

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	CCC/13/24

The Highland Council

Committee: Climate Change

Date: 28 August 2024

Report Title: Net Zero - Communications and Engagement

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report accompanies the Net Zero Communications and Engagement Strategy for consideration by the Climate Change Committee within **Appendix 1**.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Agree** to recommend that the Council approve the Net Zero Communications & Engagement Strategy; and
- ii. **Note** the Net Zero Ambassador Network will be crucial to the successful delivery of the Communications & Engagement Strategy.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - Delivery of the Net Zero Communications & Engagement Strategy will be led by the Climate Change and Energy Team (CCET) and met from existing resources within the Council.

3.2 **Legal** - The Council is legally obligated to meet emissions reduction targets to directly support Scotland's target to end its contribution to climate change, no later than 2045.

3.3 **Risk** - Significant economic, reputational, and legal risks arise from failure to comply with statutory climate change targets. Climate change is identified as a risk on the Council's Corporate Risk Register. A programme of training, communication and engagement will be delivered to enable Council staff to achieve the behavioural change necessary to address the scale and urgency of the climate emergency.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - Consideration will be given to Health and Safety risks when developing campaigns/events.

3.5 **Gaelic** - Consideration will be given to using Gaelic in print and publications as communications and engagement materials are developed.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

- 5.1 Achieving Net Zero will require transformational change across the Council.
- 5.2 This will involve collaboration across all Services to integrate climate change mitigation, adaptation and sustainability measures into all operations and service delivery, embedding climate considerations into every decision.
- 5.3 Effective communication and engagement will be fundamental to the success of the Council's Net Zero Programme.
- 5.4 The Net Zero Communications and Engagement Strategy has been developed to raise awareness and engage with the wide range of stakeholders to accelerate the Council's transition to Net Zero and to become a climate-ready organisation.
- 5.5 The Net Zero Communications and Engagement Strategy adopts a similar approach to the Council's Communications Strategy 2024-2027 and aligns to the Council's Operational Delivery Plan 2024-2027.

6 Climate Literacy and Training Programme

- 6.1 The CCET are developing a series of training options which are accessible, engaging, informative, and relevant to the Council's Net Zero ambition. The training programme aims to inspire and embed positive climate action across all levels of the Council. Climate Change training will be mandatory for all staff and Elected Members will be strongly encouraged to fully participate in training.
- 6.2 The training programme will help management incorporate sustainability and resilience into service delivery. It will support staff development to accelerate the Council's transition to Net Zero and a climate-ready organisation.

7 Engagement with Thematic Groups and staff

- 7.1 Engagement will enhance staff connectivity and involvement with the Net Zero Programme, increasing awareness, understanding and participation in the Council's climate objectives to drive positive change.
- 7.2 Engagement initiatives and activities will align with key priorities of the Council's Our Future Highland Programme and support the key thematic areas identified in the

Council's Net Zero Strategy. In particular, the three main carbon emitting areas of Built Estate and Energy, Sustainable Staff Travel and Waste will be prioritised.

8 Engagement through Staff Network

- 8.1 All employees and Elected Members have a role to play in adapting the Council to climate change and delivering Net Zero. Relaunching the staff climate network (formerly Eco Officer Network) with a coherent plan for its operations will be crucial to facilitating key messaging.
- 8.2 A remit for the Net Zero Ambassadors network will be finalised with an accompanying induction programme.
- 8.3 Future engagement initiatives for the network will align with the priorities identified in the Council's Net Zero Strategy.

9 Communication and behaviour change

- 9.1 Effective communication of Net Zero messaging requires coherent two-way and one-way communication aligned with Council priorities. To effectively manage the change process, the CCET will collaborate with internal and external partners and stakeholders to achieve shared outcomes.

10 Evaluation

- 10.1 The CCET will track the performance of campaigns, content and channels to understand impact and audience reach. A test and learn ethos will be adopted, with the approach adjusted, as necessary.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 19 July 2024

Author: Debbie Morris, Climate Change Coordinator

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Net Zero Communications and Engagement Strategy

Net Zero Communications & Engagement Strategy



Overview

Highland Council approved its Net Zero Strategy in June 2023, setting out the Council's approach to addressing the climate emergency and contributing towards Scotland's legally binding target to become Net Zero by 2045.

Effective communication and engagement will be fundamental to the success of the Council's Net Zero Programme.

The Net Zero Communications and Engagement Strategy has been developed to raise awareness and engage with the wide range of stakeholders to accelerate the Council's transition to Net Zero and to become a climate-ready organisation.

Delivery of the Communications and Engagement Strategy will be led by the Climate Change & Energy Team (CCET).

This Communications and Engagement Strategy aligns with:

Net Zero Strategy



The Communications and Engagement Strategy will support the delivery of the Council's Net Zero Strategy.

Our Future Highland Programme



The Net Zero Strategy aligns with the Council's Our Future Highland Programme. Outcomes of the Programme include accelerating our response to the climate and ecological emergency; positioning Highland as a leader in renewable energy and sustainability; and ensuring all Council operations support a resilient and sustainable future.

Our Future Highland Delivery Plan

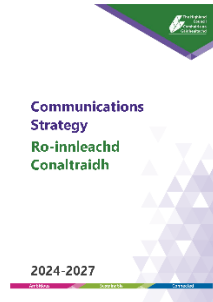


The Communications and Engagement Strategy will support the delivery of the Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio.

"To support our Net Zero Strategy" has been included in the Responsibilities section of the Terms of Reference for each of the Portfolio Boards. To

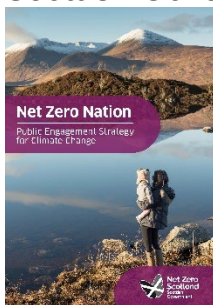
facilitate this, the CCET will engage with Services across the Council.

Communications Strategy 2024-2027



The Net Zero Communications and Engagement Strategy adopts a similar approach to the Council's Communications Strategy 2024-2027.

Scottish Government's Net Zero Nation



Communication and engagement activities led by the CCET will align with the seven guiding principles outlined in the Scottish Government's Net Zero Nation:

- **Inclusive** – equal and accessible engagement
- **Putting people first** – place people at the heart of all we do
- **Evidence-based** – sound science, data, improve engagement through active reflection
- **Just** – understand and engage with those most affected
- **Participative** – two-way communication
- **Positive** – outline a vision for action, promote the many benefits
- **Open and transparent** – ensure our actions are seen and understood

Our Aims

- Ensure staff and Members understand our journey to becoming a Net Zero and climate-ready organisation, and are equipped with the knowledge, tools and support required to contribute to achieving the Council's ambitions.
- Maintain strong and consistent messaging regarding the Net Zero Programme.
- Raise the profile of what the Council is doing to deliver carbon reductions and operational efficiencies.
- Inspire, promote, and enable action and collaboration towards transitioning to Net Zero and becoming a climate-ready organisation.
- Create targeted behaviour change campaigns through collaborative working.
- Identify and address barriers such as knowledge and policy.
- Measure the success of communication and engagement activities.
- Foster a culture of sustainability across Highland by leading by example.

Our Approach

- Show the added value and benefit of the Council transitioning to Net Zero and becoming a climate-ready organisation.
- Have a clear call to action.
- Allow staff and Members to feel part of the solution, not the problem.
- Empower staff and Members to feel capable of making change which will contribute to achieving the Council's ambitions.

Key Messages

- Achieving the Council's targets requires more than a 'Business as Usual' approach. Significant annual reductions in carbon emissions are necessary.
- All staff and elected members will have a role in adapting the Council to climate change and delivering Net Zero.
- Transformational change across the Council is required to integrate climate change mitigation, adaptation and sustainability measures into all operations and service delivery, embedding climate considerations into every decision.
- The benefits and opportunities of transitioning to Net Zero and the risk of inaction.
- Reducing emissions has economic, environmental, social and health benefits.
- Low carbon economic recovery presents opportunities for new jobs and infrastructure.

Staff and Elected Members

- Develop and deliver training programme to build understanding, inspire and embed positive climate action across all levels of the Council.
 - Mandatory Climate Change training for all members of staff.
 - Elected Members will be strongly encouraged to fully participate in training.
 - Implement specific training for key projects and roles, such as Climate Change Impact Assessments and sector-specific initiatives.
 - Improved induction programme.
- Promote topical ad-hoc training courses from external partners to relevant staff to develop green skills essential for current and future Council operations.
- Targeted behaviour change programme focused on delivering carbon reductions and operational efficiencies.
- Ensure staff and Members are informed and engaged around the transformational change required – why, what, how and understand the role they have to play in achieving the Council's ambitions.
- Highlight where policies, strategies and procedures have been revised to align with the Net Zero Strategy.
- Dedicated Net Zero Microsite for staff and Members.
- Share case studies celebrating successes and evidencing best practice via various internal channels, Corporate Communications and website.
- Encourage participation in the 'Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy' category at the Staff Recognition Awards.

- Net Zero Ambassadors in each Service to facilitate the delivery of key messaging, awareness raising, and support engagement initiatives throughout the organisation.
- Regular updates to the Climate Change Committee.

Residents

- Provide free and impartial energy efficiency support for domestic buildings linked to current projects.
- Create and deliver campaigns regarding the energy efficiency homes project.
- Promote case studies.
- Notify residents of funding opportunities in relation to energy efficiency.
- Community engagement events.

Businesses

- The Council's Net Zero and Joint Procurement Strategies require all procurement activities to be conducted in a manner that promotes a circular economy and secures Net Zero emissions through a Just Transition. Contractors are required to provide evidence of their environmental practices.

Schools

- Support Education Service to embed Learning for Sustainability into the curriculum.
- Behaviour change programme tailored to schools focused on reducing emissions relating to energy consumption, travel and waste.
- Facilitate participation in programmes such as Eco-schools and Powering Futures and promote successes.
- Develop awareness campaigns and events such as Clean Air Day and Walk to School Week.
- Promote sustainability initiatives such as climate-ready school grounds delivered by Learning through Landscapes.
- Support teachers with access to relevant resources and information.

Internal platforms

- Staff and Member briefings/workshops/roadshows
- Net Zero Communications SharePoint site (in development)
- Staff Connections Intranet (one-way communication, managed by Corporate Communications)
- Viva Engage 'Net Zero' community (two-way communication)
- Microsoft Teams channel for the Net Zero Ambassador Network (two-way communication)
- Net Zero mailbox netzero@highland.gov.uk
- Glow – School platform

External platforms via Corporate Communications

- Council social media pages (aligning with wider external messaging)
- Website (helpful pages established around resources, events, learning or training opportunities)
- Press (good news stories, largescale newsworthy events or projects).

Accessibility

- Offline communication will be essential to reach staff that do not have day-to-day access to digital platforms e.g. drivers.
- CCET will undertake audience and stakeholder mapping for targeted messaging.
- Alternative methods include communication by WhatsApp, text messaging, payslips, posters, face-to-face communication, and communication via line managers.
- Consideration will be given to using Gaelic in print and publications, as communications and engagement materials are developed, in line with the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

Branding

- Consideration will continue to be given to Net Zero Programme branding e.g. email signatures, PowerPoint templates and logos for the Net Zero Ambassador Network.

Approach to developing and delivering Net Zero communications and engagement

- A coordinated communications and engagement programme will be developed to ensure communications are consistent, forthcoming and planned.
- Communication and engagement activities will align with the Net Zero Programme, as well as supporting national and global awareness months, weeks, and days such as Climate Week, Clean Air Day and Zero Waste Week.
- The programme will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, ensuring opportunities are not missed and projects/activities joined up, wherever possible.
- CCET will work in collaboration with thematic groups/project teams to develop a communications and engagement plan for each Net Zero project/thematic group action plan, identifying requirements, key messaging, stakeholders and milestones.
- The CCET will coordinate with external partners and stakeholders to support mutual messaging and achieve shared outcomes. Key partners include High Life Highland, Home Energy Scotland and the Highlands and Islands Climate Hub.
- A combination of two-way and one-way communication will be utilised with two-way mechanisms applied to keep people involved in the Council's journey to Net Zero. The CCET will seek the views of staff, Members and pupils to inform and evaluate communications.

Evaluation

The CCET will track the performance of campaigns, content and channels to understand impact and audience reach. A test and learn ethos will be adopted, with the approach adjusted as necessary.

Measurement of carbon reduction across services can be used as an indicator to measure the success of communication and engagement; however, it can be difficult to quantify this as impacts of behavioural change are often seen over a longer time period.

Methods to measure success include:

- Rate of uptake and completion of training by officers and elected Members
- Number of hits and engagement over a designated period to the Climate Change and Energy sections of Viva Engage/SharePoint site
- Evidence of engagement from staff across all Council departments
- Evidence of how engagement has shaped changes in working practice
- Event attendance and participation in Net Zero initiatives
- Increase in membership of the staff Net Zero Ambassador Network and interaction of ambassadors
- Survey/questionnaire response rate
- Press coverage
- Awareness of brand identity.

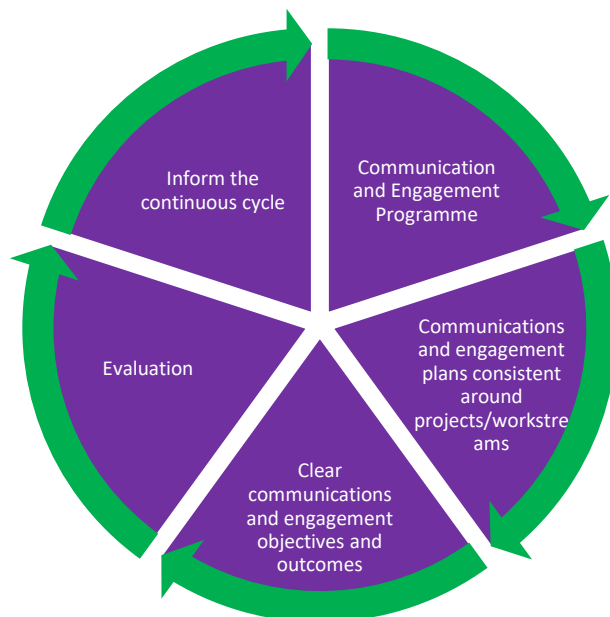


Figure: Approach to developing and delivering Net Zero communications and engagement

Priority areas

- The three key carbon emitting areas of energy, travel and waste will be prioritised in the first instance.
- The school estate accounts for a significant proportion of the Council's carbon emissions and will therefore be a key area of focus for communication and engagement activities.

Content styles

The CCET will utilise a range of content styles including:

- Information-based/awareness-raising (case studies, best practice guides, policy documentation, learning resources).
- Consultation/Participation (surveys, events, joining the Net Zero community and Net Zero themed discussions).
- Call to Action (events, workshops, Net Zero discussions, initiatives and activities).
- Interactive and engaging (maps, videos, blogs, podcasts, infographics, polls, emission calculators, dashboards on how we are doing, achievements and measurements).

Net Zero Ambassador Network

- Relaunching the staff climate network (formerly Eco Officer Network) with a coherent plan for its operations will be crucial to the successful delivery of the Communications and Engagement Strategy.
- The network is currently operating on a voluntary and informal basis with staff dedicating 1-2 hours monthly to promote Net Zero initiatives.
- A series of campaigns and events that could be led or supported by the network is in development.

Communication and engagement actions

Table 1 communication and engagement actions to be completed within a three-month period, September - November

	September – November 2024
Climate Literacy and Training	<p>Delivery of bespoke training to Extended Corporate management team The workshop aims to enhance climate literacy and understanding while focusing on practical solutions to accelerate the Council's transition to Net Zero and becoming a climate-ready organisation.</p>
	<p>Launch of Mandatory e-learning Launch interactive, bitesize modules on Traineasy to educate all staff about climate change, its impacts, and the Council's response to the climate and ecological emergency.</p>
Net Zero Ambassador Network	<p>The remit for the Net Zero Ambassador Network will be finalised with an accompanying induction programme.</p>
Communications & Engagement Programme	<p>Finalise year-long programme of communications and engagement activities built around key calendar events. Draft three-month schedule of events appended for information – Appendix 1.</p>
	<p>Finalise communications and engagement activities for waste, energy and sustainable business travel.</p>
	<p>Develop communications and engagement plans for the first tranche of projects approved for inclusion in the Net Zero Programme.</p>
Net Zero microsite	<p>Launch of Net Zero microsite The site will house communications, news, and signpost to resources. Events and learning opportunities and interactive surveys will also be featured on the site.</p>

Net Zero Programme Communications and Engagement Draft Schedule, September – November 2024
Appendix 1

Date	Communications Activity	Channel	Responsibility	Alignment with Net Zero Strategy/ Delivery Plan	Comments
1st September 2024 to 30th September 2024	Secondhand September	Viva Engage Staff Intranet or SharePoint	CCET	Circular Economy Waste	Opportunity for collaboration with Waste Awareness Team.
All of September	Highlands and Islands Climate Festival	Viva Engage Staff Intranet or SharePoint	CCET	All of September	Opportunity for collaboration with Highlands and Islands Climate Hub.
2 nd – 6 th September	Zero Waste Week	Viva Engage Staff Intranet or SharePoint	CCET	Circular Economy Waste	Opportunity for collaboration with Waste Awareness Team.
9 th September 2024	World EV Day	Viva Engage	CCET	Sustainable Travel Reconfiguring our asset base	Opportunity for collaboration with Active Travel.
22nd September 2024	World Car Free Day	Viva Engage	CCET	Sustainable Travel Reconfiguring our asset base	Opportunity for collaboration with Active Travel.
23-29 September	Scotland's Climate Week	Viva Engage Staff Intranet or SharePoint	CCET	Net Zero Strategy themes.	This year's goal is to share 'Stories for Change' to celebrate,

Date	Communications Activity	Channel	Responsibility	Alignment with Net Zero Strategy/ Delivery Plan	Comments
		Viva Engage Press release			learn and encourage climate action.
1st October 2024 – 31st October 2024	International Walk to School Month	Viva Engage Staff Intranet or SharePoint	CCET	Active Travel Reconfiguring our asset base	Opportunity for collaboration with Active Travel.
4th October	No Disposable Cup Day	Viva Engage	CCET	Circular Economy Waste	Opportunity for collaboration with Waste Awareness Team.
16 - 22 October TBC	Recycle Week	Viva Engage	CCET	Circular Economy Waste	Opportunity for collaboration with Waste Awareness Team.
November	Mock COP TBC	Viva Engage, Intranet/SharePoint, press and social media	CCET and Corporate Communications	Net Zero Strategy themes Education Workforce for the Future	Event to be confirmed.
14 th November 2024	Carbon Literacy Action Day	Viva Engage Intranet/SharePoint	CCET	Training/all Net Zero Strategy themes Workforce for the Future	Messaging/content led by Climate Training and Literacy Lead.
23 rd November – 1 December 2024	National Tree Week	Viva Engage	CCET	Planning, Land Use and Environment	Opportunity for collaboration with Environment team.

Date	Communications Activity	Channel	Responsibility	Alignment with Net Zero Strategy/ Delivery Plan	Comments
24 th November (TBC)	Buy Nothing Day	Viva Engage	CCET	Circular Economy Waste	Opportunity for collaboration with Waste Awareness Team.
26 th November 2024	World Sustainable Transport Day	Viva Engage	CCET	Sustainable Travel Reconfiguring our asset base	Opportunity for collaboration with Active Travel.

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