

South Lakeland District Council
Council
27 July 2021
Climate Action and Biodiversity Portfolio Holder

Portfolio: Cllr Dyan Jones

To lead on the Council's policies around Climate change, climate reduction and sustainable growth, to develop a policy on bio-diversity, raising community awareness and working collaboratively on policy objectives.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

- Air Quality Strategy and action plan
- Active Travel Strategy and action plan
- Council Policy on Climate Change
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

Key Areas

- Community micro-energy schemes
- Leisure, Public Realm, (Parks and Open Spaces (Including cemeteries, trees, woodland and playground improvement)
- Carbon/Greenhouse gas Reduction
- Green agenda – Low carbon reduction
- Active Travel
- Bio-Diversity

Air Quality Strategy/ Action Plan and Carbon Reduction

The Council is continuing to offer low emission parking permits at a reduced rate for cleaner vehicles.

Council is required to report on air quality management to Defra every year. Since 2011, Council has reduced the number of air quality management areas that do not meet quality standards from 4 to 1. The Council is continuing to regularly monitor the remaining site at Lowther Street, Kendal and continues to undertake promotional activities to reduce idling and promotes cycle ways throughout the district, especially to schools. As outlined in the Climate Change Action Plan to tackle climate change the Council will be investigating further, ways to discourage vehicle idling.

The Council has now introduced a requirement for all developers in its Local Planning Authority area to submit the appropriate information as part of their planning application in order for the Council to assess the developments impact on air quality.

Council is continuing to support the Local Energy Advice Partnership and Cold to Cosy schemes, which provides advice and support with installation of low energy lightbulbs and other ways to help improve energy efficiency in vulnerable residents' homes.

Carbon/Greenhouse Gas Reduction

The Council's Council's Climate Change Policy and Action Plan provides focus on how South Lakeland District Council can deliver its Council Plan objective of being a carbon neutral Council by 2030 and a carbon neutral District by 2037 by leading and encourage others to take action around climate change.

The policy and Action Plan reflect the declaration of a Climate Emergency and recognises the significance of climate change whilst identifying the health, economic, social and other opportunities offered by addressing and adapting to meet the challenges ahead. The council acknowledges the importance of climate change both in how we manage ourselves as an organisation and how we work with partners at a local, regional and national level, whilst ensuring sustainable growth is a priority.

We have been measuring our Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in detail since 2010 and SLDC organisational carbon emissions have seen a decrease of over 50% falling from 5259 tonnes in 2010 to 2476 tonnes in 2019/20.

This drop has come partly from increased efficiency throughout our estate, including the installation of solar panels on three of our buildings, but also it must be noted that for electricity the carbon factor used has reduced by nearly 40% in the UK due to an increase in renewable energy in the energy mix of electricity UK wide. Additionally the council has sold some properties so the size of the council's estate has reduced. Therefore, while the council has made significant progress on reducing emissions through mitigation actions, the greening of the national grid and organisational changes have also had significant impacts.

Solar Panels have been installed on South Lakeland House, Mintworks, and Town View Fields Hostel and soon to be installed at Ferry Nab.

Leisure, Public Realm, (Parks and Open Spaces (Including cemeteries, trees, woodland and playground improvement)

Town View Fields/Nobles Rest

The Natural Flood management scheme is settling in well and the mixed grass species is growing well. The 11 damson trees have been planted and a bog garden in two wet areas one in Nobles Rest and one in Town View Field. These plants were chosen for survival in wet areas and to encourage pollinators. Interpretation boards are being created to explain the purpose of this scheme.

Playgrounds

A new playground at North Lonsdale Road opened in March 2021 and now offers play equipment to all ages and abilities. It is bright and vibrant and has been very well received by the residents.

The first phase of improvements at Queens Park are progressing well and the new playground is on schedule to open before the schools finish for the summer. Work on the new Pump Track is due to start mid-July and should take around 3 weeks to complete.

Landscaping, planting and picnic facilities will follow this work and the Community group will continue to fund raise to replace the skate park. This playground was the last of nine projects to benefit from The National Lottery Community grant of £200,000 awarded in 2018.

Going forward the locality team are currently undergoing an assets review and looking at some of the play areas which offer little play value to see if these sites could be put to better use for the community. Consultation activities are planned to get the views from the residents. These are areas close to a new improved facility, or where they are rarely used.

Engagement is due to start at Owlett Ash in Milnthorpe to re-new the playground and plans to establish a community group to assist with the fundraising for Archers Meadow in Kendal.

Since July last year the playgrounds have been open and guidance at all sites recommending social distancing and the use of sanitisers. These were initially provided on site but most were vandalised in a very short time.

The locality team are continuing to improve areas by adding new equipment or picnic benches; This includes Hayclose Crescent, Lund Terrace, Mill Dam and Monument Way. Netting is being added to Lowther Park to prevent footballs damaging neighbouring properties. Eight gates have been replaced across the district where these no longer comply with regulations.

Working with the Friends of Lightburn Park a local artist will paint the ramps on the Skate Park with graffiti art. Weather permitting this will happen in August. Extra picnic benches have been ordered and will be installed for the summer and the Friends continue to work on the planting schemes with the Stumpery, Incredible edibles and the rose garden. They are working hard for Ulverston in Bloom in July.

Trees and Woodlands

Ash Dieback is having a significant impact upon Ash trees throughout the district, with an increase in applications of around 25% for tree works received by the Planning Department, and large numbers of SLDC owned trees affected by this virulent disease. Hazard assessments are underway to identify affected trees and carry out the necessary felling works where the risk of harm is unacceptable. Felled trees will be retained on site for habitat where practicable, with timber being removed by the contractors where appropriate. Recently completed works include felling of Ash Dieback affected trees at Bluebell Woods, Kendal, completed by Network Rail due to their proximity and risk to the Windermere Branch Line. Further works will be carried out throughout the year, as infection rates are monitored. Works in woodlands are covered by pre-existing thinning licences approved by the Forestry Commission, and where necessary additional felling licences will be applied for on a site by site basis. Serpentine Woods in Kendal, School Knott Woods in Windermere and Yewbarrow Woods in Grange over Sands have been particularly badly affected.

Tree works involving Ash trees with Ash Dieback have also been carried out in a joint project with Kendal Town Council to restore at least 20 allotments at Canal Head, Kendal. The area had fallen into decline over the last 30+ years, and with a waiting list of excess of 30 plots for the Canal Head Allotments site alone, the land will be soon back in community use.

Tree planting to replace council trees which had to be felled in open spaces, was completed on time and to budget. Recent dry weather required some supplementary watering which has been delivered by Continental Landscapes. The council no longer has any significant areas available for new tree planting. Replacement trees will be planted in parks and open spaces where practicable. Natural regeneration will be used to restock woodland where Ash trees are felled.

The Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme works have commenced and includes a number of reaches including trees. As the project continues there will be further tree works, to include the necessary felling works along Aynam Road. Officers are monitoring the works to ensure compliance with the approved plans and methodology.

Green Agenda – Low Carbon Reduction

The Council has partnered with Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) to provide support for communities across the district exploring and introducing renewable energy schemes and other projects and topics. The Council has continued to provide funding support throughout 2020/21 to enable CAfS to continue to undertake a comprehensive programme of low carbon initiatives targeted at communities across South Lakeland. This support included funding a zero carbon project in Ambleside, including a carbon footprint calculator to engage businesses and residents, a solar PV mapping activity to identify opportunities and talking to residents and businesses about group buying schemes and low carbon engagement events.

The Council approved an amendment to the original Climate Change Policy that was adopted in February 2019 to commit the Council to work towards achieving carbon neutrality in 2030 and to support a district wide target of carbon neutrality by 2037.

The Climate Change Community Fund initially made up of £20,000 invited communities to apply for matched grant funding to support carbon reduction projects. Applications were open from August until the end of September 2020, and there were 10 successful projects ranging from action planning generated by a Citizen's Jury, to bike ability courses, help with energy efficiency measures and peat bog restoration.

SLDC are part of the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership of 70 organisations across Cumbria who are committed to lowering carbon emissions in Cumbria. This partnership commissioned *Small World Consultancy* to write a report on Cumbria's baseline carbon emissions and a suggested target of 2037 for net zero emissions. SLDC were the first authority to ratify that date. *Cumbria Action for Sustainability* have successfully bid for National Lottery Funding of £2.5million to help support the *Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership*.

The project to install of EV Charging Points across the District continues to progress. Its delivery has been impacted by Covid-19. A total of 14 SLDC managed sites were reviewed of which 6 currently meet all criteria for project. The next steps will be review and seek Cabinet approval to procure equipment, a contractor and install the charge points.

Greening Campaign

The Greening Campaign is a specially designed toolkit designed to take parish or town councils through structured steps to help households reduce their carbon footprint.

Council has subsidised the cost of the first phase so that there is a cost of only £25 to town and parish councils. This scheme and subsidised cost was launched in summer 2020 and has been promoted to town and parish councils through the locality newsletter, emails and an online meeting that all were invited to.

So far, 10 town and parish councils have signed up. Staveley and Ings has completed phase 1 where an estimated Sixty-four households took part and their actions were calculated to save 39.76 tonnes of CO₂, which can be equated to the volume of 39 hot air balloons. Further news releases and promotion is planned to encourage more to sign up to phase 1.

Active Travel

As part of the ambition to be a carbon neutral council by 2030 the council have introduced a green travel protocol that recommends following a hierarchy of travel options before using your own petrol or diesel vehicle when travelling for work purposes. Covid has forced everyone to approach work in a different way and some of the changes we will continue to use going forward, for example, not all meetings need to take place in person and online Microsoft teams meetings will continue for some.

The Active Travel Group has been engaging with key partners to introduce additional Cycle Routes and safer routes to school. SLDC website now also includes cycling maps for routes across the district ([Click here](#)). Encouraging cycling is very important in any future reduction of carbon emissions.

It was recognised that during the Coronavirus lockdowns, the number of vehicles on the roads reduced and more people were cycling. Therefore, we have been working in partnership with Cumbria County Council to introduce more cycle lanes and routes where feasible and will work collaboratively to identify any future funding opportunities.

Council will continue to actively monitor and trial new technologies where appropriate, feasible and realistic, in a timely manner for our fleet vehicles. The council has placed an order for the first electric fleet vehicle and delivery is expected in early 2022.

The Climate Change Action Plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Bio-Diversity

The Council has continued to raise the importance of biodiversity across the district whilst supporting mitigating climate change actions. Representatives from Cabinet met with the Lake District National Park authority to discuss how to increase biodiversity across the district through partnership working.

The Biodiversity Policy recognises the Councils commitment to protecting and enhancing local biodiversity, setting out a number actions as to how it will be achieved.

The policy recognised the importance of plant and insect species and works with contractors to implement different forms of management for open spaces and areas of traditional parks, supporting and enhancing biodiversity.

Principles behind the policy:

- To reduce the carbon emissions created by regular grass cuttings, from decomposition (both those collected and those left on-site) and emissions from vehicles and machinery.
- To increase the diversity of plant species found in green spaces, benefitting local wildlife and the wider environment to diversify local landscape value.

The full policy can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

The Council Plan 2021 reinforces the Councils commitments on key priorities to reduce inequalities, deliver sustainable economic growth and respond to the very clear and dramatic threat posed by climate change and biodiversity loss.

Now the culvert work at Town View Fields is completed, the field's biodiversity will be further enriched by the planting of a wildflower meadow and a small damson orchard to help attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Section 151 Officer	Not applicable (N/A)	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	12/07/2021	13/07/2021

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	12/07/2021
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	09/07/2021
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	N/A