



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 23rd January 2023

To: Chair and Members of the Community and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Report Title: Environment & Sustainability Strategy – Update

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Cllr Mark Houlbrook	All	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Following the declaration of the Climate & Biodiversity Emergency in September 2019, by Mayor Ros Jones, the Council has since initiated Doncaster Climate Commission, chaired by Ed Milliband MP, for which the Report on findings was published in November 2020.
2. The declaration and subsequent findings from the commission have influenced a number of decisions and activities that followed.
3. The new Environment & Sustainability Strategy was published January 2021 and the Net Zero Masterplan was published Feb 2021.
4. A new Sustainability Unit has been approved and was formed, 1st September 2021, with new and existing posts to provide more focus, co-ordination and drive in areas of carbon reduction and nature recovery.
5. A £5m fund has been established to initiative projects that deliver on the Environment & Sustainability strategy action plan and there has been £36m worth of schemes and infrastructure projects announced and initiated, including housing retrofit schemes, renewable energy investment and the challenge of planting 1 million trees in the next 10 years.
6. The decisions, activity and plans developed to date will lay firm foundations for delivery against the Councils' climate and environment ambitions.
7. This report shares further information in the form of an update on activity as requested by the Community & Environment Overview & Scrutiny panel.

EXEMPT REPORT

8. N/A

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

9. Residents and businesses benefit from support, advice and grant funding the Council and partners will deliver.
10. Residents and businesses will be made to feel part of a movement which will impact on everyone.
11. The actions set out in the Environment & Sustainability strategy will provide a wide range of cross-cutting benefits, including environment, social, economic and health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. That the Panel note and consider the information received.

BACKGROUND

13. Following the declaration of the Climate & Biodiversity Emergency, it was agreed there is an imperative that the Council organise its resources in a way that enables focus, drive and delivery. A co-ordinated approach was required, and a new Sustainability Unit would lead.
14. Further actions included the creation of the Doncaster Climate Commission and the publishing of its findings, a new Environment & Sustainability strategy and Net Zero Masterplan.
15. The Environment & Sustainability strategy (known as 'the strategy') set out a pathway for carbon reduction and nature recovery as well as adaptation to the local effects of climate change.
16. The strategy proposes the delivery of 111 actions which contribute to the short, medium and long term pathway of environmental improvement. This is not an exhaustive list, and while some actions will be achieved and replaced with new actions, some actions may develop in line with policy, legislation, financial markets, and technology.
17. The actions are split into key themes of Natural Environment, Built Environment, Green Tech & Economy, and Sustainable Consumption, Education & Behaviour Change.
18. A governance structure is in place to allow focused stakeholder engagement amongst each of these themes which report on progress to Team Doncaster Coordinating Groups – Housing and Environment
19. Some of the key activities and decisions to date include:
20. **Corporate:**
 - a. Sustainability Unit structure approved 1st September 2021
 - i. 24 members of staff making up 19 FTE (Full Time Equivalent)

- posts
 - ii. Includes 8 new posts working predominantly on carbon reduction and woodland creation and management
- b. Team Doncaster Environment & Sustainability Network Officer Group established September 2021:
- i. 4 thematic groups feed into the Network Officer Group, with a focus on Built Environment, Natural Environment, Economy & Technology, and Consumption, Education & Behaviour.
 - ii. Consists of Team Doncaster partners and wider eg. Yorkshire Water, National Farmers Union, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.
- c. 54 of the 111 E & S Strategy actions issued to Council Heads of Service as part of their Service Plans for 2022-23, covering existing and planned delivery. 39 actions to be delivered through agreed 'key areas of focus' and 18 actions as yet unallocated (to be revisited in 2023-24)
- d. Corporate decision making now routinely considers 'Climate' impact.
21. **Communications:**
- a) Internal and external communications to raise awareness, celebrate success and promote a 'call to action' have begun, with some mixed results so far. This is an area for improvement and is already showing positive signs with better and more frequent comms being produced.
 - b) Your Life Doncaster has been agreed as the host website for the Environment & Sustainability pages and 'Climate Doncaster' has been agreed as the brand for all partner and community based environmental PR.
22. **Funding:**
- a) £12.56m St. Leger Homes Thermal Improvement programme. Insulating the remaining 1,800 uninsulated homes.
 - b) £2.4m capital funding application for Council buildings energy efficiency retrofit, including low energy lighting and solar.
 - c) Total of £23.3m of external funding secured including:
 - d) A number of successful funding bids for housing retrofit worth a combined £6.8m.
 - e) £1.7m to decarbonise Askern Leisure Centre
 - f) £166k to increase the number of EV charging bays in Council carparks from 15 to 35.
 - g) £499k for tree planting and tree maintenance
 - h) £138k from the Community Renewal Fund to develop a Housing Retrofit study, training and development and business grade energy audits of buildings and schools.
 - i) £330k for low carbon business grants – issued to 118 Doncaster SME's and micro-businesses.

- j) £150k for a Hydrogen Refuelling Hub feasibility study.
- k) £579k Nature for Climate 'Peatland Discovery Grant'.
- l) £3.3m will enable the delivery of a range of capital works to help restore 2869ha of peatland habitat across the Humberhead Levels, including at the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve (Thorne, Hatfield, Goole, and Crowle Moors), Potteric Carr SSSI, Misson Training Ground SSSI, the River Idle Washlands SSSI and on farmed peatland.
- m) We have 26 outline proposals for use of the Council's £5m Environment & Sustainability Reserve.
- n) 2019 Flood Recovery programme being progressed consisting of 42 scheme with combined costs of £15m. £6m in funding allocated to the programme so far.
- o) £2m in funding won through a DEFRA Competition to retrofit sustainable drainage systems in to two areas of Doncaster that suffer from surface water flooding.
- p) £1.8m allocated through SYMCA Gainshare ring fenced to flood resilience schemes across the borough.

23. **Built Environment**

a) **Housing Retrofit:**

- i. Our retrofit schemes have/will assist 858 households with a mixture of insulation, heating and solar works by March:
 1. 611 homes through Local Authority Delivery (LAD) and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)
 2. 247 homes through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO)
 3. We are preparing for the launch of a new government grant (ECO Plus) due to start April, which will help fund insulation works for homeowners living in homes rated A-D council tax band. This is a 3 year scheme that has potential to help thousands of homes in Doncaster to reduce heating consumption and cost.
 4. The Sustainability Unit awaits the outcome of 2 funding bids worth £6.4m to undertake further insulation works to Council owned and privately owned homes between 2023 and 2025.

b) **Building Retrofit:**

- i. Askern Leisure Centre – Removal of the coal fired boiler, replace with heat pumps, improved roof and wall insulation, LED lighting, low-e glazing and EV charging.
 1. 260.54 tonnes of carbon saving per annum
 2. 4,544.39 tonnes of carbon savings over the lifetime of the improvement works

c) **Electric Vehicles and Charging:**

- i. 42 charging bays now in operation for Council fleet, with 24 being installed/awaiting installation.
 1. 22 bays – North Bridge Depot
 2. 6 bays – Civic Office

3. 2 bays – Archives Building (Chequer Road)
 4. 2 bays – Sandall Beat Environment Centre
 5. 2 bays – Rose Hill Crematorium
 6. 2 bays – Wheatley family Hub
 7. 2 bays – Balby family Hub
 8. 2 bays – Mexborough Library
 9. 2 bays – Holmescarr Centre
 10. Vermeuyden Centre (2 bays) – Awaiting installation
 11. Martin Wells (1 bay) – Awaiting installation
 12. Waste Transfer Station (1 bay with infrastructure for whole DMBC staff carpark) – awaiting installation
 13. 20 bays – currently in construction phase at Civic Office solar carport.
- ii. The following sites are due to have new EV charging bays for public use in the next 2-3 months.
 1. Chamber Road (4 new bays, plus 2 upgrades)
 2. Market carpark (upgrade of 4 bays)
 3. The Dome (2 bays)
 4. Askern Leisure Centre – (2 bay)
 5. John Street carpark Mexborough (2 bay)
 6. Bridge Street carpark Thorne (2 bay)
 7. Civic Quarter carpark (4 bays)
 - iii. To add to the public offer of EV charging in Council carparks, a decision is to be added to the Forward Plan to approve an externally funded scheme of 100 onstreet residential chargepoints, installed in 11 locations across Doncaster.

Renewable Energy:

- iv. Although this is not a delivery outcome for the Council, the 49MW solar farm development approval at Warren Farm, Duncroft, adds to the already impressive renewable energy generation statistics for Doncaster. A further application for 45MW solar farm at Micklebring is at Planning Committee in February, and an application for a 600MW solar farm covering parts of Thorne and North Lincs is expected in 2023-24. A planning application for large scale battery storage (2.7GW) is being made by Banks Renewables at Thorpe Marsh Power Station. The Council could be in a good position to agree a long term Power Purchase Agreement for 100% renewable energy generated in Doncaster.

24. Natural Environment

a) Natural Capital Mapping:

- i. A set of detailed maps are now available for Doncaster to utilise for assessment: for protection, improvement and development to support nature recovery and utilisation of land to maximise the ecosystem services delivered by key sites.
- ii. Due to the size and level of detail they hold, colleagues continue to work on the maps to make them available in a usable format for external stakeholders to view.
- iii. It is intended that the Doncaster Local Records Centre will eventually provide map copies on request, as part of its existing chargeable service.

b. Naturalisation

- i. We are now in the second year of a five-year naturalisation trial. We now have 126 sites where areas of one form or another have been set aside for naturalisation over this coming year totalling 1,613,243 m², which is an increase of 75,462 m² from last year. This includes 41 wildflower sites, areas sown with a variety of seed mixtures in the springtime. Signs promoting the naturalisation project have been installed at sites to inform members of the public as to why some grass areas are being left longer and maintained in a different way to encourage a wider diversity of plant and insects.

c. Tree Challenge:

- i. Season 1 (November 2021 – March 2022) successfully delivered 2 large scale tree planting projects at Bentley and Bullcroft Pit Tops, contributing to the 53,706 trees planted.

Large-scale planting (Council)	= 47,947
Residential & Private planting	= 431
Tiny Forest	= 570
Community planting	= 4,508
Street Scene	= 250
Total	= 53,706

- ii. The devastating effects of the July 2022 heatwave resulted in the loss of over 20,000 newly planted trees. Plans are being prepared to recover the losses at Bullcroft Pit Top.
- iii. The Environment & Sustainability Strategy identified the need to procure from companies with appropriate procedures and controls to ensure that all nursery stock planted is free from pest and disease. This is something which has been stipulated within tenders and quotations carried out by Street Scene for several years when buying plants and trees. This will continue to be included and evaluated as part of any formal tendering process to ensure the no pests and diseases are bought in with nursery stock. Where required plant passports must be provided to ensure products can be traced throughout the supply chain and declared compliant with plant health requirements.
- iv. Season 2 of planting is now underway with over 1,700 trees planted in November and December and 46,000 planned for planting between January and March 2023 for the Queens Green Canopy project.

d. Local Nature Recovery Strategy:

- i. The production of the LNRS will be led by SYMCA as part of their Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP), supported by South Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership. The ESP will provide a framework for understanding SYMCA's role in enabling environmental, social, and economic prosperity.
- ii. The ESP will also enable delivery on the manifesto commitments outlined by Mayor Oliver Coppard *"to work with partners such as the Wildlife Trust to develop and deliver a South Yorkshire Natural Environment Strategy, so that we can protect and restores nature, and invests in our ecosystems."*

- iii. Nature Recovery and the LNRS will now be included in the SYMCA Statement of Common Ground and commitments will be sought from all South Yorkshire Authorities to develop, deliver and monitor delivery through planning, as is also required through the Environment Act.
- iv. South Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership members are currently working on the development of an initial Nature Recovery Network map which will then undergo a wider consultation process (anticipated late 2022/early 2023), along with target and priority setting.
- v. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy will then need a delivery plan and funding to implement and monitor the actions.

e. Biodiversity Net Gain

- i. Cabinet approval has been given to add a £25,000 per biodiversity unit Biodiversity Net Gain Compensation fee to the list of Council fees and charges. This will be used in planning applications in instances where biodiversity measures cannot be delivered on site and Biodiversity Net Gain Units are not available for sale on the open market.
- ii. A supplementary planning document on Biodiversity Net Gain was drafted and went out to public consultation in April 2022. The document is now published and can be found at <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/planning/biodiversity-net-gain-supplementary-planning-document>

f. UNESCO Biosphere status for Thorne and Hatfield Moors

- i. Project to include Doncaster and surrounding area (Hatfield and Crowle Moors).
- ii. Working with Prof. Ian Rotherham and other UNESCO experts to develop an application.
- iii. Target for completion is 2025.

g. Peatland restoration programme on Thorne and Hatfield Moors

- i. The project will enable the delivery of a range of capital works to help restore 2869ha of peatland habitat across the Humberhead Levels, including at the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve (Thorne, Hatfield, Goole, and Crowle Moors), Potteric Carr SSSI, Misson Training Ground SSSI, the River Idle Washlands SSSI and on farmed peatland.
- ii. The capital works will predominantly be associated with the restoration of hydrological function and establishment of conditions for peat-forming vegetation. In restoring peatland habitat the project will reduce carbon emissions and enhance carbon sequestration where feasible. Project Objective 3 quantifies this aim 'reduce carbon emissions, secure 1,501,335 tCO₂e and encourage active peat formation on formerly milled peats on Thorne and Hatfield Moors, other protected sites and adjacent farmland'.
- iii. The project also aims to increase knowledge and understanding of the value of peatlands, their benefits for wildlife and role in mitigating the impacts of climate change. At least 2000 local people will be engaged with the project.

25. Economy

a) Community Renewal Fund (CRF):

- i. Approximately £50,000 of CRF has been used to contribute towards the delivery of 1,200m² of new green infrastructure through tree planting at Bentley and Bullcroft Pit Tops, as well as fully funding the Tiny Forest at Askern Littlemoor Primary Academy.
- ii. £44,000 has been used to fund a Housing Retrofit study, authored by the University of Sheffield, which is due for publication in October.
- iii. £25,000 will be used to fund housing retrofit qualification for up to 15 people from the Council, St Leger Homes and private companies in Doncaster.
- iv. £150,000 has been used to fund a Hydrogen Fuel Feasibility Study, focused on transport, to understand the potential for Doncaster to introduce hydrogen generation infrastructure for future use by HGVs.
- v. £330,000 has been made available for SMEs to access Low Carbon Grants, to improve their business premises and/or processes. 118 grants have been approved for a variety of uses including replacement controls for automation and EV charging.
- vi. £70,000 has been made available to undertake 26 business grade energy audits on Council buildings and schools. The audits will provide us with the necessary information and recommendations to bid into the forthcoming Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

b) Flood Risk, Highway & Land Drainage

- i. 2019 Flood Recovery programme being progressed consisting of 42 scheme with combined costs of £15m.
- ii. £2m in funding won through a DEFRA Competition to retrofit sustainable drainage systems in to two areas of Doncaster that suffer from surface water flooding. £1m allocated to Clay Lane and £1m allocated to Scawthorpe. Both schemes will be carried out in conjunction with Yorkshire Water to maximise opportunities make the areas more resilient to flood ris
- iii. 2 fully funded natural flood management (NFM) schemes in development, Tickhill NFM and Conisbrough NFM each designed to increase community resilience to flash flooding, slowing the flow on these fast reacting catchments and working with land owners and farmers to maximise opportunity for water attenuation.
- iv. Multiple surface water and retrospective SuDS schemes throughout the borough's highway network to improve road safety, reduce highway deterioration and improve water quality.
- v. £1.8m allocated through SYMCA Gainshare ring fenced to flood resilience schemes across the borough.
- vi. Working with partner organisations and neighbourhood authorities to deliver source to sea catchment plans and strategies such as Connected by Water and Humber 2100+

26. Consumption, Education And Behaviour

a) Community Engagement:

- i. In partnership with St Leger Homes, Doncaster Chamber, Voluntary Action Doncaster and Doncaster College, the Council launched the Environmental Pride scheme to support and encourage communities with their environmental activities. Eight grants totalling £20,000 (funded by Efficiency North procurement framework) have been approved in Round 1. A second Round is underway with a £24,000 fund for 7 applications. An example of project:

Growing Together Education CIC is a working farm and runs a farm shop, community cafe, community craft shop, education and training programmes, SEND programmes, green social prescribing, community workshops and events. They will create a working, sustainable and usable large garden area for students, workshops, community groups and volunteers. They will be converting a new area of their site into a full market garden, with areas for year round working, examples of how people can grow at home and a fully accessible community garden.

- ii. Keep Britain Tidy - National Great British Spring Clean saw the Award Winning communities of Doncaster taking part in litter picks across the Borough. There were over 100 litter pick events with over 1,600 bags of litter collected by over 2,000 Community volunteers. 571 litter pickers and 113 hi-viz vests were loaned out by Street Scene during the campaign, some of which were kept by the volunteers to continue litter picking after the campaign had finished. Equipment is still loaned or donated to volunteers outside of the Spring Clean period to help maximise volunteer involvement – with a further 196 litter pickers given out since the Spring Clean.

b) Schools and Education:

- i. Following the creation of the Sustainability Unit in September and the inclusion of Countryside & Woodland Rangers, we have created a new Environment & Sustainability Service for schools to purchase. The service includes energy management and compliance with energy related legislative requirements, procurement of utilities and a broad educational support package that can be delivered at the school or Sandall Beat Environment Centre. With 80 schools buying the service it is one of the most popular services delivered through the Council's Buy Doncaster brand.
- ii. Inspired by school children at Bessacarr Primary there was a Motion to Full Council – Banning the release of Balloons and Sky Lanterns on land owned by Doncaster Council. Passed in January 2022. Proposer Cllr Majid Khan, Seconder Cllr Sarah Smith.

c) Climate Champions:

- i. Since inception early 2021, the Climate Champions group has grown to 192 members, who participate in discussion and sharing of good environmental practice, both in their professional and

personal lives and is a great influence amongst colleagues, friends and family.

d) **Carbon Literacy:**

- I. With support from some of our Climate Champions, the Sustainability Unit has delivered Carbon Literacy training to 234 staff and elected members. Improving the wider understanding of climate change and giving people more confidence when discussing actions of mitigation
- II. Doncaster City Council has been chosen as winner of the National Carbon Literacy Action Day – Catalyst Award 2022


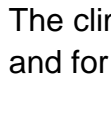
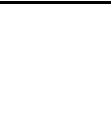
OPTIONS CONSIDERED






27. This report is for information only.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

28. This report is for information only.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 Tackling Climate Change	✓			
<p>Each of the actions being implemented either reduce carbon emissions, protect or enhance nature, or protect residents from the impacts of climate change.</p>				
 Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work	✓			
<p>The climate and environment agenda presents significant opportunity to re-skill and for young people to find opportunities in a future green economy.</p>				
 Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs	✓			
<p>Environmental services and the green economy is likely to be the most important and lucrative of all sectors. It presents very scalable and long-term opportunities as well as specialist industry.</p>				

 Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all	✓			
Improved air quality as a result of reduced use of fossil fuels in energy supply and transport.				
 Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs	✓			
Each of the actions being implemented either reduce carbon emissions, protect or enhance nature, or protect residents from the impacts of climate change.				
 Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough				✓
Not applicable.				
 Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future	✓			
Improving transport infrastructure through electric vehicle charging.				
 Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities				✓
Not applicable.				
Fair & Inclusive	✓			
Supporting residents with housing retrofit, access to green open space and woodland. Ensuring all communities benefit.				

Legal Implications

29. No Legal Implications have been sought for this report. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Panel.

Financial Implications

30. No Financial Implications have been sought for this report. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Panel. This report is for information only.

Human Resources

31. No Implications have been sought for this report. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Panel. This report is for information only.

Technology Implications

32. No Implications have been sought for this report. Further specific advice can be provided in relation to any issues raised by the Panel. This report is for information only.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

33. This report is for information only.

CONSULTATION

34. Various consultations undertaken with Portfolio Holders and Ward Members for each work stream.
35. Dan Swaine – Director Economy & Environment
36. Cllr Mark Houlbrook – Portfolio Holder for Sustainability & Waste

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Environment & Sustainability Strategy](#)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

37. EV – Electric Vehicle
38. LNRS – Local Nature Recovery Strategy
39. ESP – Environment and Sustainability Plan
40. SYMCA – South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
41. MW – Megawatt
42. GW – Gigawatt
43. FTE – Full Time Equivalent
44. E&S – Environment & Sustainability
45. UNESCO – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
46. SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest
47. DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
48. SEND – Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
49. NFM – Natural Flood Management
50. SUDs – Sustainable Drainage Systems
51. SME's – Small & Medium Enterprise
52. TCO_{2e} – Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent
53. ECO – Energy Company Obligation
54. LAD – Local Authority Delivery scheme
55. SHDF – Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

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