



Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee

Agenda Item

8

11 March 2024

Title:	Climate Action Plan Review
Report of:	Judith Barker, Executive Director, Place and Connectivity
Lead Member:	Cllr Bridget Smith
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	Key Decision KD2023/048
Voting Arrangements:	A simple majority of voting Members

Recommendations:

A	To agree the revisions to the Climate Action Plan 2022-2025 actions as set out in Appendix A, and delegate authority to the Executive Director, Place and Connectivity to approve relevant changes to the supporting text of the Plan prior to publication.
B	To comment on the proposed approach to developing the capital and revenue climate programme as agreed in the MTFP
C	To agree £50,000 in FY2024/25 and £120,000 in FY 2025/26 from the Subject to Approval revenue budget allocation for Natural Cambridgeshire, delegating authority to the Executive Director Place and Connectivity to consider and approve a revision to the existing grant funding agreement
D	To agree £60,000 in both FY2024/25 and FY 2025/26 from the Subject to Approval revenue budget allocation for Fenland Soil, delegating authority to the Executive Director Place and Connectivity to consider and approve an extension to the existing grant funding agreement

Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

x	Achieving good growth
x	Increased connectivity
x	Enabling resilient communities

1. Purpose

1.1	To update the Climate Action Plan 2022-2025 for its final year of implementation, prior to a full review of the Plan to be undertaken in 2024/25
1.2	To set out the broad principles that will, alongside the Climate Action Plan, guide the development of the capital and revenue climate programme delivery.
1.3	To ensure the contribution of stakeholder bodies through allocation of revenue funding, subject to approval of specific business cases for each stakeholder body.

2. Proposal

2.1	To agree revisions to the Actions as set out in Appendix A: Rationale for Change.
2.2	To agree revisions to the contextual text of the Climate Action Plan as set out in Appendix B: Draft Revised Plan, and delegate responsibility to the Executive Director, Place and Community for any further revisions to the contextual text prior to publication.
2.3	To agree extensions of revenue funding over the next two-year period to end of FY 25/26 for Natural Cambridgeshire and Fenland Soil.

3. Background

3.1	The Committee agreed to have a two-stage approach to updating the Climate Action Plan (“the Plan”). The first stage was to be March 2024 to consider a ‘light touch’ refresh to the current list of actions. This would take the Plan through to its completion date of March 2025.
3.2	The second phase would follow a full evidence-based review during 2024 so that a revised Plan, covering the period 2025-2028, would be approved in March 2025. This can also be informed by the work on Locally Determined Contributions taking place during 2024. A work programme and associated revenue funding (from the MTFP Climate Programme budget) will come to Committee at its next meeting.
3.3	The first phase concentrates on those actions that are still to be delivered over the next year. It also allows the opportunity to update the Plan in line with opportunities in Medium Term Financial Plan which was agreed by the CPCA Board on 31 January 2024.
3.4	Attached as Appendix A are the proposed changes to the actions. The rationale for change has been developed and reviewed by the Plan’s thematic working groups and the officer Climate Programme Board. It was subsequently presented at the Climate Partnership Group on the 1 st March. As that date coincided with publication of this Committee’s Agenda papers a verbal update will be made to Committee on any issues arising from the Climate Partnership discussion.
3.5	The Plan has changed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replace out of date information / completed actions• Highlight progress to date.• Align with the latest CPCA Corporate Strategy
3.6	The Plan action table has been modified so that it identifies a lead delivery body in the delivery of the action and their role, whilst the column indicating whether the action supports adaptation and/or mitigation have been removed. The latter column was just for information and did not add to the action itself. Adaptation work remains a core aspect of the Plan.
3.7	Including the previous changes to the Strategic Actions agreed by the CPCA Board on 22 March 2023 , the number of actions from 2024 in this revised draft have reduced from 42 to 37 Actions. Appendix A provides the rationale for change.
3.8	The Committee is recommended to approve the revisions to the actions as set out in Appendix A.
3.9	Contextual amendments are required to the Climate Action Plan document itself as part of this updating. A draft outline of the changes are included as Appendix B. To enable the most up-to-date information to be included in a public-facing document it is proposed that this is updated by officers following approval by the Committee of the revised actions.
3.10	The Medium Term Financial Plan includes additional provision for £9m of capital and £2m of revenue climate activity over 4 years. The Combined Authority is implementing the single assurance framework for all programmes and projects. Development of the climate programme will be one of the first to go through. To assist development of the programme, the Climate Partnership are considering at their meeting on 1 March the broad additional ‘climate’ criteria previously discussed at Committee that would support delivery of the revised Climate Action Plan. Outcome of that meeting will be reported verbally

	at Committee. Officers will develop a Climate Programme of activity for agreement by the Committee at its June meeting.
3.11	In addition to the core criteria of the assurance framework, the climate criteria being considered are: Strategic - aligned with the Climate Action Plan and/or the Independent Commission's recommendations Strategic - prioritised in more than one partners climate strategies/action plans Economic - Does not replace other mainstream funding or responsibilities Management - Has considered dependencies and avoids unintended climate consequences
3.12	In addition, the following aims will be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative or innovative demonstrator projects that can be replicated or scaled in the area • Establishing or unlocking crucial 'building blocks' to support the key objectives of Climate Action Plan delivery • Significantly cuts carbon emissions with high value for money • Delivers tangible adaptation benefits • Delivers a nature-based solution • Unlocks significant additional funding • Changes market behaviour
3.13	Two of the ongoing actions in the Plan have been to support the work of Natural Cambridgeshire (the Local Nature Partnership) and Fenland Soil (the organisation supporting the join-up of farmers, academics to investigate and tackle peat issues). Both organisations have been highly effective in delivery: Natural Cambridgeshire is also key partner in the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy; Fenland Soil has mobilised significant research and applied activity, including recently securing two separate grants totalling £1m for a paludiculture ('wet' farming) demonstration programme in the Fens and a project on lowland peat management. To ensure the business continuity and forward planning of these two organisations, it is recommended that the Committee approve ongoing revenue funding, extending current support over the next two financial years (funding for Natural Cambridgeshire currently runs to FY24/25, Fenland Soil to FY23/24). This would be subject to negotiation and agreement of revised grant agreements with clearly defined outcomes/outputs for the Combined Authority.
3.14	The revenue support would include an allowance for increased costs since 2021/22. For Natural Cambridgeshire it is recommended that the annual revenue support is increased from £70k per annum to £120k per annum (including in FY24/25). This will ensure their core costs are covered without the risk of reliance on other external funding. This is important as 2024/25 is a critical year for the development of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy, of which Natural Cambridgeshire is a core partner in co-production. The funding agreement would include the requirement to address the long-term financial stability of the organisations,

4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix A: Climate Action Plan Rationale for Change
4.2	Appendix B: Draft Revised Climate Action Plan 2022-2025

5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1	The MTFP has £1.1m revenue in both FY24/25 and FY25/26 for the climate programme. The allocations to Natural Cambridgeshire and Fenland Soil would total £110k in FY24/25 and £180k in FY25/26 from that budget line. This would leave £990k revenue for FY24/25 and £920K in FY25/26 to be considered through the Climate Programme paper at June Committee.,
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Legal Implications	
5.2	None.
Public Health Implications	
5.3	Tackling emissions and impacts of climate change can have significantly positive impacts on public health and future risks to health.
Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
5.4	The Climate Action Plan is a key component of the Combined Authority's response to environmental and climate change impact.
Other Significant Implications	
5.5	None.
Background Papers	
5.6	Item 3.4 - Climate Change Action Plan CA Board Agenda - March 2022 Item 3.2 - Climate and Strategy Business Case CA Board Agenda - June 2022 Item 4.2 - Climate and Strategy Business Case CA Board Agenda - July 2022