to rapid charging;
- this was one of the main drivers of the Council's decarbonisation agenda and yet the tariff was being tripled;
- further information was sought on alternative options which were competitive with other local authorities and in line with the Council's environmental responsibilities;
- it was also acknowledged that Highland Council could not run EV chargers at a loss and subsidies would start to cease from 1 December;
- before setting a tariff, a plan and budget needed to be in place for the ongoing repair and maintenance of the chargers, especially if the network was to be expanded;
- information was sought, and provided, as to who was currently responsible for the maintenance of chargers. Concerns were raised about the reliability of the network and it was important to know what percentage of the network was

- operational as there was conflicting data; and
- many supermarkets now ran EV charging points and it was suggested that they be approached to bring them in line with ChargePlace Scotland. However, in response, it was explained that they were under no obligation to do so.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** that Highland Council EV charge points current tariff had been in place since 1 June 2021;
- ii. **NOTED** the budget pressure the current tariff rate places on the Council;
- iii. **AGREED** that, as there were financial implications for the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, to recommend to that Committee to defer consideration of the report to the Climate Change Committee's next meeting and request that officers amend the report to include tariff options more competitive with other local authorities and in line with our environmental responsibilities.

9. Energy Benchmarking of Property Estate Comharrachadh-beinnse Lùtha na h-Oighreachd Seilbhe

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/06/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion Members felt that the March 2023 deadline appeared ambitious. In this regard it was queried if there were enough resources and staff available to achieve the outcome but it was confirmed that officers were comfortable with the timescale.

The Committee **APPROVED** the progression of the proposed project and the distribution/awareness of the associated information deliverables.

10. Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme Update Alba Lùth Èifeachdach: Cunntas às Ùr mun Sgeama Stèidhichte air Àite

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/07/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- clarification was sought, and provided, on whether residents would receive advice on how to use their heating systems more efficiently;
- it was queried if external wall insulation would still be offered to residents in the future;
- it was questioned how the scheme engaged with persons experiencing extreme fuel poverty circumstances because of the difficulties surrounding them; and
- Members felt that the Council should provide an information campaign to advise households on ways to reduce their energy bills. In this regard it was confirmed that the Council would signpost residents to sources of advice according to their situation.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and **AGREED** that the Climate Change & Energy Team should present at local committees to raise awareness of the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme programme.

11. Salix Recycling Funding

Maoineachadh Ath-chuairteachaidh Salix

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/08/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

12. Climate Change Corporate Risk Aithris air Cunnart Corporra

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/09/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members questioned why a deadline date in appendix 1 of the report appeared to be substantially different in comparison to the other three. In this regard it was clarified that the Highland Adapts Partnership Board had agreed the deadlines dates.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the revised risk template on Climate Change and Ecological Emergency at Appendix 1 of the report for inclusion in the Council's Corporate Risk Register;
- ii. **NOTED** the revised template would also come to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 30 November 2022;
- iii. **NOTED** a Service Risk Register would be developed detailing risks and actions at an operational level; and
- iv. **AGREED** Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Risks be considered by the Climate Change Committee on a quarterly basis.

13. Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies; Reporting) Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde (Dleastanasan Bhuidhnean Poblach; Aithris)

There had been circulated Report No. CCC/10/22 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- in terms of achieving net zero, it was questioned when Highland Council expected to achieve this by; and
- as the Highland Council had set the year 2025 to achieve net zero, it was queried if full Council would be updated if this could not be achieved.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. changes in reporting Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies; Reporting);
- ii. requirement to report a 'zero emission' target on direct emissions;
- iii. proposed place holder submission on scope 3 emissions until a full baseline exercise had been completed;
- iv. need for alignment of spend with targeted emission reductions;
- v. requirement for a Council adaptation strategy aligned with the Climate Change reporting; and
- vi. opportunity to use the reporting as a toolkit for the Council's wider delivery of net zero.

The meeting was closed at 12.30 pm.