

**Ward:** All

**Portfolio:** Strategic Policy and Climate Change

**FROM:** Cllr Tom Ronan  
Portfolio Holder for  
Strategic Policy and  
Climate Change

**Date:** Monday, 27th September  
2021

**SUBJECT** Update on Progress to Address the Climate and Ecological  
: Emergency

Internal Use Only: Please complete sign off boxes below prior to submission to Democratic Services			
	Seen by:	Name	Date
<b>Report Sign off</b>	Legal		13/09/2021
	Finance	Richard Bates	14/09/2021
	Chief Executive Officer	Tracey Aarons	13/09/2021
	Head of Service	Claire Malcolmson	13/09/2021
<b>Summary:</b>	A Climate and Ecological Emergency was declared at Full Council in February 2019 and is part of the Council's corporate plan. This report provides an update on the continuous work towards that		
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Members are asked to note the progress made to deliver on the Council's Climate and Ecological Commitment and associated priorities. The progress is overseen by the Council's Scrutiny Climate and Ecological Emergency Group.		
<b>Direct and/or indirect impact on service delivery to our customers and communities</b>	A number of actions and priorities have been embedded into service plans across the Council and are reported on by the relevant Head of Service. These will offer a different way of working for all Council services. Any actions that fall outside of existing service plans will form new business cases and be reported on accordingly		
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	Any financial implications from any actions or priorities will be picked up in service planning and business case development		
<b>Climate Change Risks and Opportunities:</b>	There are no Climate Change Risks and Opportunities as a result of this report		
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	There are no legal implications arising from this report		
<b>Crime and Disorder Implications:</b>	There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report		
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	There are no equalities implications arising from this report		
<b>Risk Assessment and Adverse Impact on</b>	This paper reports on the recent progress made to deliver on the Council's Climate and Ecological Commitment Priority Actions and Climate and Ecological Emergency Group Action Plan. Failure to		

<b>Corporate Actions:</b>	deliver on these priorities and actions could result in the Council being unable to deliver on its Climate and Ecological Commitment.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Following the motion to Full Council in February 2019, the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency, pledging to:

- To make best endeavours, using its powers and resources, including both financial and officer time, to enable the district of Mendip to be carbon neutral by 2030
- Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible
- Work with other councils and governments to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C
- Continue to work with partners across the district and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans
- Commit £100K to fund action in the scoping and delivery of the District Council's Climate Emergency 2030 commitment.
- Report to Full Council every six months with the actions the Council will take to address this emergency.

In August 2021 Mendip District Council's Carbon Management Plan was approved setting out Mendip's current emissions profile and our future pathway both within the council and across Mendip including how the emissions reductions could be achieved within our own power.

This paper reports on the progress made to deliver on its commitment since the last report to Full Council in February 2021.

## **Scrutiny Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Group (SCEEG)**

The Scrutiny Climate and Ecological Emergency Group continues to monitor the Council's progress against its Climate and Ecological Emergency priorities.

As of February 2021, the group is now the Scrutiny and Ecological Working Group (SCEEG)

Leader of the working group – Cllr Janine Nash

Scrutiny Member – Cllr Adam Boyden

Scrutiny Member – Cllr Michael Dunk

Scrutiny Member – Cllr Michael Gay

Scrutiny Member – Cllr Nicholas Cottle

Scrutiny Member – Cllr Alison Barkshire

Scrutiny Member – Cllr Drew Gardner

Co-opted Member – Cllr Shane Collins

Co-opted Member – Cllr Shannon Brooke

Co-opted Member – Cllr Lucie Taylor-Hood

Lead Officer – Jacob Hall (Climate Change and Resilience Officer)

The remit of the group is as follows along with current progress against them

1. That CEEG be requested to consider the Future Emissions Pathway Report and make recommendations back to Cabinet, via Scrutiny, on the pathway option to select, given the existing powers of the Council, and suggested suite of actions that would support the Council in bridging the gap towards carbon neutrality.  
Completed
2. The Climate Change Resilience Officer in consultation with the PFH evaluate the scope of the Agricultural Emissions report, with support from CEEG working group, and to bring the report back to cabinet within 6 months.  
In progress
3. SCEEG will monitor the progress of the Council to act on its Corporate Priority 'Deliver on our Climate and Ecological Emergency commitment' and its associated actions by reviewing the Quarterly Report and feeding into Scrutiny. *The group will develop an annual three-point action plan of core projects to address priority areas in support of the Council's climate change and biodiversity objectives. As part of this the working group will review specific matters in line with the Corporate Priority commitment and, with the support of key Officers, the group will make recommendations for improvements to Cabinet, via Scrutiny Board*  
Ongoing action.
4. SCEEG will monitor the Council's contribution to the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy.  
Awaiting renewed governance
5. Review the need and scope for (SPDs) and General (Planning) Guidance Notes, including a timeline for delivery. The new SCEEG be asked to report their findings to Scrutiny, in turn reporting to Cabinet. They are also asked to continue to monitor this programme of work.  
In progress
6. To acknowledge the adopted pathway as a "working document" and request that the Scrutiny Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group review the Pathway on an annual basis, in accordance with opportunities that may arise from updated policy, funding frameworks, or other drivers and incentives.  
Ongoing action

## **February – September 2021 Climate and Ecological Emergency Commitment – Progress Update**

In February 2020, Mendip District Council's 2020-2023 Corporate Plan Priorities were agreed, although currently under review a number of actions have progressed over the last six months as follows

### **Engagement**

The appointment of a new Climate Change and Resilience Officer Jacob Hall as a replacement for Hayley Warrens who started on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

Regular meetings are in place with the Marketing and Media team who support the climate change and ecological emergency by proactively highlighting the work of the council, national days such as World Car Free Day (22<sup>nd</sup> September) and highlight events from key partners such as the AONB & Somerset Wildlife Trust. Some of the work over the last 6 months can be seen below and a full list found in Appendix A.

- Climate and Ecological Emergency Fund
  - Full Comms Support
- Big Community Switch – Spring
  - iChoosr offers 100% renewable electricity tariffs
  - 6 April – 18 May
  - <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/bigcommunityswitch>
  - <https://bigcommunityswitch.co.uk/mendip/home>
- Big Community Switch – Summer
  - August – 12 October
- Little eat Festivals:
  - local and sustainable produce (think global, act local)
- Electric Bike and Car Survey
  - encouraging use of electric transport - bikes/cars (less carbon emissions)
- Private Sector Housing: Energy Efficiency Grants and Loans
- Mendip Markets
  - Shop local (air miles)
  - Some traders are plastic-free
  - Encourage visitors to take reusable bags
  - Food Waste
- Great British Spring Clean
  - Support national campaign
  - Council (IDV) can provide litter picks, high vis jackets, black bags and collect rubbish after event (service available throughout the year)
- Partners/Influencers
  - Somerset Waste Partnership: Garden Waste, service updates, national campaigns e.g., Recycle Week/ Stop Food Waste.
  - Promote Lendology, CSE, Energy Saving Trust, Woodland Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Mendip Hills AONB, National Energy Action and more.

Carbon Literacy Training is currently underway across Mendip with Somerset County Council having carried out a number of sessions. Mendip District Council is working with Somerset County to identify those already trained and how to work best together to continue to rollout to local communities. Training of the new Climate Change and Resilience Officer is expected to take place in Q3/4 2021/2022

Regular meetings are in place with all relevant Climate Change Officers across Somerset to link up and understand projects going on across the County looking at how projects can overlap and support each other as well as offering assistance and advise.

The new procurement strategy will include a section on contributing to social economic and environmental improvement with areas on sustainable procurement, sustainable communities and environmental management.

Mendip District Councils District Wide Carbon Management Plan that sets out the district's current emissions profile and details the Councils emissions pathway to 2030 was approved by Cabinet in August 2021. An overall reduction of 30.5% was recognised as the most realistic given current policy and funding that is available to facilitate decarbonisation of territorial activities. The website will be updated in Q3 2021/2022 to

focus on the Carbon Management Plan and what we and others can do to follow our emissions pathway.

The Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Fund was launched in Q1 2021/2022. A total of £50,000 available in grants of up to £2000 per project with the deadline for submission 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Funds are there to support local projects in Mendip that will have an ecological benefit and/or an impact on net-carbon emissions. Applications will be review in early October 2021 and awarded towards the end of the month

Continuing to work with our Parishes to engage in a number of projects such as Somerset Wildlife Trusts Wilder Churches which looks to teach communities how to look after closed church yards and encourage biodiversity within them.

Parish Forum event held in July promoting the Community and Climate and Ecological Emergency Grants presenting a number of potential projects such as re-wilding, EV (Electric Vehicle) charging points installation and LED streetlights. Three guest speakers were also invited to present from Solar Sense, Somerset Wildlife Trust and The Woodland Trust.

Mendip District Council has joined UK100 a network of highly ambitious local government leaders, which seeks to devise and implement plans for the transition to clean energy that are ambitious, cost effective and take the public and businesses with them. The UK100 supports decision-makers in UK towns, cities and counties in their transition to Net Zero. As set out in Mendip District Council's Carbon Management Plan in order for us to reach Net-Zero by 2030 we require the implementation of new policies and guidance from national government. By joining the UK100 MDC is combining our voice with over 50 other local authorities across the UK to increase our strength in lobbying central government to do more to combat climate change

### **Multi-user paths to support non motorised travel**

The LCWIP (Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan) is moving forwards – stage 1 has been completed and stage 2 is nearing completion.

Stage 1: Inception + Determining Scope

Outputs: Inception Meeting, Confirmed Geographic Scope and Ambition Workshop with Stakeholder Team

Stage 2: Data Analysis

Outputs: Baseline data analysis for each of the key settlements

Stages 3 + 4 Network Development + Site Auditing

Using the draft Geographic Scope from Stage 1 and information outputs from Stage 2, the focus of Stages 3 and 4 will be the development of the walking and cycling networks and the site audits of the identified routes. Once we have outlined the draft LCWIP networks, we would present the draft networks to key local stakeholders, including local council officers and councillors. The feedback from the session would be documented in the final LCWIP report and would be used to revise the networks where needed

Outputs: Confirmed LCWIP geographic scopes, Presentation of recommended LCWIP routes to Stakeholders, LCWIP Site Audits of RST and WRAT routes, and LTN Cell Identification.

In addition to this the Council has worked alongside volunteers to support the creation of routes already identified. This has included funding the work currently being carried out on the Dulcote Quarry section of the Strawberry Line, funding to support fencing needs for the Missing Links project and work to commission surveys and obtain licenses for the use of Winsor Hill tunnel and the Bath Road Viaduct at Shepton Mallet.

## **Energy**

The council is continuing to explore options in renewable energy infrastructure. A consultant was procured in December 2020 with initial discussions having taken place. Due to realigned priorities due to the ongoing Covid pandemic and more recently the unitary planning these have not progressed. Discussions are scheduled for Q3 2021/2022 to engage with the consultant and identify next steps.

Mendip District Council is engaging with a new supplier for the rollout of EV charging points across a number of car parks in the district with a new timeline for installation expected to be finalised in Q3 2021/2022

New windows have been installed at our campus site to improve the energy efficiency of the building

## **Environment**

Conversations are under way with a large number of organisations across Mendip in the build-up to the 2021/2022 tree planting season to understand what is planned currently, including the NFU (National Farmers Union), AONB, Local Parishes, Somerset Wildlife Trust and other local groups and how Mendip District Council can best support them moving forward

A report on Agricultural emissions has been written and approved by SCEEAG and will be presented to Cabinet in Q3 2021. The report highlights the current understanding of agricultural emissions and the limitations with previous estimates provided. Three options are offered which provide the opportunity to work with different stakeholders to help understand agricultural emissions across Mendip more accurately and include a bespoke action plan to work with local farmers on what can be done to reduce their carbon footprint.

Mendip District Council continues to work with and support Somerset Wildlife Trust with projects such as Nature for Climate Fund & Peatland Discovery bid looking at reclaiming peatland in Mendip.

An Air Quality Action Plan was presented to Cabinet September 2021. A number of achievements have taken place since September 2020 listed in the report along with next stages in continuing to improve air quality across Mendip. Emissions from various industries such as cement, timber etc are monitored annually to ensure their compliance with air emission legislation

Anti-idling signs have been procured and are in the process of being installed across Mendip.

Mendip District Council Employees are continuing with flexible working across the council to reduce commuter miles and emissions from vehicles.

A number of service areas across Mendip District Council such as planning are now paperless.

The Council is working with Somerset County Council on an eBike strategy for Somerset. A draft was circulated to each Climate Change Officer across the districts and feedback provided in August 2021. The strategy is split into two work packages

- Work package A will look to focus on undertaking a number of tasks to develop the overall strategy
- Work package B will then take the agreed strategy and develop a delivery plan for the priority components

## **Housing**

Mendip District Council in collaboration with the other Somerset District Council's has applied for and been successful with a number of Government funded retrofitting bids to improve homes in Mendip:

### **Green Homes Grant - LAD (Local Authority delivery) funding**

- **LAD phase 1a and 1b:** Two successful bids. Retrofitting privately owned and socially rented homes in Somerset with an EPC of E or lower, low-income occupants with measures including insulation, doors and windows and green energy and heating. Currently ongoing, completion expected March 2022.
- **LAD phase 1b:** Successful bid: Retrofitting Park Homes with external wall insulation, underfloor insulation and energy saving measures. Currently ongoing, completion expected October 2021
- **LAD 2 Capacity Building Funding:** This bid is aimed at building capacity for future retrofitting work, formulating further bids and coordinating our approach across Somerset. Needs to be completed by March 2022. Waiting on formal Confirmation of bid.
- **LAD 2:** This funding has been successfully bid for by the South West Energy Hub. It is being delivered by EON and Happy Energy with the aim at retrofitting and improving the energy rating of homes across all tenures which have an energy rating of D/E or lower and low-income occupants. The bid is being delivered across the South West including Mendip, and we have engaged with the Hub and the delivery partner to highlight areas for targeting. Project runs from July 2021 to Dec 2021.
- **Sustainable Warmth Bid (LAD 3 and Home Energy Upgrade Grants HUGS):** This bid is aimed at low-income households with poor EPC ratings (D and lower) focusing on fabric improvements along with low carbon energy solutions. Waiting on formal Confirmation of bid.

**Private Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency standards:** A bid has been submitted by MDC (Mendip District Council) in collaboration with Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to promote and encourage compliance and enforcement with the minimum energy performance standards in the private rented sector (Energy Performance

Certificate (EPC) E). The funding will be used to resource the targeting of private landlords and properties that may be in breach of the legislation, facilitate compliance and build for future enforcement activities. Waiting on formal Confirmation of bid.

**Fuel Poverty promotional campaign:** This project was endorsed by Cabinet last year. Procurement has been completed and we are assessing a project proposal to deliver the fuel poverty promotional campaign across Mendip.

**Home Energy Advice Line: Delivered** by the CSE, this service continues to be delivered in Mendip and is available to all residents to seek expert advice on saving energy, reducing fuel bills, and accessing available financial assistance. In 2020/21, CSE received a total of 875 enquiries and supported 443 households, saving clients a combined total of nearly £183K. This service continues to help residents and over the least two years has been boosted by a previously successful bid for warm homes fund money which has provided dedicated case workers in Somerset and will also deliver heating improvements including heat pumps to eligible residents.

A number of grants & loans have been issued since April 2021 by our Private Sector Housing Team

- 15 Safer Home Grants (Including improvements to roofs, windows, and heating upgrades)
- 3 Energy Grants
- 5 Empty Home Grants
- £43K spent on safer home/energy grants
- £10K spent on empty home grant
- 5 EPC Grants issued
- 6 loans issued to a value of £54k with a further grant in the pipeline for a resident to install an air source heat pump at their home.

## **Planning Policy**

Following review of the local plan, the planning policy team are working on the following

- Design and Amenity of New Development SPD (based on DP7)
- Introducing climate change measures via Design Codes
- Revisions to the 'marketing' SPD which protects commercial/ community uses
  
- In addition to the above, there will be
  - (a) Joint SPD for phosphates and Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs)
  - (b) A Renewable Energy SPD (to follow joint county study)

Currently any new major planning applications i.e. over 10 homes or 1000m<sup>2</sup> are required to provide a sustainability statement. For smaller developments they may be asked to supply more specific studies relating to their application such as SUDs or biodiversity studies.

## **Waste & Recycling**

Recycle more campaign was launched by Somerset Waste Partnership at the end of 2020 and continues to work well across Mendip. Somerset's recycling rate reported for 2020-2021 was 52.4% saving 123,036 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, putting Somerset in the top 20%



of authorities across the UK. 50.8% of this was recycled in Somerset and 97.8% within the UK.

Mendip District Council have been successful in a bid for funds for a pilot scheme developed by Mendip, to reduce food waste in the food and hospitality industry across the district. With 10% of greenhouse emissions coming from waste food, which is greater than the emissions from the aviation industry, the aim of the project is to educate the industry into the benefits of reducing wasted food, both from an economical and environmental point of view.

Mendip are working with the Office for Product Safety and Standards, the Waste Resources Action Programme, the Virtual College and OzHarvest to make the project a success and identify the savings made to business and the reduction in greenhouse gases. A final report will be presented to the OPSS and depending on the success of the project, may be rolled out nationally.

### **Further actions needed**

The latest IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report published showed a range of scenarios should temperatures not stay below the recommended 1.5°C annual global temperature rise as set out in the Paris agreement and stated many changes are already irreversibly occurring across the globe. The upcoming COP26 event being held in Glasgow between 31<sup>st</sup> October and 12<sup>th</sup> November continues to highlight the need to work together and discuss how to continue tackling climate change and keep global temperature reductions below 1.5°C.

The Carbon Management plan has highlighted that without national government assistance Mendip is only able to achieve a 30.5% reduction on its emissions by 2030 and so advancements in policy and technology are essential to continue driving down Emissions across the District

Mendip District Council and the Scrutiny Climate Ecological Emergency Group should continue to identify and push for legislative changes that are required by Government to enable to Council to continue working towards Net-Zero across Mendip

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to note the progress made since February 2021 to continue to work towards the emissions pathway set out in Mendip District Councils Carbon Management Plan.

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### **Background Papers**

Appendix A - Full list of Marketing & Media Teams Comms work February – September 2021