

Agenda Item	6
Report No	CCC/11/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Climate Change

Date: 17 May 2023

Report Title: Training and Literacy

Report By: Depute Chief Executive

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the need for mandatory climate change training across all levels of the Council, from officers to elected members. This paper provides an overview of the proposed approach to develop and deliver a series of training options that are accessible, engaging, and informative.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to note, subject of the approval of the Net Zero Strategy:-
- i. the need for climate change training to be mandatory across all levels of the Council, from officers to Elected Members, to achieve our climate change ambitions; and
 - ii. that Carbon Literacy Training should be delivered to Members, the Executive Leadership Team, and the Senior Leadership Team in the first instance, to allow for assessment of training requirements for other staff.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – Development, implementation and evaluation of training and resources will be led by the Climate Change Team with support from People Development. The cost of developing and delivering training in-house is significantly lower than external training.
- 3.2 **Legal** – The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a legal duty on Local Authorities to contribute to delivering emissions reduction targets.

- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – Climate Change training will have a more comprehensive benefit than increasing the sustainability of Council operations. The Highland Council is a key employer in the region. The workplace is where people will learn the skills to address climate change and make informed decisions. This will promote significant cultural change in the workplace, at home and in their communities. The co-benefits for individuals (section 8.3) should benefit communities across the Highlands.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – This report outlines the benefit of Climate Change training in addressing the Climate Emergency and equipping the Council with the necessary skills to achieve our climate change ambitions.
- 3.5 **Risk** – The increasing public awareness and scrutiny around the Climate and Ecological Emergency indicates that there is a reputational risk to the Council if action is not delivered at pace, to reduce our impact in line with the Scottish Government’s ambition. Engagement and training will be essential for all council personnel to achieve the behavioural change necessary to address the scale and urgency of the climate emergency.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – None arising from this report.

4 Background

4.1 Scottish Policy Drivers

The Scottish Government passed the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, followed by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, which place legally binding duties on the entirety of Scotland to achieve Net Zero by 2045. To reach this ambition, the Highland Council is responsible for minimising greenhouse gas emissions and delivering the Council programme sustainably while also minimising the impacts of climate change through adaptation.

4.2 Net Zero Strategy and Adaptation Strategy

In response to the Climate Emergency and the Scotland-wide targets to achieve Net Zero, the Highland Council is currently developing a Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan to set out a clear pathway to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all Council services and operations. An Adaptation Strategy will also focus on the Council-wide approach to preparing for and recovering from climatic impacts. It will outline the climate observations and projections for Highland and set out a comprehensive programme of actions linked to the climate risks and opportunities for the Council.

4.3 Corporate Plan “Our Future Highland”

Four of the five critical strategic priority outcomes for the Highland Council Corporate Plan “Our Future Highland” involve sustainable and resilient-centred aims, and outline sustainability as being a fundamental guiding principle in all Council activities going forward. To realise these strategic outcomes, there must be a solid foundational knowledge of the causes of climate change, the actions we can take to mitigate and adapt to its consequences and how to understand and avoid the impacts of our efforts as a Council.

4.4 **People Strategy**

The People Strategy outlines the Council's role of "facilitating the growth and development of our people, based on the current and future needs of the organisation". Climate Change training will be implemented across all levels of the Council to facilitate the development of our people. This will contribute towards the professional development of our people and give them the necessary skills and knowledge to comply with Council initiatives to minimise emissions. This will be the foundation of our journey to meet our carbon reduction targets and contribute towards the Scottish Government target to end Scotland's contribution to climate change no later than 2045.

5 Context

- 5.1 At the meeting of The Highland Council on 9 December 2021, it was agreed that a cross-service collaborative approach is essential if progress is to be made to move the Council forward regarding net zero. All employees and Elected Members will have a role in adapting the Council to climate change and delivering net zero.
- 5.2 One of the key themes identified in Audit Scotland's publication [Addressing Climate Change](#), is the need for climate change to be at the heart of decision-making at all levels of the public sector. Training is essential to ensure staff and Members are confident in climate action and what they need to do. By embedding awareness of the climate impacts of everyday actions, training will enable employees and Members to make informed decisions.
- 5.3 Carbon Literacy training was recently offered to Senior Leadership and Elected Members through the Scottish Cities Alliance in conjunction with The Improvement Service and Keep Scotland Beautiful. Carbon Literacy is "an awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis¹". Uptake of this training has been very low from Highland Council staff and Members over the last two years.
- 5.4 At the Climate Change Committee workshop on 18 April 2023, Members recommended mandatory Climate Change training should be implemented across all levels of the Council, from officers to Elected Members.
- 5.5 To inspire and embed positive climate action across all levels of the Council, it is essential that people are fully aware of the causes and impacts of climate change, understand the importance of mitigation and adaptation, and recognise the benefits and opportunities of addressing the climate emergency. To achieve this, the Council will develop a series of training options that are accessible, engaging, and informative.
- 5.6 Climate Change training will provide employees with the understanding, knowledge and skills to cascade and embed environmentally sustainable values throughout our Local Authority and beyond. This will facilitate climate action in service delivery, operations, and personal choices across the Council to create the holistic change necessary to meet our Net Zero Targets and build resilience.

¹ The Carbon Literacy Project

- 5.7 Training will equip individuals with the skills, knowledge, and experience to make decisions in their work and personal lives that incorporate consideration of their impact on the climate, as well as providing them with the ability to communicate the message and inspire action in others, thereby fostering emissions reductions and adaptation at a scale more extensive than that of Council operations. It is essential that climate change training acts not only as a method for providing information but also for signposting and support to enable people to get involved.
- 5.8 Training can also be an adaptive measure and provide a foundation for mitigating climate change within the Council. Providing staff with an awareness of the present and future impacts facilitates preparedness to minimise the effects, creating a more resilient workforce. Adaptation and resilience can be weaved into project proposals, planning decisions, and operations by increasing understanding of local climatic impacts amongst staff thereby safeguarding continuity and future proofing Council activities.

6 Proposed Delivery

- 6.1 The Climate Change team has reviewed some of the current training options for the Council. There is a variety of accredited carbon literacy courses, workshops, and e-learning available that can be delivered by external training providers or adapted to be delivered in-house by Council staff. Most course materials derive from the Carbon Literacy Project's Local Authority toolkits.
- 6.2 It is proposed that multiple approaches should be taken to ensure that training is accessible, effective, and efficiently delivered. The content for each delivery method (in-person and virtual) will be adapted for the Highland context to create bespoke training courses relevant to our situation.
- 6.3 **Induction Materials**
Mandatory Climate Change induction materials will be developed for new employees to raise awareness of the climate emergency, highlight the role individuals can play in addressing the climate emergency, and outline the Council's climate change ambitions. These materials will be hosted on the Traineasy platform for Council training and reviewed and revisited yearly.
- 6.4 **Carbon Literacy Training**
It is proposed that Carbon Literacy Training will be aimed at Members, the Executive Leadership Team, and the Senior Leadership Team in the first instance. This will allow for assessing training requirements for staff within teams/services.

All Carbon Literacy courses consist of a day's worth (7-8 hours) of learning. There is a wealth of evidence which proves that Carbon Literacy training changes people's behaviour and enables and motivates them to act on climate change. Learners must understand the scale of the challenge, before learning about the specific and significant actions they can take. 1-2 hours or a half-day of learning has not been proven to bring about the long-lasting behaviour change required.

Through this training, the Carbon Literacy Project offers Carbon Literacy accreditation, which benefits individual professional development. It allows the Highland Council to be accredited as a Carbon Literate Organisation.

6.5 **E-learning Modules**

A series of online e-learning modules will be developed covering various climate change related topics to give staff, managers, and Elected Members the skills and knowledge to make climate-conscious decisions and take climate action. Creating targeted training options, containing relevant content for specific services will be possible.

6.6 **Embedded in Internal Communication and Engagement**

All communication and engagement initiatives provide an opportunity to spread knowledge surrounding the Climate Emergency.

Interactive workshops used to upskill and increase knowledge surrounding climate change and sustainability provide engagement and collaboration opportunities. One possibility would be using the Climate Fresk workshop format to educate and motivate.

7 **Recommendations for Training Topics**

- the causes of climate change;
- how the climate is changing;
- the impacts of climate change;
- Climate change in the UK/ Scotland/ Highlands;
- mitigation and adaptation;
- the Policy Position;
- the Economic Position & Green Recovery;
- the role of Local Authorities;
- taking action;
- co-benefits of climate action; and
- communicating climate change

7.1 While the above topics are recommended for training options, it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list. It will be necessary to respond to identified needs within the Council continually. Training can be tailored for specific services with additional relevant topics where necessary.

8 **Benefits of Training**

8.1 Climate change training also offers a wide variety of co-benefits for the Council and the individuals who participate.

8.2 **For the Council:-**

- reduced carbon emissions;
- reduced energy bills and transport costs;
- improved employee morale, satisfaction, and productivity;
- enhanced reputational image and credibility;
- up-to-date knowledge and information for staff;

- adherence to Net Zero Strategy and low-carbon initiatives;
- sustainability embedded in workplace culture;
- increased innovation and participation; and
- improved resilience of Council operations, buildings and workforce

8.3 For Individuals:-

- skills development;
- financial savings;
- empowerment to make informed low carbon choices;
- improved health and wellbeing; and
- increased resilience to the impacts of Climate Change

9 Measuring Success

- 9.1 It will be essential to monitor, evaluate and measure the impact of learning and development opportunities to inform the improvement and effectiveness of training and materials.
- 9.2 The progress and effectiveness of training will be assessed through regular evaluation, including gauging the uptake and impact of the training, and feedback from participants (including before/after surveys), to determine what was effective and what proved ineffective, to provide insight for future development and delivery.
- 9.3 Data will be collected on the number of Elected Members, managers and employees that undertake the various training offerings, including the service that they are from and the number of people that obtain the Carbon Literacy accreditation.
- 9.4 The success of the training will be apparent in the choices and actions that individuals take both in work and at home in the spreading of the message and reducing their personal carbon footprint and Council-wide carbon emissions. Employee Review and Development meetings could provide insight into the level of embeddedness in this regard.
- 9.5 Success will also amount to the adherence to the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan and introduction of more carbon-conscious service provision and operation, all equating to a more sustainable and resilient council.

Designation: Depute Chief Executive

Date: 28 April 2023

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