

To: Climate Change Sub-Committee

On: 19 April 2021

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Climate Emergency – Policy Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of the key policy updates at a national level since January 2021. The areas covered are recent legislation; the Scottish Government's plans, strategies and consultations; the Scottish Government's budget and recently announced funding; the Edinburgh Declaration and plans for COP26.
- 1.2 This is a fast-paced policy area, particularly over the coming months in the run up to the COP26 summit and there are national documents due to be published around the date of the Climate Change Sub-Committee meeting, therefore further updates will be provided if appropriate.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Climate Change Sub-Committee:
- Note the policy update in relation to the climate emergency.

3. Background

3.1 Recent legislation

In February 2021, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill, which will accelerate the deployment of heat networks – a heating system that lets groups of homes and business properties get heating from a shared central source rather than individual fossil fuel boilers. These heating networks help cut emissions and reduce fuel poverty and their development also supports the creation of green jobs. The legislation creates a new licencing system to improve standards, new rights for heat network developers to level the playing field and encourage growth and investment and a new consent system to make sure new networks are

developed in areas where they will most benefit and are tailored to local needs.

3.2 **Scottish Government plans, strategies and consultations**

The development of heat networks was further supported by the publication of the Scottish Government's Heat in Buildings Strategy (published in February 2021) which outlines actions needed to transform Scotland's domestic and non-domestic building stock to use low and zero emissions heating systems.

3.3 In 2018, the Scottish Government published their Climate Change Plan, outlining action to meet Scotland's climate targets. In December 2020, the plan was updated to reflect the new targets within the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 and the challenges and opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, aligning activity with a green recovery. It has also been updated based on progress developing the Green New Deal; following advice and contributions from a range of advisory groups; and in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow.

3.4 The plan focuses on the following areas – electricity; buildings; transport; industry; waste and the circular economy; land use, land use change and forestry; agriculture; and negative emissions technologies – and maps out key milestones to 2032. The plan recognises that to achieve Scotland's climate ambition, collaborative effort is the key - across organisations, sectors and with citizen buy-in and behaviour change.

3.5 Alongside this, the Scottish Government have recently consulted on their draft public engagement strategy 'Net Zero Nation' with the consultation closing on 31 March 2021. The purpose of the consultation was to ensure that public engagement is as effective and inclusive as it can be, recognising that to achieve Scotland's climate ambitions, societal support and behaviour change is critical. The strategy is underpinned by three strategic objectives:

- That people are aware of the action that the Scottish Government are taking and how it relates to their lives;
- That people actively participate in shaping the direction of travel in relation to adaptation and mitigation of climate change; and
- That people take action on climate change, and that this is normalised and encouraged across Scotland.

3.6 Linked to this engagement with individuals across Scotland, Scotland's Climate Assembly, a representative forum of Scotland's population, is due to conclude shortly, with their final meeting having recently taken place on 19 and 20 March 2021. Following this, an interim report was published on 24 March 2021, outlining 16 goals covering a broad range of issues including heating, emissions, land use, taxation and the economy. A full report with detailed recommendations will be published in May following the election of a new Scottish Parliament.

3.7 The Just Transition Commission published its recommendations on 23 March 2021. The Commission was established in 2019 to advise on moving to a net-zero economy in a way that is fair for all - a key theme for the Scottish Government in relation to the COP26 summit lobbying. The concept of a just transition became widely understood through the Paris Agreement which

noted the need to take into account the importance of a 'just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs'. The Commission's report outlines four key messages:

- Pursue an orderly, managed transition to net-zero that creates benefits and opportunities for people across Scotland
- Equip people with the skills and education they need to benefit from the transition
- Empower and invigorate our communities and strengthen local economies
- Share benefits widely and ensure burdens are distributed on the basis of ability to pay

- 3.8 There are 24 recommendations grouped under each of the above four themes, of particular interest for local government are recommendations in relation to developing green skills; utilising the power of public sector supply chains and public sector pension funds; green participatory budgeting; for local authorities along with the Scottish Government and developers to commit to creating low carbon-communities, particularly in line with the 20-minute neighbourhoods and the call to 'empower and resource local authorities to deliver a just and green recovery'.
- 3.9 A consultation on single use plastics in Scotland opened at the end of last year closing in January 2021, with a further consultation on draft regulations (based on the results of the previous consultation) carried out between March and April 2021. The regulations (Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products and Oxo-degradable Plastic Products) (Scotland)) will effectively create a ban on problematic single-use plastic items in line with Article 5 of the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive.
- 3.10 Linked to this, the Scottish Parliament agreed in January 2021, that the minimum cost of a plastic carrier bag in Scotland will increase from 5p to 10p from April 2021 (although there are some temporary exemptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic) as part of the ongoing efforts to tackle single-use plastics.
- 3.11 The procurement activity of the public sector has a critically important role to play to support Scotland meeting its climate goals. Following a presentation to the Climate Change Sub-Committee by the Council's Strategic Commercial and Procurement Manager in December, there has been further progress in this area with the cross-sector Climate and Procurement Forum working with Scottish Ministers to develop a policy note and Ministers writing to public sector leaders (including all Council Chief Executives) on 18 March 2021 outlining key messages to further inform and advance public bodies' approaches to tackling the climate emergency through procurement.
- 3.12 In March, the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) published its annual analysis of public sector climate change reports. The analysis presents positive findings, with Scotland's public bodies reporting a continued decrease of scope 1 and scope 2 emissions (direct greenhouse gas emissions and electricity indirect greenhouse gas emissions, i.e. generated from purchased electricity). Emissions savings as a result of projects increased by 2% compared to project savings for 2018/19. Waste projects were responsible for

nearly half of those savings (42%), exceeding savings from electricity projects (34%) for the first time.

3.13 The report also noted that 75% of public bodies have one or more emission targets, ranging from an overall corporate emissions target to a specific activity or emission source. Over 20 bodies have already set a net zero target that aligns with or is more ambitious than the 2045 national target. 11 local authorities have a net zero target, of these 4 are aligned with the national target of 2045.

3.14 **Budget and funding streams**

Within the Scottish Government's 2021/22 budget, there were a range of green funding streams identified including the first wave of the £2bn Low Carbon Fund with £14m in the first year for the Green Jobs Fund, the heat in buildings budget was increased to £213.4m and forestry to £121.2m. Multi-year commitments included the peatland restoration programme (see below), £120m for zero-emission buses, £500m for active travel, £70m for recycling improvement fund (see below) and £500m for bus priority infrastructure.

3.15 £8m will be used to fund activity in relation to COP26, particularly to accelerate climate goals, develop Scotland's international influence and attract green investment alongside the ongoing commitment to support internal climate justice with £3m of funding identified for this.

3.16 In recent weeks, further details have been published about some of the above funding. A £22m peatland restoration fund for farmers, landowners and land managers was announced in February 2021, with this latest funding round supporting both smaller projects but also expanded to larger schemes over multiple years, enhancing confidence in those seeking to invest in people and machinery to deliver these projects.

3.17 The Recycling Improvement Fund was launched in mid-March 2021 - a £70m fund open to local authorities to support innovation and improvement to recycling infrastructure.

3.18 **The Edinburgh Declaration**

The Edinburgh Declaration is an international agreement to ensure action is taken at all levels to protect biodiversity and has been led and supported by the Scottish Government. The Declaration is a statement of intent agreed between subnational, regional and local governments across the world calling on the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) to take bold action to halt biodiversity loss. It also calls for greater prominence to be given to the role that subnational governments, cities and local authorities play in delivering a new global framework of targets, set to be agreed in October 2021.

3.19 In a paper to the COSLA Environment and Economy Board in October 2020, it was noted that the Scottish Government had indicated that signing the declaration would signal a local authority's ambition to act upon the commitment. Early indications from civil servants were that this would be reflected in wider Scottish policy, including a Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

3.20 Councils have the scope to sign up to the declaration individually and COSLA has proposed that they would be willing to formally commit to the Declaration on behalf of all 32 Councils - this would need endorsement by COSLA Leaders before May 2021.

3.21 A notice of motion in the following terms was approved by Renfrewshire Council at its meeting held on 4 March 2021:

“Council notes the Edinburgh Declaration on biodiversity and notes the issues raised regarding the importance of addressing the loss of biodiversity. Council notes with concern the significant implications that the loss of biodiversity and climate change has on our livelihood and communities and agrees with the need for a global framework in efforts to deliver biodiversity locally.

Council agrees to sign the Edinburgh Declaration on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Council believes that this will help the development of effective policy and governance in biodiversity making Renfrewshire a place where nature is protected and enhanced.”

3.22 In order to sign the Edinburgh Declaration, potential signatories contact the Scottish Government via email, attaching documented evidence of delegated authority, and there is a short vetting process to authenticate this.

3.23 On the Scottish Government’s website there is a section with the current signatories, which includes all levels of government across the globe and a range of other organisations such as the Scottish Land Commission, NatureScot and similar bodies in other countries. Aberdeenshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and Stirling Council are all current signatories.

3.24 **COP26**

The 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (known as COP26) is a United Nations climate summit due to take place in Glasgow in the first 12 days of November 2021, following postponement from November 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. As well as the diplomatic meeting, which is the primary function of a COP summit, they also deliver a significant programme of outreach and engagement events, which take place within different ‘coloured zones’ or completely outwith the official site.

3.25 COSLA recently provided an update at the March Convention around plans to promote the critical role of local government (and international subnational government) in delivering global climate ambitions, including at a ‘Cities and Built Environment’ day, expected to be held in the second week of the summit. In addition, both COSLA and Renfrewshire Council submitted proposals to the UK Cabinet Office, of expressions of interest in securing space in the UK Government managed blue and green zones.

3.26 Renfrewshire Council’s expression of interest was focused on the ‘Cities and Built Environment’ theme, linking Renfrewshire’s internationally renowned industrial history to the AMIDS development, an example of our innovative green future and our plans for green recovery. The expression of interest also

highlighted the role Renfrewshire's rivers have played in our industrial heritage and will continue to play in our future and the resilience of our place, flowing from the White and Black Carts to the River Clyde - the backdrop to COP26.

- 3.27 Managed spaces at COP26 are limited, and demand is very high, therefore there may be more of an opportunity to participate and engage in other outreach events beyond the managed blue and green zones. It should also be noted there is still uncertainty around the format of this year's COP given the significant challenges around international travel due to the pandemic and indications are that a proportion of the participation opportunities may shift to digital rather than in person. Regardless, the enhanced focus on climate policy and the opportunity to share expertise and make international and cross-sectoral connections that COP26 will bring represents a unique opportunity for Renfrewshire Council and Scotland as a whole.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – none
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health and Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – paragraph 3.11 notes the recent procurement policy developments in relation to the climate emergency
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – the report notes COSLA's position on the Edinburgh Declaration and a COSLA's recent update in relation to COP26

13. **Climate Risk** – this report provides a summary of policy developments at a Scottish and UK level to respond to the climate emergency.
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List of Background Papers

None

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