



Report to Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date – 17 April 2024
Key Decision – Yes
Public/Private – Public

Portfolio – Councillor Bob Kelly, Cumberland Policy and Regulatory Services
Directorate – Darren Crossley: Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
Lead Officer – Chloe Tringham, Assistant Director Climate & Waste
Steven O’Keeffe, Climate and Natural Environment Manager (interim)

Title – Draft Climate and Nature Strategy

Brief Summary:

The draft Climate and Nature Strategy sets out the objectives, commitments and programmes that the Council (we) will deliver for climate and nature. It is a position statement and should be read as a working strategy for the next three years (2024-2027). The draft strategy is now ready for engagement and consultation.

Recommendations:

The committee is invited to comment on the draft strategy with particular reference to:

- The climate and nature challenge and Plan on a Page
- The links to Community Panels and Community Networks
- The potential for a Citizens Jury/Assembly

Tracking

Executive:	June 2024
Scrutiny:	17 April 2024
Council:	Not applicable

1. Background

- 1.1. The purpose of this draft strategy is to set out the objectives, commitments and programmes that the Council (we) will deliver for climate and nature. It is a position statement and should be read as a working strategy for next three years (2024-2027).
- 1.2. The draft strategy has been developed alongside the Council's Delivery Plan, informed by the current strategies, actions and partnership work underway. It has also been informed by the work undertaken by the previous councils.
- 1.3. The public opinion and social trends on climate change are changing, a recent Office for National Statistics¹ survey estimates that 72% have made a lot or some changes to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change. Among those who had made a lot or some changes to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change the concerns that motivated them to make the changes were:
 - Effect on future generations (69%)
 - Loss of natural habitats or wildlife due to climate change (66%)
 - Energy and food supplies (55%)
 - Other people being directly affected by climate change, for example: extreme weather events or rising sea levels. (52%)
- 1.4. The Local Government Association recently commissioned YouGov to run an opinion poll on public perceptions around local climate action and;
 - two thirds of responders said they were worried about climate change with flooding, storms and heatwaves being the impacts most likely to affect their local area
 - With only 12% thinking climate change will not impact their local area

Strategy development

- 1.5. Climate policy is within the Cumberland Policy and Regulatory Services portfolio. Climate and nature present cross-cutting challenges and opportunities for our Executive Members and their portfolios.
- 1.6. The Climate and Nature Advisory Group has been directly involved in drafting the strategy as part of its brief to provide advice to the Executive on policies and initiatives. This group includes elected Members, Executive Portfolio Holders and internal officers. Co-opted members of the group also bring their knowledge of nature and climate issues to assist this work.
- 1.7. Tackling the climate emergency and building environmental resilience is a whole society challenge. Adapting to the changes will need cross-sector action that includes and extends beyond the Council. If we don't rise to this challenge, it will have significant

¹ [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: climate change - Office for National Statistics](#)

impacts on health and wellbeing and is likely to affect the least well off disproportionately, widening the gap and stretching the inequalities in Cumberland.

- 1.8. People, nature and climate are interwoven. Cumberland's natural capital plays a vital role in our economy; it also provides health and wellbeing benefits for residents, workers and visitors, as well as protecting society and the economy from adverse effects of pollution and weather. Action to restore nature is best co-ordinated with action to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 1.9. As well as the risks and consequences there are opportunities for common benefits, if we join up the goals for people, for nature and for climate. As a unitary council we are in a unique position to take this fresh approach, putting sustainability at the forefront of our decision making and policy development.
- 1.10. We have learnt from the work of the previous councils and their consultations; we have considered the recommendations of the Copeland Citizen Jury and Youth Summit in prioritising our programmes. Many of the previous actions have become 'business as usual' and we will seek to sustain this positive progress through service planning; the goal is sustainability for the long term.
- 1.11. Over the last month work on the draft strategy has been streamlined into:
 - A Plan on a Page (contained in draft strategy)
 - Draft strategy (Appendix A)
 - Background information used for the strategy development

The climate and nature challenge

- 1.12. The 'climate and nature challenge' is described as follows:

Cumberland is on the frontline of the climate emergency, and we are going to be amongst the hardest hit in the UK. Forewarned is forearmed and we must:

- *Accelerate our mitigation, aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C*
- *Start adapting to a 2°C rise and assess the risks of a 4°C rise*

Mitigation reduces the need to adapt; and alongside we must protect and enhance nature, our greatest ally as we face this challenge.

- 1.13. This challenge is set out in strategy on pages 5 and 6, through the Plan on a Page and the warming (North West of England) and biodiversity loss (UK) stripes. This sets the context for the strategy and creates a call to action.
- 1.14. The Plan on a Page is a communication tool that summarise the draft strategy into a concise set of statements and diagrams that is engaging and easy to understand.

Control and influence

1.15. The introduction explains the purpose of the strategy and sets out a model to describe the Council's levels of control and influence (Table 1). The leadership role of Councillors is important when exercising indirect control and influence. Councillors represent their communities, bringing their views into the Council's decision-making process. Councillors are the advocates of and for their communities (Constitution Part 1 Paragraph 3.8).

Table 1: Controlling and influencing.

Definition	Examples from the strategy
Direct Control: Our own actions	Council's Assets and fleet; Operations; Workforce
Indirect Control: The actions of others	Community Panels and Community Networks
	Procurement and commissioning
Influence: through our leadership roles	Development Control; Local Plan; Transport Planning; Waste strategy
	Town and Parish Councils; Place and thematic partnerships
	Communications and engagement; consultation responses on national policy

Risks, consequences and opportunities

1.16. The section on risks, consequences and opportunities brings together information from the national risk assessment and our partnerships for flood resilience and emergency planning.

1.17. The development of the strategy and related plans has highlighted a number of opportunities for greater collaboration on risks and opportunities, especially around existing interdependencies such as shared assets and business continuity arrangements.

1.18. As the strategy develops there will an opportunity to horizon scan for emerging risk, especially as new information on the National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) is released later in the year. We will also be exploring the opportunities of adaptive risk assessment and reporting through the Local Climate Adaption Toolkit and the Local Authority Adaptive Reporting Pilot. This research will inform our approach to integrating climate and nature risks into our Council Operating Model and partnerships.

1.19. When reporting on risk and opportunities we will need to take an equal focus on mitigation (Net Zero, 1.5°C), adaption (2°C), and protecting and enhancing nature.

Community Panels, Community Networks and Community Power

1.20. The Committee received a report on Community Power at their meeting in February 2024. This report set out the critical role that Community Panels and Community Networks will have in tackling the climate and nature challenge as follows:

'The depth and complexity of many modern problems from climate change to deindustrialisation or social isolation are beyond the ability of any single institution to resolve. We need an approach that recognises how Cumberland Council can ensure communities are not merely passive recipients of services or transactional customers and one which recognises their role at the heart of sustainable solutions.'

1.21. The Community Panels and their priorities provide an opportunity to link actions to the places that matter most to our communities, their neighbourhoods, villages and towns. So far, the panels we have offered over £40,000 in funding to organisations for projects that will make a difference for climate and nature by:

- Improving access and biodiversity
- Providing outdoor learning sessions and community activities
- Providing energy efficiency measures in community buildings and supporting community hubs
- Protecting and conserving red squirrels
- Enabling a future play area and community orchard
- Supporting a safe cycleway and cycle parking
- Providing healthy lunches in warm spots during winter months
- Providing gardening and cooking equipment for community groups

1.22. This strategy is dependent upon:

'8 Community Panels and Community Networks working towards active, resilient and empowered communities. Where communities of interest meet communities of place to tackle local priorities.'

1.23. It is through the Community Panels and Community Networks that we will bring together the communities of interest and place, linking in the local climate and nature groups. We will also look to scale-up climate and nature actions across Cumberland through external funding. (See Paragraph 5.6)

Partnerships

1.24. Working with partners and developing new and existing partnerships remains a fundamental to our way of working. The 23 partnerships listed are actively working on the climate and nature challenge. We will be mapping our representation across these partnerships and their sub groups so that we can help drive the agenda and maximise our influence, whilst being influenced by our partners.

Objectives and commitments

1.25. There are 4 objectives:

- *Adapting now to the changes we can expect over our lifetimes*
- *Giving nature a helping hand*
- *Growing the know-how, skills ,opportunities and inspiration for change*
- *Supporting more sustainable places, practices, livelihoods and lifestyles*

1.26. Each objective is presented with a set of aspirational commitments and aims (Pages 12-13) which summarises the related work in the partnerships and programmes. As we finalise the strategy, we will link these objectives and statements to the programmes listed and the related strategies and plans. This will create a link to tangible actions.

1.27. There are always close ties with other plans and these objectives and commitments have been set to maximise the opportunities for innovation and collaboration with partners and communities.

Communications and engagement

1.28. Communications and engagement are paramount for influencing behaviours. Under the objective '*Growing the know-how, skills ,opportunities and inspiration for change*' we have committed to:

'build trust and inspire change by promoting positive examples of adaptation and mitigation, sharing the opportunities and choices through our proactive communications and engagement.'

1.29. Since Vesting Day we have been publishing an Environment and Climate Newsletter with the goal of growing the subscribers issue by issue. In March 2024 we published our fourth issue of the newsletter which reached 14,823 recipients. This is a growth of 4% in the number of subscribers from our first issue in July 2023. We will continue to promote the newsletter as our main source of information on the development and delivery of the strategy and programmes.

1.30. Over the same period there have been over 20 media releases relating to climate, waste and nature. To give an idea of the breadth and variety of activity a selection of recent announcements is listed:

- £250,000 of government funding has been secured for public swimming pools in Carlisle, Wigton and Workington.
- Substantial funding boost of £870,588 for Active Travel initiatives.
- In collaboration with the Hadrian's Wall Trail Partnership, has developed a new ramped access to a popular riverside footpath in Carlisle.
- Advising residents to be careful when driving through Caldbeck as amphibians are currently crossing roads in the area.

- Community planting for pollinators day in Whitehaven
- Successful Completion of Ravenglass Flood Alleviation Project
- Recycling Rambler hits the road

1.31. There have been opportunities for people to have their say on consultations with links to climate and nature:

- Access to food survey
- Budget consultation
- Connecting Millom and Haverigg seeks to improve the transport network and related public realm, in and around Millom.
- Harrington marina and shoreline bathing water public consultation
- Place Programmes and Town Deals consultations
- Waste Collection Public Engagement Survey
- Woodland creation
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy (live survey)

Themes, programmes, and plans

1.32. The 23 programmes are presented under their themes (Pages 14-17) and again with more information in the table at the end of the strategy. Additional action planning will be incorporated into the Council's planning processes and partnership working.

1.33. The two management plans which support our Council actions are summarised on pages 18-20. The Carbon and Energy Management Plan will be taken to Business and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then form part of the appendices to the final strategy. The Biodiversity Management Plan will be developed over summer and adopted alongside the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in autumn, completing the set.

1.34. A list of related strategies and plans, including pending documents, is included to illustrate the breadth and depth of work underway.

1.35. The monitoring and reporting on the progress of the strategy will be through the quarterly performance reports. An annual review of the strategy will be reported through the Portfolio Holder.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Biodiversity Duty

1.36. The Cumbria LNRS will outline our county's priorities for nature recovery and identify key locations that could contribute to achieving these priorities. Westmorland and Furness Council are the responsible authority for the Cumbria LNRS, with Cumberland Council, Lake District National Park Authority, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and Natural England acting as supporting authorities. There are also many other

organisations involved in the development of the LNRS such as Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and many more NGOs, organisations, and individuals.

- 1.37. The communications and engagement work on the LNRS includes a survey asking for views on nature and wildlife in the local area. The survey responses will help support the first chapters of the LNRS by showing how important nature is to people. (Survey link: [Nature in Cumbria](#)).
- 1.38. It is through the adoption of the LNRS, as a supporting authority, and the Climate & Nature Strategy's Biodiversity Management Plan we will fulfil our strengthened biodiversity duty.

2. Proposals

- 2.1. The proposal is to engage and consult on this strategy and the two management plans as part of the hierarchy of strategies and plans under the Council Plan.

3. Alternative options considered

- 3.1. An alternative option would be to develop separate strategies and plans as follows:

- Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Plan
- Climate Change Adaption Strategy and Plan
- Biodiversity Strategy and Plan
- Carbon and Energy Management Strategy and Plan

Combining climate (mitigation and adaption) and nature topics into a single strategy (with two supporting plans as appendices) is the preferred option.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 4.1. The report provides the committee with an overview of the development of the strategy and the draft prepared for engagement and consultation. This report provides an opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the draft.

5. Implications:

Contribution to the Cumberland Plan Priorities -

- 5.1. The Cumberland Council Plan has 'environmental resilience and climate emergency as an area of focus, this draft strategy sets out how we are going to deliver against this challenge.
- 5.2. The Cumberland Approach identifies sustainability as a fundamental principle for shaping our approach to service delivery, working with partners and engaging residents. The Council Plan defines sustainability as:

'The climate and environmental emergency will be at the forefront of our decision making and policy development. We will encourage others to do the same and set an example in using resources sustainably, looking for low carbon or carbon neutral alternatives in what we buy and how we work. We will make a fair and just transition to a more sustainable Council and Cumberland.'

Relevant Risks and explain how risks can be mitigated –

5.3. The relevant risks are managed through the Risk Management and Framework as follows:

- Overarching Corporate Risk for Climate Change
- Directorate and Service Risk Registers
- Programme and project risks through the Programme Management Office

The treatment these risks is in line with the risk tolerances.

Consultation / Engagement –

5.4. The Community Engagement Framework is being used to guide our approach to engagement and consultation. It is through improved community participation that we can build trust and understanding, which can help better shape the delivery of the strategy and improve decision-making.

5.5. As part of the consultation on the draft strategy we will be publishing an online survey which sets out the sections of the strategy with related links and information.

5.6. The content on the website for climate and nature will be reviewed and updates prepared as the strategy is finalised. A designed version of the final strategy will be produced.

Climate and nature local groups

5.7. Cumberland has over 14 active local groups work on climate and nature. Many of these groups are part of the Cumbria Sustainability Network, supported through the Zero Carbon Cumbria Programme. We will be engaging with these groups during the consultation on the strategy to brief them on the draft and seek their views. We will take this opportunity to connect these groups to their local Community Network and Community Panel.

Economic Summit

5.8. The Economic Summit (29 February 2024) created a great opportunity to discuss the draft objectives and programmes through the two climate and nature workshops. The workshops were attended by representatives of 31 different organisations and the engagement on the two questions generated feedback that will inform both this strategy and the emerging Economic Strategy. The two questions were:

- How can our work on climate change and nature help us to unlock and generate opportunities for residents, businesses, social enterprises in addition to community and voluntary sectors?

- What additional actions for climate change and nature will help us to unlock and generate opportunities for residents, businesses, social enterprises in addition to community and voluntary sectors?

We will be arranging a further workshop for partners to brief them on the draft strategy and seek their views.

Potential Citizens Jury/Assembly

- 5.9. There are resources available through the Zero Carbon Cumbria Programme to look again at a Citizens Jury/Assembly. Citizens Assemblies and Juries are a way of bringing together citizens to try and work through complex issues and make recommendations in an attempt to influence policy. They have been used throughout the world and at a local level in Copeland, Furness and Kendal over the last few years organised by local not for profit organisation.
- 5.10. The proposal is to organise two Citizens Juries or an Assembly in Cumbria on a particularly important issue that is key to successfully addressing climate change. A workshop will be organised in April to consider this offer in more detail.

Engaging with young people

- 5.11. The development of the strategy has benefited from the Youth Summit, the Copeland Youth Panel (2021) and recent engagement with young people on possible solutions to encourage climate awareness and action.
- 5.12. We will be taking the opportunity to engage with the Whitehaven Youth Summit this summer on climate and nature.

Legal – The Committee’s terms of reference include the consideration of all powers and duties the council has relating to environment.

The Climate and Nature Strategy relates to the exercise of Executive functions and is therefore a decision of the Executive as to its adoption.

The Council has a duty under s.3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to ensure the Council makes arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The proposed strategy should therefore represent best value for Cumberland.

It is anticipated that the delivery of the strategy and accompanying management plans will require legal advice on a case-by case basis. (Lead Senior Lawyer, 3/4/24)

Finance – There are no direct financial implications within the recommendations for the draft strategy and related plans. A criteria for action planning, based on the Financial Procedure Rules, has been part of the development of the strategy. As projects are developed to deliver

the strategy detailed business cases will be needed setting out the costs and savings as well as the potential for external funding.

The 2024/25 Budget sets out the following programmes and plans that are linked to the strategy:

- Transformation Programme
- Capital Programme
- Asset Management Plan and fleet investment

(Group Accountant, 28/3/24)

Information Governance – Climate and nature topics give rise to Environmental Information Regulations 2004 requests. We will review these requests annually to see if we can routinely publish more information through the updates to the strategy. (Information Governance and Data Compliance Officer, 27/3/24)

Impact Assessments –

Have you screened the decision for impacts using the Impact Assessment?

The draft strategy has been screened using the Impact Assessment tool. The screening will be updated once the consultation and engagement is completed.

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Background papers:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

Carbon and Energy Management Plan (Business and Resources OSC agenda item on 16/4/24)

Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership: Summary of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Cumbria

Available online at: <https://zerocarboncumbria.co.uk/about/reports/cumbria-greenhouse-gas-emissions-report/>

Appendices attached to report:

Draft strategy