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Climate & Environment Policy

Addressing the Climate Crisis for Copeland's People and Places

Version: Final

Policy Date: December 2020

Document Control

Organisation	Copeland Borough Council
Title	Climate & Environment Policy
Version	Final Version
Author	Mitchell McCombe Nuclear & Energy Development Officer
Filename	Climate & Environment Policy
Owner	Pat Graham Chief Executive Officer
Subject	Climate & Environmental Policy
Protective Marking	N/A
Review Date	2023

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Revision History

Version Renewed	Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	Description of Revision

Document Approval

Version	Approved By	Date
Final Draft	Executive	10/11/2020
Final Draft	Full Council	15/12/2020

Document Distribution

This policy is to be distributed to all staff and Elected Members of Copeland Borough Council and placed on the Council's intranet site and website. A copy must also be provided to contractors and 3rd parties undertaking work on Copeland Borough Council premises.

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Introduction

Purpose

This document sets out Copeland Borough Council's ("the Council") revised Climate & Environment Policy ("the Policy") covering the years 2020-2023.

This Policy has the following objectives:

- To commit to becoming a truly sustainable organisation, with the ability to deliver the quality of services expected of the Council for Copeland's people and communities now and in the future;
- To take meaningful action to limit the harmful effects of climate change, and to protect and enhance the environment; and
- To continue our journey towards becoming a low-carbon Council.

This document also sets out our ambitions and responsibilities as leaders in the community, to help our residents, businesses and visitors to adopt sustainable ways to live, work and visit Copeland.

Policy Background

The previous Environmental Policy (covering the years 2017-2020) aimed to ensure that the environmental impacts of the Council's decisions and actions were positive, sustainable and resilient both now and in the future. The policy went on to recognise that "[The Council's] own activities have an impact on the environment, [and that] it has a legal and ethical duty to act as an environmentally responsible organisation that is adaptive to climate change". This Policy accomplished many things including implementing LED lighting across our estate, installation of air-source heat pumps, the rollout of the Council's kerbside recycling scheme and rewilding interventions.

This document sets out the Council's new policy framework for issues relating to the climate and environment. It replaces the Council's 2017 Environmental Policy and:

- Set out the new policy intentions based on consultations with departmental managers and senior officers across the organisation;
- Builds on the commitments made in the Climate & Environmental Position Statement, agreed by the Council's Executive Committee in December 2019 (see Appendix A);
- Justifies a series of subsequent actions the Council will take to reduce the environmental and climatological footprint of the organisation;
- Embeds the UN Sustainable Development Goals into the fabric of the organisation.

Policy Context

International Commitments

Member Countries of the United Nations (UN) adopted the Paris Agreement in 2016 to “strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change¹”. This will be achieved through efforts to restrict global temperature rise to below 2°C this century, but preferably 1.5°C. The United Kingdom (“the UK”) ratified this treaty and are thus bound by international law to abide by the targets. While there is no set-date requiring countries to achieve 1.5-2°C limits, it is stated that peak emission levels must be reached as soon as reasonably practicable.

In 2015, Member Countries of the UN also adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (“the SDGs”) which replace the Millennium Development Goals introduced at the start of the millennium. The UN argue that the 17 goals – designed to eradicate poverty, respond to climate change and promote peaceful and prosperous livelihoods are *integrated*². Many organisations and local authorities have now adopted particular SDGs and used them as a template to tackle key areas including:

- SDG-7 Affordable & Clean Energy: increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix and improving energy efficiencies;
- SDG-11 Sustainable Cities & Communities: strengthened regional development planning;
- SDG-12 Responsible Consumption & Production: measures to substantially reduce waste generation through greater awareness of the waste triangle, and promotion of commercially sustainable practices in procurement and contracting;
- SDG-13 Climate Action: integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

We are also inspired by the actions and initiatives undertaken by the Global Covenant of Mayors – the largest global actor for city and local government leadership in addressing climatological and environmental crises. The Covenant “envisions a world where committed mayors and local governments – in alliance with partners – accelerate ambitious, measurable climate and energy initiatives that lead to a low-emission and climate-resilient future³”.

UK Commitments

In 2008 the UK Government passed the Climate Change Act, which set legally binding targets for the UK to reduce carbon emissions to 80% of the 1990 levels across all sectors.

This Act of Parliament was amended in May 2019 following recommendations by the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) for the UK government to bring forward legislation to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change/>

² This integration states that action in one area will affect the outline in another area.

³ <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/about/>

This Act:

- Established the Committee on Climate Change (“the CCC”) – which acts as an advisory committee to central and devolved governments and reports to the Department for Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy (BEIS);
- Introduced “carbon budgets”. These budgets “restrict the amount of greenhouse gas the UK can legally emit in a defined five year period⁴”. Reductions are also staggered – meaning the first carbon budget required a 25% reduction, second 31% and 3rd by 37% and so on. In 2019, a report to Parliament by the CCC stated that current UK Government policies and plans are “insufficient” and the UK will fail to meet the thresholds for the fourth and fifth carbon budgets⁵.

The UK Clean Growth Strategy aims to “grow our national income while simultaneously cutting greenhouse gas emissions⁶”. It has set out a series of key commitments that will support the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

In 2019 the Government introduced the Environment Bill to Parliament⁷. It was reintroduced in the Queens Speech in December 2019 and has set out ambitions to:

- Establish a new governance framework for the environment;
- Integrate environmental protection into policy-making;
- Establish an Office for Environmental Protection;
- Support the transition towards a circular economy – making better use of our resources for longer;
- Introduce similar charges for other single-use plastic items following the successes of the carrier-bag charge;
- Strengthen local authorities powers to tackle air quality issues;
- Introduce “mandatory biodiversity net-gain” to ensure that new developments enhance biodiversity and deliver thriving natural spaces for communities.

Regional & Local Commitments

To date, more than half of the UK’s local authorities have declared “Climate Emergencies”, statements that recognise the Climate Crisis as an emergency, and hence commit time and resources to taking meaningful action to reduce emissions and limit harmful effects by a target date. Of the Cumbrian local authorities, Allerdale Borough Council, Barrow Borough Council, Eden District Council, Carlisle City Council and South Lakeland District Council have declared climate emergencies. The Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) has been implementing carbon management strategies for a number of years.

⁴ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/reducing-carbon-emissions/carbon-budgets-and-targets/>

⁵ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CCC-2019-Progress-in-reducing-UK-emissions.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy/clean-growth-strategy-executive-summary>

⁷ You can view explanatory notes here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2019/environment-bill-policy-statement>

In response to increasing concern about the issue of climate change, in April 2019, all Cumbrian local authorities and the LDNPA formally adopted the Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy incorporating a pledge for Cumbria, “to become a ‘carbon neutral’ County and to mitigate the likely impact of existing climate change”. To support this pledge, a carbon baseline report for Cumbria was commissioned which identifies a number of pathways towards becoming a Net Zero Cumbria. Based on the report’s findings, the Cumbria Leaders Board and Chief Executives Group are considering the adoption of a net-zero carbon target for Cumbria of 2037 (see Figure 1 for reference).

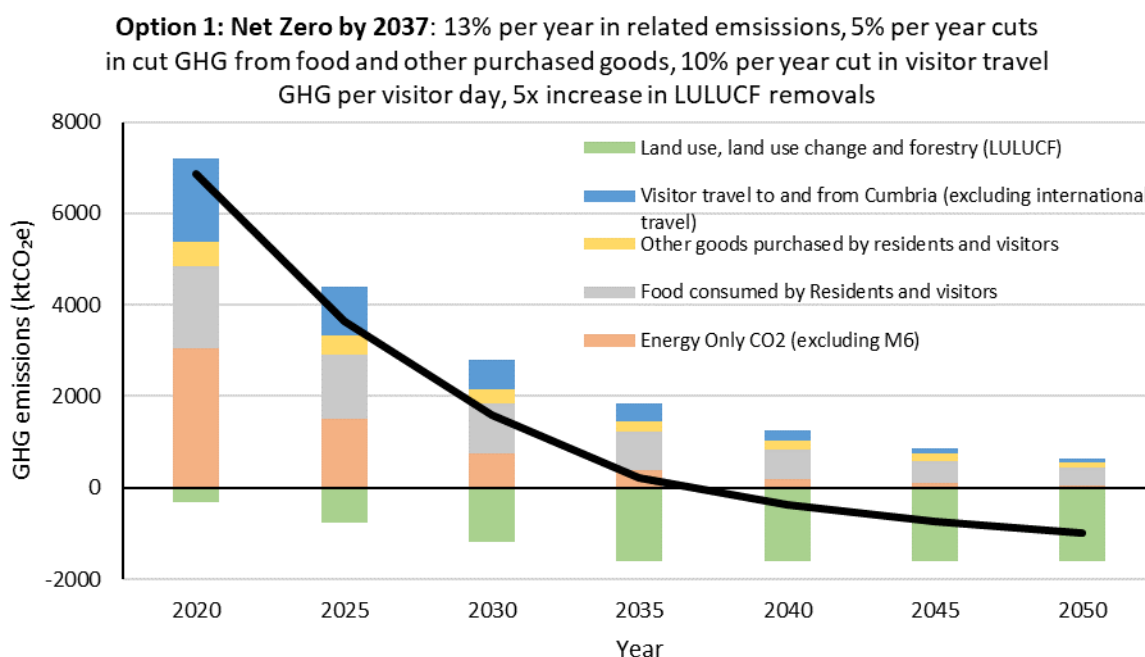


Figure 1 - Net Zero by 2037

In December 2019, the Council agreed a Climate and Environment Position Statement, which sets out the Council’s corporate and community leadership commitments to changing for the better, to limiting further harmful effects of climate change and to identifying longer-term strategic ambitions to become a low-carbon authority.

Future Challenges: learning from the Global Coronavirus Pandemic

The COVID pandemic and the increasing frequency and severity of global crises show us the urgent need to better align the needs of individuals, business and society towards shared goals – economic wellbeing, yes, but also community wellbeing, empowerment, sustainability, resilience and other qualitative measures encompassed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

During the pandemic, the mobilisation of citizens and volunteers in partnership with business, industry, third sector and local government to meet the immediate needs of those in danger, those who are most vulnerable and society as a whole, has highlighted the potential value of a community within which the empowered citizen is an active contributor. This challenges us to rethink and reimagine the role of business and the individual in the relationship between public health, economic wellbeing, environment and place. To meaningfully contribute to the fight against climate change, we must engage citizens in the development and implementation of our plans.

Environmental sustainability underpins a thriving community: one where our residents live healthy and prosperous lives; feel better connected with people and places; have a sense of empowerment in decision-making and place shaping; and feel enabled by the offer of diverse and accessible services and opportunities.

Why Will this Policy Benefit Copeland?

1. **Citizen Engagement:** It is essential to connect climate policy to the needs of all citizens, demonstrating that action to combat climate change can improve lives, not diminish them. By doing so we will realise the wider benefits of adaptation to and mitigation of climate damage, such as better homes, more money in local economies, clean air, healthier travel options, new employment opportunities and new models of working across different industries.
2. **Co-benefits:** By looking at these wider co-benefits we can deliver environmental and social value at the same time and use property, environmental health, community services, housing, infrastructure or economic development budgets in a smarter way that delivers urgent environmental action, while maintaining continuity of service provision.
3. **Increased Opportunity and Reduced Costs:** Action on climate heating and biodiversity can deliver many local benefits, including lower energy bills, economic regeneration and creation of local jobs, reductions in fuel poverty, improved air quality and enhanced green spaces. Increasing resilience to climate change risks can result in avoided costs from flood damage to buildings, infrastructure and services, enhanced green spaces and improved health.
4. **Sustainability:** As a small local authority, it is important that we are able to continue to deliver quality services to our residents, businesses and visitors in a more sustainable way. We must be able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Benefits of a Revised Policy

The Policy will achieve the following benefits:

- Demonstrate that the Council is acting as a responsible authority by taking meaningful steps to prevent further harm and create a positive impact on the climate and biosphere;
- Support the Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy ambitions for Cumbria to become “carbon neutral”;
- Facilitate (by using a “bottom-up” approach) the successful implementation of the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- Take into consideration the changing socio-economic circumstances following the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Stimulate a fundamental shift in culture in terms of how we as individuals and as a council take account of climate and environmental considerations in our activities and decision-making.

Benefits are likely to be realised in the following areas:

Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduced emissions result in local, regional, national and global reduction in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events caused by climate change ✓ Avoid economic and social cost and disruption of responding to consequences of severe weather conditions
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Green infrastructure can contribute to habitat creation, air quality and natural flood resilience ✓ Improved biodiversity has benefits for native animal and plant species including resistance to disease, and pollinator health, which is essential for food security
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Access to green spaces is linked to positive mental and physical health ✓ Healthier diets with lower environmental impacts associated with food production ✓ Green travel improves air quality and promotes greater activity levels, which are good for health
Economic and Job Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Creation of green jobs in a sustainable economy ✓ Support and incentivise local businesses to operate sustainably ✓ Attract investment in the infrastructure and skills to support inclusive growth
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduced severity and frequency of flooding ✓ Reduced exposure to public health emergencies ✓ Protect our natural assets including the Lake District National Park and Heritage Coastline ✓ Local, low carbon electricity provides energy security ✓ Sustainable land and water management secures the future of our rural industries
Equity and Social Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Green and blue infrastructure can increase life expectancy and reduce health inequalities ✓ Providing support to vulnerable people and those on lower incomes ✓ Affordable warmth: more efficient buildings are warmer and cheaper to run, which reduces fuel poverty, with knock on health, education and financial benefits
Corporate/ Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Efficiency savings associated with reduced energy bills and consumption levels ✓ Improved efficiency and productivity of the Council's property and assets ✓ Commercial opportunities associated with low carbon energy generation

Scope

The following sections of this Policy covers three areas:

	Description
A Sustainable Council	Areas of Policy that impact the organisation, our assets, Elected Members and Employees.
A Sustainable Borough	Areas of Policy concerned with the wider Borough and community.
Community Leadership & Net Zero	Areas of Policy relating to the Council's role and influence as community leaders.

Detailed actions will be included in the Council's Climate Action Plan and are not included in this Policy.

1. A Sustainable Council

Organisational Emissions

- 1.1. We will work to reduce our organisational carbon emissions to very low or Net Zero, and to positively impact biodiversity and the environment wherever reasonably practicable.
- 1.2. In order to do so, we as a Council will adopt the following principles:
 - The climate and ecological impact of Council activities will be assessed and considered in decision making;
 - Net Zero requires a fundamental rethink of our behaviour – we will embrace this;
 - Our people will bring about the change, therefore we must invest in them and our culture;
 - We will drastically reduce our consumption of energy, fuel and materials;
 - Where consumption cannot be avoided or minimised we will source energy, fuel and materials responsibly;
 - We will remove unnecessary travel, implementing a more flexible agile working policy;
 - Across our estate, we will minimise waste to landfill and promote the use of the waste hierarchy and circular economy principles, including eradicating all single use plastics from our day to day operations;
 - We will embed sustainability into our procurement practices under Social Value criteria;
 - We will divest from fossil fuels (e.g. through our pension funds) and make no future investment in fossil fuels.

Leadership

- 1.3. The Council's Elected Members are leaders in the community, and therefore have a role in championing meaningful action.
- 1.4. We will:
 - Identify an Environmental Champion;
 - Identify a Climate Champion;
 - Publish a Climate Charter, setting out the Council's commitment to its Members, staff, customers, and the public in relation to climate change;
 - Form a climate steering group to provide oversight and scrutiny of the Council's climate policy, strategy and plans.
- 1.5. At a corporate level, if we are to make a meaningful difference, our leadership team must understand, support and champion the cultural shift required, and then drive change.
- 1.6. Training and awareness for Elected Members and our employees is crucial to enabling everyone to make informed, climate-aware decisions.
- 1.7. Processes and structures must also be amended to ensure that corporate decision-making takes proper account of climate and environmental impacts. We will update our governance and corporate reporting mechanisms accordingly.

- 1.8. It is important that we have the capacity and the capability to develop our strategies and to deliver our plans. We will explore alternative ways to provide this resource, recognising severe pressures on our budget.
- 1.9. We will overhaul our Human Resources policies, to reflect the working practices required to achieve our targets and moving towards supportive agile working policies to reduce unnecessary travel to work.

Action Areas

- 1.10. We will integrate consideration of emissions into Corporate and Executive reporting mechanisms.
- 1.11. Detailed actions will be included in the Climate Action Plan and are not included in this Policy, covering:
 - Members & Employees;
 - Energy Efficiency of Property & Estate;
 - Fleet Vehicles & Travel;
 - Waste & Consumption.

2. A Sustainable Borough

We recognise that we are a small local authority with limited influence over the infrastructure of this place. However, while this Policy does not mandate any individual or organisation other than the Council, it places an expectation on others to show equal commitment to carbon reduction and the sustainability of our Borough. Meaningful change can only come from collective responsibility and ownership between us, our residents and the businesses that operate in the Borough.

If by sustainability, we mean the wellbeing of Copeland's communities, now and for the future, then we must consider climate change holistically and not in isolation from strategic activities relating to the economy, environment and public health.

Carbon Baseline

The Cumbria Carbon Baseline Report shows that Copeland's production and consumption based emissions are relatively low (4.6tCO₂ per capita) and almost equal to the UK average.

Production emissions are the net emissions that take place in Copeland plus those arising from the production of electricity used in the Borough, wherever that generation takes place.

The largest contribution to production based emissions comes from:

1. Industrial and commercial fuel use
2. Domestic energy use (primarily gas and electricity)
3. Road Transport

Consumption based emissions take into account the emissions associated with any goods or services consumed in the Borough, such as food purchased from shops, energy generated elsewhere but used here and vehicle fuel. High areas of consumption based emissions include:

- The emissions footprint of residents is roughly equal to that of visitors
- Top emissions areas for residents include travel (mostly by car), food and drink and household fuel use
- Travel (road and air) dominates visitor emissions

This understanding provides a guide as to where to target emissions reduction interventions.

Adaption & Mitigation

2.1. The Sustainable Borough section of the Climate Action Plan will set detailed actions and targets in the following areas:

Low carbon Energy

We will pursue the clean energy vision set out in the Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus, supporting opportunities to develop and deploy clean energy technologies including nuclear, offshore wind, hydrogen and synthetic fuels. Copeland will be at the forefront of the UK's decarbonised energy systems.

We also encourage the development of community and decentralised low carbon energy generation in the Borough, and will support this through our involvement in the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership and through the Borderlands Energy Masterplan and accompanying Local Energy Plans.

Availability of low carbon energy is an attractive selling point for Copeland as a place to do business, and will support our economic growth and diversification ambitions.

Decarbonising Heat

In order to achieve the UK's Net Zero targets, we must also decarbonise heat. We will support and encourage proposals to develop domestic and industrial heat networks, as well as encouraging industrial partners to decarbonise their own heat supplies.

Energy Efficiency and the Built Environment

Enhanced building efficiency is key to reducing overall consumption of energy and will help to reduce energy costs for residents and businesses alike.

Recognising that the Council's own estate is relatively small, we will support energy efficiency initiatives and signpost to organisations (such as Cumbria Action for Sustainability) and available grant funding (such as through the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership) to help our residents and businesses alike.

We expect commercial property owners to actively pursue carbon reduction activities across their estates, and not to wait for the Council or other authorities to mandate or fund this.

Waste

There has been significant focus on the reduction of single use plastics. This is an important environmental and ecological issue, and the Council will cut the use of single use plastics from its operations wherever possible. However, the climate impact of waste is due to the embodied emissions of materials and emissions associated with disposal.

We will integrate the waste hierarchy into the Council's operations, and work towards fully circular material lifecycles wherever possible.

We will ensure that the sustainability is meaningfully considered when procuring goods and services.

We will continue to develop the Council's service offer to residents and businesses to ensure that recycling options are widely available and accessible, including in public spaces.

Transport

We will engage in development of the Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan and other strategic initiatives to ensure that Copeland's future infrastructure offers our residents, businesses and visitors accessible opportunities to travel safely and sustainably or to reduce the need to travel altogether.

This may include:

- Active travel infrastructure including cycling and walking
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Hydrogen fuels and infrastructure
- Conversion of the Council's own fleet to electric or hydrogen vehicles
- Availability of accessible low-carbon public transport services

Though the Council's influence over infrastructure development is relatively limited, we will consider how we can incentivise and promote the transition to more sustainable modes of transport.

Visitor Economy

We will maximise the value of our natural, heritage and cultural assets: the stunning Lake District Coast, between the England's highest peak and deepest lake. Our tourism offer will centre on showcasing the tranquillity of the environment around us, promoting healthy lifestyles by sourcing a healthy food offer from local, fresh, seasonal produce and helping people explore the beauty of the Lake District National Park in an environmentally friendly way.

Resilience and Flooding

To meet our climate goals, we must not only vastly reduce our emissions, but we must concurrently remove significant amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. We will actively support environmental enhancements, beneficial land use/management and biodiversity interventions in the Borough.

Implementation of this Policy will help to combat the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather conditions resulting from climate change, and with partners we will develop mitigation approaches that help communities prepare and be protected from the effects of such events.

For example, we encourage and support initiatives to "slow the flow" – rewilding, reforestation and more sustainable land use management of upland environments to recreate natural buffers for surface water, with a co-benefit to biodiversity.

Biodiversity and Land Management

In order to reduce the harmful impacts of climate change, we must act to remove carbon from the atmosphere. Offsetting will not achieve this, so we must also implement carbon sequestration activities.

Given Copeland's rural setting, Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) is a target area for sequestration of carbon.

The council will support and encourage initiatives such as afforestation, rewilding, peatland restoration and habitat conservation that bring climate and biodiversity co-benefits.

Funding

- 2.2. Working with our partners across Cumbria's strategic bodies and groups such as the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership, we will explore the opportunities for additional and alternative funding routes to support climate action.
- 2.3. Recognising that everyone has a role to play in decarbonising our economy, we will help our local businesses and community groups to identify funding opportunities, noting that the Council is not resourced to undertake this role.
- 2.4. We will work with partners and local stakeholders to support the Borderlands Energy Masterplan and development of Local Energy Plans, which might include community energy projects.

Citizen Engagement

- 2.5. Meaningful action on climate change requires a collective approach. We will explore ways of facilitating greater levels of citizen engagement in development of climate action plans, projects and initiatives.
- 2.6. In collaboration with the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership, we are committed to creating a Copeland Citizens Jury, to enable a representative cross-section of the public to properly discuss climate change in detail and then make recommendations for policy change and action. This will achieve many things, but above all will enable communities to have a role in decision-making around climate action plans for Copeland.

3. Community Leadership and Net Zero

Cumbria Climate Change Working Group

- 3.1. The Council will continue to engage with the Cumbria Climate Change Working Group in order to support county-wide work towards Cumbria's Net Zero target under the Joint Public Health Strategy for Cumbria.
- 3.2. The Council will support the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership – a group of public, private and third sector organisations working together to drive down Cumbria's carbon emissions.

Clean Energy

- 3.3. We will work with partners to secure the delivery of the vision set out in the Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus, bringing new large, small and advanced new nuclear development to Copeland, to produce low-carbon heat, fuels and electricity to decarbonise the local and national economy.
- 3.4. We will develop strategies to become a net exporter of clean energy to the North and wider UK, as well as decarbonising local energy networks, helping energy intensive industries to operate more sustainably.
- 3.5. By doing so, we will create green collar jobs to support the new clean energy economy in West Cumbria, Cumbria and the UK.

Business

- 3.6. Successful decarbonisation of our Borough cannot be achieved by the Council alone. The key players across our economic area also have a responsibility to consider their own emission reduction plans in line with government targets.
- 3.7. We will encourage organisations that operate in Cumbria to reduce their emissions and to operate sustainably.
- 3.8. By giving residents and communities a voice in shaping this future, for example through a Citizens Jury, we hope to inspire and lead those organisations to follow suit and do the same.

4. Implementation

- 4.1. This policy document replaces the Council’s Environmental Policy 2017-2020, and will become effective immediately upon adoption by the Council. Following adoption, the Council will develop underpinning strategies and plans to implement the Policy.
- 4.2. The key implementation document shall be the Council’s Climate Action Plan, which is a separate document that will be reviewed annually.
- 4.3. A number of measures are set out in the Climate Action Plan document, by which to implement this Policy. The following are the suggested high-impact priority activities to be taken immediately:
 1. Development and adoption of a Sustainability Charter, which publically sets out the Council’s commitment to and enforceable expectations of anyone who lives in, works in or visits Copeland, including the Council itself;
 2. Explicit consideration of sustainability (including climate impact) to be built into corporate governance, reporting and democratic decision-making mechanisms;
 3. All Council Service Plans (from 2021) to include sustainability targets;
 4. Sustainability to be given proper weighting under Social Value criteria within Council procurement procedures in line with Social Value Act;
 5. Cultural change programme starting with education and training for leaders, and climate literacy to be embedded into corporate induction;
 6. Review of corporate policies to embed sustainability, climate and environmental considerations;
 7. Use Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership funding to create meaningful citizen participation in sustainability and climate action projects, ensuring positive outcomes for all Copeland residents;
 8. With funding from the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership, host a Copeland Citizen’s Jury on Climate Change to inform our plans;
 9. Explore the formation of a decarbonisation alliance for Copeland/West Cumbria, made up of private, public, third sector and community representatives, to develop a decarbonisation roadmap.
- 4.4. A “Climate Steering Group” will be established to provide scrutiny and oversight of the Council’s progress, and to oversee the implementation of the Policy and Climate Action Plan by:
 - Supporting and contributing to the development of underlying strategies and plans of this Policy;
 - Annually monitoring and reporting progress to appropriate bodies within the Council;
 - Acting as “Green Champions” within and outside of the organisation and promoting a sustainable working culture;
 - Working in collaboration with the Council’s Commercial Engagement Group to drive new sustainable low-carbon initiatives.

Terms of Reference will be detailed and proposed at the first meeting of the Group.

Appendix A – Climate & Environment Position Statement

Copeland Borough Council recognises that the climate crisis represents a man-made existential threat to life on earth and is already having far-reaching, irreversible effects on populations, places, economies, society and the natural environment, locally, nationally and globally. The halting of this pace of detrimental change must be both a global and local priority. We welcome the British Government's amendment to the Climate Change Act of 2008, which commits to a Net Zero Carbon UK by 2050, and Cumbria County Council's corresponding commitment to a Net Zero Carbon target for the County.

Copeland has already borne witness to early damaging effects of climate breakdown; flooding of local towns, dry summer spells, and extreme weather events such as Storm Desmond, which to date have been minor in comparison to some of the global manifestations. Such effects will become more frequent and severe. Copeland takes pride in hosting a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Lake District National Park, other natural assets including the Coast, and sites of strategic national importance, which should be protected and preserved.

However, more must be done to also combat the man-made ecological crisis that is as much a threat to the planet. The unprecedented rate of species extinction caused by human activity, known as "the sixth mass extinction", threatens the survival of human civilisation. Each year, the rate at which humans consume natural resources far outstrips the ability of the planet to replenish them – the date at which this occurs is known as "Earth Overshoot Day", which occurred on 29th July 2019, the earliest ever.

We commit to maximising the benefits that will come from combating, and developing resilience to, these crises and in doing so developing a sustainable economy. We will put sustainable decision making at the heart of everything we do and this will not be seen as an add-on only if we can afford it. In the short term, this will require a necessary mind-set shift and behavioural change, but will result in positive social, economic and environmental outcomes in Copeland and beyond.

Since the first commercial nuclear electricity generation at Calder Hall in 1957, Copeland has contributed to the UK's green economy. Now, world-leading environmental restoration capability is being developed in cleaning up the Sellafield site – a site that will continue to support low-carbon electricity generation around the UK for decades to come. There is great potential for Copeland, as Centre of Nuclear Excellence at the heart of Britain's Energy Coast, to support future low carbon missions to sustainably power the nation.

Copeland Borough Council has already taken steps to reduce our environmental impact, including implementing a kerbside recycling scheme for residents, reducing the carbon footprint of our operational fleet and estate and increasing the biodiversity of our open spaces, but we know we must do more: to protect our rural, coastal environment; to influence sustainable practices across the industries that operate here; and as home to the Lake District National Park, England's highest peak and the natural coastline, we can show millions of tourists what a sustainable future looks like.

We recognise that we must act today if we are to secure any sustainable future beyond the next century, and that this mission is bigger than any personal, corporate or political agenda. We commit to taking meaningful action to reduce our footprint, in a sustainable way that stimulates economic growth and creates beneficial outcomes for our communities, by:

- Building sustainability into the core of our policy framework and decision making processes, expanding our approach to full lifecycle considerations and implementing best practice including the Waste Hierarchy;
- Working with central government and neighbouring Councils to contribute to the carbon-reduction targets set out in the UK Carbon Budget and at County level;
- Actively engaging with support networks including the Cumbria Climate Action Group, and leading the Local Authority Climate Policy Group to ensure consistently ambitious climate policy across the County;
- Acting as a supportive partner to local community organisations, businesses and homeowners in taking mutually beneficial climate and environment action;
- Publicly declare, within appropriate plans and strategies, the commitment to achieve a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations, especially energy sourcing and use, travel and transport, waste production and disposal and the purchasing of goods and services;
- Publicly declare, within appropriate plans and strategies, the commitment to increase biodiversity and protect the biosphere;
- Monitor the progress of our plans against the actions needed and publish the result;
- Assess the risk associated with both the climate and ecological crises, and adapt accordingly to the implications for our services and our communities;
- Develop plans and support projects with our partners and local communities to progressively address the causes and the impacts of climate change and environmental damage, according to our local priorities, securing maximum benefit for our communities;
- Help our residents understand the challenge and take action.

Copeland Borough Council is a small local authority, under pressure to deliver quality of service within ever-constrained budgets. However, we recognise that, while we may not be able to deliver the above commitments within our current capability and capacity, this has to be our priority. So, we will find new ways to continue delivering the services that our residents and communities expect from us, while striving to deliver the ambitious commitments made here.