

South Lakeland District Council
Council
Wednesday, 13 July 2022
Climate Action and Biodiversity Portfolio Holder
Report

Portfolio: Climate Action and Biodiversity Portfolio Holder

Report from: Cllr Dyan Jones

To lead on the Council's policies around Climate change, carbon 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
- Climate Change Policy and Action Plan
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

Key Areas

- Air Quality Management Plans
- Leisure, Public Realm, (Parks and Open Spaces (Including cemeteries, trees, woodland and playground improvement)
- Carbon Reduction and Active Travel
- Biodiversity

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

Parks and Open Spaces

The Friends of Nobles Rest are continuing to be proactive and have worked hard on the central beds to eliminate weeds and encourage the growth of this bio-diverse planting scheme. Extra plants will be purchased to fill the gaps. The delayed planting of trees in Swine Parrock will be addressed in the autumn, working with Kendal Conservation Volunteers and the Arboricultural Officer to achieve a well-managed woodland. The volunteers are hoping to have a work party in the area to continue with Ivy removal and cutting back some on the Sycamore saplings. The timber from Storm Arwen will be left in the wood to provide habitat.

The Damson trees planted last year are doing well and the Ground Maintenance Contractor are going to knock back some of the nettles and thistles that are currently overwhelming the

park especially close to the footpaths. The first Interpretation Board has been well received and the second one to encourage children to look for birds and insects is in production.

Working with Kendal Town Council a couple of large middens have been installed for use by the Friends and contractors so hopefully next year we will have our own compost for the central beds. The longer grass in the park seems to be deterring the campers we often find at the perimeters of this park.

The Friends of Fletcher Park have planted additional trees and wildflowers in the borders of the park and requested the grass here is left to grow. This is starting to create a very colourful border.

Kendal Town Council had some wildflower matting spare from a project at Somerville Gardens and have planted in an SLDC bed on Aynam road which is currently producing a wealth of beautiful flowers and should add colour all summer.

The Friends of Lightburn Park have planted additional wildflowers to the Railway compound in the park and with the flowers planted last year and the grass being left a wild flower meadow is being created. The grass is still being cut in the sidings for safety reasons. They are also tending the raised beds and sensory gardens and have worked with Sandside School to create Incredible Edibles. They are working hard to prepare the park for the Ulverston in Bloom competition in July.

Working with Continental Landscapes we are continually looking for area to mow less but we have a fine balance due to the need of all users. We are also looking at verges and green spaces in housing developments where the residents have requested this.

The new Biodiversity toolkit will help the Friends groups with ideas but this needs to be site specific to get this balance right.

Playgrounds

Fund raising is continuing to raise funds for Owlett Ash in Milnthorpe and hopefully the playground at Grange promenade will be redeveloped as part of the Prom project. Several pieces of equipment have been removed from here as they are beyond repair. Following consultation items are being replaced in some of the smaller playgrounds to give a better facility and a couple of very small unused areas have been closed.

The pump track at Queens Park is still very popular. Unfortunately the half pipe on the skate park has been removed following a fire and safety concerns. The Windermere Park for All group are working hard on fundraising so this can be redeveloped.

Trees and Woodland

Works to clear damaged trees following the winter Storms, the most significant being Storm Arwen, has been completed. All main sites are reopened and access paths are cleared. There remains a large amount of timber and branch debris in some sites where retention of this material as deadwood habitat will benefit biodiversity and wildlife. The public reaction to this damage has been generally one of understanding, and acceptance of the strategy to retain deadwood on sites for wildlife. This has been assisted by press coverage of other landowners following a similar strategy. The storms have resulted in an increase in requests for tree management works to council owned trees across the district requiring more site assessments following service requests. The Locality team have been supportive in recording and assessing these service requests.

Ash Dieback management works have now been completed on Bowling Fell and Serpentine Woods, Kendal. A couple of complaints were received following this work but once the callers understood the reasoning behind the work they accepted it as a necessary action. Further work will be required in Serpentine Woods in 2023 and surveys will be undertaken in the coming months to map affected trees.

Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme is nearing completion of the Abbot Hall and Kendal Parish Church reaches, and the trees surrounding the works have fared remarkably well considering the amount of development works which have taken place. Works on the Aynam Road reaches will commence in the coming months, with further planned tree removals to be carried out under the Project Arboriculturist's supervision.

Carbon Reduction in the Council

The Council's Climate Change Policy and Action Plan seeks to deliver a carbon neutral Council by 2030. Whilst South Lakeland will no longer exist post April 2023, it is vital that South Lakeland's commitment to climate change is reflected in the new authority. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as a council, for 2021/22 fell under the allocated carbon budget with an annual total of 2400 tonnes CO₂e. This is due to a slight increase in transport emissions and an increase in emissions from energy at our offices, where staff have been returning to work after the Covid-19 pandemic. However, positively, the council is 33% down on emissions through Quarter 1 2022/23 versus last year.

To address emissions from energy and buildings, the Assets Team are undertaking a programme of energy efficiency measures including insulation, upgrades to LED and a planned heat decarbonisation project at Ferry Nab. In addition to this, the completed works at South Lakeland House has allowed for the gas boiler at the Lowther Street office to be decommissioned, this should result in a carbon saving during the winter months of 2022/23.

The Climate Action team have applied for funding through the Low Carbon Skills Fund, of up to £50,000 to fund the production of Heat Decarbonisation Plans for 3 council owned buildings: Kendal Leisure Centre, Ulverston Market Hall and Town View Fields. These Heat Decarbonisation Plans will be carried out by specialist consultants and they will set out fully costed plans for how to decarbonise the buildings heating systems and how emissions can be reduced in the building through the installation of Green technologies. These Heat Decarbonisation plans can form the basis of future Public Sector Decarbonisation funding applications, which is the primary public sector scheme to receive funding to decarbonise public sector buildings.

Another large source of emissions for South Lakeland District Council is transport emissions from its operational fleet. After the purchase of the first electric vehicle on the fleet in 2022, the council is looking to continue exploring options to decarbonise the fleet. A joint working approach has been adopted moving forward, with the formation of the Fleet Decarbonisation officer working group. Made up of officers from the depot, the Assets and Delivery team and the Climate Change Action Team, this group will work to improve systems and processes and research the EV market to enable a quicker and smoother transition to a low-carbon fleet. The focus of this group in 2022/23 will be explore options for EV infrastructure at council depots and to set up a new trial process to ensure that Council is agile in its decision making for vehicle purchases.

The SLDC SOSCI EV charging scheme is nearing completion. The council is installing 24 22kW chargers into our car parks including South Lakeland House, Library Road Kendal,

Redbank Road Grasmere and Buxton Place Ulverston. These charge points will go live in the Late Summer 2022 and will be available for public use, they will support a 2-3 hour charge time for a vehicle and is our first step in providing EV infrastructure to our residents.

Carbon Reduction in the District

The Council's Climate Change Action Plan seeks to enable and deliver a carbon neutral South Lakeland District by 2037 by leading and encourage others to take action around climate change. The work in the community to tackle Climate Change has continued and is growing its scope and ambition.

The Council has extended its funding agreement with Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS). CAfS will continue to deliver projects from previous funding rounds including Solar Made Easy in the Lakes, which is a solar project to encourage residents to install on their homes, after two pioneer properties have installed the next step is to install at an additional 8 pioneer properties in Ambleside. And the Big Solar Co-Op which is aiming to generate renewable energy for key intuitions in Ambleside. The success and interest in these projects has led to CAfS extending these projects to further geography including Kendal.

The CAfS funding agreement for 2022/23 is focused on interventions to enable small businesses transition to the Green Economy. As well as continuing their Carbon calculator, their peer-to-peer learning events in the Lake District, CAfS are offering up to 20 hours tailored one-to-one support to 12 businesses in South Lakeland. Involved in this support will be a scoping study to help the business understand their impacts and opportunities, an energy audit, sector specific support or referral to programmes like Charge While You Sleep or My Green Butler and additional offers of paid support going forward.

CAfS are also taking a leading role in building a Green business support across South Lakeland and Cumbria, partnering with other SLDC funded organisations Future Fixers and Small Green Business, as well as other partners like Cumbria Tourism to build a comprehensive suite of sustainability support for small and medium businesses. SLDC officers are involved in this network and see a great deal of potential for this group going forward.

As part of its Green Transport ambitions the Council is working to provide EV infrastructure to its residents, and as well as the 24 chargers going into SLDC Car Parks, SLDC are part of Cumbria Wide partnership aiming to 'turbo-charge' EV Charging infrastructure in the county. SLDC are an active member of this partnership, which is focusing on two areas; Extending off-street charging in council owned car parks across the County, utilising all 6 districts and the counties car parks. And also providing on-street charging infrastructure, at a larger scale, through installing chargers on streets, utilising new technology to do so. The partnership is in the process of exploring bids to the LEVI and ORCS schemes and are hoping to provide good news soon.

The Council is also committed to ensuring we transition to a low-carbon district in an equitable way, by tackling growing fuel poverty and supporting our community in ensuring their homes are energy efficient. SLDC have been part of a consortium in the Green Homes LAD2 project to deliver a series of energy efficiency measures to residents vulnerable to fuel poverty. We are expecting to retrofit 80 properties with a variation of energy efficiency measures including solar panels, insulation and heat pump installations. The next stage of the Green Homes Grant; LAD3 has been combined with HUG1 to create Sustainable Warmth. SLDC are part of a Cumbrian consortium that has applied for £25 million of funding

to address fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency and carbon savings in at least 1,000 mainly private sector properties.

While it's important to provide for residents directly through our projects and agreements, SLDC also recognises the importance of enabling and supporting Parish and Town Councils in their own sustainability journey. In recent months the Climate Action Project Team have been exploring how best to build on the success of the Greening Campaign, which took 11 parish and town councils through a process design to enable councils to help households reduce their carbon footprint and engage with sustainability. The Climate Action team have been supporting certain Parish councils in the area of EV charge points where towns/parishes have sought advice on how to go about a EV chargepoint project.

As part of an approach hoping to build on the Greening campaign and enable town and parish councils, SLDC are launching a Town and Parish Council Climate Change toolkit in partnership with ACT, CALC and CAfS which is designed to provide best practice advice and direct councils to where they can receive support going forward.

Active Travel

The council have introduced a green travel protocol that recommends following a hierarchy of more sustainable travel options before using employees' vehicles when travelling for work purposes. The progress made in introducing remote working and virtual meetings, which reduce the need for travel, will be sustained. We have supported the County Council in preparing a Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP) for Kendal which will help to form the basis for the continuing development of Kendal's cycle and walking network. The Plan sets out prioritised proposals for enhanced cycling and walking routes in Kendal, and was prepared in consultation with a wide range of interested parties and the local community. It was approved by the County Council's South Lakeland Local Committee in March 2022 and is an essential requirement when bids are made for government funding for cycling and walking improvements. SLDC's cabinet will consider endorsing the Plan at its meeting on Monday 4 July.

Biodiversity

Work has begun to re-focus on biodiversity, looking at our Biodiversity Policy and forming an internal Biodiversity Action Plan to create momentum on the issue over the next 12 months. There there will be a focus on four strands of Biodiversity:

- Biodiversity Net Gain rollout
- Own Land management
- Community, Education and Awareness
- Biodiversity expertise, knowledge and Monitoring

The local plans team and development management have begun to research and plan for the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain, this is in the early stages but should be an ongoing priority to ensure our development service is pro-active in response to this key legislation.

Our volunteers and friends groups on our various parks are a great resource to help the Council improve the Biodiversity of our land and to raise the awareness of Biodiversity in the

community. To further enable this work and to provide more options and guidance to current to potential friends groups we have created a Biodiversity Community Toolkit.

This toolkit is acts as a guidance for community groups, volunteers and as a call to action for residents interested in forming a friends group or a friends group wanting to expand their work. The toolkit outlines where work can be carried out, how to get involved by contacting our locality team, and importantly states that while we will do all we can to enable this work, some of our sites aren't suitable for all biodiversity features so any work has to be authorised by the council's locality team. The toolkit outlines the benefits of biodiversity and goes into detail of all the different features, which include bee banks or bee hotels, bog gardens, meadows, tree planting, planting for pollinators or woodpiles. The toolkit can be found on our website and will be promoted out to our residents and community in the next edition of South Lakeland News.

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Section 151 Officer	N/A	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	01/07/22	01/07/22

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	N/A
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	01/07/22
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	13/07/22